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Abstract
In the current social scenario, in the face of substantial changes of economic kind, Europe includes among its guidelines for the construction of a society based on knowledge the promotion of strategies and skills aimed at favoring the employability of the individuals.
Given this, within the Sinapsi University Center activities, the Services for the Promotion of Employability (SPO) are born; they are addressed to newly enrolled students and about to graduate ones (LT, LM), to PhD students and PhDs as well as to new graduates of the University, proposing them a framing path in the role of professional, which is divided into three specific stages related to orientation (Career Guidance), professional promotion (Self Marketing) and job placement (Specialized Placement).
According to the perspective that orientation is a permanent educational task, the activities proposed by the SPO section, through the use of biographical-narrative methodologies, have the goal of promoting both self-orientation skills and self-design and self-redesign skills (Life Design), and are mainly realized through the group system, which becomes a comparison experience for the participants, activating the ability to reflect on their own vocations and career prefigurability scenarios. The latter turn out to be strategic for the acquisition of essential selection criteria for defining a personal professional project adhering to the context. In particular, the contribution presents a pilot experience carried out within the Course of Study in Speech Therapy, where the training activities proposed to the undergraduates in Speech Therapy have the goal of supporting the enhancement of professional curricula, through the narrative description of transversal skills and the knowledge gained during the university experience and not, so favoring a greater exploration of outgoing professional profiles.
With respect to professional development the undergraduates in Speech Therapy, through the use of narrative devices, succeeded not just in dealing with the experiential nature of learnings (recognized for their usability in other contexts) but also in assessing the interconnection of some transversal skills and abilities considered fundamental for the promotion of employability, namely:
-       applying knowledge and understanding, in reference to the the ability to apply the knowledge of the speech therapy process, within the rehabilitative setting, both in a simulated form and on the patient, also adopting above all the methodology of problem solving (clinical reasoning);
-       making judgments, that is, being able to know and apply autonomously the speech therapy process by using clinical reasoning (diagnostic and evaluation process) as a guiding tool to respond effectively to patient's health needs. The group considers this skill to be very important in the construction of one's professional identity;
-       communication skills and management of emotions, in reference to the ability to establish a significant therapeutic relationship with the person and an effective relationship with all the other professionals of the same or other disciplines.
Moreover, the recognition of the transversal skills owned by the undergraduates in Speech Therapy allowed them to realize and revise some of the main devices and tools of Self Marketing (curriculum vitae, video curriculum, infographic, etc.). It is clear that the employability of the

individual is not favored just by the formal level of qualification achieved; it is rather the mobilization and recognition of his cognitive, social and relational skills that allows him to make expendable the knowledge and skills owned. If we consider the challenges related to employability and innovations that young people will have to face in their future, academic training must invest in the development of meta-skills, engaging in giving the students not just "contents", but also the way in which mastering them (IFTF, Future Work Skills, 2020), making the individual learner at the center of didactic actions. From this point of view, the "narratological" training according to De Carlo can represent a strategic element as "doing training, in fact, requires listening to the stories of the adults in training" (De Carlo, 2015, p. 165). Narrating can inaugurate processes of imagination, emotional-cognitive elaboration, mobility, and enhances the skills and abilities of an individual. Experience is an opportunity for learning in every time and in every place, if it activates reflective-transformative processes in the individual (Mezirow, 2009). The need to certify the skills and knowledge acquired elsewhere requires to deal with the experiential nature of learnings, recognized for their usability in other contexts, different from the academic world (Striano, 2015, 2016). The narrative devices employed allowed to narrate and therefore make visible the skills and knowledge of the students. According to the OCSE a crucial role is played in particular by the competencies and in particular by the competency 3b, defined as "the ability to define and implement plans for life and personal projects" (OCSE/OECD, 2005). Assuming that narration is an indispensable device for the construction of meanings, it is clear how personal and professional prefiguration processes can be supported and explored in depth using oral or written narrations of experiences, through which the individuals give their personal meaning to such experiences, to the extent that the stories that people tell reflect the stories that people are (Mac Adams, 1993).

