1. VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE AND ADULT EDUCATION. AUTONOMY IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF ADULT LEARNING

Guidance is inextricably linked to the process of the education of mankind, in that it represents a form of "re-segmentation" aimed at redesigning the transformative processes of human growth. In fact, it deals with a process of cultural self planning, socially and in the work environment, which is contextually expressed in the process of constructing one's own cultural identity; the quality of knowledge and interactions the individual establishes with items of culture and the origins of ideas, which mature with education, on culture and knowledge of the importance attributed to same and the role believed to be played in the dynamics which will preside over and accompany the transformation.

Based on this assumption and as indicated by Morin, according to whom «the single worthwhile knowledge is that which is fuelled by uncertainty and the sole thought which lives, is that which is maintained at the temperature of ones own destruction»349, the following pages seek to consider vocational guidance in the perspective of specific human development, to be understood in terms of the 'duration' of a lifetime that is developed in the dialectic between continuity and discontinuity, above all when attention is turned towards a specific use such as vocational guidance.

The adult, as an individual in evolution, in "transaction"350, in growth, is an individual in education and as such, whatsoever his social and economic conditions, whatsoever his culture, ethnicity, religion, age, needs to direct and re-direct himself in the complexities of the world of work and the general conditions of life. The adult is an individual living in transition and transition represents the spaces through which evolution and transformation are achieved. These are the spaces of action for adult educational vocational guidance351 which is developed in the process of adulthood.

Guidance and education are processes which «arise in the direction of the integral and integrated construction of the person»352 therefore focusing and recentralising the attention on the educative value of guidance in adulthood, signifies exceeding certain reductionistic visions linked to simple predispositions of informative services, in favour of «development of specific adult guidance needs, differentiated in relation to the specifics in life history (personal biographies) and the related professional problems (difficulty in finding employment, loss of employment, necessity of altering ones own profession, etc.)»353.

The transition education-employment, which specifically characterises the vocational guidance sphere, represents one of the most important spaces in educational action in the life of an individual, the dynamics which characterise this passage – as well as those recursive (employment-education-employment), necessary for professional updating and redevelopment – may not be interpreted following unique and exclusive approaches, in themselves functional, which are aimed at evaluating the rapport between costs and benefits, or determinable and

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352 I. LOIODICE, Non perdere la bussola. Orientamento e formazione in età adulta, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2004, p. 70.
353 Ivi, p. 72.
structural, aimed at evaluating the process based on personal and contextual variables. From the educative point of view, attention should be given to the process itself, to the continual dynamics of discontinuity which characterise these phases of passage, to the dynamics of the breach between personal and professional identity and therefore the world of daily life, in which the individual experiences continuity and discontinuity, rational and emotional, between private life and working life, between personal aspirations and actual possibilities of professional development.

Refusing the approach aimed at considering the guidance «of the perspective of aid, on the service added to the educative activity, although extensive in the scholastic curriculum or in the entire span of the life of the citizen»354, guidance does not configure as an external intervention, even when attempting to connect the reference to social reality with that of the world of subjectivity, nor lends to respond to solicitation from social and economic sectors and businesses which hypothecate this fundamental space of educative action into an economical function which frequently vexes the collaboration of a certain physiological practice.

Guidance directly concerns the instance of autonomy, an instance which educational reflection sides with in a teleological sense, promoting same as an objective of educational action and contemporarily, deeming it a precondition for the realisation of individual and social emancipation: the operator of guidance which defines autonomy as a teleological tenet in the actual practice of operator, has to be able to exert a task of unsegmented reflection which only educational theory may guarantee. Educational practice does not pursue autonomy as a function of an abstract principle of freedom, but fuels those dimensions of mankind to become those which create, in autonomy, the precise figure of a responsibility which is expressed in the capability of choice. Autonomy as freedom of choice, which signifies preventive power of choice, acting therefore as a beginning and end of the educational process355; it follows that guidance as an educational practice acts on those dimensions which allow for objective autonomy, the tenet of the guidance process «educate to choose is firstly, [...] educate to plan»356.

