

CAREER GUIDANCE ACTIVITY AND DIGITAL STORYTELLING L'ORIENTAMENTO NARRATIVO E IL DIGITAL STORYTELLING

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Abstract

Career counselors are now increasingly important in Italy due to the uncertainties related to the labor market today. This professional figure is capable of building a pathway of self-knowledge and insertion in the social, economic and cultural context of reference, together with the person concerned.

In recent years, storytelling is acquiring new ground within both training and guidance. Stories can be used to activate both individual and group discussion and reflection in relation to certain strategic dimensions of orientation. Finally, storytelling can increase youth empowerment and enhance certain strategic dimensions such as decision-making self-efficacy, particularly using new information and communication technologies through digital storytelling.

La figura dell'Orientatore professionista in Italia è ormai sempre più importante a causa delle incertezze legate oggi al mercato del lavoro. Si tratta di una figura capace di costruire, insieme al diretto interessato, un percorso di conoscenza di sé e di inserimento nel contesto sociale, economico e culturale di riferimento.

Negli ultimi anni la narrazione sta acquisendo nuovi spazi all'interno sia della formazione che dell'orientamento. È possibile utilizzare le storie per attivare il confronto e la riflessione sia individuale che di gruppo in relazione ad alcune dimensioni strategiche dell'orientamento. Infine, raccontare le storie, in particolare utilizzando le nuove tecnologie dell'informazione e della comunicazione attraverso il digital storytelling può incrementare l'empowerment dei giovani e potenziare alcune dimensioni strategiche quali l'autoefficacia decisionale.

Keywords

Career guidance; professional profile; digital storytelling.

Orientamento professionale; profilo professionale, narrazione in modalità digitale

1. Introduction

As much as orientation is described in the common discourse as a practice in which principles, ends, and ideals are widely shared and accepted, there still exists a debate on the purposes of orientation and in particular in relation to the anthropological question of how man should be considered in relation to work and what function the formation of the man-worker-citizen should have (Riva, 2020; Soresi & Nota, 2020; Riva 2023).

It happens in particular, that in the face of a (not new) tendency of public policies to connect the orientation discourse more organically to the employment discourse, there exists a vision of orientation that pushes to consider it as a process that contributes to the complete development of the human person.

In other words, “simplifying and taking the opposite models into consideration, we can refer on the one hand to a functionalist and neoliberalist model - aimed at adaptation to the system, centered on the matching of individual and company/work entity, on the predominantly professionalizing dimension and on the development of skills primarily useful to the world of work itself - and, on the other hand, to a model that conceives of guidance as an instrument of promotion and social justice, of democratic emancipation for all and all, in view of the goals of the UN 2030 Agenda such as those of quality education, gender equality, decent work and economic growth(Riva, 2023: p.40)

In the context of education-related contexts, it assumes a key function for the student's growth pathway (Bonelli & Da Re, 2022; De Vincenzo, Patrizi & Mosta, 2019), but also a crucial function in relation to the person's possibility of defining himself in terms of personal identity (Lo Presti, 2010), defining a life project (Bernaud et al, 2016) or to design career paths (Pellerey, 2017), including in relation to people experiencing particular conditions of social disadvantage (Caldin, 2023; Nicodemo, 2019).

2. The Italian context of orientation

Only include indispensable images or drawings or graphics in the article and check that they are saved in a format readable by all computers. Images, graphs and The Italian context of guidance involves a plurality of entities that differ widely in terms of service content, users and the legal nature of the provider.

Within this plurality, however, there are two strands related to guidance that have had greater development at the regulatory level: that which refers to the Ministry of Education and that which refers to the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy.

The first strand that is intended to be highlighted is that of guidance that refers to the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. The main actors in it are the regions, through the Job Centers, the National Agency for Active and Labor Policies (ANPAL). The Employment Centers were defined by the Law (Article 18 of Legislative Decree 150/15) as a territorial articulation of the Regions. They are entrusted with the task of carrying out specialized guidance activities “for the purpose of constructing the most appropriate paths for insertion and reintegration into the labor market.”

