Participatory Teaching and Research: a Remote Fieldwork Initiative

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Abstract: This paper presents a participatory teaching and research initiative carried out at the University of Messina. As part of a project entitled "Professional social practices in local services: making knowledge explicit", several experimental work groups called "Participatory and situated teaching and research boards" were set up in 2018. On the one hand, the "boards" produce new knowledge and expertise in social services; on the other, they communicate with future practitioners in university classrooms, using a teaching method based on participation and co-construction of knowledge. This paper will deal specifically with the process of knowledge co-construction that developed in the "Drug Addiction board", in which practitioners from drug addiction services (SerD) and therapeutic communities, service clients, students and academic scholars were directly involved in the construction of a virtual co-teaching lesson for university students. The paper will present the lesson content prepared by the roundtable participants for a specific theme: primary prevention.

Keywords: participatory teaching, primary prevention, tacit knowledge, remote platform, co-costruction of knowledge

1. Learning and research: project, methodology and classroom work

This contribution presents part of the results and reflections that emerged from a highly structured research study which began in 2018 as part of the discipline "Principles and Methods of Research and Social Services" included in the study plan of the Degree Course in Social Service Sciences at Cospecs Department, University of Messina. The research, entitled "Professional Social Practices in Services in the territory: explicating knowledge" aims, on the one hand, to bring out the latent knowledge embedded in the social practices of professionals such as social workers, psychologists, educators and other professionals who interact with them and, on the other hand, to find ways to convey this knowledge to students during training but also to other professionals in a broader sense. The assumption is that knowledge used in the daily activities of the services risks remaining the preserve of the individual worker without, therefore, becoming the driving force of new and additional learning within organizations and professional communities (Tarsia, 2020).

The field work moves, at the same time, on several fronts, that of research, university, learning, training/updating of professionals and people received in services, family members and finally that of the public engagement of the University (Tarsia & Tuorto, 2021). The research question, which is transversal to these areas, and united by the common characteristic of being spaces of production and reproduction of knowledge, can be defined as follows: What are the socio-environmental conditions which facilitate the explication and redistribution of tacit knowledge? (Polanyi,1966) In other words, the intent is to identify the characteristics and the relational plots of a space where it is possible to co-construct knowledge, while also trying to understand how this can be acquired and assimilated by other professionals, and generally by other social actors such as clients and by directors of services and students. In the attempt to clarify, furthermore, the perimeter within which we will move in this contribution, we can say that we will investigate the requirements of a virtual space of teaching and research where it is possible to create the conditions for learning together and at the same time produce additional professional knowledge to be communicated externally. Ultimately, we will try to detect the traits of an osmotic area between research and classroom teaching. This is the intent that will drive us to concentrate on the description of certain elements pertaining to particular research and learning setting, characterized by the presence of very different subjects and by the participation of university students. This space, called the "Teaching and Participatory Research Board", usually set up as a group meeting in a room at the Department, moved to an online platform due to

the health emergency. It is also interesting, for the purposes of this work, to point out, how this group - whose goal is to design and implement a lesson for students - was required to think and manage a lesson remotely.

The methodology used in the research is participatory and collaborative (Hilton, 2018; Beresford & Glasby, 2005) and the type of imprinting given to the group was experimental in nature. Precisely because of this, the research and educational techniques put into practice were diverse and drew upon heterogenous reservoirs of working instruments which were in part retrieved from previous teaching and class training experiences and partially from an intentional methodological investigation. Over time more traditional techniques were experimented with, such as interviews and the world cafè. During the last year, 2020/2021, foresight tools were utilised, referring to Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) by Sohail Inayatullah (2017; 2004), with the Delphi method, also characterized by future studies.

1.1 Production of knowledge and learning space

In this research experience, the participatory and situated method is embodied by the construction of a circular setting and by the use of activations that trigger processes of comparison and negotiation of different meanings, perspectives and paradigms. The physical space (which in the future became virtual) where the participants interact is known as the "Board of Participatory and Situated Teaching and Research".