As it is not «assertion of an abstract of absolute liberty, but knowledge of being-in-situations»357, autonomy requires the individual to have the capability of learning to learn358 which is the result of deuterolearning representing, according

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356 I. LOIODICE, Non perdere la bussola, cit., p. 70.
357 E. CORBI, Orientamento come formazione, cit., p. 68.
to Bateson\textsuperscript{359}, the generative sources of the perspectives and models of organization of experience. Autonomy, therefore, manifests as capability of guidance and choice in a field of determining possibilities and that it is connected to knowledge of the whole conditions in which each individual lives and acts\textsuperscript{360}.

Autonomy as «capability to distinguish and self guidance, represents the necessary assumption and the constitutive element for the "weaving" of the experiential process»\textsuperscript{361}, therefore an intervention, a project, a policy, in general the practice of vocational guidance, requires that the individual is able to exercise metacognition\textsuperscript{362}, to develop «autonomy as a competence»\textsuperscript{363} and the capability of giving a sense to what is and what will be in the rapport with others and in different contests\textsuperscript{364}.

The capability of managing the processability dynamic of the cycle of personal and professional life is inherent to that particular form of knowledge which is based on the capability of metacognition which manifests in the first instance, in the form of verbalisation of knowledge and cognition of cognitive phenomena and delineates as learning knowledge and autonomous capabilities of organization of ones own learning and constructive processes of knowledge.

According to an educational vision – which transfers the attention to simple cognitive acts in the management of cognitive and relational activities (which is contemporarily rational and emotional\textsuperscript{365}) – the metacognition competence arises as an unavoidable conditio to the approach to a more sophisticated level of reflection (or reflective models of thought\textsuperscript{366}) on which interventions of educational

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{360} See I. SALOMONE, \textit{Il Setting pedagogico. Vincoli e possibilità per l'interazione educativa}, La Nuova Italia Scientifica, Roma 1997.
\item \textsuperscript{361} E. FRAUENFELDER, "Ingegneria pedagogica" per la costruzione di ambienti di apprendimento, in M. R. Strollo (Ed.), \textit{Scienze cognitive e aperture pedagogiche. Nuovi orizzonti nella formazione degli insegnanti}, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2007, p. 29.
\item \textsuperscript{363} E. FRAUENFELDER, "Ingegneria pedagogica" per la costruzione di ambienti di apprendimento, \textit{cit.}, p. 30.
\item \textsuperscript{364} See A. ALBERICI, L'adulto, le sue transizioni: orientamento e apprendimento lifelong, in P.G. BRESCIANI, M. FRANCHI (Eds.), \textit{Biografie in transizione. I progetti lavorativi dell'epoca della flessibilità}, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2006.
\item \textsuperscript{365} M. CONTINI, \textit{Per una pedagogia delle emozioni}, La Nuova Italia, Firenze 1992.
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vocational guidance are focused. In fact, when the adult is induced to seek the sense of what is and what will be in the rapport with others and in different contests, it is not only the metacognitive logic which activates the interpretative procedure of self and the world, it is thanks to reflection that an adult may develop autonomy, as reflecting takes note of the limits of knowledge creating an educative space to construct and re-construct possibilities of opening to the new. The passage of metacognitive knowledge to reflective management of ones own constructive processes of knowledge may come about during the structuring of the processes of vocational guidance managed as experience of "meaningful learning". 

According to de Mennato, comprehending the reasons of ones own choices, which is the main objective of any intervention of guidance, signifies «entering completely in the exercise of metacognition»368. Therefore, the practice of vocational guidance may not pass through the acquisition of simple techniques of metacognition. Neither can it be limited to the metacognition technique. The operator has to therefore accompany the leaner in the choice and the use of the more appropriate strategies to confront the experiential situations, supporting those processes of reflection which may accustom the thoughts of the individual to critical scrutiny of multiple possibilities.