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The identification of the concrete activities that Job Centers must implement is placed by a delegation contained in Legislative Decree 150/2015 in the head of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies, which is entrusted with the task of defining the essential levels of services, including Specialized Orientation. Defined as an activity articulated in skills assessment services, individualized interview activities (“including through small groups”), counseling activities, and information activities on the system and how to certify skills. The specialized guidance service is aimed at “making the person more aware in the in-depth reading of the context, in the reconstruction and enhancement of their professional and educational history, in the identification of their personal skills and resources.” A vision centered on the person and his or her potential constitutes an essential point of an orientation activity focused on promoting empowerment through and sense of self-efficacy (Nota & Soresi, 2000), from a perspective that looks at competencies in terms of both soft skills and hard skills (Pellerey, 2017).

The first strand of the guidance system, therefore, is aimed at enabling people to place themselves employably and counter the phenomenon of misalignment between labor supply and demand, which has significant social and economic costs. Quite different is the other strand of orientation that is based on the Ministry of Education and Merit (“educational” orientation), which posits orientation as an antidote to school dropout (Cornacchia, 2019) and as a vehicle for citizenship skills. The backdrop is evidently the role that schools can and should play in combating inequality (Vannini, 2023), where social background continues to be a very heavy factor of disadvantage in relation to educational contexts .

The operational strategy on orientation that the Ministry of Education is implementing is

contained in Decree Nr. 328 of 22 December of 2022, which adopted the Guidelines for Orientation, implementing the reform envisaged in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR, 2021). It contains several new elements. As of the next school year (2023/2024), 30 hours of orientation per school year, including extra-curricular; for the last three years of Secondary Schools, 30 curricular hours per school year will be introduced. Among the various initiatives is the e-Portfolio, which provides an orientation module of at least 30 hours with personalized learning, which is recorded in the portfolio that accompanies children and families in reflecting on and identifying the student's greatest strengths within the educational journey.

In the coming school years, therefore, guidance will be a strategic priority of training for teachers of all educational grades, in the probationary year and in-service. For mentor teachers in Secondary I and II grades, specific training initiatives are planned, also coordinated by Support Cores established in each Regional School Office. On an experimental basis, training campuses will be activated to offer a comprehensive overview of all secondary paths, a single digital platform for orientation where students and families can view useful information and data. A figure has been envisaged within the organizational framework of each educational institution who can keep a dialogue open with families and students with a view to facilitating the continuation of the course of study, entry into the world of work, or facilitating the match between students' skills and the demand for work.

Schools can use the resources offered by national and European plans and programs under the Ministry of Education and Merit and by local and national initiatives promoted by regions, universities, local authorities, employment centers, employer associations, and territorial bodies and organizations.

Specific investment has been made in the figures of the tutor teacher and the guidance teacher. The tutors will help each student to become aware of his or her potential and will support families in the moments of choosing students' educational and/or professional paths.

The guidance counselors will facilitate the matching of students' skills, educational offerings and job demand to enable an informed choice of the study or professional path to be taken.

The guidelines of the Ministry of Education and Merit (Mim, 2023) aim to implement a structured and coordinated system of interventions in the field of guidance, the content of which should ensure a process of lifelong learning and training, intended to accompany an entire life project. It is not an isolated document, but they constitute the evolution of a document that had already had other editions (Miur Note of 19.02.2014).

Although in the latest version the mention of orientation from as early as kindergarten is somewhat episodic (Margottini, 2023), the stated assumption from which the guidelines start is that orientation should become part of school teaching in every order and grade. In terms of content, orientation is made to coincide for the most part with the acquisition of key competencies (Recommendation of the European Parliament and Council 2006/962/EC) promoted by the European Union (Riva, 2023), based on an idea of promoting transversal competencies as the foundation of an ability to cope with the difficulties of life and work.

This appears to be extremely important, but only if this choice takes on a true orientation rather than educational function. Furthermore, with Art. 2 of Legislative Decree 15 April 2005, no. 77 promoted school alternation as an experience capable of fostering the orientation of young people toward the enhancement of their vocations, interests and learning styles, through the realization of a connection of the school with the world of work that is achieved by correlating the educational offer to the cultural, social and economic development of the territory, through a mode of internship that, for students remains optional, but is provided as an educational offer by the school system. With Law no. 77, the innovation, (Balsamo, 2015), is given by the possibility, for students, to learn by working, through the integration of theoretical learning and practical learning, which go to realize an educational model that can accompany the current transformation of work, bringing educational policies to approach productive policies (Gentili, 2016).