It concerns work groups characterized by mixed participants with the objective of letting knowledge emerge and conveying it to students and other professionals in the form of lessons and seminars to which the label of "co-teaching" has been attributed, precisely because of the co-design and co-presence of all members of the group. To date, the "boards" have been activated in four areas, all related to social services: mental health, reception of refugees, juvenile and adult justice and drug addiction. A basic assumption of this field work is that knowledge is the result of the interaction between different subjects who contaminate each other's fields of experience, connect their personal spheres of reality (Schutz, 2007), thereby placing themselves in a position of interest and curiosity, of possibility and exploration (Becker, 2007). During the research we tried to adopt a curved gaze towards the stratification of knowledge and comprehension of reality (Inayatullah, 2004) in order to capture the multidimensionality of what occurs in the helping process. The construction of knowledge in the "board" is considered as the production of intellectual knowledge that can contribute to innovation and change social practices, which in a field such as that of pathological addiction, requires constant adaptations and modifications to follow the changes of socio-political scenarios and the heterogeneous spread of the phenomenon. As already mentioned, the intent of this contribution is to better see

the comprehension process and the construction of knowledge, which is activated in the context of the "board" so as to identify the conditions which may facilitate the comprehension of new situated knowledge. To succeed in this intention, we will borrow some considerations which emerge from Mannheim's reflection (2000) and use them to give meaning and value to the contradictions within construction processes of intellectual knowledge. The intention is to highlight the dynamicity of the different positions and life experiences which we consider virtuous and which are salient in the field experience we are describing. According to the author, the production of knowledge comes from various ways of interacting and from the structures of power involved in the relations between the various social actors. Mannheim also refers to the concept of competition highlighting the generative potential that can come from an intrinsically conflictual situation.

In this regard the author, referring to Hegel, considers synthesis as key to understanding reality. Synthesis requires the making of a choice, it is position and negotiation of meaning and sense: "syntheses do not fluctuate freely in social space but they become possible and probable in a specific structural situation" (Mannheim, 2000, p. 233). Translating what has been stated up to now in the research experience on the field we can consider the "Board of Participatory Teaching and Research" as a situated space (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2007; Lave & Wenger, 2006) where the "specific structural situation" in which knowledge is built from different points of view and perspectives.

During the five two-hour encounters, in which the members of the "board" interact and reflect on the topics related to the help relationship and the organisation of social services, processes of information exchange are triggered that lead to the suspension of personal judgement and thought, assuming a position of active listening which facilitates comprehension and re-elaboration of thought. The effort consists in enhancing experiential knowledge and, in the meantime, in triggering a process of abstraction and reconceptualization which is conveyed to the individual participant in terms of cognitive process, professional and personal insight. This process develops on a substratum of tensions which the participants are careful not to stress and which are intentionally accepted. These are contradictions which refer not only to knowledge belonging to different fields but also to an emotional dimension which provides meaning and contributes to the construction of a frame in which the members of the "board" act.

In the "board's" here-and-now, a process takes place, which Mannheim clarifies with these words: "in the economical fields the forces of competition act up to a certain point [...]. Therefore, during the competition to provide an adequate explanation of being, phases occur where the group suddenly accepts a possibility of knowledge, a fecund category, an opponent's hypoth-

esis" (Mannheim, 2000, p. 230). The people participating in the group consider this space as a place of confrontation and communication and for this reason they invest, with the support of facilitation of the coordinator, in the exploratory and generative possibilities of conflict which re-emerge from time to time (Tarsia, 2019). Different points of view, "competing" knowledge are allowed to emerge gradually combine, sometimes excluding each other, to reach a group synthesis. In this experience, conflict (competition in Mannheim's view) is not confused with violence or aggression but it is seen as a relational process in which one should be situated and understand what is happening. Conflict is a sign of transformation, and the objective is to learn and understand what is happening, but also stimulate the other person to say what he or she thinks and what they have experienced in a particular circumstance: "therefore, alongside original consensus, alongside basic fears, original feelings and the simplest ordinary wisdom, an ever-changing ex post consensus appears, conquered with effort and battles, but among this a problematic life unfolds, and it struggles where everything is still in doubt" (Mannheim, 2000, p. 235). Competition and conflict, as we are describing them, are acted out in the "Board" and assumed as elements that can facilitate evolution and generate conceptualizations and knowledge. As in other contributions (Tarsia, 2021) the space of the "board" has been associated with what Konno, Toyama and Nonaka (2000) define "Ba": a group setting where conditions are created for explication, production and acquisition of knowledge which is animated by individuals belonging to different orders of reality (Shutz, 2007): professionals, users, academic scholars, students and family. One example, among many, can help us understand better the relational experience and the "specific structural situation" which develops on the "board". Below a synthesis of a fragment of a communicative interaction which took place during a world café in 2018-2020 face to face.