Managing the practice of vocational guidance according to these educational instances, signifies thinking of guidance as a «whole initiative, activated in educational relations, which contribute to construct the development of human personality, considered in the reality of – biological, social and cultural – contests which de facto surround the field in which these may exercise their own liberty of choices»369. From this point of view, vocational guidance does not represent a field of abstract possibilities, in that the active role of the learner in the construction of his own course of professional development, is not absolutised but is experimented as a research process through the relationship between operator and the learner. Thus the real world enters into the practice of guidance as "ground" «on which it is possible to develop an educative relation which is really such, in the meeting of different readings of reality which refuse such hurriedly relativistic conclusions, as equally hasty tentatives of reductions and a sole point of view to follow the illusion of a valid absolute and never ending objective»370.

For this reason it is possible to define vocational guidance as a practice of education for work, work as a project, a form of learning, as an identity dimension, 

368 P. DE MENNATO, Il sapere personale. Un’epistemologia della professione docente, Edizioni Angelo Guerini e Associati, Milano 2003, p. 133.
369 E. CORBI, Prospettive pedagogiche tra costruttivismo e realismo, Liguori, Napoli 2010, p. 102.
representing an educative space which needs the rational action of guidance in view of lifelong learning. Thus, the operators of vocational guidance should thoroughly investigate the ever closer twin between «development of learning potentialities, acquisition of knowledge and competences for life and work and lifelong guidance», so that

Guidance is not only a system to improve the gap between capability and aspiration of those about to enter into the workplace and the professional positions available. It is a process with systems of action which allow every individual to discover his own path between such different opportunities, and to do so many times in his lifetime, in comparison to work, employment is ever more fragmented, of a short duration and with short term prospects.

Alberici identifies lifelong learning as an instrument, which is at the same time a path and the essential condition of activities and paths of guidance. Therefore dealing with guidance and in particular with vocational guidance, signifies dealing with the processes of learning in adulthood. In recent years adult learning has been extensively studied, to such a point that scientific research had produced numerous interpretative models of different modes through which the adult learns, among which the studies of self-learning, on self-directed and experiential learning, assume particular importance for the reflection contained in this article, as well as studies on the theme of learning organization, of situated learning and the Communities of Practice and those on transformative learning and reflective practices.
Recognition of international literature in this sector allows operators of vocational guidance to acquire a set of prospects, strategies and practices of interventions aimed at supporting the development of capabilities of «educational self-challenge»\(^{378}\) of a young adult preparing for this important phase of transition between instruction and work. Should the prime objective of actions of guidance with the adult become «the activation of conditions which allow all to recognize and reflect on ones own personal, social and professional story, to identify strong points as well as weak points, and to criticise such shortcomings but also the resources possessed»\(^{379}\), it is evident that the educational nature of the intervention of guidance as expressed as actions of promotion of the individuals in competences of self-education, thanks to continual and permanent exercise of the strategic competences of learning to learn.

2. GUIDANCE AS EDUCATION

When educational science decides to interrogate itself on the processes of vocational guidance where necessity operates an epistemological choice, it places itself in the field of a perspective of educative research, on work practices as practices of learning\(^{380}\). In this specific field of work research, it is understood as significative anthropological experience which invests the totality of the person (emotional, logic, and ethic) and is therefore thematically positioned as space of educability.

Educability is the essential condition for the development of educative practice in that it inserts criteria of possibility of education. A person who thinks of his work is educable in the available measures and actively and knowingly undertakes a path of self-education.

The practice of guidance becomes an educative practice when it contributes to support the development of attitudes and tensions of self-education. Guidance towards learning represents one of the six principles of andragogy\(^{381}\) which

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\(^{379}\) I. LOIODICE, Non perdere la bussola, cit. p. 77.


\(^{381}\) See M. S. KNOWLES, E.F. HOLTON III, R.A. SWANSON, op. cit.
invite the expert in guidance to realise activities in which the learner should be in
the condition to
- detect the need for knowledge;
- recognise self concept and feel it to be valued;
- actively use previous experience to interpreter the situations of uncertainty
compared to those met in the course of life.

Actions of this type may not be realised if the operator is not able to instil in
the individual, the availability and motivation to learn.

