Newsletter: Issue 1

A.L.I.C.E. in Venice: our trip’s starting point!

CIRDFA’s perspective

Summary of contents

In this Newsletter our aim has been to introduce CIRDFA’s perspective on the A.L.I.C.E. project. It coincides not only with the coordination of the project but also with our Centre’s specific nature as a space for educational research and pedagogical innovation. The authors present a theoretical discussion as a background for the whole intervention (Margiotta), the project strategy and approach to training the “trainer workforce” that will implement the activities with adults (Raffaghelli), the experimentation with creative languages from the point of view of intergenerational learning and the adoption of digital tools in support of autobiographical narratives (Baschiera) and parental education (Zambianchi).

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In questa newsletter la nostra attenzione è stata rivolta a introdurre la prospettiva del CIRDFA all’interno del progetto ALICE. Essa coincide con il coordinamento del progetto, ma anche con la particolare… natura del Centro come spazio per la ricerca e l’innovazione educative. Gli autori introducono per tanto la discussione teorica che a cornice all’intero intervento (Margiotta); la strategia progettuale e l’approccio formative che prepara i formatori come forza lavoro intelligente nell’implementare le attività di apprendimento con gli adulti (Raffaghelli); la sperimentazione con linguaggi creative dal punto di vista dell’apprendimento intergenerational e l’adozione di tools digitali per promuovere narrative autobiografiche (Baschiera) e formazione a support della genitorialità (Zambianchi).
Adults Learning for Intergenerational Creative Experiences: building the Lifelong Learning Society

Umberto Margiotta

When the A.L.I.C.E. project was merely dreamed of as a distant possibility, the research group I coordinate and several other voices from among our partners involved in the Comenius Project P.IN:O.K.I.O (www.pinokioproject.eu) were convinced that bringing innovation to school and through formal learning processes was not enough to promote a Lifelong Learning Strategy. I would go further: it is not enough to endow individuals with the basic competences (in Europe we would also say “key competences”) they need to live in a society where citizenship, inclusion, and work depend on the ability to “learn to learn” and to build one’s own opportunities at every stage of one’s life. I call this learnfare. ... READ THE FULL ARTICLE

A European strategy to implement adults’ informal learning activities for intergenerational creative experiences

Juliana Raffaghelli

In our complex contemporary European society, social cohesion needs to be built on the basis of a new, integrated and complex aspect of our social fabric, where diversity (between cultures, age and gender) is considered an opportunity. Intergenerational learning (IL) brings the question of “differences” that enrich to the fore: in fact, IL can be a twofold process, which improves dialogue between generations through civic participation in common social and institutional spaces, while at the same time initiating processes of informal learning towards the achievement — both by adults and children — of key competences for lifelong learning. IL is thus a means and an end to fostering social cohesion. But what about trainers responsible for implementing intergenerational learning?... READ THE FULL ARTICLE

Intergenerational Learning, a background for practice

Barbara Baschiera

This brief article aims to introduce the early stages of development of CIRDFA’s experimental activities within the context of the “A.L.I.C.E.” (Adults Learning for Intergenerational Creative Experiences) Grundtvig LLP project, which belongs to the field of Educational Sciences, and speculates on the effects of intergenerational experiences on adolescents and older adults, using blogs as an environment for socialisation and co-construction of knowledge between different generations. Taking into consideration the “state of the art” of research into intergenerational practices, policies, programmes and initiatives in Europe and worldwide, this experiment in intergenerational relationships will be accomplished by adopting narration and autobiography as a hermeneutical, epistemic and relational approach ... READ THE FULL ARTICLE
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Elena Zambianchi

La possibilità di affrontare le sfide del XXI secolo attraverso i dispositivi offerti da un’educazione di qualità è certamente favorita dalla disponibilità ad accogliere le continue evidenze da tempo fornite dalle scienze pedagogiche, sociali, psicologiche e in particolare dalle neuroscienze che testimoniano, con dati innegabili, quanto la qualità della primissima infanzia (0-3) influenzino significativamente la condizione dell’esistenza umana in tutte le sue dimensioni e di conseguenza anche le sue capacità nell’affrontare le condizioni del vivere quotidiano e nella possibilità di esprimersi ed estrinsecarsi al meglio. In accordo con Margiotta (2011a), un’educazione di qualità è quella che sa utilizzare approcci e strategie flessibili per rispondere ai bisogni dei propri destinatari – bisogni che la persona umana manifesta fin dalla sua nascita e lungo il corso della vita – e che dunque rappresentano esigenze innate ed indispensabili alla crescita e costantemente presenti…LEGGI TUTTO L’ARTICOLO
Adults Learning for Intergenerational Creative Experiences: building the Lifelong Learning Society

Umberto Margiotta

When the A.L.I.C.E. project was merely dreamed of as a possibility, the research group I coordinate and several other voices from among our partners involved in the European project P.I.N.O.K.I.O (www.pinokioproject.eu) were convinced that bringing innovation at school and through formal learning processes is not enough to promote a Lifelong Learning strategy. I would go further: it is not enough to endow individuals with the basic competences (in Europe we would also say “key competences”) they need to live in a society where citizenship, inclusion, and work depend on the ability to “learn to learn” and to build one’s own opportunities at every stage of one’s life. I call this learnfare.

Indeed, one issue of democracy is its relationship to welfare politics. One may legitimately wonder whether representative democratic systems can still grow in parallel with citizenship and inclusion policies. What happens nowadays to processes of human skills-building – the *proprium* of education and training – when the policies themselves are being dismantled, are in crisis, or are even breaking down?