The moment in which the individual subjects relate to each other is during a subgroup discussion that is reflecting on the knowledge and skills of those who work in therapeutic communities. The participants are seated in a circle, around a table, and are positioned in a separate environment from the others. They do not know each other well; this is the third encounter of the "board". The dialogue is between a social worker, people belonging to different communities and a student attending a study course in Social Work. The topic they are discussing is the knowledge and skills of social workers. Each member is invited to communicate their personal experience and express their thoughts. The subgroup dwells on the importance of the operator's ability to listen to the users' state of mind in the helping relationship. The people belonging to communities remember how anger was a powerful emotion that occurred when entering rehabilitation. A few remarks are enough for the members of the group to associate anger with

pain. Voices are low, calm. A feeling that something burdensome is being investigated. But the exchange of words is fast. Each one recalls something to recount. Confrontation occurs on how necessary it is to relate to pain. The student thinks it is important to face it. The social worker, on the other hand, underlines the importance of the operator's ability to "welcome pain", i.e., to stop and wait, in the helping relationship. The two users add pieces to their story, at times eyes become teary. They remember how important it was for them, during their therapeutic path, to have found a social worker capable of recognizing their sorrow and of being capable of giving meaning to their emerging pain.

This brief account frames a situation of transition experienced by a person during their therapeutic course of treatment and it returns understanding and knowledge about this particular aspect to the members of the "board". Recognizing pain is the topic. According to what emerges from the participants' feedback, a process is prefigured about how a person can gradually become aware of his or her emotions. Daily life with others, the presence of a social worker who does not force the person to face his or her pain (contrary to what the student believed), make it possible to work on "when and how to" accept one own's suffering, what it has meant and what it will mean. The points of view of the individual subgroup members convey, on the one hand, the way in which this particular emotional event unfolds, which seems to occur in the same way for every service user, and on the other, it helps subsequent learning to emerge. Initially, pain is latent, it is revealed by actions which lead to verbal and physical oppositional behaviour. The possibility of being accepted and feeling that their pain is recognized seem to be the constituent moments of synthesis: a moment of learning and new understanding among social workers and the users of social service users. It is also a moment of reciprocal learning and meta-reflection for the members of this subgroup, who re-live different experiences, but when it comes to explicating meaning they re-signify and re-conceptualize them. In this context the student becomes aware of the existence of diversified approaches and multiple ways to handle a difficult situation. It is on these almost imperceptible insights that the training of those who will be future professionals is based, and in the sub-group of the "board" they find a protected environment to continue to gain experience in the field.

2. How to use situated and participatory research and teaching in social work education

As described above, the "board on drug addiction" is a task group whose composition is intentionally heterogeneous (A.A. 2020/2021: 6 students, 11 professionals -social workers, psychiatrists, psychologists/psychotherapists,

educators/pedagogists-, 3 scholars and experts of practice). During the current year, a further variation in the methodological tool has been made, with particular attention to solicitations which previously emerged in the field. Wanting to continue to valorise the conflictual dimension, but introducing the perspective of a possible future (Pellegrino, 2019) and advisable future, we have chosen to adopt various techniques which refer to Inayatullah's CLA method (2004).

Due to the health emergency, the meetings were moved to the Teams platform at the University of Messina. Thanks to various technical measures (for example, the use of pre-constituted breakout rooms to work in subgroups, the constant use of the webcam and the combination of various technology such as writing on a personal notebook at home or in the office and forwarding the photo through WhatsApp) and to good past interpersonal awareness, at least in the core of the group, it was possible to maintain a high level of participation and interaction. The "board" meetings were organised maintaining the following structure: initiation of the work in plenary, indication of the first solicitation - the definition of the topic to be discussed- and the proposal of the second question which had the aim of opening up to the experiential aspect of daily routine and professional life. To both questions participants responded in an individual way and by the use of a written script on a notebook, the photo of the notes was then sent to the coordinator. The third solicitation was discussed in a subgroup. The conclusion was defined in a plenary discussion. The topic discussed varied in each encounter: primary prevention, social work inclusion and knowledge emerging from the helping relationship.