It is in the light of such principles that the operator working with an adult
learner has to keep account of a series of factors which inevitably influence the
learning processes implemented by the guidance path the individuality of the
learner, the particular situations, objectives and aims of learning, which are real-
ised during the experience of guidance, resulting in the necessity of managing the
guidance practices according to some coordination of a methodological type:
- beginning with definition (following reflection) in the needs of guidance;
- evaluate the concept in itself favouring availability towards the construction
of a autonomous personality;
- recognise experience as a indispensable resource for the development of
new learning;
- activate processes of reflection of research in availability and learning which
are recognised as a need for knowledge and know how;
- focus on real life with guidance towards learning;
- stimulate intrinsic motivation.

Deweyan pragmatical teachings tells us that the departure point in the process
of adult guidance is representative of experience\textsuperscript{382}. For this motive the pro-
grammes of guidance should take into account the dynamics of ways of trans-
formation adopted by the adults to think of themselves and the world. Accord-
ing to Mezirow an adult who learns is an individual who interprets experiences in
that learning signifies utilising a significance which we have already constructed,
to direct our way of thinking, react and hear regarding whatsoever we are living
in the present. Finding a significance means to give a sense, or coherence, to our
experience. If, as suggested by Mezirow meaning is a form of interpretation, in-
terpretation is a critical elaboration of experience\textsuperscript{383}. This is the main characteris-
tic of adult learning, to critically interpret experience through reflection on mean-

\textsuperscript{382} See J. DEWEY (1938), \textit{Experience and Education}, in J.A. BOYDSTON (Ed.), \textit{The Later Works

\textsuperscript{383} See J. MEZIROW, \textit{op. cit.}
ing schemes and meaning perspectives utilised by individuals to interpret the world. \footnote{Transformative learning inscribes the learning experience in the real world and orients the process of learning in the problematic complexities of that world. In the processes of learning and construction of knowledge individual being taught constructs specific meaning perspectives, that is to say complex group of meaning schemes. Referral to the perspective is functional to the explanation of the learning process in terms of interpretation: learning something means to attribute meaning to a new experience utilising meaning perspectives and meaning schemes available. Transformative learning allows the adult to reconstruct those perspectives and schemes constructed to define the new which act as a heuristic trail consenting the interpretation of facts and the definition of actions.}

Living the paths of vocational guidance with the view of self-education means elaborating a competence of the use of schemes of referral, by which the individual observes and interprets his own experience, knowing his own learning is a dialectical process of interpretation conditioned to a preconceived set of expectations. In this sense, guidance assumes a fundamental measuring function allowing the individual to utilise these epistemological competences which induce him towards transformative learning and therefore to reinterpret a remote or new experience, based on a new set of expectations, giving new meaning and new perspectives to that experience.

Based on this restructuring there are reflective procedures, thanks to which the individual may identify and analysis socio-cultural perspectives and schemes to identify distortions or rigidity and therefore transform them. The competence of critical thinking has, in fact, the objective of favouring the change of significant personal perspectives and learning: learning by which the adult reflecting on their self-image, seeks to change their self-concept, to bring into discussion internalised rules and to reinterpret behaviour according to this new perspective.

Classified within this framework, the role of guidance consists in encouraging the individual to consider alternative perspectives of his personal, social and professional life, examining his own values, beliefs and behaviour. If the adult learns through the reflection on meaning schemes and meaning perspectives, vocational guidance as a practice of adult education is not exclusively realised through the experience conveyed by learning, taking form above all from different contests of daily life including occupation.

With reference to adult learning, which is always an interpretation of experience, the theory of transformative learning lending to an efficient integration
with the model of epidemiology of professional practice by Schön\textsuperscript{386}, offering significant indications for the construction of hypotheses of vocational guidance.

Considering the project of the professional life of the adult in education in terms of educational self-challenge, it is possible to propose practices of guidance which focus on the processes of "awareness"\textsuperscript{387} of the learner. If the need to understand the experiences is the most peculiar characteristic of the human being\textsuperscript{388}, vocational guidance must answer to this need guiding adult learning towards the management of change, stimulating the availability of the individual to transformation and to the metabolism of change through reflection on experience.