Experiential connections.
The core skills for employability in the personal and professional promotion process

In the current social scenario, in the face of substantial changes of economic kind, Europe includes among its guidelines for the construction of a society based no longer and not so much on knowledge, but on skills, the promotion of strategies to favor the employability of the individuals. The scientific community, in the human and social sciences, elaborated the strategic construct of "sustainable employability", with which we mean "the intertwining of the human, social and psychological capital of the person - mediated by situational variables - that allows the individual to place (or place again) himself within the labor market with a personal professional project adhering to the context" (Grimaldi, Porcelli & Rossi, 2014, p. 66). Therefore, the concept of employability calls into question the abilities of the individual, that is: "the set of skills, now regarded as crucial, to deal with the job properly and effectively: the ability to find work [...]; the ability to improve it (in terms of professional or career development); the ability to change it, either by free choice or by being forced by restructuring processes from some crisis or by the perverse effects of globalization" (Alberici in Serreri, 2010, pp. 13-14).

The *New Skills Agenda for Europe*, adopted on June 10, 2016 by the European Commission (EC), includes several initiatives aimed at favoring the development of a wide range of skills relevant and useful to labor market demands, with the purpose of promoting employability, competitiveness and growth in Europe (European Commission, 2016).

The Agenda aims to face the three challenges of contemporary economies identified by the Commission as the most relevant and urgent ones:

• the lack of appropriate skills to meet the needs of the labor market (both basic skills, in particular mathematical and digital, and transversal ones);

• the insufficient transparency and visibility of skills and qualifications, at local, national and European level;

• the difficulty of being able to predict and anticipate the skills needed.

School, University and the other educational institutions, alongside basic skills, that is, the general ones, which are transferable to several tasks, relevant for the training and the general professional preparation of the individual, and the technical-professional skills, that is, the ones which are highly specific and specialized, must deal with strengthening and enhancing all those soft skills that allow the connection of knowledge and abilities in relation to the context, and also personal resources, namely, personality traits (perseverance, precision and rationality), psycho-social qualities (team work and effective communication), dynamism, multidimensionality, systemic character, contingency and flexibility.

According to Morin, thinking about instruction and education in terms of skills and not just contents means teaching to learn throughout life, offering the individual the ability to situate knowledge in a context and to employ his resources to face the challenges of our open, global and inclusive society (Morin, 2001).

The current socio-working contexts ask the individuals to be ready to constantly change not just the places of the practice, but also roles and professional fields. The dimension of training in today's societies is increasingly characterized as a process of 'lifelong learning', aimed at acquiring and developing the skills needed to address the various tasks in life and work.

Training cannot be limited to preparing the individual for a definitive work, but must provide him with general skills that can be used in the society of flexibility, which requires everyone remarkable adaptability. Nowadays specialized skills are replaced by multiple ones, considered in terms of transversality as they require the individual the ability to implement behaviors beyond the specific professionalism.

The 'soft skills' or 'transversal skills' have become today the new directives of a training process that aims at excellence and that knows well how much competitiveness is globalized, both that of products and that of ideas. Today, however, they are precisely the 'soft skills' that weave all the conceivable interconnections linking the cognitive sphere with the emotional sphere, the ethics with the ability to organize, the spirit of initiative with the ability to communicate (Dorsey, 2004).

The *soft skills*, complementary to the *hard skills*, the latter known as the technical and administrative abilities concerning a specific profession, are also called 'transferable', in fact in the European Union document, *Transferability of Skills across Economic Sectors: Role and Importance for Employment at European Level* (2011), it is proposed an interesting articulation of the professional skills characterizing an individual with respect to his employment opportunities in the labor world and to the possible '*transition*' from one job to another (European Union, 2011).