Due to simplification purposes, the text will deal with the description and analysis of the work carried out on the first topic, "Primary Prevention". The questions proposed to the group were: 1) What do you mean by primary prevention? 2) We ask you to describe the role that primary prevention has in the "national discourse" on addiction policies and on the operation of services by indicating social actors, currents of thought or other that you consider useful. 3) In what way do you imagine that the "dialogue" which you have just defined may evolve in the future (in 20 years, for example)? At the end of the discussion the group was invited to coin a metaphor (an image, an object or other) useful in representing the preferred future that the participants had defined together. The last part of the work, where each member narrated the results of their work, was audio recorded. It was then transcribed and used to create, with an expert's help, a visual map which graphically represented the definitions and the most significant phases of the work and all the metaphors proposed. The visual map, along with the research report produced collectively through google-drive, represented the tool utilised as a guide in the co-teaching lesson. Again, the lesson was creat-

ed in a virtual classroom where all the "board" members were present. After concluding the lesson students were asked to make questions and provide, at an appropriate time, their own point of view through a structured questionnaire.

The entire process of reflection and processing of knowledge was concluded in a final verification meeting with all the members of the "board". The areas subject to verification were: the field of experience through S.W.O.T. analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), acquired knowledge, valorisation of the processes, use of foresight tools, proposals to change the future, and new members to be integrated in the group. They also discussed the results provided anonymously by the students and the outcome of the work carried out, in parallel, using the Delphi method with a group of experts at the national level. If the first part of the article served to give the coordinates of the research project, outlining also the setting in which the production of knowledge and the implementation of the students' and professionals' learning take place, in the second part of the article, the synthesis of the process of co-production of knowledge will be presented, underlining the conditions that allowed the unfolding of the learning process. Thus, the definitions of prevention which are majorly recognized in the sector's literature will be presented first. These definitions will be then compared with the ones emerging from the "Board's" work and which have been presented in the classroom during the co-teaching video lessons. Finally, reflection on the meaning of proposing a type education contaminated by field research in a process of co-construction of understanding among professors, students, and other stakeholders paying particular attention to the idea that the training process of students can benefit from a setting where it is possible to move further into certain topics linked to the direct experience of the members of the group in the help process and also become aware of the heterogeneity of the existing paradigms used to codify, categorise and respond to a certain social problem and finally have the opportunity to converse with workers, service users and family members in a space other than the SerD or communities.

3. Prevention. General aspects and shared knowledgeow to use situated and participatory research and teaching in social work education

The issues linked to pathological addictions involve a complex universe of social and health factors and therefore "require a highly integrated intervention" (Quercia, 2020). Socio-health addiction assistance is ensured in Italy by the National Health Service (SSN), by addiction services (SerD) working in the Local Health Departments (ASL) on a territorial district lev-

el; here multi-professional teams work, characterized in particular by the co-presence of medical-health (doctors, nurses) and social professions (social workers, educators, psychologists).

In order to face the topic of prevention referring to the sphere of drug addiction, it is not possible not to recognise such a complexity and the necessary multidisciplinary approach needed in order to handle it.

An important classificatory definition, given by Caplan (1964), refers to the medical model (psychiatric in particular) and it has been widely reconsidered in psychology and in other disciplines, such as criminology. According to Caplan's classification there are three types of prevention: primary, secondary, tertiary. The aim of primary prevention is to utilise risk reduction strategies so as to prevent the onset of specific pathologies before symptoms occur. Primary prevention efforts are aimed at the entire population or subgroups with observed vulnerability, such as those of people with drug/alcohol addiction. Secondary prevention, diversely, seeks to identify precocious symptoms of disorders, with the aim of reducing the length and the negative consequences; let's consider for example epidemiological screening activities and interventions of various pathologies. Tertiary prevention, finally, is thought to deal with ongoing pathological conditions in order to prevent them from becoming chronic, putting into effect interventions aiming at rehabilitation and the recovery of "productive" abilities. A classification that surpasses Caplan's, but which in many respects reiterates it, was defined by Gordon (1983). This author identifies three levels of prevention, based on the subjects to whom they refer to: universal, selective, indicated. In an approach which considers risk "pathological", universal prevention provides strategies for the entire population, with the aim of reducing the probability of an undesired condition; selective prevention is directed to subgroups of the population, identified as being at high risk for a specific problematic behaviour in particular environmental conditions; prevention interventions shown are directed at the most vulnerable individuals who are already in specific problematic conditions. Although it is widely considered as "old", Caplan's classification has undoubtedly updated content. In particular, the primary prevention conception is currently utilised on a large scale in different disciplines (medical, psychological, sociological) and also in the language of policies, relating to a plurality of areas, such as social health and therefore drug addiction.