The traditional design or conception of welfare has been based upon a linear sequence of life stages: birth, training, work, marriage, home, family, children, retirement, death. As a matter of fact, each stage mentioned has become more fragile, and the sequence has become more contingent upon socioeconomic conditions, and perhaps more fragile or transient in the lives of members of society. The relationships between the composition of society, the perception of needs, the genesis of requests for social support and the consequent systems of protection have changed greatly. Most people claim that it is easier to agree upon the contents of social and economic reforms than upon the rules for social reforms. It is therefore easier to reform many aspects of welfare than its contributions. Is it really so?

To place the right/need to learn during one’s lifespan at the centre of active welfare has profound implications. The same norm justifies the emergence of both social norms and, in everyday language, new categories of recognition and certification.

With all its ambiguities, the issue of the individual’s right to learn is shifting active welfare away from a “workfare” and towards a “learnfare” perspective. While the former does not deal with the contradiction of the growing temporariness of work, the latter ensures effective access on the individual’s part to learning opportunities, which are consistent with either the needs of the economy or his/her personal life projects. As a matter of fact, learnfare is not currently available even in those countries where there is major legislation on the matter. To take learnfare as a framework for social politics means interpreting the space opened by the Lisbon strategy and more recently by the EU2020 strategy not in a submissive manner but with an orientation towards its own direction of development. Here the point is – as Amartya Sen underlines – to go beyond the human capital definition, after having recognised its relevance. A so-called “welfare of capabilities” should therefore be established, and should be considered more than just a welfare of competencies, being connected with the collective and individual opportunities to act on one’s own right to learn.
This new perspective makes a profound change in methods and research styles within the sciences of education and training urgent. Furthermore, it increases the need to use new paradigms in order to study those problems with which every individual is faced when asked to constitute their own formative capital throughout life. In other words, the way the mind is shaped from the very beginning, the first experiences of learning, are becoming increasingly important.

There is another question that we need to tackle when thinking about a society of learnfare: creativity. When we talk about creativity we are referring to the ability to deal with change, the capacity that an individual shows in practice when addressing new problems and inventing new strategies to tackle them. But the interesting question, which neurosciences are illustrating convincingly (Margiotta, 2011), is that creativity as “mental habitude” is deeply rooted in action, in early stimulation, and particularly in embodied cognition. Rizzolati's mirror neurons theory has shed light on this: the simulative function of the mirror system allows one individual to understand another’s intentions simply by simulating them at the level of the sensory-motor system. Based on a simulative function, processes of comprehension evolve and interact with experience, i.e., with the possibility to imagine (or to evoke) what is being talked about or acted upon. Cognition is not only the manipulation of symbols, but also living experience evoked, recalled, reshaped by the imagination. Can another, more powerful reason for changing traditional educational practices be imagined?

These frontiers of educational science and neuroscience help us to understand that it is time we put new learning environments, new languages, new situations and new roles to the test.

So this is what A.L.I.C.E. is about: a step towards new pedagogical practices, which encompass a re-examination and reinvention of educational relationships and situations. This project is on the cutting edge. It is located in a zone where andragogy (the pedagogy of adult learning) meets the needs of early stimulation and early learning, where adults with low levels of educational attainment can find the opportunity to re-evaluate their own role as educators, as citizens who are fully engaged (and included) in lifelong learning, but at the same time as supporters of their own children’s perspective of lifelong learning.

I started writing this introductory article thinking about the future of welfare, and the change that the European model intends to promote through its “smart and sustainable” growth model as set out in the EU2020 strategy. This is surely because we also wrote the project (and probably because of this concern of ours, it passed the highly competitive selection procedure).

Now the challenge is to implement, explore, reflect upon and discuss the interesting results that A.L.I.C.E. will surely produce, in order to take concrete steps towards a learnfare society.

Let me proudly introduce the activity of the research group I coordinate within CIRDFA¹, a centre that has been dedicated for over a decade to exploring the frontiers of teaching and learning, in changing educational contexts.

¹ To know more about CIRDFA, see the institution’s web page hosted on the A.L.I.C.E. website: http://www.alice-llp.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=10&Itemid=121

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Adults Learning for Intergenerational Creative Experiences
Newsletter – Issue 1 – March 2012
A European strategy to implement adults’ informal learning activities for intergenerational creative experiences

Juliana Raffaghelli

Introduction

In our complex contemporary European society, social cohesion needs to be built on the basis of a new, integrated and complex aspect of our social fabric, where diversity (between cultures, age and gender) is considered an opportunity. Intergenerational learning (IL) brings the question of “differences” that enrich to the fore: in fact, IL can be a twofold process, which improves dialogue between generations through civic participation in common social and institutional spaces, while at the same time initiating processes of informal learning towards the achievement – both by adults and children – of key competences for lifelong learning. IL is thus a means and an end to fostering social cohesion.

Nevertheless, ensuring IL through the creation of adequate educational environments is a challenge both for researchers and practitioners. On one hand, formal education promotes mainly intra-generational experiences, structured in learning contexts where little or no contact between among generations (beyond the technical role of teachers/educators) occurs (Loewen, 1996; Miller et al. 2008). On the other hand, intergenerational learning also implies setting up adequate learning contexts for adults (Newman, 2008). More research is clearly needed in this field: in spite of the importance given nowadays to the lifelong learning perspective, adults’ informal learning, in the form of more frequent learning situations for adults with low educational attainment, has not been sufficiently explored, described and modelled. Such a research focus should accompany the modernisation of Higher Education, as well as recognition of vocational learning, achieved through working situations; lack of attention to this issue risks ending in low participation levels, from a lifelong learning perspective, of a significant proportion of the adult population, as is emphasised by ET2020 indicators and strategy.