This classification, which focuses on transferability[1] from one employment to another, both in a transversal and in a vertical sense, indicates the *soft skills* as the most transferable ones, since they do not refer to a particular job and so characterize the individual open to entering any professional field with a good personal preparation to face the challenges of employability (European Union, 2011).

The European Union document 'takes on a significant role as it has been noted a close connection between the transferability of skills and the risk of losing work and not finding another' (Pellerey, 2016, p.43), in fact all individuals with a broader range of skills, especially transversal ones, have a lower risk of unemployment during periods of economic crisis (Pellerey, 2016).

In *Enhancing youth employability: the importance of core work skills*, a 2013 publication, the ILO observes how the education and training policies of many countries are focusing on the 'core work skills' at the foundation of learning for life.

The *core work skills* identified by the ILO have been grouped into four broad skill categories:

- learning to learn;
- communication;
- team work;

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[1] With "transferability" we in fact mean the opportunity of employing some acquired skills, through a recontextualisation that entails a redefinition of one's skills baggage.

- problem solving.

Learning to learn covers knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities allowing individuals to set up, plan and achieve their learning goals and become '*independent autonomous learners*' (ILO, 2013, p.2).

Communication covers the ability to gain understanding from others - by listening, reading and observing, by using both formal and informal tools, oral and written - and to clarify ideas effectively (ILO, 2013, p.2).

Team work covers the skills needed to act smoothly and efficiently within a group, including the ones related to cooperation and leadership (ILO, 2013, p.2).

Problem solving concerns the analytical skills needed to evaluate information or situations and decide the most appropriate ways to deal with problems.

Some of these skills have been investigated, in Italy, by ANVUR (National Agency for the Evaluation of the university system and Research) through the experimentation of the TEst on COmpetencies (TECO), which aims to evaluate the level of *generic skills* acquired by Italian university students, focusing the study on reading skills, critical analysis, solving new problems of logical, interpretative or scientific-quantitative kind, and communication. As stated in the final Report for 2014 (ANVUR, 2015), these skills are at least as essential as the ones more related to the specific subjects of degree, which University must place at the center of its training activity, even because they are necessary for a better adaptability to the labor market and to the present and future life of people, and therefore fundamental for increasing personal employability and *empowerment* (ANVUR, 2015, pp. 14-15).

The path "Skills for employability" and the self-evaluation of transversal skills

Given the foregoing considerations, within the Sinapsi University Center activities, the Services for the Promotion of Employability (SPO) are born; they are addressed to newly enrolled students and about to graduate ones (LT, LM), to PhD students and PhDs as well as to new graduates and volunteers involved in the projects of the National Civil Service, proposing them the path "Skills for employability", with the goal of carrying out activities aimed at orientation (Career Guidance), professional promotion (Self Marketing) and job placement (Specialized Placement).

The idea of the operational staff of the Services for the Promotion of Employability (SPO) section is to propose a kind of training that promotes in the individuals the recognition and the enhancement of skills which are invisible, but strategically relevant in a rapidly changing global context. A training that may favor the creation of connections and relationships between individual knowledge, skills and performances.

Starting from reflections on the iceberg model of skills of Spencer & Spencer (1993) it was decided to realize paths to promote in the involved individuals a recognition of transversal skills and those aspects which are not immediately recognizable, which are thus at the basis of the iceberg, namely: self-image, motivations, hopes, values, attitudes, unlike abilities and knowledge that belong instead to a more superficial area. In fact, we see that while knowledge and abilities, acquired in the various formal, informal and non-formal contexts, are measurable, observable and therefore certifiable, self-image, motivations, hopes and values remain at a submerged and unaware level.

The work undertaken stems from the convention established, starting in 2016, with the Department of Neuroscience with the aim, at first, to support spaces for reflection on professional training and therefore to promote greater integration between technical skills, acquired in particular during the curricular internship, and transversal skills. At a later stage, it was decided to design and implement, on the basis of the emerged training needs, a Workshop entitled "Skills for Employability" aimed at the undergraduates, with the goal of making a first screening of the levels of perceived employability, favoring greater exploration of outgoing professional profiles and supporting the development of professional curricula through the narrative description of transversal skills and knowledge gained during the university experience.

