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A reflexive methodology for action-research with disadvantages students in Higher Education

Nunzia Rainone, Maria Luisa Martino, Anna Cannata, Maria Francesca Freda

Dipartimento di teorie e metodi delle scienze umane e sociali TEOMESUS, Università Federico II di Napoli mettete tutte questa

marialuisa.martino@unina.it; nunzia.rainone@libero.it; anna_cannata@libero.it; fmfreda@unina.it.

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The growing phenomena of disadvantaged and non-traditional students increases the risk of educational underachievement and drop-out in university context of the European countries.
Within European funded project INSTALL (*Innovative Solutions to Acquire Learning to Learn*), to be developed over the next two years in Italy (lead partner), Romania, Denmark, Ireland, and Spain, this paper discusses the effectiveness of the use of qualitative tools to promote a reflexive competence on the formative experience and so a functional adjustment to the university context. The Narrative Mediation Path (NMP) is an innovative and qualitative methodology that develops a group training process targeted to disadvantaged students. NMP, based on the psychological concept of mentalization, also known as reflexive competence (Fonagy & Target, 1997; Allen & Fonagy, 2008), combines into one methodology four discursive modules: Metaphoric, Iconographic, Writing and Bodily. The use of "multidimensional" narrative (Hermans, 2001), promote 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 results suggest that the use of different discursive modules supports the students in the recognition of different abilities.

Introduzione e obiettivi:

- sottolineare l'importanza x l'europa di questo tema con particolare riferimento alla competenza dell'imp a imp come competenza chiave volta promuovere l'inclusione univ.

- Mentalizzazione/riflessività e narrazione/competenza dell'imparare ad imparare

- The competence of Learning to Learn è questo l'obiettivo EU

L'istruzione e la formazione sono al centro dell'agenda di Lisbona per la crescita e l'occupazione, e costituiscono un elemento essenziale del suo follow-up fino al 2020. Crescita, occupazione, equità ed inclusione sociale sono fondamentali per dar vita a un «triangolo della conoscenza: istruzione/ricerca/innovazione» che funzioni e fare in modo che tutti i cittadini siano meglio qualificati.

Nel periodo fino al 2020, l'obiettivo principale della cooperazione europea, nel campo della formazione, dovrebbe essere quello di sostenere l'ulteriore sviluppo dei sistemi di istruzione e formazione degli Stati membri che sono volti a garantire: a) la realizzazione personale, sociale e professionale di tutti i cittadini; b) una prosperità economica sostenibile e l'occupabilità, promuovendo la coesione sociale e la cittadinanza attiva.

I sistemi di istruzione e formazione dell'intera UE devono garantire l'equità e l'eccellenza. È essenziale, quindi, migliorare i livelli d'istruzione e fornire competenze chiave a tutti, non solo per la crescita economica e la competitività, ma anche per la riduzione della povertà e la promozione dell'inclusione sociale. Al tempo stesso, si dovrebbe così assicurare pari opportunità, cercando di fornire a tutti la possibilità di ottenere risultati coerenti con le proprie potenzialità.

L'apprendimento delle nuove competenze dovrebbe infatti essere considerato un principio fondamentale su cui poggia l'intero quadro, che è inteso a contemplare l'apprendimento in tutti i contesti, siano essi formali, non formali o informali, e a tutti i livelli.

I sistemi di istruzione e formazione dovrebbero, pertanto, diventare più aperti e rispondere meglio alle esigenze dei cittadini e ai bisogni del mercato del lavoro e più in generale della società. Altresì, i sistemi di istruzione e formazione dovrebbero mettere in atto servizi e attività che assicurino anche ai gruppi svantaggiati pari opportunità di accesso ad un'istruzione di qualità, equità di trattamento, come pure un elevato livello di competenze chiave.

I sistemi tradizionali devono essere modificati per renderli molto più aperti e flessibili, in modo da permettere agli studenti di accedere a un percorso di apprendimento di loro scelta, in funzione dei loro bisogni e interessi, fruendo della possibilità di apprendere competenze chiave da poter poi spendere nel mondo del lavoro.

In particolare, muovendo dalle diverse capacità individuali, occorre rispondere alle diverse esigenze degli studenti assicurando la parità e l'accesso a quei gruppi che, a causa di svantaggi formativi determinati da circostanze personali, sociali, culturali hanno bisogno di un sostegno particolare per realizzare le loro potenzialità educative.

È necessario, infatti, sostenere l'acquisizione delle competenze chiave da parte di coloro che rischiano di ottenere risultati al di sotto delle loro potenzialità nel campo dell'istruzione e di subire, pertanto, fenomeni di esclusione sociale.

Lo sviluppo di sistemi di istruzione e formazione efficienti ed equi, di elevata qualità, contribuisce considerevolmente a ridurre i rischi della disoccupazione, di esclusione sociale in un'economia moderna basata sulla conoscenza.

Le istituzioni universitarie devono, pertanto, rendersi flessibili e mettere in atto processi di modernizzazione per fornire prestazioni che supportino lo sviluppo di competenze chiave.