In line with the abovementioned research problem, it clearly emerges that educators of adults need new skills in order to intervene in uncommon situations such as cultural events, school projects, social activities, engaging adults and making them reflect on their learning processes without invading their sense of independence and protagonism in cultivating their own competences. This means providing adults with learning environments that are “free” of overly structured training situations. This is A.L.I.C.E.’s main challenge, as evidenced by its aims and objectives (which can also be found at its website: www.alice-ilp.eu). But it also regards a very specific topic: the role of adults as educators, a crucial form of participation in the learnfare society (Margiotta, 2011).

The starting point: building caring environments and the role of adults as educators

Early childhood education and care (ECEC), as well as later support for children in the education system, should go in parallel with adult education. In fact, adults are not only caregivers, but also educators, whose actions significantly impact the schooling system as well as future life, and the lifelong learning decisions of growing children. These assumptions emerge both from research and European policy priorities for the goals of the EU 2020 strategy. ECEC in Europe has been linked to efficiency and equity in education
(Eurydice, 2009), being a means for achieving socio-cultural inclusion and preventing students from dropping out of education. This is so not only because pre-primary education facilitates later learning, but also because a substantial body of evidence shows that, especially for disadvantaged children, it can produce large socio-economic returns. For this reason, the Commission has identified pre-primary education as a priority theme for cooperation between Member States in 2009-10, in particular to promote generalised equitable access (COM (2008) 865). It should also be pointed out that in most European countries (op. cit.) a conceptual distinction between the functions of care and education is commonly made, emphasising the role of formal education, and showing less concern with other forms of education, which are seen as “private”. As can be seen, adults play an important role as a “bridge” between informal and formal learning in childhood, through early caregiving, as an informal educational function that fosters lifelong learning in children. For example, the EURYDICE 2009 report on “Integrating Immigrant Children into Schools in Europe” points out that communication between schools and parents becomes crucial in supporting the effective engagement of children in school activities; very often the school has to tackle both the problem of integrating children at risk and educating adults to understand their children’s learning/social problem within the school. This vision is consistent with the importance of adult learning policy priorities in Europe (LLP 2011), where approaches to adults’ education which emphasise senior volunteering, senior citizen education and improvement of skills through family learning are a key to the creation of a more inclusive society. Indeed, as has been highlighted by the European Councils of Stockholm (2001) and Barcelona (2002), Europe will experience a demographic challenge in coming decades, and the Commission wishes to turn this key issue into an opportunity (COM (2006) 571). The Green Paper “Confronting demographic change: a new solidarity between the generations” and the Commission’s working document on the ageing of society (SEC (2008) 2911) as well as EU2020 and OMS recommendations, are all aimed at promoting a social model that ties together citizenship education and intergenerational learning, as a commitment that strengthens social and affective relations between senior citizens as volunteers and children. This entails a culture of awareness of rights and needs throughout life. Memory and recent history, and learning about social/technological innovations, are two sides of the same coin of reciprocity and learning to improve quality of life. With 2011 as the European Year of Volunteering and 2012 designated as the European Year for Active Ageing, the context of action is complete.

Why Creative Languages (CL)?

As stated previously, intergenerational learning is an uncommon situation, which requires pedagogical innovation and crossing boundaries of practice (both personal and institutional). The key point is: how can we ensure IL? What environments and languages best promote connections between generations? Creative languages, i.e. moving beyond the languages traditionally adopted in educational settings, might provide one answer.

The role of arts education in forming competences for life among young people in the 21st century has been widely recognised at the European level. (Jan Figel, 2009, European Year of Creativity and Innovation); in adult education, art (from themed film and art to literary evenings, graffiti and “performative” social media such as blogs or video repositories with own texts/images) and games are used as a focal point, as events/situations/objects that promote emotional engagement together with reflection on life values, relationships and identity. The kernel of effectiveness is the creative process, where emotional intelligence together with divergent cognitive processes is enacted. CL is therefore a powerful tool for facilitating dialogue with otherness (in this case, children). The key issue is the opportunity provided by CL of “being together” in non-traditional ways, sharing
creative activity with a feeling of play, exploring, trying, expressing. Furthermore, all these activities are now naturally mediated by technologies; indeed, an exponential development in their accessibility and usability has been seen with the phenomenon of Web 2.0 and particularly of social media, which leads to these new types of media being adopted for everyday life activities of searching for information, self-expression, social connections and support, all these dimensions connected to informal learning and thus to participation in lifelong learning pathways. As a consequence, the Creative Languages to be adopted during the project are mediated by technologies to support new literacies and empower dialogue and expression.

The Focus of the CIRDFA team: the European Training of Trainers’ strategy within the GRUNDTVIG A.L.I.C.E. (“Adults’ Learning for Intergenerational Creative Experiences”) LLP PROJECT

In order to implement the approach described above, the training of adults’ trainers is seen as a necessary step among partners. In fact, training is seen as a device to promote the implementation of pedagogical innovations in adults’ learning. This pedagogical device consists of the following key elements:

a) A space for reflection on intergenerational learning and the problems of intergenerational dialogue both within one’s own cultural context and the European context

b) Development of specific knowledge and achievement of competences for leading intergenerational learning processes through the introduction of Creative Languages, which are the expression of project partners’ expert knowledge:

- Art and adults’ creative interactions with children
- Children’s literature and metaphors to enact intergenerational dialogue
- Digital storytelling: intergenerational narratives
- Games and social media to promote intergenerational learning
- Development of competences for Learning Design and implementation in local communities: producing adult learning pilot programmes
- Participatory analysis of adults’ reflections on informal learning processes and achieved competences.