In all the disciplines mentioned above, prevention is associated with evidence-based models, which are intended to enact interventions of prevention, based on empirical evidence and therefore on the measurement of efficiency of the same interventions. There are at the same time analyses, with a sociological slant and related in particular to addictions, that highlight some critical nodes, in particular the "limits in the practicability of evidence-based

studies in the preventive field" (Allamani et al., 2018). This has implications on the political dimension of prevention. Referring to a specific area, that of alcohol addiction, the unpredictability of policy effectiveness is highlighted and it can be explained by several hypotheses; one of these concerns the fact that changes in alcoholic beverages and the correlated damage reflect social changes more than alcoholism prevention policies, which could be demonstrated with scientific evidence (Ibidem). This is a hypothesis we think could be extended to the entire field of pathological addiction. Considering the complex prevention aspects, which necessarily have to be kept together, it seems important to recall briefly some contents of primary prevention, since it is the one on which we focus in this paper. As demonstrated, primary prevention (which is very similar to what Gordon defines as universal) targets a very wide range of subjects. It has, therefore, a dimension which is also collective, involving various institutions of society, such as schools, local community actors with various competences involved in dealing with specific problematic areas. Within addiction areas, in a vision which holds together individual and collective responsibilities, information takes on particular prominence. Related to this, the role of social professions is not always adequately valorised and often flanked in a prevalent manner to functions characterised by restorative rather than preventive functions.

In Italy, over the years there have been many primary prevention initiatives in the field of drug/alcohol addiction, although preventive interventions in the political agenda have often been obscured by the emphasis on mere restraining or punitive control, characterised by a progressive impoverishment of social protection (De Giorgi, 2002; Prina, 2003). This must also be related to regulations on addictive substances, in particular with T.U. 309/1990, where the issue of prevention can be found in many articles and is often associated with "repression". Over the years many prevention measures have taken place involving schools and the whole education system, involving formative/informative activities, set in global education projects activated by the Ministry of Public Education. Many projects have also been primary prevention ones and they have involved the families of the students, local services and individuals from local communities.

The definition of prevention and the theoretical references formerly illustrated reveal ideas widely discussed during the work of the "board" about drug addiction. One of the first aspects to consider is the complexity of primary prevention, which has developed over time and is recognized as a fundamental activity in the working sphere of drug addiction. In the historical and social transitions in which drug use has changed, along with the interventions of services and operators - who have had to adapt to these changes - Caplan's and Gordon's definitions are still relevant. Orientation towards the territory, towards the population in its entirety and towards

specific groups, in particular young people, has been widely shared by all the "board's" participants. Primary prevention involves society "universally"; it is directly linked to social and socio-health policies, firstly national ones. The shared knowledge emerging from the "board" shed light on the fact that these policies have been poor, focusing far more on care rather than on prevention. In the intricacy of social and criminal policies, moreover, attention on prevention in certain historical phases has undergone a re-dimensioning by the debate on repression; thus, elements of coherence seem to emerge with what has been detected by sociological studies on deviance, previously cited, which have focused on policies against drug addiction. The "board" also pointed out that primary prevention has been an intervention conducted for many years but, despite this, it does not seem to have led to a radical change in reducing the phenomenon of drug addiction. This aspect connects to what has been noted in literature about the limitations of an analysis of addiction based on evidence; limitations which appear in the background of the work emerging from the "board", where, contrarily, emphasis is put on the attention towards the effectiveness of primary prevention interventions. In conclusion, it is possible to state that the "board" has revealed interesting and effective depictions of the workers' practices in the field of addictions; the articulated reflections, which have characterised all the moments of the encounters, have revealed the richness of experiences and the ability of the participants to analyse, giving researchers who have followed the work the opportunity to capture various theoretical-practical connections.