In particular, the training activities proposed to the undergraduates in Speech Therapy have the goal of supporting the enhancement of professional curricula, through the narrative description of transversal skills and knowledge gained during the university experience and not, and so, favoring a greater exploration of outgoing professional profiles. In order to activate the recognition of skills it is proposed a narrative device (my self-evaluation map of transversal skills) which requires the individuals to identify on the basis of the various learning contexts (formal, non-formal and informal contexts) the related transversal skills acquired.

The proposed activities are carried out mainly through the group system - co-led by a psychologist and a pedagogist - which becomes a comparison experience for the participants, activating the ability to reflect on their own vocations and career prefigurability scenarios. The latter turn out to be strategic for the acquisition of essential selection criteria for defining a personal professional project adhering to the context. From a methodological point of view, the alternation of moments of individual reflection and group sharing promotes the activation and interconnection of personal and interpersonal skills. The production and sharing of the individual narrations produced within the "Skills for employability" laboratory allows the individuals involved to recognize all those transversal skills that are often invisible to the individuals themselves. The autobiographical narrative approach, thus, can shed light on those resources and skills that the individual often unconsciously hold and that can make the difference in a professional and social endowment (de Carlo, 2011).

We want to run through the various stages of the path realized with the presentation of collected data. The path was realized with a group of 28 female students, undergraduates in Speech Therapy, and it was structured in 3 meetings lasting 3 hours each. The meetings were structured through the articulation of 5 work sessions, namely:

- start of a first focus group with the students;
- individual administering of the Avo Giovani questionnaire (Inapp, ex Isfol, 2016) with the aim of detecting the level of perceived employability (internal potential of employability);
- start of a second focus group on the topic: "Which transversal skills for the employability of the speech therapist?";
- use of the two narrative devices *My skills patchwork and my self-evaluation map of transversal skills* to promote a recognition of transversal skills (Capo, in Striano & Capobianco, 2016);
- individual and group return with particular attention to the aspects related to the recognition of soft skills, and to self-marketing strategies (CV, etc) and the prefigurability of outgoing professional profiles.

During the first focus group, through some initial input, the students were invited to explicit their training needs; in this context, it emerged clearly the need to identify specific work spaces with the aim of recognizing the professional skills gained, acquiring a vocabulary to promote them and make them visible even within the CVs. The need to connect knowledge and skills and, therefore, to consolidate the application of the acquired knowledge and to develop a greater awareness of one's professional goals is connected, by the group of undergraduates, to the anxiety related to the end of the course of study, enabling immediately to the health profession of speech therapist. Although the didactic organization of the Cds in Speech Therapy provides wide spaces for curricular internships, the undergraduates share the need to experiment more with activities that can support thought processes about their professional action. It certainly emerges the need to take more advantage of experiences and contexts that give the opportunity to *learning to apply knowledge*. In scientific degree courses, in fact, the nexus theory-practice is strongly expected and, therefore, the students expect a didactic organization that supports such expectation and that devotes specific spaces to training through experience. Somehow the students express the need to "put their hands in the dough", that is, to practice within internships and experiences where they can "taste" what the exercise of a certain professional profile entails. The work carried out in the second meeting has been started on the basis of a stimulus question with the goal of activating in the group a reflection

on the transversal skills gained in the various learning contexts (formal, non-formal and informal). Starting from the variuos experiences gained so far as part of one's curricular internship, through the brainstorming tool, the students were asked to identify the transversal skills characterizing the professional figure of the speech therapist. The management of interpersonal relationships has been identified by the group as one of the most characterizing Life Skill. The relationship with the patient, with particular reference to communication skills and emotional management skills, is the context in which the students declare they have initially encountered greater difficulties, while the management of the relationship with the tutor is connected to the need of developing an ability for autonomy of judgment increasingly more autonomous; still, the management of the relationship with the university institution represents in the group's experience a further learning context in reference to the ability for mediation and management of conflicts and work stress.