Through the subjective re-description of the experience, reflection favours the transformation of an undetermined situation into a heuristic trace subject to inquiry\textsuperscript{389}. In the construction of one's own path of research aimed at professional development, the adult uses different levels of awareness not all explicit and knowledgeable\textsuperscript{390}. For this reason the approach to reflectivity becomes a necessary halt in the path of vocational guidance which want to represent an experience of personal and professional self renewal to the learner.

The adult is an individual who resists change. As already evidenced, according to Mezirow the adult learning stands as an occasion for the construction of new meanings produced by the modification of the perspectives. Therefore, the objective of the practice of vocational guidance is that of favouring the learner in the development of an enmity towards transformative learning. The method which most lends itself in answer to an objective of this type, is that of reflection, as this brings attention to "deuterolearning"\textsuperscript{391}. Schemes of behaviour produced by deuterolearning are usually resistant to change, above all as they are closely linked to the personal identity of the individual.

One of the main functions of reflection consists in the valuation of previous learning, passing to the examination of the foundations and justifications of personal beliefs. Many adults who live the experience of vocational guidance often discover doubt in the veracity, validity or authenticity of certain assertions relative to their professional identity. The tentative to resolve these doubts, through the reflective method, induces the individual, supported by the guidance of the

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\textsuperscript{386} See D.A. SCHÖN, \textit{The Reflective Practitioner}, cit.
\textsuperscript{388} See J. MEZIROW, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{391} See G. Bateson, \textit{op. cit.}
operator, to utilise reflection as a transformative function for the construction and the management of knowledge and competences.

As reflective rationality refunds the adult a sense of his perspectives, beliefs, and proposals in the courses of vocational guidances it may act as a heuristic method, thanks to which the learner is aware of the epistemological conditions on which to construct his professional identity. To succeed in this objective, it is however necessary that the individual is placed in the conditions to begin and realise a project of inquiry on his personal and professional epistemology.

De Mennato maintains that knowledge «is the history of an individual – of every individual – and his being in the world, and is, therefore, inseparable from his transformations»392. On this interpretative line, if for epistemological we mean the way in which each single individual or a collective (such as a work group) constructs, negotiates and uses knowledge, it is inevitable that the 'epistemic positions' change according to the processes of construction and destruction of the knowledge which the single and collective activate from time to time. From here therefore, the necessity to reflect on the whole of the perspective assumed by the individual, in cognitive processes and the way in which knowledge itself is represented, constructed and destroyed and therefore negotiated and transferred in a situation in the terms of 'use'.

In this respect, workshops on vocational guidance result particularly efficient. Dealing with a path on which the individual realises the experience of reflection on his knowledge and his professional competences. Such paths are proposed on a border line between inquiry on personal epistemology in that the learner reflects on knowledge and professional competences, referring to the work procedures which represent the field of referral on which to exercise reflective rationality. The field of reflection on which to act is, as noted, are implicated processes of learning and construction of knowledge which determine processes of destruction and reconstruction of the 'epistemic assets' of knowledge consolidated, in the procedure of actions almost standardised in that it is the fruit of experience. Such processes are translated into new procedures which favour the configuration of knowledge as a method of interpretation in the fields of action.

It therefore deals with an investigation study on a twofold epistemology, on one hand an investigation on personal epistemology in that the individual focuses on the rapport which the single maintains with reality, their epistemological position compared to same, the privileged cognitive models and strategy, beliefs, representation and theories ('naïve' or common sense) regarding knowledge, its values and substantiality; on the other hand it investigates on professional epis-

temology\textsuperscript{393}, in that the individual focuses on the processes of construction, transferral and use of knowledge suitable for his professional profile, thus as has emerged from the analysis of work practices, these are in themselves experiences developed spontaneously through, of work experience/internships and employment.