The networked learning approach (through eLearning methodologies) helps trainers to build their professional knowledge in a collaborative, transnational environment. Interactions with content and Creative Language experts support the acquisition of the necessary competences for implementation of the pedagogical model, while support provided at the local level helps trainers to design specific adults’ learning events (such as pilot programmes), as well as to implement a participatory assessment of learning impacts that are part of the interventionist approach.

Consequently, trainers are guided towards a better understanding of the nature of their “mediation” and of the innovation in the pedagogical approach, insofar as it is an interventionist method, through a process of transnational, networked learning. The transformational power of learning experiences is therefore expressed as part of the trainer’s role: his/her shared reflections on the various contexts of practice highlight the specific and common features of evolving professional practice for the European Lifelong Learning strategy. Figure 1 introduces this training structure.
The project’s coordinating team, with its expertise in the field of university education, will lead the process of integrating content management with learning design, in order to generate a transnational eLearning course with ECTS university credits awarded. The structure of this course will be blended: an initial residential seminar will launch the programme of activities, with an initial presentation for trainers – through active workshops – as well as familiarisation with the virtual learning environment (VLE) as a space for giving continuity to dialogue between European trainers. In the following 6 months, each partner will introduce their expertise through a learning unit, to be delivered in about one month, through the VLE. Activities will embrace reading texts, watching videos, a discussion forum and the progressive creation of adults’ example programmes, to be piloted in local contexts. A subsequent phase, coordinated by each project partner, includes coaching at the local level for the implementation of pedagogical innovations, which includes informal learning situations mediated by Creative Languages, concluding in participatory reflections on achieved competences. This latter activity of reflection will be facilitated by discussions as well as “mirrors” of learning situations, i.e. adults’ productions (e.g. blog posts, games, pictures, videos). Adults will be invited to “self-evaluate” their own learning and competences achieved through simple instruments proposed by trainers. A final phase of exchanges between trainers regarding the results of practices is planned as part of their own training.

Conclusions
As was emphasised by Knowles (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005) pedagogical learning and andragogical learning are different, considering the minimal role of the educator in the latter. Indeed, an adult will decide to participate in a learning environment only if s/he feels able to take responsibility, if s/he understands the rationale of what is being proposed, and if s/he considers that the issue is worth spending energy and time on, because it is related to a key part of his/her own life. Every adult is capable of recognising the importance of becoming a good educator; however, many adults consider that their own experience as son/daughter, and children in general, is enough for them to accompany their own children’s learning experiences. The
research background introduced in this article shows that there are many cases in which adults’ own learning baggage is not enough, and specific training might be of crucial help. Furthermore, it is assumed that the development of adults as educators may have great potential for the achievement of both adults’ and children’s key competences. However, adequate models and practices need to be implemented, as part of educational innovations that make andragogical and pedagogical learning share the same sphere of intervention.

This demands new professional profiles among adults as educators: the role goes beyond that of a teacher, trainer, educator or social activity organiser. In fact, a new lifelong learning perspective will require new professional skills and knowledge, particularly regarding the issue of mediating informal learning experiences where participants become aware of the own learning through participatory processes. This applies specifically to the case of participation in lifelong learning strategies, beyond formal and non-formal learning (in specialised institutions or on the job), by adults in conditions of poverty, at social risk, or immigrants. Therefore, the project, through an interventionist method that builds on the socio-constructivist approach, may shed new light on the new skills and pedagogical innovations required to help at least 15% of adults – the ET2020 benchmark – to participate in lifelong learning.

References

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This brief article aims to introduce the early stages of development of CIRDFA’s experimental activities within the context of the “A.L.I.C.E.” (Adults Learning for Intergenerational Creative Experiences) Grundtvig LLP project, which belongs to the field of Educational Sciences, and speculates on the effects of intergenerational experiences on adolescents and older adults, using blogs as an environment for socialisation and co-construction of knowledge between different generations.

Taking into consideration the “state of the art” of research into intergenerational practices, policies, programmes and initiatives in Europe and worldwide, this experiment in intergenerational relationships will be accomplished by adopting narration and autobiography as a hermeneutical, epistemic and relational approach.

Background

The achievements of science and the resulting medical advances have contributed significantly in recent decades to lengthening average human life spans, making the ageing of the population a more widespread and significant social phenomenon. Together with falling birth rates, this has given rise to an unprecedented demographic transition that has seen steady growth in the number of older people, and a steady decline in the number of young people. This demographic revolution has produced new scenarios and fostered greater interest and concern among socio-economic, health, cultural and educational policy experts. Indeed, many countries are not yet structured to meet the new needs and demographics of the “silver society” – needs which are related not only to treatment and care for the elderly, but also to well-being over time and trends which cut across generations.

While within social and cultural contexts that are characterised by a strong sense of belonging among their members the elderly can still count on an extensive network of relationships, on widespread solidarity and recognition of their societal role, in other environments, as a result of their leaving the productive world, the affirmation of the nuclear family model and changed roles in relation to care duties, they often find themselves living alone, separated from other generations, according to the stereotypes of gradual withdrawal, or acts of sympathy. Gaps that are more and more evident in an age such as today’s, where the overwhelming speed of scientific and technological development and the rapid obsolescence of knowledge, have transformed a static society into a dynamic one, marginalising old people because they are seen as possessing neither new knowledge nor useful experiences for new generations.

Yet older people have potential in the education of children and adolescents, as caregivers and educators who can contribute richly not only to the schooling system, but also life. They can play an important role in informal and formal learning, which implies the process of scaffolding in the informal educational function which improves children’s lifelong learning prospects.

In keeping with the Europe 2020 Strategy, with OMS recommendations and European Parliament resolution of 22 April 2008 concerning the role of volunteering in contributing to economic and social cohesion (2007/2149(INI)), it seems necessary to promote a social model that blends citizenship education and intergenerational learning, as a commitment that strengthens social and
Affective relations between senior citizens and children.