Numerosi paesi stanno introducendo riforme che come punto di riferimento utilizzano esplicitamente il quadro delle competenze; programmi di studio che si modellano su di questo sia in

ambito scolastico ma anche e soprattutto in ambito universitario. Una delle sfide principali, infatti, è far in modo che *tutti* gli studenti possano usufruire delle metodologie innovative, a tutti i livelli di istruzione.

Occorre, quindi, che i sistemi di istruzione e formazione, comprese le università, diventino più aperti e siano più in linea con i bisogni del mercato del lavoro e più in generale della società.

La miscela di capacità professionali fornite dai sistemi universitari di formazione dell'Unione non è, infatti, in grado di dare un pieno sostegno a una formazione che si renda flessibile e spendibile nel mondo del lavoro. Fornire, in ambito universitario, spazi volti a supportare lo sviluppo di competenze chiave favorirebbe gli studenti nel costruire curriculum trasversali da poter spendere nel mondo del lavoro.

Tra le otto competenze chiave declinate dall'Unione Europea, la competenza *dell'imparare ad imparare* è quella ampiamente riconosciuta come fondamentale nel favorire l'adattamento ai contesti e l'inclusione partecipata nel mondo della formazione e del lavoro. Tale competenza è definita come "l'abilità di perseverare nell'apprendimento, di organizzare il proprio apprendimento anche mediante una gestione efficace del tempo e delle informazioni, sia a livello individuale che in gruppo. Questa competenza comprende la consapevolezza del proprio processo di apprendimento e dei propri bisogni, l'identificazione delle opportunità disponibili e la capacità di sormontare gli ostacoli per apprendere in modo efficace. Questa competenza comporta l'acquisizione, l'elaborazione e l'assimilazione di nuove conoscenze e abilità come anche la ricerca e l'uso delle opportunità di orientamento. Il fatto di imparare a imparare fa sì che i discenti prendano le mosse da quanto hanno appreso in precedenza e dalle loro esperienze di vita per usare e applicare conoscenze e abilità in tutta una serie di contesti: a casa, sul lavoro, nell'istruzione e nella formazione. […] In tutti i casi imparare a imparare comporta che una persona conosca e comprenda le proprie strategie di apprendimento preferite, i punti di forza e i punti deboli delle proprie abilità e qualifiche e sia in grado di cercare le opportunità di istruzione e formazione e gli strumenti di orientamento e/o sostegno disponibili. […] Ciò comporta una gestione efficace del proprio apprendimento, della propria carriera e dei propri schemi lavorativi e, in particolare, la capacità […] di riflettere in modo critico sugli obiettivi e le finalità dell'apprendimento. Una persona dovrebbe essere in grado di consacrare del tempo per apprendere autonomamente e con autodisciplina, ma anche per lavorare in modo collaborativo quale parte del processo di apprendimento, di cogliere i vantaggi che possono derivare da un gruppo eterogeneo e di condividere ciò che ha appreso. Le persone dovrebbero inoltre essere in grado di organizzare il proprio apprendimento, di valutare il proprio lavoro e di cercare consigli, informazioni e sostegno, ove necessario. […] Un'attitudine ad affrontare i problemi per risolverli serve sia per il processo di apprendimento stesso sia per poter gestire gli ostacoli e il cambiamento. Il desiderio di applicare quanto si è appreso in precedenza e le proprie esperienze di vita nonché la curiosità di cercare nuove opportunità di apprendere e di applicare l'apprendimento in una gamma di contesti della vita sono elementi essenziali di un'attitudine positiva."

Nel contesto universitario, la competenza dell'imparare ad imparare si traduce in una competenza allo studio che coinvolge l'insieme della persona, fa da sfondo a tutte le attività di apprendimento e si declina in un saper studiare, fondato su di un insieme di saperi e di capacità guidati ed integrati da un saper come fare. Tale competenza allo studio rientra nell'ambito delle competenze di ordine superiore o meta fondate sulla possibilità di sviluppare consapevolezza del come si conosce e del come intervenire per ottimizzare il proprio processo conoscitivo in ragione di scopi. Per sviluppare una competenza allo studio è necessario attivare un processo di mentalizzazione/ riflessività del proprio percorso formativo (Fonagy, et al., 2002), ovvero un processo volto a comprendere le ragioni del proprio ed altrui comportamento e ad agire conseguentemente nel contesto in maniera intenzionale sentendosi protagonista delle proprie azioni. In ambito formativo, il processo di mentalizzazione/riflessività consente al soggetto in formazione di vedersi e di riconoscersi all'opera integrando dimensioni emotive, cognitive e sociali che

attraversano l'esperienza formativa per orientarle strategicamente. Mentalizzazione, o competenza riflessiva, significa, in altri termini, essere consapevoli dei propri ed altrui stati mentali (pensieri, credenze, emozioni, desideri, motivazioni) ed, in ragione di ciò, di riconoscere, elaborare e regolare le emozioni che attraversano il processo apprenditivo, di utilizzare strategicamente operazioni cognitive che riguardano gli stati mentali (descrivere, interpretare, dedurre, riflettere, anticipare, ricordare, codificare, ecc) e di comunicare e relazionarsi efficacemente con gli altri (Fonagy et al, 1997; Allen, Fonagy, 2006).