4. The Co-teaching Lesson

The starting point of the co-teaching lesson was the conceptualization and reflection work carried out in three preliminary meetings by the group of participants working on the "board". The results of this intense and articulated work were presented to the students in a "virtual" didactic space, organized through the aforementioned computer platform (Teams), which, despite the limits of physical distance, allowed the connection of different points of view, knowledge and experiences.

The co-teaching lesson was not limited to presenting the topics dealt with on the "board" to the students; the objective was to go beyond the mere transmission of knowledge by promoting an activity of re-elaboration, comparison and sharing as a tool to explicate "hidden" knowledge. The members of the "board" have had two important documentative tools on hand – previously mentioned - for the presentation of their work: a visual map, containing the fundamental concepts which emerged from the three meeting; a report on co-constructed research from which both knowledge and open issues on primary prevention emerged. The relations developed in the

group and the trustworthy relation which took shape among the participants turned out to be an essential tool upon which the entire process of sharing and transmission of knowledge was created.

Coming to the specifics of the contents presented in the lesson, a fundamental theme was that of attention to information, especially for young people. The current legislation on drug addiction is one of the tools that enables experts to create projects aimed at schools and over time they have found discrete spaces, which have, however, often been "conquered" after dealing with certain reluctances in schools and limited economical investment. Information addressed to young people, to be activated in schools and intended not in the form of a face-to-face lesson in class, but rather as a class group work that enables the students to express themselves freely, assumes particularly meaningful value. Approaching a complex problem such as drug addiction, through the transmission of information and thus knowledge, directly concerns the students attending co-teaching; these students were assigned with the importance of a critical, dynamic approach intended to problematize the topic of primary prevention and to highlight evolution and future perspectives.

A theme addressed with particular emphasis, closely related to information, is that of stereotypes and prejudices (towards drug addicts), which strongly influence primary prevention. Lack of knowledge leads society, especially in small towns, to be unable to deal with the problem and to marginalize drug addicts, identifying them only with their limitations and with the value of their behaviour. In order to promote a progressive and difficult path of deconstruction of stereotypes, it will be necessary to focus above all on the new generations, guaranteeing the distribution of specific school programmes, aiming at acquiring further awareness. A shared issue on co-teaching was the effectiveness of primary prevention; scholars and experts are called on by constant research and analysis of the long-term effects of primary prevention activities, with the objective of preventing individuals from coming close to drug addiction. The importance of research, in particular that related to a longitudinal one, represents a fundamental value, at the core of university training which professors are called to transmit with continuity to students. It is research done not with mere purposes of speculative elaboration, but with the aim of extracting indications from the results on how to re-think modalities and tools of primary prevention.

Finally, the co-teaching lesson has shed light on the future, through the rainbow metaphor. This has occurred coherently with the use of foresight tools, previously mentioned. Although it is difficult to imagine the social context in 20 years, we can hope for scenarios where investments in primary prevention, to be consolidated also with innovative tools, can contribute to

a process of widespread knowledge, giving substance to primary prevention interventions.

5. Conclusions

5.1. Daily representations and co-construction of professional knowledge

The research presented in this article is strongly characterized by contamination of knowledge, whether it be explicit or "hidden". The professional expertise (Garland, 2004) which has traditionally characterised service systems and actors on various levels involved in paths of social reintegration, has found an important space during various phases of the research. Rich heritage of knowledge and competences have emerged from the "board's" work, which has taken the shape of a group, meaning a dynamic totality based little on its similarities and more on its interdependence (Lewin, 1980). The discussion of different topics related to primary prevention, e.g. the debate on the effectiveness of preventive interventions implemented by professionals, made clear the interest and the ability to share this knowledge and expertise. Cross-curricular and cross-referenced perspectives emerged clearly from the group pooling theory and methods to which the different professions involved (social workers, educators, psychologists, doctors) refer to. Therefore, sector-specific visions have been overcome, with the aim of understanding the global nature of needs and the complexity of situations which professionals come into contact with. The knowledge of the professionals was flanked by the representations of the clients involved in the research; the work presented in this article, therefore, also used the approach of *client studies*, widely used in the Anglo-Saxon context, particularly in *social work research*, but less present in Italy (Cellini, 2021).