Considering the role and functions which cognitive processes perform in professional activity\textsuperscript{394}, a young adult or an adult addressing an intervention of vocational guidance is offered to the operator as an entity in continuing education. As can be reasonably thought, transformative learning is difficultly achievable and the objective which moves the proposition of reflective laboratories for vocational guidance is not that which guarantees the learner with the possibility of the transformation of meaning schemes and meaning perspectives, rather than supporting the processes of reflection on experiences aimed at experimenting the methods of transformation, redefining himself and his own projects in working life in terms of educational self-challenge.

This could generally be the scene on which one could connect the actions of guidance and placement put into action by operators of guidance who have a professional profile strongly characterised by educative skills. It is evident that, from this point of view, a net distinction between fields and contests of action by different professional figures, who for various reasons deal in guidance have no reason to be hesitant. In fact, in this perspective the multidimensionality of guidance practices, is recognised as an educative practice and one postulates, coherently, a guidance function in the educative practice which imposes a system of training and work for the educative professions, to give recognition to this specific competence.

3. PLACEMENT AND VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

The literal translation of the English word placement is "the act of placing". From an educational point of view and referring to recent transformations which assail universities and institutions no longer being just education, research and didactics, placement may also be read in terms of a vision more than an actual action of work placement. According to the thesis argued in this paper, placement does not begin when the university student has concluded his cycle of study. The action of vocational guidance is planned, coordinated and monitored


beginning with university guidance, that is to say when the university offers such a contrast of qualified superior instruction and particularly significant compared to specific professional fields.

The Italian university system is painstakingly seeking to maintain the right equilibrium in its mission, or dimensions, which range from research to didactics, from social leadership to production. It is precisely due to this last mission (never separated from the others) that it assumes particular importance the system of job placement activated in universities.

Many of the job placement services offered by universities are presented as services of placing graduates into the work place, offering a support to students in respect to guidance in leaving the university path, to facilitate the beginning of a professional career for graduates. This deals with services which cater for graduates and businesses. Graduates are offered the chance to combine the course of studies taken with a professional profile requested in the local, national and international workplace, providing concrete aid for placement in the workplace with the objective of reducing hiring time. Businesses are offered the chance to create an intermix request/offer complying to their needs and to the skills of the graduates leaving university, with the evident advantage for businesses to reduce time and costs in the search for personnel and their direct involvement beginning with the definition of educative courses which answer to their actual professional needs in the world of work.

The offices and personnel employed in job placement therefore perform an activity of guidance post-university; organising internships aimed at new graduates and individual interviews of guidance when leaving university, manage the rapport with businesses, provide a service of information and welcoming in the request for work and internships which are received from the business, send information to businesses regarding the professional profiles of university graduates, provide consultations of identification, from a list of graduates, one with a professional profile coherent to the needs of the same business. Offer the graduates an accompanying course to prepare to manage, in a competent and autonomous manner their own active research for employment, giving support when drawing up a curriculum vitae, in the definition of their own professional project and in the participation and selection of work, promoting initiatives aimed at multiplying the opportunities of guidance to work, through the organization of presentations to businesses orientated at placement, by seminars of guidance to work and through the diffusion of entrepreneurial opportunities.

These offices and personnel are usually entrusted with interventions of vocational guidance which generally aim for the acquisition of the means necessary to better deal with the world of work and professionals. The services offered are different. Some are listed below.

Training and vocational guidance workshops for graduates, graduates and students of post lauream courses aimed at supplying the learners with information
and advice on different aspects: active research of employment, processes of selection of personnel, letters of presentation, selection interviews drawing up of *curriculum vitae* analysis of competences, contractual conditions of the workplace.

Events such as open days and career days represent important moments of meeting and confrontation between students' universities, graduates and businesses, institutions, professionals etc. After an initial company presentation there follows a meeting with the responsible for Area Recruiting allowing the students/graduates present, the opportunity to submit their own *curriculum vitae* and have their first work interview, acquiring information but above all, testing their knowledge of their professional choice, through the reflection on their own profile and on their own attitudes which during this experience are objective and reified.