The learning competence that involves the whole person and is the background of every learning activity

The **ability to study** based on a mix of knowledge and skills driven and integrated by a **know-how**

Higher or target competences based on the opportunity of awareness about **know-how** and **the way to act** in order to optimize the cognitive process according to the goals given

The implementation of a **reflecting/mentalizing** process of the training path is necessary to achieve these goals (Fonagy et al., 2002)
A process aimed to comprehend the reasons of one's own and other's behavior and to act consequently and intentionally within the framework as the main character of one's own actions

This process allows the trainee to see and recognise himself while **integrating emotional, cognitive and social dimensions through the training experiences to be strategically oriented**
to be aware of one's own and others' mental statuses
(thougths, beliefs, emotions, whishes, motivations)
THEREFORE

- ✓ To recognize, elaborate and regulate emotions flowing through the learning process
- ✓ To strategically use cognitive operations involving mental statuses
- ✓ To communicate with and relate to others effectively

(Fonagy et al, 1997; Allen & Fonagy, 2006).
Narration
potentiates the reflecting process of mentalization
(Smorti, 1994; Murray, 2000; Hermans, 2001; Freda, 2008)

The mentalization itself acts as an oral or written narration, because the subject is always involved in creating stories about his own and others' mental statuses (Allen & Fonagy, 2006)
Why?
Narration acts as an activator and a promoter of reflecting processes when it is used in a continuous alternation between narrative and meta-narrative processes or reflection processes about narration. This alternation promotes the transition from narrative sequences describing the events to reflective narrative sequences in which the subject uses narration to reflect about his own being in the experience. This happens through the "narrative group" who activates and improves the potentialities of reflection inherent in narration, the abilities to address complex problems, and to build knowledge through experience (Freda, 2008).

In summary Many personal, social, cultural, economic circumstances affect the performance and completion rate of a large segment of European students in tertiary education: the growing phenomena of disadvantaged and non-traditional students increases the risk of educational underachievement and drop-out. In the universities participating in INSTALL – representative of the EU higher education ecosystem – up

to 35% of enrolled students are underachievers. In Europe, 20% to 45% of university students are non-traditional learners.

The EU2020 strategic objective of a more cohesive growth through knowledge based economy calls for improved models to sustain the acquisition of the key competence Learning to Learn for those disadvantaged tertiary education students exposed to the risk of social exclusion. The successful implementation of the European Higher Education Area hinges on the social dimension of Higher Education in terms of access, participation and successful completion of studies; guidance and counseling. The European Commission clearly calls for "the need to develop and implement innovative approaches to teaching and learning support acquisition of key competences for those at risk of educational underachievement and social exclusion".

INSTALL responds to those needs and challenges by developing innovative solutions to address disadvantaged students' constraints to acquiring and developing the Learning to Learn key competence. The project will develop, validate and deploy innovative Narrative Mediation Paths to empower disadvantaged students to fully reap the benefits of tertiary education in a Lifelong Learning perspective. The Narrative Mediation Path is based on the psychological concept of mentalisation (as the ability to understand oneself or someone else's mental state) to develop and enhance L2L. The INSTALL innovative support service targeted at tertiary level students will be test with at least 200 students in 5 EU Countries to be then deployed at full EU scale.

Target:

1) Essential Criteria of academic performance

1a) Students who are in a delay in making exams

Italy Federico II	The course will be targeted at students who, at the end of the first year, have only obtained 50% or less of the total credits of the first year, that is 30 credits or less (the total of the credits of the first year are 60).

1b) Student who have a low average mark

This criterion is operationalized differently in the different universities involved in the project:

Italy Federico II	Students who have a range of marks that goes from 18 to 22, that is a *low average mark.* (The minimum mark to pass an exam is 18. Taking less than 18, the student fails. The maximum possible mark is 30).

2) Essential Criteria related to the personal story of the student

The student must meet one or more* characteristics *of the non traditional/disadvantaged student as described in the international literature:

- Low income,
- Living far from his/her parents' home,
- Living in urban or rural places,
- Low mark diploma
- Ethnic minority,
- Full time, part-time, occasionally worker,
- With family responsibilities (single parent, supporting children, orphan)
- Disabled,
- Older than 25,
- From a family with a low level of education,
- First generation university student .

3) Preferential criterion (not essential): e*vidence of the high potential of the student*

This criterion refers to the fact that the student should have good basic skills and good potentialities that will allow him/her to use the NMP in an effective manner.

This criterion is operationalized as follows:

- the student must have obtained at least one high mark at an exam, during his degree career;
- the student must have obtained a good mark at the Diploma, before enrolling in university.

Each Countries involved in the project will adapt this criterion to own context.