The A.L.I.C.E. LLP project is an example of how intergenerational lifelong learning can be implemented in reality, by encouraging processes of mutual learning, between older adults and youngsters, who are both considered as co-constructors of knowledge and culture.

**Position of the problem**

Today’s elderly people have to face situations and social scenarios which are very different and cognitively much more demanding than in the past. The spread of advanced technology (especially regarding information and communication) has created the so-called **digital divide** which, combined with the development of cultural models oriented towards consumerism, productivity and efficiency, has developed an additional source of social discrimination against old people, directly influencing the collective imagination on this generation, reinforcing stereotypes and impeding the spread of a deeper, realistic understanding of the life conditions of this segment of population.

The most recent European research on social representations of old age in industrialised countries shows how young people (aged 15 and above) still believe that the elderly are characterised not only by psychological dispositions such as mental rigidity, orientation to the past, lack of planning for the future, closure to change and technological innovation, but also behavioural traits such as stubbornness, susceptibility, poor adaptability, a tendency to self-pity and, most importantly, excessive requests for assistance, perpetuating a stereotypical attitude aimed to underline the fragility of physical, mental and relational aspects.

In order to promote social cohesion and participation, personal development and active citizenship, it is essential to establish new instructional models geared towards spreading solidarity as a means to increase the value of everyone’s human capital. Intergenerational social integration where the elderly are not just seen as a negative cost but also a positive asset is a new way of thinking which may enable society to face the challenges of our age. Intergenerational learning can deliver experiences and memories, new skills and attitudes, creating most of all new relational resources capable of developing a stronger civic sense and a common sense of belonging.

In this perspective, conditions for research can develop, both as a process of group empowerment, crucial for a re-invention of the retirement years, and as an intergenerational approach to the issue of training across the whole of life, where learning and teaching, corresponding to receiving and transmitting, in fact, feed a single mechanism of reciprocity between generations.

**Hypothesis**

The hypothesis that guides research into the matter is that, through educational processes that take into account the creative potential of the language of technology and at the same time safeguard the values that society recognises, and through intergenerational learning, it is possible to:

1. prevent and combat processes of social exclusion and discrimination against vulnerable groups, by reducing the digital divide;
2. create learning environments for adolescents to grow up in;
3. enhance relational competence between subjects of different ages;
4. develop and exploit the potential of the elderly and generative learning;
5. encourage the participation of older people in social life and continuing education programmes;
6. significantly change the stereotypes related to different stages of life that emerge from society’s collective imagination and lead to the spread of new cultural attitudes towards old age;
7. develop, test and evaluate a
While on one hand “culture” influences the experience of getting old, on the other through culture it is possible to produce actions capable of highlighting the richness in terms of human relationships and the enormous potential for each individual’s growth that can arise from dialogue between generations, and receiving and giving oneself for others. In a society seeking to regain a generational perspective, elderly people can convey their experience and memories to youngsters, helping them to structure their personalities, communicate a sense of life’s continuum and recognise themselves as part of a cohesive society.

Providing both old and young people with guiding roles means creating a new relational resource, freeing the former from a condition of frequent social exclusion, and helping the latter to develop a stronger civic sense. There is a need, at the social and cultural level, for education and training to place the image of old people as a resource at the centre, while, at the individual level, what is required is for education regarding senescence to begin as early as possible, basing itself on the notion of ongoing personal improvement, in a journey that is life itself. For this purpose, there are many resources to help the elderly in pursuing this goal: a reflective attitude, cultivating their baggage of life experiences, the autonomy of the self, the potential for solidarity. Hence the apparent need for an intergenerational exchange that can take place both by improving the technological literacy of the over-65s and by organising significant moments for the exchange of experiences between generations, in order not to waste the rich potential and heritage represented by senior citizens, which characterises the identity of each community.

Why adopt narration and autobiography as a hermeneutical, epistemic and relational approach?

It is extremely important that adolescents and senior citizens write and narrate increasingly about themselves, in so doing, they can understand the role of writing in their lives. Writing will genuinely help them at every moment during subsequent stages of their lives, in successfully solving problems and overcoming crises. When an adolescent becomes an adult, education as well as autobiographical narration provides extremely fruitful support for developing a more intimate personal maturity, since writing about oneself is a process of self-analysis, too; it is a near-reflexive, continuous monitoring of both the inner and the relational experience. Both adolescents and senior citizens can increase their reflexive comprehension of life and its problems, its painful events. Thus, autobiography constitutes a genuine initiation, a way of developing personal and interpersonal formation, well structured evidence of individual growth; it is an opportunity for planning and trying out experiences and adventures. (Demetrio, 2005)

Methodological framework

During the first stage of the project the trainer will conduct an analysis involving adolescents and children on one side and older people who have left the productive world or are still professionally active, and the non self-sufficient elderly.

To begin studying the image that the two generations have of each other, the trainer will prepare and administer a structured tool of analysis:

1. to provide the fundamental contextual variables that determine the extent and manner of interaction between generations;
2. to understand the image that young people have of old age, cultural categories and any stereotypes applied to young people for the “understanding” of this reality;
3. to ascertain the willingness of adolescents to be involved in an intergenerational autobiographical workshop on a blog for senior
citizens;
4. to ascertain the willingness of older people to dialogue, share their skills with and pass on their knowledge to young people, analysing the factors that influence said willingness, first of all their various beliefs with regard to this generation.

