

**NARRATIVE LEARNING FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS: A MODEL FOR INTERVENTION IN HE**

**Maria Francesca Freda, University Federico II of Naples, Italy**

**Giovanna Esposito, University Federico II of Naples, Italy**

**Maria Luisa Martino, University Federico II of Naples, Italy**

**José González Monteagudo, University of Seville, Spain**

Autobiographical narratives have implications for both research and training. As a research instrument, written narratives offer first-hand biographical materials about recent history, society, culture, the family and education. These materials make it possible to approach historical and socio-cultural questions from the subjective and experiential perspective of the subjects. As a training instrument, autobiographical narratives favor the production and appropriation of knowledge, make the learning of basic techniques of qualitative research easier, allow the applying of disciplinary knowledge in social and close personal contexts, and have a great motivating strength. Due to all this, life stories are useful for the creation of motivating learning contexts, centered on the lives of students and favoring an integrating education of cognitive, emotional and social dimensions. These methods have much to contribute to teaching in matters of social sciences such as cultural anthropology, cultural studies, sociology, pedagogy, psychology, social work and communication, and beyond these disciplines.

In this paper we will focus on narrative learning (Goodson et al., 2010; Biesta et al., 2011; Dominicé, 2000), presenting and discussing a model for intervention with disadvantaged students in HE. This model of narrative learning will be tested and validated in the 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. The aim of INSTALL is the acquisition of key competence of Learning to Learn at university, by developing and implementing a group training process that proposes an innovative methodology, the *Narrative Mediation Path* (NMP), targeted to disadvantaged students. NMP is based on the psychological concept of Mentalization, also known as reflexive competence (Fonagy & Target, 1997; Allen & Fonagy, 2008). Mentalization, at a university level, allows students to becoming aware of their and others' mental state (thoughts, beliefs, emotions, wishes, motivations), to recognize, elaborate and modulate emotions throughout the learning process, to strategically use cognitive operations and to communicate with and relate to others effectively. Scientific evidence (Hermans, 2001) demonstrates the key role of narration as instrumental for the reflecting process of mentalization. So INSTALL defines a methodology based on narration to sustain the development of reflexive/mentalization competence of individuals' learning experience. 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. 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.

NMP combines into one methodology four discursive modules, Metaphoric, Iconographic, Writing and Bodily. These modules 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. These four modules are implemented in a cycle of eight meetings conducted by Narrative Group Trainers and consist in the submission of a set of narrative inputs. Specifically, Metaphoric module proposes metaphors and proverbs, Iconographic module a series of vignettes, Writing module texts and narration, Bodily module images of sculptures to be interpreted by the students.