

Paper presented at the All Ireland Society for Higher Education Conference (2012)  
Dublin, Ireland.

## **Promoting Reflecting Thinking Skills in Underachieving Undergraduate Students Using a Narrative Mediation Path**

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### **Abstract**

Twenty-first century university students are expected to be flexible, self-regulated, intentional learners with the ability to pursue and persist in learning. To succeed in university and future careers, students must be ready to respond quickly to ever-changing intellectual environments. Learning to learn has been identified at the European Union level as a key competence necessary for success in the knowledge society (EU 2006). NUI Maynooth, in conjunction with its European partners, INSTALL<sup>1</sup>, is responding to this challenge by developing innovative solutions to address students' constraints to acquiring skills relating to the learning to learn key competence. An exploratory group narrative technique known as the Narrative Mediation Path (NMP) has been developed to examine student behaviour during semesters when they have experienced difficulties with academic work.

As part of our ongoing research at NUI Maynooth which aims to pinpoint more precisely some of the difficulties encountered by undergraduate students during their first year of study, face-to-face interviews have been conducted with 200 students from this population. Some of the common themes to emerge from an analysis of the content of these interviews are discussed in the current paper. Notable was the proportion of students expressing concerns relating to coping with the academic demands of university courses. From this sample of 200 students, 20 participants will take part in the subsequent phases of the INSTALL project during which the NMP will be utilised. This narrative learning procedure will be tested in the INSTALL partner countries over the next two years. One of the primary objectives of these later phases is to examine the effectiveness of the NMP in promoting reflective skills.

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<sup>1</sup> INSTALL, *Innovative Solutions to Acquire Learning to Learn*, is a European funded project (Erasmus Multilateral Projects, n° 517750-LLP-1-IT-ERASMUS-ESIN). Partners involved are: University of Naples, Italy, National School of Political and Public Administrative Studies (NSPSA), Romania; University of Aarhus, Denmark; NUI Maynooth, Ireland and University of Seville, Spain. Please note that this project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This paper reflects the views only of the authors and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Paper presented at The European Higher Education Society 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Forum (2012), Stavanger, Norway.

**Exploring spaces for learning: Using narrative mediation path to improve the academic performance of underachieving university students**

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Learning to learn has been identified as a key educational competence. Over the next two years, as part of the INSTALL project, NUI Maynooth is testing the effectiveness of an exploratory group technique, the Narrative Mediation Path (NMP), which has been developed to promote reflective thinking skills. To date, interviews have been conducted with 200 first year students. Common themes emerging from these interviews regarding student engagement are discussed. Notable was the number of concerns relating to coping with academic demands. From these 200 students, 20 students will participate in the subsequent phases of the INSTALL project utilising the NMP.