The emergence of a willingness for dialogue between generations, of a new profile of the elderly individual who is willing to feel like an active participant in the context to which he/she belongs, by passing on his/her own knowledge, and of a profile of adolescent who is sensitive to the recovery of historical memory, are prerequisites for achieving educational exchanges between generations. A model of a formative environment (a blog) will subsequently be structured. This will be able to aggregate the different ages of life, to satisfy the demand for significant relational bonds and foster connections between generations.

The project has a three-pronged methodology: 1) An education for active participation of the elderly during the third age achieved through educational activities, socialisation, sharing, and self-review, aimed at enhancing the resources and the personal growth of participants, and the construction of a new life prospect plan and useful to the community. 2) Activities on intergenerational dialogue and exchange in which young people can support members of older generations; 3) Activities in which the elderly support young people. With regard to the activities conducted in support of older generations:

✓ young people will be involved as autobiographers to collect the life stories of older people, this opportunity for social inclusion of people who are even more fragile and vulnerable and for the creation and strengthening of local relationships and bonds;
✓ others will be dedicated to the creation of a “virtual museum” of collective memory, helping older people to select stories, documents and photographs, linked to its territory, which will feed into a virtual museum. The activity aims to enhance the role of elderly people in the process of reconstruction of the sites, but looks at young people indirectly promoting social integration, sense of belonging to the territory and the respect and care of property;

As for the elderly:
✓ some will focus on maintaining contact with young people known via blog.
✓ some will attend virtual laboratories of expressive activities together with young people, in a logic of learning and meeting together;
✓ some will be involved in teaching young people manual skills and ancient crafts.

References


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Articolo 4

Un percorso di supporto alla genitorialità attraverso l’approccio riflessivo

Elena Zambianchi

Per essere coerenti, oltre che prevedibili, noi (genitori) dobbiamo essere noi stessi

Donald Woods Winnicott, “Conversazioni con i genitori”, 1993

• Breve presentazione del tema di ricerca – Un’educazione di qualità per le sfide del XXI secolo

La possibilità di affrontare le sfide del XXI secolo attraverso i dispositivi offerti da un’educazione di qualità è certamente favorita dalla disponibilità ad accogliere le continue evidenze da tempo fornite dalle scienze pedagogiche, sociali, psicologiche e in particolare dalle neuroscienze che testimoniano, con dati innegabili, quanto la qualità della primissima infanzia (0-3) influenzì significativamente la condizione dell’esistenza umana in tutte le sue dimensioni e di conseguenza anche le sue capacità nell’affrontare le condizioni del vivere quotidiano e nella possibilità di esprimersi e estrinsecarsi al meglio. In accordo con Margiotta (2011a), un’educazione di qualità è quella che sa utilizzare approcci e strategie flessibili per rispondere ai bisogni dei propri destinatari – bisogni che la persona umana manifesta fin dalla sua nascita e lungo il corso della vita – e che dunque rappresentano esigenze innate ed indispensabili alla crescita e costantemente presenti. Per questo motivo è fondamentale assicurare un adeguato supporto a tutti coloro che si occupano dell’età evolutiva per favorirne la miglior comprensione possibile ma soprattutto per promuovere e potenziare in essi la capacità di un appropriato affiancamento.

La Comunità Europea è profondamente consapevole dell’importanza dell’educazione e della cura della prima infanzia (Early Childhood and Care – ECEC), che sovente richiama all’attenzione dei decisori politici come in (a) Green Paper 2005 ”Confronting demographic change: a new solidarity between the generations”; (b) Integrating Immigrant Children into Schools in Europe, 2009, (c) Rapporto Eurydice 2009 “Early Childhood Education and Care in Europe: Tackling Social and Cultural Inequalities”. In particolare quest’ultimo rapporto, che prende in esame dati e politiche europei in tema di educazione e di cura della prima infanzia, sottolinea che l’educazione preprimaria può contribuire molto alla lotta contro gli svantaggi educativi se un’educazione precoce e intensiva incentrata sul bambino e svolta in preposte adeguate strutture (è questa la funzione dei servizi ECEC) si accompagna ad un forte coinvolgimento e ad una formazione dei genitori, ciò connotandosi ad azioni a misura di sostegno per le famiglie.

Ed è quanto assume a proprio background il progetto ALICE, tra i cui obiettivi vi è la formazione informale di adulti interessati ad interagire con i bambini (a) da un lato per promuovere la riflessione e l’acquisizione di competenze utili ad aumentarne l’efficacia educativa e (b) dall’altro per infondere in essi
la consapevolezza dell’importanza del proprio ruolo di educatore rispetto ai diritti di cittadinanza e di coesione sociale.

**Sintetico status quaestionis – Famiglie d’oggi e crisi della funzione genitoriale**
Il modello tradizionale di famiglia è stato modificato e messo in crisi dall’ampio mutamento culturale ed economico della contemporaneità, ma se nel corso della storia la famiglia è sostanzialmente riuscita a farsi sempre interprete del composito assetto entro cui si è trovata di volta in volta a dispiegarsi (Donati, 2006), altrettanto non si può dire rispetto all’assolvimento dei compiti ontologici per cui è stata fondata e che sono connessi alla funzione genitoriale (Corsi e Stramaglia, 2009). Anche se il “diventare genitori” non è più considerato un evento normale ed ineluttabile del ciclo di vita ma piuttosto una condizione umana volontaria (non necessariamente coincidente con la maternità e la paternità biologiche), la capacità di esplicitare il ruolo di genitore e di esercitare le connesse funzioni è attualmente in preoccupante crisi, crisi ritenuta essa tra le principali cause concorrenti al grave disagio di cui soffre – come mai prima – il mondo giovanile (Salerno e Di Vita, 2004).