5.2. Students, professionals and service users inside and outside the online platform.

In the aforementioned osmosis between learning and research, we think it is interesting, in conclusion, to provide additional data considerations expressed by the students to whom this year's co-teaching lesson was addressed. In the attempt to capture salient aspects from an educational experience point of view, we have noticed that what has involved students is the co-presence of different professionals and clients in the classroom and in the work group. Also emphasized was the importance given, even remotely, to debate and listen to their voices and interests on issues related to their own work and professional future. After the lesson an anonymous questionnaire was handed out to all the participants attending the virtual class. 21 students enrolled in the degree course in Psychological Sciences and Techniques. The

most appreciated aspects were three: 1) The possibility to discuss with professionals who deal with drug addiction on a daily basis (on a scale of 1 to 5, 13 assigned a 5, 6 assigned a 4 and 2 assigned a 3); 2) The opportunity to ask detailed questions; 3) The opportunity to have different people responding to their enquiries and demonstrating how it is possible to work in a multi-professional team.

The students have stated that they have learned and explored new content on topics such as: professional *modus operandi;* people's moods in communities; actions of primary prevention and socio-working inclusion. In particular, they have asked the professionals to talk about a film-documentary they had seen recently which described the experience of the therapeutic community of San Patrignano[1]. The overall score on the co-teaching lesson was 8,76 (on a scale from 1 to 10). The students were asked the following question: "Do you think it has been a useful lesson for your training and future profession?". All the students answered positively. They also believed that their professional future will have benefited from the content of the lesson. All the students assigned a high mark (between 4 and 5) to "Use of life stories of workers and guests in the structures", "Developing content moving from what happens in services", "Presentation of the service and methodology from direct field experience."

Recalling the initial question of this contribution, which is meant to investigate the useful conditions to generate learning and co-construction of knowledge, also in a virtual setting, we can consider, on the one hand, the passage from a co-teaching lesson in presence to co-teaching remotely, and on the other, the meetings on the "board" at the university to those on Teams platform, and how this represented the loss of certain elements which occur during physical presence in the meetings (e.g. eating a biscuit, drinking a coffee together or physically accommodating all the group members in the class). These aspects are considered as functional for the atmosphere of collaboration and facilitation but in their absence new perspectives and possibilities have occurred which appear to be equally useful and interesting.

In the case of both the group meetings and the lessons, an atmosphere of mutual listening was created that guided the discussion even if remotely. As stated by the students' responses in class, the working style of the group of co-researchers was driving just as it was in presence and it created the condition for confrontation during debate. It is possible to imagine a virtuous contamination between the two virtual spheres (the classroom and

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[1] San Patrignano is a rehabilitation centre founded by Vincenzo Muccioli in 1978. For further studies see Guidicini, P., & Pieretti G. (eds) (1994). *San Patrignano tra Comunità e Società Ricerca sui percorsi di vita di 711 ex-ospiti di San Patrignano.* Milano: Franco Angeli; G. Manfrè, G. et al (eds) (2005). *Oltre la comunità. Studio multidisciplinare di ritenzione in trattamento e follow-up su ex-residenti di San Patrignano.* Milano: Franco Angeli.

