

## *Abstracts*

### **Empathy: The Stepchild of Critical Reflection and Transformative Learning**

*Edward W. Taylor*

Historically, three constructs have been seen as central to transformative learning theory, critical reflection, dialogue, and experience (Mezirow, 1990). Learners' experience, is seen as socially constructed, as constituting the starting point for dialogue, as the essential medium through which a transformation is promoted and developed, and as leading to critical reflection where learners question 'the integrity of deeply held assumptions and beliefs based on prior experience (Taylor, 2009, p. 7)'. Missing in this tripartite of core components of transformative learning theory is 'empathy' which typically is seen as the ability to 'subjectively experience and share in another psychological state or intrinsic feelings (Morse, et. al, 1992, p. 274)'. As a construct, empathy has been mentioned in the literature as significant to reflection specifically and generally transformative, although it is rarely defined or discussed in much depth, particularly in its relationship to the central constructs of transformative learning. Questions are raised: What is empathy and what is the role of empathy in relationship to reflection? To critical reflection? And transformative learning? Recognizing the significance of empathy what are the implications for fostering reflection? This manuscript would address these questions and review recent research on empathy, reflection and TL.

### **European quandary – whence and whither?**

*Zygmunt Bauman*

European Union is one of the currently most advanced attempts to find or design from scratch a local solution to globally produced problems; and while engaged in such trials, to put to test an answer to Coetze's question, from quoting of which we have started: the question "of why life must be likened to a race, or of why the national economies must race against one another rather than going for a comradesly jog together, for the sake of the health".

Perhaps Europe is a utopia, but it is an active utopia, struggling to coalesce and consolidate the otherwise disconnected, multidirectional actions. How active that utopia will ultimately turn, depends on its actors.

## **Investigating teaching and learning methods in Italian universities and beyond. The quest to improve and share practices and strategies in the international higher education context**

*Monica Fedeli, Joellen E. Coryell*

The present paper aims to describe the first phase (12 months) of an Italian research unit, which is part of a more extensive three year project that endeavored to: *design innovative programs for higher education, to promote personalized learning, to build on job competencies, to value talents, to create new work opportunities, and to provide positive strategies in higher education to support young adults during their employment emergency as a response to the socio-economic crisis and as a citizenship action.* In response, a consortium of universities and researchers, called Emp&Co (*Employability and Competences*) was created. The project involves six Italian Universities (Padova, Firenze, Siena, Napoli, Molise, Roma Sapienza), and Dr. Monica Fedeli from the University of Padova is the Principal Investigator. Dr. Fedeli's research group is focusing on the innovation of teaching and learning methods and promotion of personalized programs in order to modernize university didactics, to encourage the university-business dialogue, and to promote employability. In the first phase of the project, a literature review was conducted and an analysis of student evaluation questionnaires on didactics, from 8 Italian, 3 American, 5 European, 1 Canadian, and 1 African University was completed to compare and learn from the different ways in which courses are evaluated by students in the different academic contexts. The goal at the end of the first year is the creation of a questionnaire template focused on teaching and learning methods, in order to gain a better understanding of student perspectives in our country. Additionally, we hope to implement strategies that will improve university didactics as requested by all European Union declarations. This paper introduces the overall study and the foregrounding work done with Dr. Joellen Coryell from Texas State University in the United States, who is a consultant to the University of Padova in the areas of adult and higher education teaching and learning.

## **Intervention-Research in Organisation: Supporting Track and Tools to Enhance Reflective Attitude in Higher Education**

*Daniela Frison*

This paper presents a research developed at the University of Padua with the aim to observe the learning results of a University-Business Cooperation experience in humanities. The research involved 18 graduating students in Continuing Education and Management of Educational Services who planned and put in practice an intervention-research on organisation's needs and questions. This contribution focuses on strategies and tools to support their research process and their relationship between the two reference organisations: university and enterprise. Processes and tools to enhance reflective attitude are presented and analysis of data collected are explored.

## **Adult Learners portfolio. The Value of Reflection in Higher Education. A Case Study at University of Padua**

*Anna Serbati*

This paper presents a study carried out at the University of Padova with the aim to promote an active process of recognition of competences that adults enrolled in university degrees have already acquired within non formal and informal contexts. During the research 44 working students completed a learning outcomes portfolio in order to make their competences gained within past experiences explicit and comparable with the expected learning outcomes and therefore to tailor their educational careers. The study, through a mix-method approach, investigated the educational and guidance dimensions of the portfolio construction within a guided process for the development of competences awareness obtained by the reflection during and after the action. Results from interviews to adult students, teachers evaluators and tutor/advisers, showed that the autobiographic reflective process has the transformative power to bring out moments or past aspects and create new connections between these aspects, generating new coherences and perspectives for the future professional and personal life.

## **Self-Construction and Life Trajectories: a Pedagogical Reading of Background Guidance Models**

*Francesco Lo Presti*

Starting by *complexity, liquidity, fragmentation* that, as highlighted in the literature (Sennett, 2008; 2012; Bauman, 2011; 2013), characterize the post-modern condition, underlines the need for the education system to define and propose formative strategies that, by capturing the transition from technical rationality to personal and professional reflexivity, are able to orient individuals in ability to plan the future, being guided by a wider awareness about the prospects, the systems and processes of meaning that compose their life trajectories. Through the pedagogical review of *career construction theory* (Savickas, 2005) and *self-construction theory* (Guichard, 2010a; 2010b), actually among the most influential in guidance and both ascribable to the paradigm of *Life Designing*, the article proposes a reading of guidance processes like processes of reflexive education focused on life trajectories, which try to define possible prospects and borders of this specific aim for research and intervention from an educational point of view.

