

*AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL
METHODOLOGIES AS SUPPORT FOR
LEARNING PROCESSES*
BY ANDREA CIANTAR

A - AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PRACTICES AS NON FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNINGS

Educational contexts and related forms of learning are traditionally divided into three fundamental typologies:

- formal learning;
- non-formal learning;
- informal education and learning.

Informal education and learning:

“Learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and typically does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases it is non-intentional” (or “incidental”/random).

Commission of the European Communities (2001: 32-33)

"Life is the thing that happens to us while we are busy making other plans."

Anthony De Mello



Informal learning occurs in many experiences and aspects of life:

- experiences connected to **work**, as well as **leisure time** and **play**;
- we learn from **art, books, cinema, music**;
- a **trip** – as we well know – is one of the most important sources of informal learning;
- one learns from our **relationships....** In our encounters with others;

- today, we also learn from the **mass media** and **the web**;
- also very important is the kind of informal learning that occurs through the **body**
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- *The fact of living experiences, even extraordinary ones, does not guarantee that we will be able to learn from them...*
- Autobiographical methods, as an educational approach, can be an opportunity to elaborate the experience, reflect on it, and understand the meaning it has in our life.

LEARNING FROM OUR OWN LIFE STORY

- Telling own life story as an occasion and a tool for learning.
- We learn from our own story, drawing out our experiences, recognizing the value they have, and making visible the hidden and **implicit knowledge** that is in each one of us.
- Reconstruct the past history is a way to reorganize the identity: *Who am I? What plans I have for the future?*

OTHER LEARNINGS CONNECTED WITH AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PRACTICES...

- Memory is a cognitive activity.
- Cultivating memory is the basis of all education.
- Cultivating memory favors the exercise of various kinds of expressive languages.
- Cultivating memory invites us to think about other people's memories.
- Cultivating memory means growing emotionally, since remembering is also a feeling.

(Demetrio, Borgonovi, 2005)

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PATHS: *THE TIME I LEARNED...*

A - List of short memories

Try to remember at least 12 moments in your life where you learned something important to you.

These moments can be linked to:

- educational and training activities, related to your studies or your passions;
- to significant persons from whom, for better or for worse, you have learned;
- to professional experiences;
- to family life;
- to the emotional dimension;

- leisure time, play, travel;
- to the corporeity;
- to every life experience in general ...

They can be deliberate, intentional, or - more often
- unexpected experiences ... pleasant or
unpleasant, big or small

In any case, experiences from which you believe
you have learned something.

Let's chose one of those memories, and narrate it...

- *What happened? Tell the story...*

- *What did you learn?*

About the world, the others..

About yourself...

- *Why is this memory still important to you today?
What remains inside you of that experience?*
- *How do you think this learning can be interesting
also for other people in general?*

B - AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL METHODS AS A SUPPORT IN EDUCATIONAL AND CARE PROFESSIONS...

- Those who work in the social field, as a volunteer, animator, educator, often bear a wealth of very significant experiences, made up of meetings, experiences, learning, knowledge, values and visions of the world.
- This heritage of experiences, unfortunately, is often lost, perhaps because - taken from the action - we do not have time to stop and reflect and "remember", or because we do not have effective methods to achieve such an objective.

Autobiographical methodologies allow to work effectively on the emergence of this heritage.

They are also a support against burn out:

- facilitate to process negative experiences;
- facilitate sharing in the work group;
- greater awareness in the participants of their resources, values, visions.

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I REMEMBER: MY PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES IN THE EDUCATIONAL FIELD....

Try to remember some episodes of your experience in social and educational work, and to reflect on them, as shown below...

- A successful experience
- A moment of crisis, of failure, from which you still learned something ...
- My work as in a metaphor: try to describe your work with a metaphor....
- What do you think is, or should be, the ultimate purpose, explicit or implicit, of your work?
- What would you like to improve, learn, inaugurate, in your social work practice?

C - AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL METHODOLOGIES AS SUPPORT FOR LEARNING PROCESSES

- As a form for orienteering: exploring my skills, my attitudes and vocations...
- To become aware the way I learn, my learning style...
- Developing a personal relation with a specific field of learning.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PATHS: EXPLORING MY SKILLS, MY ATTITUDES AND VOCATIONS...

- Remember an episode of your life where emerged a my attitude, vocation, skills ...
- What I feel capable of, what are my best and positive skills
- What would I do, if I could decide fully, and do the best for me and for others
- What are my deepest aspirations, what I sense is good for me, and that represents my positive contribution to the world ...

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PATHS: THE WAY I LEARN...

Try to recall a time in your life when you learned something important for you.

- *What happened?*
- *What made the learning possible? What kind of processes have been important to gain this learning? mental, physical, relational, social, casual, etc...*

D - AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PATHS TO SUPPORT THREE LEARNING CHALLENGES (*)

The first challenge: bringing to the surface our implicit knowledge and ideas about ourselves and the world

- How can we bring to the surface implicit beliefs about ourselves and the world, in order to become conscious of them and – if I need – transform them?

What implicit beliefs, looking back now, you think that this experience has left you?

In particular, what implicit beliefs about yourself?

Looking back these implicit beliefs, how would you change them today?

(*) <https://www.slideshare.net/andreaciantar9/three-challenges-for-informal-learning-in-europe-2>

The second learning challenge: developing critical knowledge, breaking through the social myths

Remember the time....

I learned to question something that for me was not true or fair.

I was outraged for the injustice, I have been able to fight for something right, I made a contribution to change for the better ...

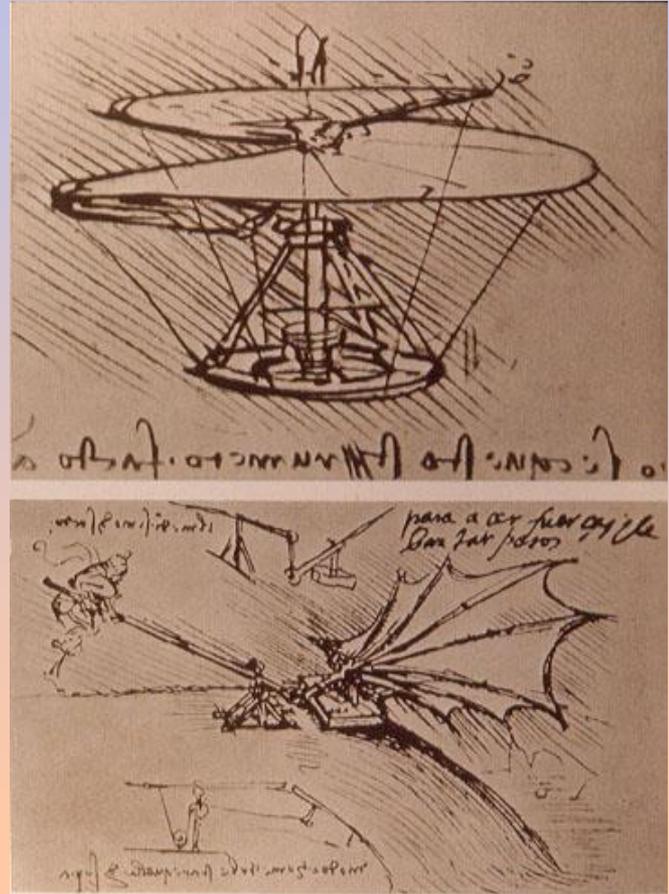


**The third challenge:
taking back control
of the “means” of
doing:**

To learn how to improve
our creative
capacities...

Remember the time....

*I created something, at
material or immaterial
level....*



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