

INSTALL METHODOLOGY

The educational methodology, which were designed and named *Narration Mediation Paths (NMPs)*, makes use of a group narrative device aiming at promoting and/or strengthening the key competence of learning to learn in disadvantaged students' groups. In the university context, such a competence consists in the ability to think on the emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions embedded in the learning process. It is thought possible, that through an educational process that, by means of narrative devices, promotes the development and/or increase of the reflective key-competence of the mentalization in students. Mentalization, at a university level, allows students to become 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; Freda, 2008a; 2008b; 2011) demonstrates the key role of narration as instrumental in the reflecting process of mentalization. Mentalization presents itself as a narration – whether oral or written – insofar as the subject is constantly engaged in creating stories concerning his/her own and others' mental states (Allen, Fonagy, 2006). Narration acts as an activator and a promoter of the 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/her 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, 2008a; 2008b; 2011).

NMPs

The NMPs consist of an educational path carried out in little groups of students (at least 20 university students). The NMPs are organized in 8 meetings, articulated in 4 modules (metaphorical, iconographic, writing, and bodily) which are characterized by different narrative tools, relating to different discourse modules.

The sequence of the 4 modules aims also at encouraging an increase in cognitive and emotive involvement. Such an involvement is made possible by using narrative 'stimuli' and procedures which become step by step increasingly absorbing and subjective.

Furthermore, such a progression permits passing gradually from the exploration of the entire field of the educational experience to the exploration of specific and individual situations; from a 'reconstructing function' to a 'constructive and planning function' of the educational experience; from a competence in understanding one's own representations of the university experience to the competence in coping (and in knowing how to cope) with specific situations.

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

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

What follows is the general schema of each module, articulated according to objectives, tools, and procedures of each training meeting:

Metaphorical Module – (1st and 2nd meeting; two hours per meeting):

The objectives of this module consist of: 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 of a metaphorical kit composed of some proverbs and mottoes found in the local culture of the Partner Country. Each student is asked to choose the proverbs and mottoes which best represent his/her university experience. Proverbs and mottoes represent different fields of the educational experience: failure and powerlessness, exclusion and feeling of inferiority, difficulty in managing time and commitments or in learning the contents of the disciplines in an adequate way, possibility of a change, confidence in the future and in one's own resources.

Iconographic Module - (3rd and 4th meeting; two hours per meeting)

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

A Kit is delivered to each participant made up of five vignettes depicting significant moments of his/her own university experience. Participants are asked to 'wear vignette protagonist's shoes', and to complete sentences expressing what the protagonist is telling or thinking on the speech/though balloons in the image. Through the vignette participants are situated in a context, insofar as the vignettes reproduce significant moments of participants' university experience, 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. The vignettes depict typical and significant situations in the university experience, such as initial enrolment on their course and the attendance of university lectures and classes, individual study at home, university exams, the balance between studying and working, and the organization of life-times.

Narrative Module mediated by writing - (5th, 6th, and 7th meeting; two hours per meeting)

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

In particular, what is proposed in this module is the written narrative, focused on connections between different types of experience and relevant competences. Participants are asked to describe a *low point*, that is, a critical event which has occurred in one's own university experience, a *high point*, that is, a positive event of one's own university experience; and a *decisional turning point* of one's own university experience.

Bodily Module (8th meeting; two hours)

This module uses a sculpture technique in order to convey a symbolic and non-verbal representation concerning the future of the students' group, and to encourage 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 what they imagine 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.