the "board") which has led students to ask questions and ask for detailed study. We can assume that the exchange between the two environments was conveyed by the emotional climate created in the virtual classroom, by the listening style of the group members and by the organizational choices made beforehand. On the "board" the fields of knowledge which have been acquired have remained the same as those which emerged during the face-to-face meeting: among many, professional knowledge connected to specific sectors, knowledge on regulations and procedures, relational competences and *soft-skills*. The challenge of moving to an online platform was to maintain the quality of the relations and reflections. On the one hand, the strong intention to confront and to narrate personal experience and the motivation to be present during the meetings have enabled the acquisition and generation of new learning, and contemporarily, certain working modalities have been modified and they have involved different choices regarding the management of the "board" remotely. For example, the numerous participants on the "board" (set by the possibility of participating remotely) led to the impossibility of dealing with everyone in the same manner as with students in class. Moreover, even during meetings it was impossible to see each other at the same time. In addition, it was difficult for the facilitator to be present during the work of the subgroups and to solicitate group debates or respond immediately to enquiries or doubts. With the intention of maintaining the times established when the group was present, and net of the moments in which there were connection problems or difficulties in accessing the platform, the time available for the final briefing was reduced, as were the moments before and after the meetings in which the facilitator had communicative exchanges with the individual components of the "board". The high number of participants on the "board" and the need to carry out the lesson on the platform pushed some members to take part in the lesson from their workplace. This has resulted in some moments of difficulty in carving out a dedicated time but also a more extended time. In 2020/2021 the lesson lasted two hours instead of three. The reduction of time also led to the elimination of group work with students, concentrating on a final briefing that, as shown in the questionnaire, was much appreciated by the students. From the confrontation of previous experiences and declarations of the current members of the group, the use of the platform has created two opposite dynamics. On the one hand, people accepted in services have been slightly marginalised (for example, the same device used by two participants, worker and user, lack of space for reflection or impossibility for users to log in due to connection problems or lack of appropriate devices) whereas, on the contrary, the remote exchange reinforced the relationship between students and professionals. The online modality, "surprisingly", as stated by the students directly involved on the "board", has enabled them, after an initial feeling of

disorientation, to overcome embarrassment and become protagonists, ask questions and communicate their own point of view (taken from field notes and briefing moments dedicated to students).

The reconstruction of a dialogue and exchange setting, the possibility to work individually, giving back space to personal reflection in the intimacy of one's own home or office, and finally maintaining subgroups on the platform have served to create a collaborative atmosphere implementing students' and social workers' learning, also favouring an exchange with people from different territories and different services. In addition, the use of other tools such as the co-construction of the final report on google-drive has enabled the members to continue sharing content outside the meetings on the platform, to contact each other independently and organise the work without the presence of the facilitator.

Finally, the students involved in the co-teaching lesson had the possibility, even remotely, to listen to the outcome of the work and the description of the content from several members of the "board" with the possibility to ask questions and receive answers on a topic they were not familiar with. We can conclude by stating that circularity between teaching and research, even remotely, enables the valorisation of experiential knowledge and produces new intellectual and practical knowledge.

In this contribution, therefore, attention was given to two levels of learning: that of the members of the "board" and that of university students. The meetings of the "board" allowed, on the one hand, to create the conditions for a "safe space" (Giorgi, Pizzolati & Vacchelli, 2021) in which the members recognized themselves as "experts" (Allegri et al., 2017) in a knowledge that had suitable space and time, not only to be shared, but also to be reworked and conceptualized in other knowledge. The attention paid to the process of elaborating knowledge made it possible to define the topics of the co-teaching lesson, to choose the communicative structure and the language to use with the students but also to divide up the tasks and produce a common document. The construction of knowledge requires moments of exploration, in which the group asks itself questions, responds to common solicitations and works by adding and integrating, but the time used to grasp and understand the tensions and to negotiate and create convergence of ideas and information. The use of participatory techniques, but also the decision to use online tools to compose a collective writing, helped the group to produce new useful knowledge in personal life, professional and organizational work.

The analysis of these processes is part of the numerous researches carried out in the broader line of organizational, situated and expansive learning (Fabbri, Bracci & Romano, 2021; Virkkunen & Newnham, 2020; Pipan & Pentimalli, 2018; Gherardi & Perrotta, 2015; Gherardi, 2000) which underlines the sense of co-building knowledge in the workplace and training to inno-

vate and consolidate knowledge and operational practices. In summary, the meetings held within the "board" can be considered a space for the production of theoretical-practical knowledge in which the group of components shares knowledge starting from their own activities, which are situated in a professional and organizational practice specific. Furthermore, as already said, students can obtain information and have the opportunity to learn from the narration and description of these professional and life practices. They also have the much appreciated possibility to deepen and better understand the working contexts, but also the procedures and choices of professionals in an open and attentive dialogue space. The students, even at the online experience, met the professionals of one of the possible sectors in which they will work and, despite the short time available, they understood the importance of team work and the complexity of the world of drug addiction. Finally, we can say that all those who participate, differently, in this process of production of knowledge have the possibility to identify certain cognitive schemes that they use to comprehend the reality of helping relationships and the mechanisms which produce knowledge in this field and initiate processes, detailed learning and individual development to be used during different situations (internship, thesis writing, work environment).

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