Methodology:

Step:
Narrative
Reflecting/Mentalizing competence

Learning to Learn Competence:
Empowering personal identity

Graduation
To enhance academic performance and limit drop-out
Inclusion and participation in university life

Metodologia: NMP (4 moduli)+sequenza metodol+esempi in slide

Risultati:
Conclusioni:

D1.1. NARRATIVE MEDIATION PATH MODEL

Introduction

Narration has a key role for improving the reflecting process of mentalization. Narration acts as an activator and a promoter of reflective competence when it is used in a continuous alternation between narrative and meta-narrative processes. This alternation promotes the transition from narrative sequences describing the events to reflective narrative sequences in which the subject uses narration to reflect about his own being in the experience.

In particular, “narrative group” activates and improves the potentialities of reflection inherent in narration, the abilities to address complex problems and to build knowledge through experience.

In the university context, to develop the Learning to Learn Key competence, that is INSTALL aim, it is necessary to start a mentalization process of own formative path, id est, a process that aims to understand the reasons of own and others behavior to act in the university context in a functional way to academic achievement.

What is the NMP?

Narrative Mediation Path (NMP) is an innovative educational methodology based on narration as a mediation tool to foster the reflective/mentalization competence.

Specifically, NMP consists in a group training process targeted to groups of disadvantaged students enrolled in the second year of university and in late with passed examinations. NMP combines into one methodology four discursive narrative modules: Metaphoric, Iconographic, Writing and Bodily. These four modules are implemented in a cycle of six meetings conducted by Narrative Group Trainers (NGTs). NMP uses a set of narrative inputs which differently refer to the four discursive modules.

The reflective cycle of mentalization promoted through NMP

Through the four modules the student can access to the possibility both of mentalizing the personal way of participating in the university education, and of developing a reflexive competence that allows him/her to learn to learn in a way which is strategic and adaptive in relationship with the context.

Although the mentalization/reflexive competence is the final outcome of the training, in each module a reflexive register is activated about the educational experience of the student, at different levels of analysis, in relationship with different educational situations and according to the different narrative inputs proposed to the group of the trained students.

On the whole, the training is thought as a circularly reflexive process of mentalization about one's own educational experience, starting from an initial synchronic and thick representation of the educational experience (proposed in the first module), passing through a diachronic analysis of specific university situation and, finally, returning to the synchronic level in which the same experience is re-investigated in the light of the reflexive and meta-reflexive processes previously activated.

Articulation of the modules and the methodological sequences

The choice of using four different communicative channels during the training stems from two different factors related to the characteristics, on the one hand, of the different inputs and, on the other hand, of the participating students:

a) narrative inputs have a different 'invasiveness' according the different communicative channels chosen and, consequently, a different effectiveness in the different phases of the training path (e.g. visual-iconographic inputs are less invasive and, therefore, are preferably used in the beginning phase of the training (in comparison with the written inputs);

b) students can be different for being more or less 'in tune' with the different communicative channels and, accordingly, they can tend to use their reflexive potentialities in a different way (e.g. for some subjects the speech channel is that through which they are able to express themselves with fewer inhibitions; for others, on the contrary, it is the visual channel to elicit more easily the expression of the educative Self)

The sequence of the four communicative channels is also motivated by other factors:

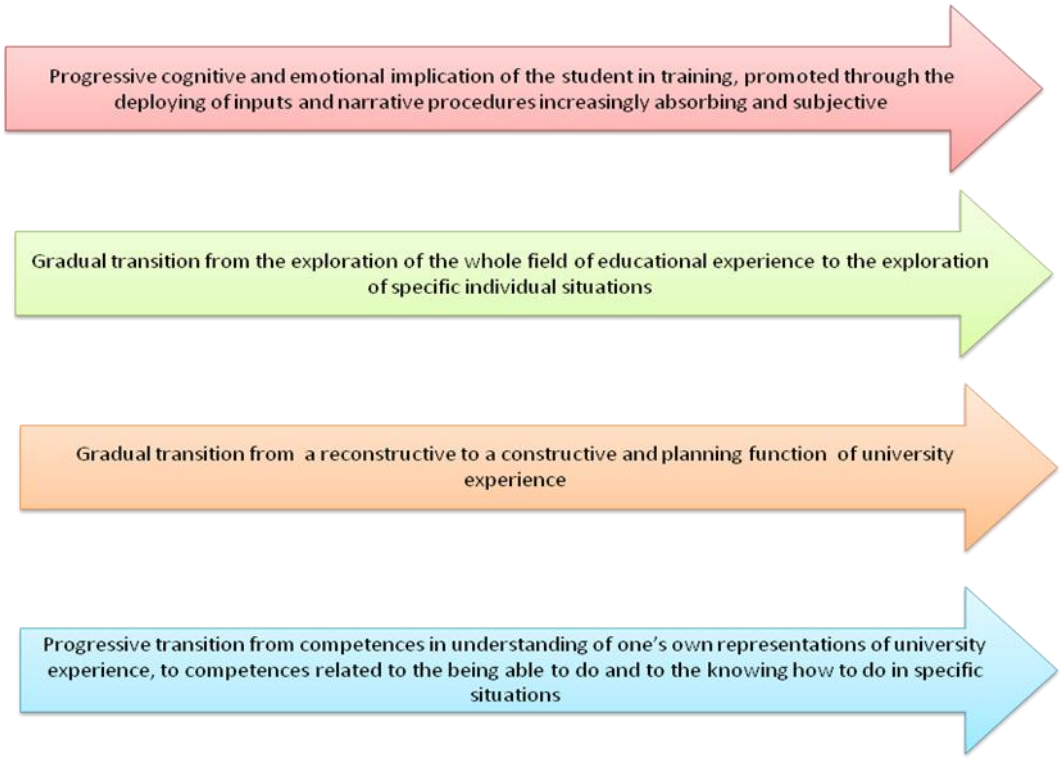
a) Fostering a progressive cognitive and emotional implication of the student in training, which is made possible through the use of inputs and narrative procedures increasingly absorbing and subjective;