**Ipotesi di ricerca – Per un supporto alla genitorialità**
Il concetto di genitorialità rimanda ad una serie di temi come la rappresentazione d’essere in relazione con l’immagine interna di padre e di madre, il costituirsi di una rappresentazione del proprio figlio, di se stessi nel ruolo di genitore e della relazione di sé col bambino. Ne deriva che l’adulto capace di esprimere una funzione genitoriale compiuta è quella persona che ha maturato l’adultità (cfr. Demetrio, 2000), che ha cioè raggiunto una propria “competenza autobiografica” riuscendo a gestire responsabilmente il proprio personale percorso di vita – ed eventualmente a riconciliarsi con esso – avendo come obiettivo funzionale quello di condurre l’altro ad estrinsecare al meglio il proprio peculiare percorso di vita, ovvero il proprio sé (Stern, 1989). Alla luce di queste e delle precedenti considerazioni, le ipotesi sottese al presente progetto di ricerca sono almeno tre:

a) i numerosi significati collegati alla funzione genitoriale sono impensieribili sia dalla comprensione dei bisogni primari dell’uomo e dei comportamenti più consoni alla loro soddisfazione che dalla conoscenza di alcuni aspetti dello sviluppo, delle capacità relazionali e di adattamento dell’individuo al proprio ambiente (Brazelton e Greenspan, 2001);
b) se la genitorialità è la qualità dinamica, in costante evoluzione, dei molteplici momenti di dialogo educativo dell’adulto col bambino, possiamo affermare che funzione genitoriale e relazione educativa sono le due dimensioni fondanti il rapporto adulto/bambino, e che tale rapporto si realizza in una reciprocità dove solo la consapevolezza e la capacità di autoriflessione del primo diviene “il metro di misura” dell’evoluzione del secondo (Bastianoni e Fruggeri, 2005);
c) se, in accordo con Fabbri (2008, pp. 45-46) il “mestiere di genitore” viene imparato attraverso l’esperienza, a partire da quella dell’essere figli sino agli apprendimenti per la partecipazione a pratiche sociali, riteniamo che i genitori, attraverso percorsi culturali informali che adottino un approccio rilessivo) possano essere accompagnati ed aiutati nel transitare da una condizione di principiante (genitore preriflessivo, che fa riferimento a saperi impliciti e inconsapevoli) ad una condizione di genitore competente (genitore riflessivo, che fa riferimento a saperi espliciti ed autentici).

**Obiettivi della ricerca – Per un supporto alla genitorialità**
Il sostegno alla genitorialità è divenuto quasi una parola d’ordine per i decisori politici e gli operatori di welfare, non solo nelle situazioni di disagio ma anche nella normalità, nella consapevolezza che la famiglia, soprattutto con figli in età evolutiva e pur nella sua rapida trasformazione e nelle sue fragilità, rimane il nucleo centrale dell’organizzazione sociale, base dell’appartenenza e luogo dell’educazione e della socializzazione.
primaria per le persone che ne fanno parte. Se assumiamo che la famiglia abbia un primato non solo in senso temporale (anche se è evidente che si tratta del primo ambito educativo e socializzativo con cui l’individuo entra in contatto) ma anche in senso sociale in quanto snodo tra livello simbolico e strutturale, tra generi e generazioni e luogo – forse l’unico nella società – dove ci si prende cura della persona nella sua globalità e dove, quindi, si riannodano i fili delle dimensioni affettive, cognitive ed etiche (cfr. Catarsi, 2008), allora i genitori devono essere considerati “risorse” significative per lo sviluppo delle persone in età evolutiva, soprattutto per le relazioni che si generano nel contesto familiare e che avranno, come ampiamente attesta la letteratura, una grande influenza nel processo di costruzione dell’identità personale e sociale.

Il progetto di ricerca qui prospettato si configura come un intervento di “educazione familiare”2 dedicato al sostegno della genitorialità e teso a coadiuvare i genitori:

- nell’interpretazione del loro ruolo educativo e formativo,
- nella rivitalizzazione delle proprie responsabilità,
- nella valorizzazione di quei “saperi” di cui essi sono comunque portatori.

Il sostegno potrà servire a supportare i genitori nello sviluppo del proprio acume educativo, ad assumere atteggiamenti appropriati e a maturare una consapevolezza cognitiva ed emotivo-affettiva che risulti positiva per l’evoluzione di tutti (Boffo, 2011): sia per loro stessi (l’io), sia per il bambino individualmente (l’altro), sia nella loro interrelazione (la comunità). Il sostegno ai genitori avverrà nelle due direzioni della cura e della educazione:

- dal semplice ma essenziale aiuto a sviluppare competenze di caregiving già presenti o potenziali, favorendone la consapevolezza e dunque rendendone evidente la possibilità di utilizzarle opportunamente;
- un supporto nella direzione di potenziare la riflessione critica su quelli che sono gli strumenti educativi già posseduti ma di cui non vi è consapevolezza o di cui viene messa in dubbio l’esistenza.

• **Metodologia della ricerca, contesto di riferimento e fonti principali**

La metodologia prevede di operare per mezzo di attività laboratoriali centrate sulla prassi del racconto, della narrazione, del confronto e dell’ascolto. Il percorso formativo è destinato ai genitori in attesa e/o di genitori con bambini in età 0-3.

Gli incontri previsti dal percorso coinvolgeranno piccoli gruppi di genitori utilizzando linguaggi analogici (a partire da input letterari, tra cui poesie e favole e da input iconici, tra cui foto testimoni di ciò che è stato figli) e tecniche ludiche attive (giochi di conoscenza, di fiducia, role-playing, fantasie guidate ecc.) per ascoltarsi/ascoltare, attivare la capacità di analisi, aumentare la consapevolezza – con l’autoesplorazione di sé – esplorare l’altro/gli altri (con lo scambio di esperienze e di suggerimenti).