In a second moment, in which it was planned the use of the two narrative devices *My skills patchwork and my self-evaluation map of transversal skills*, the students succeeded not just in identifying the skills acquired in the various training experiences, but also in grasping interconnections between the 4 different macro-categories of transversal skills, namely, management, relational, cognitive and organizational skills. Regarding management skills, a fundamental aspect it's certainly the self-awareness and, therefore, the knowledge of one's emotions and thoughts. A self-awareness that supports the orientation to the goal and, therefore, the ability to define clear goals, engaging in view of their achievement. This last element is connected to the handling of one's emotions that leads to know how to draw on one's resources in order to get self-determination in times of difficulty: *"Dance allowed me to acquire a good control of my body and myself, especially in stressful situations: in fact, I'm able to keep high the concentration even in particularly insidious conditions. [...] Moreover, dance, although a largely individual discipline, allowed me to place trust in other people, rely on them, and in the presence of a competition, honesty and respect for others go first. [...]"; "For several years I practiced volleyball. I learned that in order to win, it was not important the ability of the individual but the collaboration of the whole team: being a team means being individuals who aim to achieve a goal, the same goal, working in harmony. This ability is a fundamental requirement for a speech therapist working in a team"*. Among the relational skills, central it's the empathy, that is, the ability to listen and know how to communicate, adapting the content and the form on the basis of the interlocutor, or better, of the needs of the interlocutor: *"A few years ago I started my voluntary activity at the Cisom (Italian relief Corp of the Order of Malta). From this experience I developed various relational skills, since the role of volunteer implies the desire to understand others, hence, the ability to listen, understand and respond to feelings and concerns of others even if not expressed or partially expressed, therefore, the ability to work in a group"; "Being a student of speech therapy meant to be a student and a trainee at the same time. As a student I attended lessons, I learned notions and took exams. As a trainee I attended outpatient visits, evaluations and rehabilitative treatments and performed them myself. In both the roles I learned a lot, but during the internship I learned something one doesn't learn in books: the relationship that is established between therapist and patient. It is a complex relationship where one must not fall into excessive involvement but not even be too detached. You need to find a fair balance allowing you to be empathetic and to have an adequate professional detachment at the same time"*.

Regarding cognitive skills, it is underlined the importance of problem solving, which involves the ability to devise appropriate solutions to handle complex situations; in turn, the solution of problems is connected to creative thinking, and, thus, to the skill that allows us to identify alternative solutions, through the recognition of inedited connections: *"Everyday we are faced with situations to be analyzed and decisions to be taken, planning at best the interventions to be performed in favor of the patients"*.

From this point of view, organizational skills are considered indispensable to move from an idea to a concrete level. It is called into question the planning that arises from the need to segment a situation into several sub-problems to identify the material and human resources to be activated;

connected to planning is the ability to manage time (time management), that is, to set priorities and meet deadlines: *"During the internship in the university hospital company of the University Federico II, I acquired good professional technical skills, transferring the theoretical knowledge gained during the course of study to the practice of speech therapist. Moreover, I refined the operational control, planning and time management skills, having to carefully compare the progress of the rehabilitation project with respect to the deadlines set by the company"*.

Therefore, the narrations allow the students to identify and experience connections between the various transversal skills, to revive future perspectives. This process is particularly important in a transition phase, like the one that undergraduates in Speech Therapy live: *"The feeling you get when you graduate is of enormous satisfaction and happiness, but there is also a sense of disorientation! One feels to be without experience and so one feels the need to practice a lot and try to understand how the labor world really works, and unfortunately we have no way of learning that at university. I aim to practice a lot, both through post-graduate internship and through the first therapies in full autonomy, therapies in which there is no one to tell me what to do, but aware of the importance of asking for help from more experienced colleagues, also beginning to rely on my independent judgment"*.

