

Abstracts

Supporting the Development of Youth Development Workers through Action-Based, Critically Reflective Learning

by Victoria J. Marsick and Jacqueline Davis-Manigaulte

This paper explores the dilemmas of organic vs. structured communities of practice as interventions designed to develop youth workers. Research on a New York-based network by Davis-Manigaulte (2008) provides a rich example of how structured communities successfully empower and build capacity for individuals and agencies engaged in youth work. Theory is described that the author believes drives empowering outcomes that grows out of work-based learning and public, collective, critical reflection on, in, and through action. Socio-cultural theory and pragmatic learning theory are contrasted with respect to this kind of intervention. Action Learning Conversations (ALCs), created by the author and colleagues in their own work, are described as a potential enabling structure to support the transformative development of youth workers. The paper concludes with a recapitulation of the learning dynamics that are thought to enable action-based, collective, critically reflective learning, and a caveat about their use in ways that may undermine authenticity.

Trajectories of Professional Culture Transformation. Fostering Learning Stories through Reflective Conversations

by Loretta Fabbri

The research here presented reports on the first phase of the project “Orizzonti giovani: un patto educativo” [Young Horizons: An Educational Pact], which has been carried out by the “Orientation, Training and Work” Centre of the Faculty of Literature and Philosophy of Arezzo in partnership with

the Department for Youth Policies of the City of Arezzo, Cesvot of Arezzo, and the Association "I care" of Arezzo. In particular, it was examined the research-training route by which endeavours have been made to support the processes of validation and development of educational practices in use within a community of professional educators. The educational setting has been designed in such a way as to foster the exchange and sharing of perspectives, knowledge and work practices. The goal has been to permit the practitioners to recognize problems, to define the subjects of their work, and to find possible ways of transforming practice by following a reflective methodological approach. By drawing upon this experience, the paper focuses on the identification of several conditions which can foster the construction of educational routes to develop reflective professionalism and to cultivate critical-reflective communities.

Involving EU Agricultural Workers in a non Formal Professional Development Process through Critical Reflection. A Case Study

by Maura Striano

The case study here described has been developed within the framework of the Leonardo da Vinci project "Tas for Agriform", specifically targeted to agricultural farmers over fifty, who need to become entrepreneurs, considered as a particularly difficult target of adult learners for their age, culture and personal and professional experience.

This article documents the process of construction, development, implementation and evaluation of a non formal educational and training methodology based on the use of narratives and images of professional practice and on the promotion of transformative learning processes within a community of adult learners.

Capacity Building in Practicum as Educational Reflective Practice: an Example of Social Work Education in China

by Benjamin H. B. Ku

This paper contains our reflections on the experience of using capacity building model to train Chinese social work students in practicums. The capacity building approach subscribes to critical pedagogy which challenges the traditional top-down model of education. It helps to transform students from passive learner to reflective subjects with critical curiosity about society, power, inequality, and social change. By employing the approach of dialogical education, we encouraged students reflect and demystify the

“expert-client” power relationship in social work profession and finally re-discover the practice model in the context of Chinese society.

Enabling the Low Skilled to Take their Qualifications one Step up

by Paolo Federighi and Francesca Torlone

The object of the present essay is the identification of good practices that show how to reach adults who are under-qualified, and to motivate and support them, especially if they have not attained the European Qualification Framework (EQF) level 2. This is in accordance with the Action Plan on Adult Learning (European Commission, 2007). The target group is composed of adults who are under-qualified, or with no or insufficient qualification, or whose professional skills are obsolete and who need to acquire key competences at all stages in their lives. The European study intended to achieve these results by investigating existing good practices: (i) supporting improvement of basic skill levels of adults and (ii) raising the qualification levels of those who do not have the EQF level 2. To this end, the article provides a short analysis of sixty-four Good Practices from thirty-three European countries. Fourteen of them have also been analyzed through the Case Study method. The good practices and case studies focus on concrete operational strategies then are implemented by different public and private actors. The complex institutional, regulatory and systemic framework available in the European countries has not been investigated as the present Report is focused on concrete practices. A “practice” can be deemed “good” in consideration of the results achieved in a specific context. This is the criterion followed by the research team in the selection of good practices adopted in thirty-three European countries. The examples were delivered by national correspondents who had responsibility for an intimate knowledge of the good practices and of how they have been adopted and developed in their national/local territory or sector.

What will your story be? The Transformative Power of Expressive Writing

by Denise VanBriggle

This literature review explores research focusing on the potential for expressive writing to heal and transform adults. Our stories have the capacity to name and bring closure to painful and unpleasant events. Stories allow us to explore the pieces of our lives—from the mundane to the trauma-

tic—and weave them into a comprehensive whole. In this review the term “heal” is used in psychological and somatic terms. Does nailing our pain to the page renew our sense of self? Do our bodies seem lighter because writing lifts our burdens? An analysis of the studies about writing and healing results in a synthesis of three interrelated themes that underscore expressive writing’s function as a healing process: revealing our secrets, naming our pain, and the associated physical and mental health benefits. The connection between story making and truth telling as tools for self-discovery and as catalysts for perspective transformation begs further study.

Narratives on Significant Events in Professional and Organizational Environments: Reflective Practices and Transformative Learning.

by Francesco Consoli

Pointing out Critical Events is a method that crossed several philosophical and methodological seasons. First used within a behavioural approach, it was later employed in a very different methodological environments and practical perspectives: organizational learning, phenomenology, reflective practice, constructivism, transformational learning, etc. Pointing out Critical Events is especially useful to focus on hidden aspects of daily practice, practitioners’ competencies, values and implicit theories. In this article the Author highlights differences and similarities among a number of approaches used in the Critical Events method. In the second part of the article some evidence based on practical experiences, and especially on two European Leonardo Projects (Reflect and Reflect-OR), will be discussed. Particular care is given to an appreciative use of Critical Events, especially in a nursing and midwifery professional environment.

The Essential Quality of Reflection

by Luigina Mortari

The study takes into consideration how phenomenology in the Husserlian version conceptualizes reflection. The reflective act is a metacognitive act because it is a kind of thinking which thinks thoughts; promoting a reflection so conceived is an undertaking which has implications on the whole experiential domain of the subject, since it implies interrupting the adhesion to the usual occurring of things in order to focus on a look inwards the life of mind. Phenomenology does not confine itself to indicating the essence of

the reflective act but makes explicit by which cognitive procedure it can be actualized. The study, then, examines the educational implications of the reflective discipline and the resulting cultural gains, first and foremost the development of experiential knowledge, that is, that kind of living knowledge that takes shape when thinking accompanies action, by questioning experience while it is happening.