3. Narrative career guidance

Narrative career guidance, devised in 1997 (Batini, Salvarani, 1999a, 1999b; Batini, Zaccaria, 2000; 2002), is a method that works through the use of narratives (novels, short stories, films, images, songs) and biographical materials (directly, metaphorically) of the people with whom one works.

Cultural anthropology and ethnography, cultural psychology, constructivism, and reflexivity are the epistemological paradigms from which the narrative orientation began in early 1997. The appeal to the constructivist point of view for which both science and art are two world-building systems, and more generally each of us proceeds to construct a world and a reality that is not only an individual production, but is negotiated with the culture and society to which we belong (Bruner, 1992, 1997). Narrating means telling a story through a speech, written writing, through a song, a film, a thought etc..., the story is a sequence of events to which is attributed an order (regardless of whether the events are real or imaginary), a time and a meaning (by the teller, but also by the listener, reader or viewer).

Narrative competence relates to both the ability to tell a story and the ability to listen to it; within a culture this competence can be fostered or discouraged. Today, there are so many narrative agencies that narrative competence comes to be compressed and limited to fruition: televisions, newspapers, Internet network, advertisements etc... replace each other's narratives, constitute patterns of plots, unfolding, plots, even endings. Our ability to share stories is given by the culture on which we feed (Jedlowski, 2000). Each of us uses narratives in multiple ways throughout our day (Jedlowski, 2000), each of us, at different levels, becomes, in the course of our existence, an expert in narratives.

The methodology of narrative orientation responds in new, often creative ways to the needs of the individual going through "subjectively defined" moments of choice (Batini, Del Sarto, 2005; Batini, Giusti, 2008).

According to this methodology, orienting an individual "means transferring to him or her self-orientation skills, with the purpose of immediate or future choices, in the direction of a decision or for a more appropriate reading of an existential and/or professional context, to design an educational path or to improve self-perception in the direction of greater effectiveness in the action of satisfying one's needs, realizing one's projects and desires, in the direction of greater clarity about these same ones" (Batini, Del Sarto, 2007, p.48).

In order to stimulate motivation and a sense of self-efficacy, the teaching methodology that is most appropriate is one centered on student activation, a mode capable of acting on the student's expectations and stimulating his or her self-assessment mechanisms, thus positively affecting learning (Hattie, 2009).

4. The figure of the career counselor

The figure of the career counselor is regulated in the document of the Unified Conference of the Council of Ministers "Definition of minimum standards of services and professional skills of practitioners with reference to the functions and services of guidance currently in place in the different territorial contexts and systems of Education, Training and Labor" (Repertory acts No. 136/CU of November 13, 2014). The career counselor plays a key role in choosing one's career path. With the help of a career counselor, one can analyze one's skills, interests and expectations and identify the professions best suited to one's characteristics. In addition, he or she can provide information on job opportunities in the area and the educational paths required to enter certain professions. With this support, it is possible to avoid taking the wrong paths and investing time and resources in unrewarding career paths.

5. New ways of guidance through ICT

The scientific literature informs us that ICT have long been valued in the areas of guidance and counseling, even up to psychotherapy (Barak, 1999), as they offer transversal advantages (rapid support and at the user's need, greater confidentiality especially in face-to-face

counseling, (Gedge, 2002; Griffiths, 2001). In spite of this, the difficulty, especially in Italy, of designing technological pathways and tools capable of intercepting the needs of students but also of being attentive to the subjective dimension of the student, without undermining its social mission, its ethical, inclusive and sustainability value (Riva, 2020) is well known. The OECD Skills Strategy Diagnostic Report of Italy showed for Italy, a figure that goes against the directives of international bodies in terms of actions for orientation. Italy is one of the EU countries where there is a slower growth of guidance interventions, both in presence and online mode, both in quantity and quality. (Frison D., Pellegrini M., 2020). These interventions, over the course of a decade, have undergone important evolutions, transforming from an impromptu and occasional activity to a service, with multiple purposes.