b) Promoting the transition on the part of the student from a global exploration of his/her university experience to the analysis of specific educational situations in which s/he was protagonist;

c) Supporting the student in the reflection on such educational situations up to the recognition of the active role taken and to the acquisition of a higher sense of responsibility for the subjective construction of the meaning of his/her own educational experience.

In brief, the modules promote the development of the following dimensions (Fig n. 1):

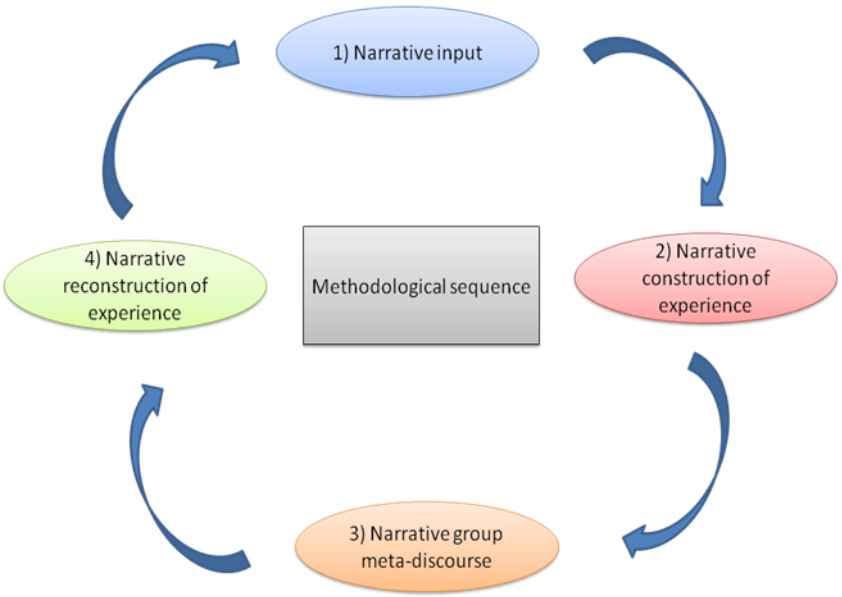
Figure n. 1



During each training meeting (and independently of the specific module) the same methodological sequence is used. This sequence can be summarized as follows (Fig. n. 2):

1) presentation of a narrative input;
2) narrative construction of the experience by means of different communicative codes (metaphorical, iconographic, writing, and bodily);
3) group narrative meta-discourse on the proposed narration;
4) narrative reconstruction of the experience.

Figure n.2



The Modules

1. Metaphorical Module (two meetings, two hours per meeting):

The metaphoric level is instrumental in fostering, in participants, a knowledge of their own representations of the Self in training/education and is more suitable in that it is a minimally invasive procedure.

The objectives of this module consist in: gaining a synchronous and concise representation of the university experience from each participant; fostering knowledge and awareness of representations of the educational university experience in each participant.

The used tools consist in a metaphorical kit composed of proverbs and mottoes found in the local culture of the Partner Country. The proverbs suggest a transposition in general terms of the educational experience, while mottoes can be taken as the specific slogans for one's own university experience. By taking into consideration the proposed proverbs and mottos, each student is asked to choose which of them expresses better his/her own university experience. If the student thinks that no proverb or motto proposed to him/her represents his/her university experience, he/she is asked to write another one.

The proverbs to be used during the first meeting focus on the typology of student to which participants feel to belong and on the reasons of their underachieving condition: incompetence and inability to cope with the university route (e.g. "as you make your bed, so you must lie in it"), lack of a good method to study, listlessness (e.g. "slow and steady wins the race"), preference for extra-university activities, difficulties with peers or the tendency to envy them (e.g. "the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence"), passivity.

The mottos to be used during the second meeting focus on the field of "doing" and on the strategies adopted to face the condition of underachiever: confidence in one's own resources (e.g. "yes, we can!"), committing oneself to fate or trusting oneself to luck, playing it clever in order to get a change (e.g. "fortune favors the brave"), becoming aware of difficulties related to the university context the student chose (e.g. "easier said than done"), waiting for a change not caused by oneself.