Thus, with respect to professional development the undergraduates in Speech Therapy consider fundamental the development and promotion of the following skills, which are essentially interconnected:

- *applying knowledge and understanding*, in reference to the the ability to apply the knowledge of the speech therapy process, within the rehabilitative setting, both in a simulated form and on the patient, also adopting above all the methodology of problem solving (clinical reasoning);
- *making judgments*, that is, being able to know and apply autonomously the speech therapy process by using clinical reasoning (diagnostic and evaluation process) as a guiding tool to respond effectively to patient's health needs. The group considers this skill to be very important in the construction of one's professional identity;
- *communication skills and management of emotions*, in reference to the ability to establish a significant therapeutic relationship with the person and an effective relationship with all the other professionals of the same or other disciplines.

Conclusions

What soft skills do students have and what should they have?

In 2015, the OCSE produced the report *Skills for social progress. The power of social and emotional skills* (OCSE, 2015), in which it is presented not just the synthesis of the work done on the role of socio-emotional skills, but strategies to improve them are also proposed. The effects of skills on individual well-being and social progress are taken under consideration, and how these socio-emotional skills can be facilitated through specific programs and didactic practices.

The report agrees with the studies on emotional intelligence arguing that interpersonal skills can favor career success, that they are necessary for team work and to foster the ability for dialogue in an intercultural environment (Goleman and Boyatzis, 2008).

So, if on the one hand economic discourse is the most powerful engine to favor the development of soft skills in the university curriculum, on the other we must not forget how important it is to promote social, ethical and moral education among students, respect for diversity, tolerance and empathy.

Today, however, more and more, regarding the logics of supply and demand, we hear of the *'skill mismatch'*, that is, the mismatch between the skills required by the labor market and the ones that students acquire in universities (OECD, 2015).

In a society in which the only constant element is change, skills also change incessantly and are always in constant evolution. The ones that were valid in the past become obsolete, swept away by

the changes and transformations introduced by the advent of the liquid society (Baumann, 2000), by the *disruptive innovation* (Christensen and Bower, 1995), and by the hybridization of the various domains of action and knowledge.

Academic training must therefore be concerned with all of this; if we consider the challenges related to employability and innovations that young workers will have to face in their future, we need to think of a training that gives them not just "contents", but also the way in which looking for them.

Today the society of skills must invest on meta-skills, as the individual must never lose sight of the global and holistic vision (IFTF, *Future Work Skills*, 2020). Consequently, it is clear that the employability of the individual is not favored just by the formal level of qualification achieved, as it is the whole of his cognitive, social and relational skills that allows him to make expendable the knowledge and skills owned.

From the interesting research of Mc Kinsey&Company, *Education to employment: getting Europe's youth into work*, (2014) a worrying situation emerges: the unemployment that was already twenty years ago, has certainly worsened today due to the crisis, but it should not be underestimated the fact that today '*education providers*' do not adapt training to the needs and demands of the labor market, and therefore they do not take into account all the dimensions of the problem. The results of the research show that the latter mostly offer a type of theoretical training appropriate for achieving good job positions, but they do not provide those *soft skills* that more and more employers seek and consider indispensable. A too theoretical and not very practical training is the real barrier that limits access to work; the problem must be solved by moving toward different paths: better communication between university and the labor world, greater flexibility of training, encouragement to update training and finally synergistic dissemination of good practices, especially the ones dealing with orientation. There is a strong need to revise the role and functions of the guidance practice; as action of support to the individual, orientation must be configured as a tool of active labor policy to promote employability. With this in mind, the orientation associated with the theme of *employability* is directly intertwined with the urgent dynamics of a labor market that prescribes new and more effective methods of supply-demand *matching*, as well as a reformed professionalism. It is therefore important to be able to mediate between the needs of the labor market, in continuous transformation, and personal and professional planning, through paths that must be offered by training institutions themselves.

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