Rapid developments in technology and computer-assisted authoring systems have made new approaches to education possible. These technologies allow teachers and learners to create complex, multimodal texts, which integrate two or more different semiotic systems (Kress 2003; Kress and van Leeuwen 2006; The New London Group 1996). Multimodal communication engages learners in the use of digital tools to construct texts in multiple semiotic modes—including writing, images, and sound and allows learners to construct texts that communicate more richly (Jewitt and Kress 2003). There is increasing interest in engaging students with digital multimodal composition, focusing not only on language proficiency as it is traditionally conceived, but also on the strategic use of multimodal resources (Hafner 2015). Incorporating multimodal meaning-making more fully into education is crucial in the twenty-first century. Multimodality connects to students' lives outside of school, and it can increase students' motivation, identity development, and mastery of digital literacies (Kim and Vorobel 2017).

Digital stories (DS) are 2- to 5-min narratives created with a variety of multimedia components such as images, figures, audio, video, and animation (Gregori-Signes 2014). The availability of computers at school, together with advanced, low-cost, user-friendly multimedia editing software (e.g., iMovie, Movie Maker, WeVideo), makes DS a powerful learning tool which can communicate complex content and emotions across a range of modes. DS can engage students in critical reflection on their own experiences, develop their digital literacy skills, help them learn subject matter from the curriculum, and entice students to participate actively in learning. The subject matter of DS can vary from content knowledge of formal education to personal experiences (Robin 2008). Literacy development, especially second language development, can be facilitated by DS—when second language learners create digital stories to show their learning progress (Chrisholm and Trent 2013; Rahimi and Yadollahi 2017). Students are often asked to take videos or photos of their experiences and make digital stories out of those materials (Chrisholm and Trent 2013). Sometimes digital stories are also used for assessment.

The project hypothesis being presented focuses on the application of digital storytelling (DST) in the field of training and orientation.

This methodology is based on the use of stories to activate individual and group discussion and reflection in relation to certain strategic dimensions of orientation. In addition, storytelling can enhance individual resources and self-definition, which are foundational dimensions of autobiography (Smorti, 2002). The role of storytelling draws its strength as a container of meaning. By telling one's story, one is able to take stock of one's life, reappropriate one's resources and discover new ones (Batini and Zaccaria, 2002) without neglecting the contribution that telling one's own story has in promoting empowerment (Valastro, 2006) and the phenomena of profound evolution of one's self (Demetrio, 1995). Narrating oneself is a cognitive process through which the individual structures (in temporally meaningful units) experiences, assigning them an order and relationships. This same phenomenon occurs when listening to a narrative (Batini and Del Sarto, 2005).

Research could focus on developing new educational content for each type and according to the numbers and characteristics of service users. Regarding the management of practical activities, it could be useful to adopt a system approach by several institutional bodies (school,

university, other social actors). Finally, it would be extremely fruitful to strengthen career guidance activities in school and university curricula and in the professional life of every individual about to enter the labor market. This could foster the acquisition of a self-oriented style and mindset through new activities, thought patterns and values as a result of creativity, imagination and contamination. In the immediate future, precisely in this, good orientation practices could be engaged.

6. Conclusions

Digital storytelling is in essence the practice of using new technologies to tell stories. Interactive storytelling revolves around the idea of telling stories with different multimedia, including graphics, audio, video, and web publishing. Technological evolution offers the possibility of storytelling and sharing stories using multimedia files of all kinds. Furthermore, the internet offers both the tools and the channels for anyone to become an author of digital stories and to disseminate them. Digital storytelling means creating a harmonious weave of text, graphics, recorded narration-audio, video, and music-to present information on a specific topic. Therefore, in the field of guidance, using the digital formula can also represent a time for learning and technological literacy as well as for developing synthesis and research skills that are more challenging and creative than the traditional methodologies, generally used in schools. For this reason, digital storytelling applied to career guidance can be considered a significant experience not only for children/teachers but also for teachers who have the opportunity to integrate their tools and experiment with new modes of orientation, also becoming mediators and interpreters of the social processes triggered by digital narratives.

¹ Author of paragraphs: "1. The Italian context of orientation" and "5. Conclusion"

² Author of paragraph: "4. New ways of guidance through ICT"

³ Author of paragraphs: "2. Narrative career guidance" and "3. The figure of the career counselor"

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