2. Iconographic Module (one meeting, two hours long):

The Iconographic Module use the vignettes, a projective tool, which introduce a more diachronic level by inviting students to imagine themselves in typical situations of the university life. Indeed, the vignettes propose to the participants short stories on hypothetical situations in which the student is invited to identify him/herself through a communicative modality which is still, however, perceived as little invasive and threatening.

The objectives of this module consist in: analysing the educational experience at the diachronic level; promoting reflection about one's own being-in-action within situations representing the university career.

Specifically, a kit of vignettes is delivered to each participant. It is made up of six vignettes depicting significant moments of one's own university experience, such as the enrolment on and the attendance of university courses, the personal study at home, the university exams (written and oral), a time of waiting for a lesson in a hall shared with other students. Participants are asked to choose one of the protagonists of

each vignette, draw a blank bubble, put themselves in the protagonist's shoes, and write in the bubble what the protagonist is thinking or saying in that situation.

Through the vignettes participants are situated in a context and encourage subjects to ask themselves questions about the "doing", that is, about the actions carried out by the protagonist in the different proposed situations.

3. Narrative Module through writing (two meetings, two hours per meeting):

This module, through the request of telling a story about one's own university experience, fosters a wider involvement of the student in the subjective construction of the meaning of the educational experience.

In particular, the objectives of this module consist in: analysing connections between the realized actions and the competences used to realize them in order to build and make explicit new meanings of experience; fostering awareness of how people know and how they know how to act in order to achieve more effective performances; supporting participants' strategic action, instrumental in their university success.

What is proposed in this module is the written narrative, focused on connections between different types of experience and the relevant competences. Among the possible narrative inputs that can be administered there are: the account of a *low point*, that is, a critical event occurred in one's own university experience; the account of *a high point*, that is, a positive event of one's own university experience; and the account of a *decisional turning point* of one's own university experience. The first meeting of this module will be based on the first two topics, the second meeting will be based on the third topic (decisional turning point).

Such narrative tasks promote the activation of reflexive and meta-reflexive processes in the group of the trained students; indeed, students, by resorting to a form of counter-factual thinking, are involved in the analysis of the possible connections between the competences they have, the in-competences and the actions (either realized or realizable) within the university context. Participants are invited to explore and to re-think their own competences and in-competences in order to analyse and identify a possible turning point, starting from which it is possible to begin to set strategic objectives, instrumental in achieving one's own developmental goals.

4. *Bodily Module (one meeting, two hours long):*

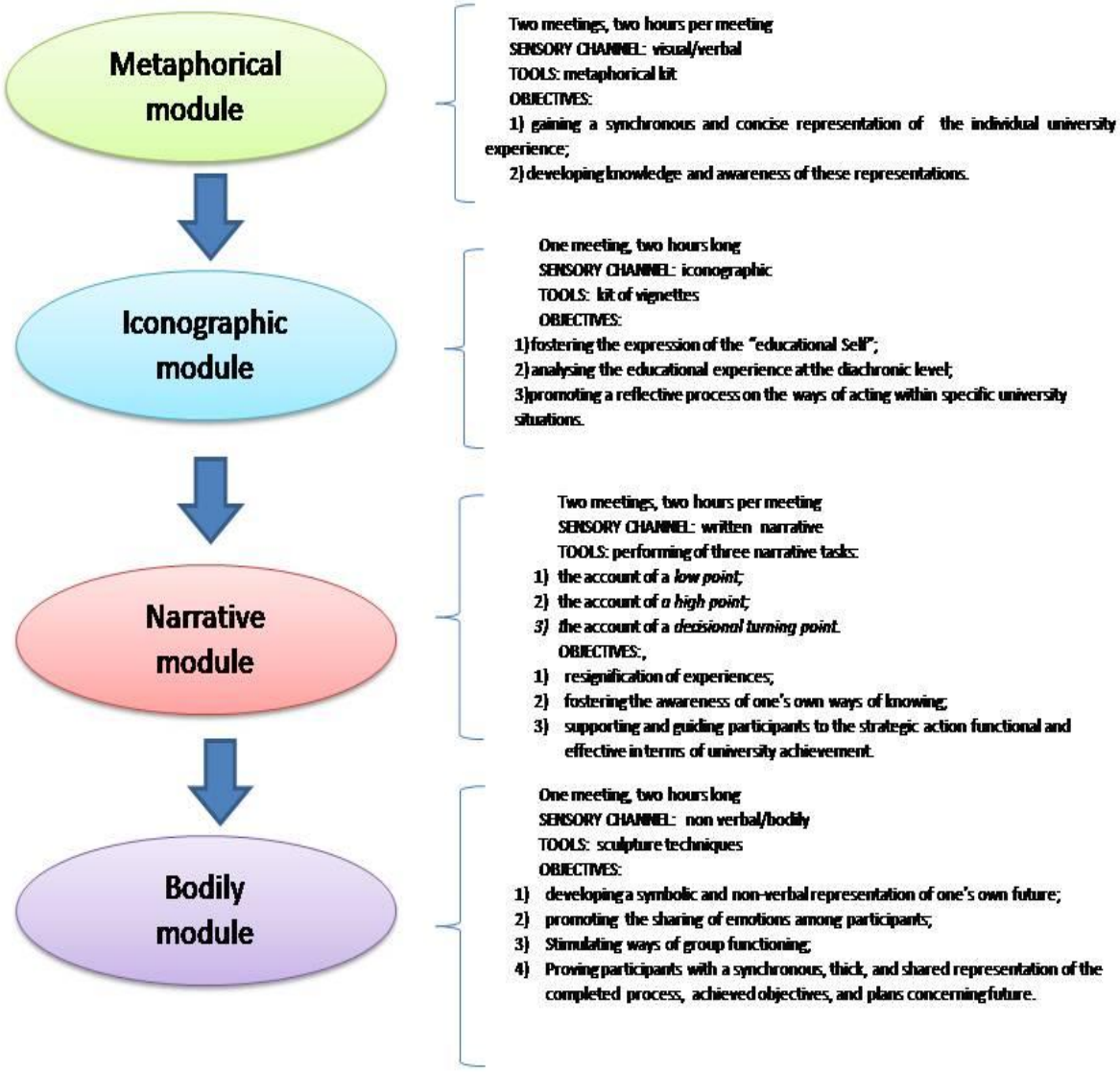
The module proposes, now, the technique of sculpture, which re-proposes, in the final phase of the training, a synchronic and 'thick' level of analysis of one's own being-in-training/education; and, though, the student accesses to this level with a different awareness by virtue of the levels of diachronic analysis of experience activated in the previous modules. Furthermore, in order to do that, sculpture mobilizes the body, which is associated with the dimension of action and of the behaviour as an outcome of a reflexive process activated previously. The student can now pass from a level of representation of one's own being-in-education to the possibility of thinking of him/herself as operating strategically, of looking at him/herself as a subject able to act in a way functional and responsive to the context.