## **Theories and Measures of Occupational Calling: a Review and Research Agenda**

*Anna Dalla Rosa, Elisa Maria Galliani, Michelangelo Vianello*

People differ in the way they experience academic and professional careers, some may feel ‘called’ to a particular domain, while others may perceive their job as a

simple mean to achieve higher goals. Research on career or vocational calling is still in its infancy, but it has so far observed some consistent results. Nonetheless, researchers have to deal with the lack of consensus about what constitutes a calling and how it should be measured. This paper addresses these needs by summarizing the main results of empirical research on calling. We integrate previous theoretical accounts in one single view that emphasizes commonalities across different theories and contributions. Next, we explore the academic and organizational outcomes of having a calling, highlighting those that showed more reliable empirical support. In this review, special attention will be devoted to the dynamics and individual development of calling. Finally, future research directions are discussed.

### **La dimensione della pratica nella formazione dell'educatore: la tutorship come strumento di elaborazione del role model**

*Barbara Barbieri, Giordana Szpunar*

In recent decades, the world of work has undergone radical changes that have led to a restructuring of productive activities, stimulating the demand for practitioners characterized by cognitive flexibility and the ability to realignment of its skills. In this scenario, it was necessary to rethink the models of the training courses of educational professions, characterized, more than others profession, from elements of fluidity and insecurity.

Studies on the “modelling” in the building process of a professional role, have been developed, mainly in the educational physician field, while little is actually known about the building process of the educators role. This paper focuses on the study of tutorship and role models, as central to the process of development of “professional behaviors” learned during the internship experience, identifying in the tutor’s role the main functions to elaborate the possible models roles internalized or learned. The tutoring role in university training courses, is increasingly becoming a supporting role both in developing the ability to converse with the knowledge related to the action, and in facilitating the acquisition of styles and patterns of professional practices.

### **Il tirocinio. Condizioni per apprendere dalla pratica**

*Loretta Fabbri*

The article analyzes some critical issues relating to the organization of internship in the formation of education professionals within the university courses. Education requires innovative teaching capable of crossing the boundaries between theory and practice. The internship is a learning setting increasingly important, because it is the bridge that allows students to interact with the workplace and professional practices.

Listen to the students is a methodology of organizational development with which they can acquire important knowledge on the procedures with which to improve

the activities of teaching/learning.

The Author has proposed students to conduct qualitative research aimed to detect:

- if and when what has been learned during the course of study was useful to manage the internship activities;
- what students learn and what they do not learn during the internship experience;
- what are the problems and the potential of that experience;
- the proposals and suggestions that they wanted to do to the teachers and the institutions that received them.

The article discusses the results of this research and, in general, we can say that the internship is identified as the area where the disciplines lose their ‘academic’ connotation and constitute the conceptual tools and patterns of intervention able to put in to know and understand the workplace.

### **Il tirocinio universitario come setting espanso di apprendimento**

*Claudio Melacarne, Stefano Bonometti*

The Job Placement Practices (JPP) can be described as the specific actions aimed at supporting students to enter their professional lives, bringing students and employers together, planning experiences, inside and outside university, where students can meet local stakeholders and learn the knowledge and the competences which are useful in the complex contemporary economical context. Each University translates such activities in situated practices and activities that could involve the overall student community, or single students during and after their university experience. Traineeship and stage activities are considered good practices to support the students enter their work life (Susan, Matthew, Rosanne, Taylor, Ellis, 2012). Together with other actions, these activities are seen as the most promising Job Placement Practices to favour the meeting between work professional needs and students’ skills (Billett, Harteis, Etelapelto, 2008). This article describes two practices useful to improve new strategies to manage and to plan traineeship activities in higher educational courses.

### **Job Placement and Vocational Guidance Supporting University Students’ Employability**

*Giovanna Del Gobbo, Francesca Torlone*

In the ongoing downturn the role of higher education is much more important than in the past and higher education is required to enhance students’ employability. It responds to policy goals related to the development of the country’s human capital and to students’ motivations in entering higher education. The article focuses on how university job placement services can help students to enhance their employability and their sustainable employability (this latter one being much more important in a long-term career development perspective). One way to enhance the institution’s contribution to university students’ employability is to strengthen and better structure job placement services directly within curriculum of degree courses. The contribute presents a reflection about the factors considered predictive of

placement (with a particular focus on soft skills and employers' perspective), that is possible to strengthen through consistent and proper devices, with specific reference to guidance/vocational talk during the first and second phase of transition to work. On the base of literature and best practices, the contribution wish define an experimental protocol, with attention to applicability and sustainability into Italian university system and in line with quality assurance in Bologna Process. Target are graduates of master's degree courses in pedagogy and adult education.

### **Placement and Job “Formation”: the Case of Educational and Care Professions**

*Vanna Boffo*

The deep crises in the Eastern World, especially in some countries of the Europe, from 2007 till now, has destroyed a lot of working place. In particular, in Italy, the situation of the young people is very difficult. Here, we have one of the lowest employment rate than in Europe. In a very dramatic context, the young degree people live the similar situation respect the other adult worker people. The articles analyzes the situation of the Educational and Care world of professions for understanding and evaluating the situation after the Degree in European Adult Education Course at the University of Florence. The results of the Research comes out of the survey developed from October and December 2013 in the Department of Education and Psychology of the University of Florence on the sample of 25 firms in Tuscany Region.