L’approccio legato al “fare” risulta funzionale agli obiettivi del progetto ALICE non solo perché mette in atto processi di apprendimento informale utili al potenziamento e allo sviluppo di competenze chiave per l’apprendimento permanente, ma per almeno altre due prerogative formative:

- più di altri risponde all’obiettivo di coinvolgere tutti i genitori, soprattutto coloro che abissognano della forza delle reti di sostegno sociale (immigrati, ceti sociali svantaggiati, bassi livelli sociali) come mezzo per migliorare la coesione sociale
- consente inoltre di aggregare più facilmente i genitori, che potranno avvalersi del confronto con gli altri per riflettere attivando e coinvolgendo le diverse dimensioni del proprio divenire (affettiva, cognitiva, sociale, ideologica), puntando, attraverso l’esperienza narrativa, ad una rivisitazione delle

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2 Per “educazione familiare” si intende l’azione di educare bambini solitamente realizzata nei gruppi familiari da adulti che ne sono i genitori, ma anche come l’insieme degli interventi sociali realizzati per preparare, sostenere, aiutare, addirittura sostituire i genitori nei loro compiti educativi verso i figli (Durning, 1995, p. 40 e segg.).
proprie rappresentazioni interne con un passaggio dall’investimento su di sé a quello sul bambino.

Sono previste valutazioni pre- e post percorso nelle dimensioni affettive, cognitive, sociali, ideologiche connesse alla funzione genitoriale.

Lo sfondo concettuale entro cui si colloca il presente progetto convoglia diverse teorizzazioni che congiuntamente offrono possibilità di lettura e di interpretazione dei processi – sempre più compositi e flessibili – attraverso cui si costruisce l’identità genitoriale:

- il costrutto di *apprendistato e pratica*, che dalla teoria sociale dell’apprendimento sviluppata da Vygotskij a Bruner giunge al concetto di *apprendimento situato* di Wenger (2007), consentendo di esplicitare l’apprendimento come una forma di partecipazione a pratiche esperte, prendendo parte ad una comunità: “un fare in contesti storici e sociali che danno struttura e significato a ciò che facciamo” (ibidem, p. 47);

- il costrutto di *apprendimento trasformativo* che Mezirow (1991) ha elaborato a partire dalle tesi di Bruner (1988) sulla funzione della cultura come “forum primario” di negoziazione interpersonale del significato, del senso e dell’indirizzamento delle azioni, e secondo cui l’adulto, per costruire la propria identità professionale, ha bisogno di decostruire e di ricostruire i saperi – attraverso un approccio riflessivo alla conoscenza di sé e del mondo – che il pregresso stato di novizio e apprendista gli ha consentito di elaborare, non sempre funzionali al contesto né privi di distorsioni;

- il costrutto di *riflessività* derivato dalle tematizzazioni di Mezirow ma anche – e soprattutto – dalle analisi di Edith Stein (1999), che riconosce come ogni azione possa essere fruttuosa solo se si accompagna alla determinazione della persona nell’aderirsi per realizzare i propri valori; di Mortari (2003), per la quale l’individuo apprendere dall’esperienza e acquista coscienza di sé e del mondo quando si dedica a riflettere su ciò che accade per cercarne il significato; di Margiotta (2011b) che, a partire dalle riflessioni di Dewey, ribadisce la significatività pedagogica del nesso tra pensiero riflessivo e processi formativi.

Siamo convinti, con Loretta Fabbri (2008, p. 50), che “l’adozione di un approccio riflessivo consente di rendere i genitori attivi costruttori delle proprie conoscenze e competenze e consapevoli interpreti delle proprie esperienze dando modo di rendere espliciti e trasparenti – all’interno dei contesti familiari – le implicazioni ed i presupposti ideologici e culturali sottratti ad azioni, rapporti, eventi e ne consente continue analisi, rivisitazioni, negoziazioni”.

**Risultati attesi e possibili utilizzazioni dei risultati**

Se consideriamo la famiglia come “risorsa”, alla quale si riconosce un’irrinunciabile funzione educativa e sociale che si esprima nella trasmissione dei saperi, nella crescita delle nuove generazioni, nella cura e nella socializzazione delle persone, nella solidarietà intergenerazionale (cfr. Mortari, 2005), allora è importante prefigurare una presenza diversa delle famiglie anche all’interno della rete dei servizi alla persona, che certamente non potranno essere sostituiti dall’intervento familiare, ma che tramite esso potranno trovare un migliore coordinamento e una più efficace finalizzazione.

Interventi precoci con azioni promozionali della genitorialità – ad esempio nell’ambito dei servizi dedicati alla primissima infanzia (post-natalità, nidi) ma anche già anticipando con coppie in attesa (preparazione al parto) – consente di collocarsi in una *prospettiva formativa della prevenzione* (e non più solo medica, tesa all’individuazione precoce dei fattori di rischio e di debolezza entro la famiglia) partendo quindi dalle potenzialità della famiglia e valorizzando le risorse che questa dimostra di possedere, alla ricerca delle modalità di superamento delle proprie difficoltà.

In ultima analisi l’auspicio della presente proposta è di poter fornire un seppur piccolo
contributo per coadiuvare coloro che hanno funzioni genitoriali nell’assolvere con responsabilità e consapevolezza l’importante compito cui sono chiamati – appunto la funzione genitoriale – che costituisce una delle più significative esperienze di formazione e di prevenzione; è infatti ipotizzabile che genitori competenti aiutino i figli a crescere con autostima e sicurezza, promuovendo lo sviluppo del proprio sé al meglio delle possibilità personali.

**Bibliografia essenziale**


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