The sculpture allows us to reach the following objectives: conveying a symbolic and non-verbal representation concerning the future of the students' group and encouraging a synchronous, condensed, and shared representation of the end of the process, of the achieved objectives, and of the future goals to be achieved after the training.

The group is asked "to sculpt the future of the group, by shaping it as it will be at the end of the educational path...". This way it is the whole group that decides what and how to sculpt, and uses participants' bodies to sculpt their own future in the university context.

Here below a schematic summary of the sequence of the modules, of objectives, of procedures and of the used inputs

Figure n. 3



1. **Metaphorical model – Proverbs and mottos**

   During the first meeting, after introducing the project and its objectives, the students are asked to choose a proverb from among those contained in the form presented below. In the event that the student thinks that none of the reported proverbs represents his/her university experience, he/she is offered the chance to write another proverb.

   The group discussion focuses on the reasons behind the choice of each student, starting from a volunteer. The trainer feeds back to the members of the group the most mentioned representations of what it means to be a student, as this as emerged from the form; and shows how the form can be useful in promoting a change in the condition of underachievement .

   The students are given about 10 minutes to choose. The rest of the available time is used to elaborate the findings and feed them back to the group.

   The following section presents the form containing the six proverbs:

   a) Form of proverbs – Metaphorical Module (1st meeting)

Below some proverbs are presented that are part of our cultural tradition. We ask you to mark with a cross the proverb that you think best represents your university experience

 Bacco, tabacco e Venere riducono l'uomo in cenere
Dionysus, tobacco and Venus reduce a man to ashes.

 La gatta per andar di fretta fece i gattini ciechi
The female cat, to give birth quickly, made the kittens blind
In English "more haste, less speed".

 Chi lava la testa all'asino perde il tempo l'acqua e il sapone
The who washes the head of a donkey wastes time, water and soap

 Chi dorme non piglia pesci
The who sleeps doesn't catch any fish.
In English, "the early bird catches the worm"

 L'erba del vicino è sempre più verde
The neighbour's grass is always greener
In English, "the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence"

 Chi è causa del suo mal pianga se stesso
The who is the cause of his pain cries for himself.
In English, "as you make your bed, so you must lie in it"

 Nella terra dei ciechi, beato chi ha un occhio
In the land of the blind, lucky is the man who has one eye.
In English, "in the land of the blind, the one eyed man is king)

 L'arte è lunga e la vita è breve
Art is long and life is short

Meglio tardi che mai
Better late than never

□ Si salvi chi può
Let him safe himself who can
In English, “every man for himself”

□ Ognuno per sè e Dio per tutti
Every man for himself and God for us all

□ Se al primo tentativo non riesci, prova, prova, prova ancora
If at first you don't succeed, try, try, try again

□ Chi ha tempo non aspetti tempo
The who has time doesn’t wait for the time
In English “no time like the present”

□ Chi va piano va sano e va lontano
The who goes slowly goes safely and far
In English, “slow and steady wins the race”

□ Sbagliando s'impara
We learn by our mistakes

If you think that none of these proverbs represents your university experience, try to write another one:

_____
_____

The second meeting starts with a summary of the findings from the activity with proverbs. The form containing some mottos is given to the students and they are asked to choose one that best represents their university situation. In the event that the student thinks that none of the reported mottos represents his/her university experience, he/she is offered the chance to write another one. Again trainers allow 10 minutes for the choice and the remaining time is dedicated to the development and feeding back of the findings, as well as the connection between his/her representation of "being a student," the finding from the first meeting, and his/her representation of “doing”, the findings more specifically from the second meeting.
The following section presents the form containing the five mottos:

b) Form of mottos – Metaphorical Module (2nd meeting)

Below some mottos are presented that are part of our cultural tradition. We ask you to mark with a cross the mottos that you think best represents your university experience

□ La fortuna aiuta gli audaci

Fortune favours the brave

□ Tra il dire e il fare c’è di mezzo il mare

Between talk and action there is a sea in the middle

In English, “easier said than done”

□ Yes we can

□ Uno su mille ce la fa

One in the thousand can do it

□ Dio vede e provvede

God sees and provides

□ Mission Impossible

□ I will survive!

□ After all, tomorrow is another day!

If you think that none of these mottos represents your university experience, try to write another one:

_____

_____

2. Iconographic Module – Vignettes

During the third meeting, a kit of six vignettes is delivered to each participant. These vignettes depict significant moments in the student’s university experience, such as the enrolment on and the attendance at university courses, personal study at home, university exams (both oral and written), a time of waiting for a lesson in a hall shared with other students. Each vignette also depicts several students engaged in different activities in the same situation reported in the vignette. Participants are asked to choose one of the protagonists of each vignette, draw a bubble, put themselves in the protagonist’s shoes, and write in the bubble what the protagonist is thinking or saying in that situation. The vignettes will be delivered to female and male students, respectively in the female or male version. This is in order to facilitate the identification and projective mechanisms.

The students are given about half an hour to complete the vignettes. The remaining time is used as in the previous module.

Below the 6 vignettes are presented, some in the female version, some in the male version:

c) Vignettes - Iconographic Module (3rd meeting)

3. Writing Module – Narration of a Low Point, a High Point, and a Decisional Turning Point

During the fourth meeting, the students are asked to narrate a low point, that is a critical negative event occurring in their own university experience, and a high point, that is a critical positive event in their own university experience. The students are given about half an hour to write about the two types of experiences.

The group discussion focuses in particular on the use of counter-factual thinking, with the aim of involving the student in an analysis of the possible connections between the competences and incompetences they have, and the actions (either realized or realizable) within the university

context.
We present below the two narrative topics:

d) Topics concerning a Low Point and a High Point (4th meeting)

Many students talk about critical moments or episodes in their university life in which they have experienced negative emotions. Please choose a critical negative episode in your university life and say what happened, when, who was involved, what you felt and thought in that situation, why you consider this to be a critical event, and what this event says about you and about your being a university student…

Many students talk about critical positive moments or episodes in their university life in which they have experienced positive emotions. Please choose a critical positive episode in your university life and say what happened, when, who was involved, what you felt and thought in that situation, why you consider this to be as a positive event, and what this event says about you and about your being a university student…

During the fifth meeting the students are asked to narrate a decisional turning point in their university experience that changed the course of their university experience.

The group is given about 20 minutes for the narration. The subsequent discussion focuses on re-thinking their own competences and incompetences, in order to begin to set strategic objectives, instrumental in order to achieve their one's own developmental goals.

Below is the narrative topic:

e) Narrative topic concerning the Decisional Turning Point (5th meeting)

Looking back at the university life of all students, it is possible to identify some turning points, episodes in which a student must make important choices and decisions. We invite you to identify a particular episode in your university experience in which you had to make a decision that resulted in a significant change in your way of thinking of yourself as a student. Please say what happened, when, who was involved, what you felt and thought in that situation, why you consider this a decisional turning point and what this episode says about you and about your being a university student...

4. Bodily Module – Sculpture

During the sixth and last meeting, the group is asked to sculpt the future of the group, by shaping it as it will be at the end of the educational path. This way it is the whole group that decides what and how to sculpt, and uses the participants' bodies "to sculpt" their own future in the university context.

The group is given 20 minutes to decide what to sculpt and about 10 to describe the sculpture. The group must decide how to place the bodies of the students, considering also the facial expressions. Finally, the group is asked to remain still for a few seconds, after finishing the sculpture, so that the sculpture can be photographed.

The subsequent group discussion focuses on the representation of the "sculpted" academic future, on how the training has impacted on how the group perceives itself projected into its university future, on the functionality / dysfunctionality of these expectations and the behavioral strategies to be implemented to make the university path productive.

+ vignette

+discussion sulla narrazione multidimensionalecollegata a diverse competenze