More directly conductible to the informative function of vocational guidance, are the services finalised towards the research of information in the world of work, on businesses and professions, with data on employment, budget, manuals to learn how to write *curriculum* and letters of motivation, magazines of guidance. There are also web services which supply students graduating and graduates with a list of web sites which focus attention of the opportunities for work, on professional profiles, on the possibility of rendering the *curriculum vitae* more visible and the reading of newsletters with suggestions on training and opportunities of employment.

On the level of university guidance there emerges, from more, the need for more decisive interventions from the Government, to aid the pupils of senior schools and their families in making the appropriate choices with respect to the university course to undertake and to support placement services when leaving.

Data of the XVI Almalaurea report on the profile of the Italian graduate of 2013 are still negative and show a worrying scene with respect to the number of those enrolled and the number of graduates, in spite of the fact that the Italian university system results to be more efficient in its general functioning; from 2011 the quota of youth completing their studies in time has grown and lecture attendance has increased while the level of graduate satisfaction regarding programmes and lecturers has notably improved.

One of the aspects which needs to be still worked on is representation in the fields of core skills, key skills and cross competencies. The report reveals that in Italy employers consider the specific disciplinary competences acquired by graduates good, while key skills are totally insufficient. The possibility of supplying adequate key skills depends on the manner in which the activities of the course of the study programme are managed. Graduates' perception is clearly positive for all the seven key skills considered: to resolve problems, analysis and summarise

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395 See https://www.almalaurea.it/info/convegni/bra2014/materiale.
information, formulate judgement autonomously, communicate efficiently, learn in a continual manner, work in groups, be enterprising. Even more than 90% of the graduates consider that during the course, four of the seven key skills were supplied in a consistent measure: skills relative to the capabilities of the analysis and summarisation of information, learning in a continual manner, formulating judgement autonomously and communicating efficiently.

A perception of key skills is influenced both by personal characteristics and by the characteristics of the degree course. Among the personal characteristics, being enrolled in a degree course driven by cultural factors both professionalising factors and to have positively valued the study course concluded, are elements which increase the probability of positive perception of key skills. Only limiting to certain key skills and with different effects, instead, are significant results also in other factors: genre, social origins, work during studies, lecture attendance, activities during internships, university results, the rapport between other students. Among the characteristics of the course the factors which influence the positive percentage on all the competences transversally are the fact to have attended a second level course, to have attended many lectures with interactive didactical models and to have studied in a southern Italian university.

The possibility of studying abroad, participating in the Erasmus programme or with other study courses recognised by the university, have significantly improved. A study on the experience of studying abroad, revealed that the experience abroad during the academic path and recognised in the course of study, are mainly Erasmus experiences of a short period (maximum one year) effected mainly in Spain, France, Germany and the United Kingdom to develop linguistic competences, improve ones own future prospective, other than seek study and work opportunities. Despite the reduced availability of scholarships and the insufficient contribution, on average (approx 250 Euro) a month 76 graduates out of 100 registered as satisfied and the experience was considered significant. More than half of those interviewed who had taken part in an experience of studying abroad, were currently employed (in Italy or abroad) and for 18% the experience abroad had been fundamental when finding employment.

Italian universities showed to have improved the quality of their educative offer, enhancing not just the performance of the university system. Nevertheless, the general data contexts remain alarming; from information gathered by Alma-laurea in recent reports there emerges a fall in enrolment, a serious problem which regards each nation and which has to be confronted and not undervalued. Above all in the light of the last Ocse, enquiry, according to which the individuals who have lower literacy level are those more affected by this crisis. It therefore results fundamental to reinforce and evaluate every more the politics and strategy of guidance.

A useful means by which universities may answer to the mission of increasingly more professionalism in the educative courses, is represented in work expe-
rience/internships. According to data published by Almalaurea the experience of work experience and internships are widespread during a Bachelor's degree less in Masters. Internships applicable in the education of 60 graduates out of 100, is a fundamental experience for a student allowing for more possibilities in the working world. In fact, graduates who have had work experience have 13.6% more probability of finding employment, in respect to those who do not have this educative opportunity on their curriculum.

4. EDUCATIONAL COUNSELLING FOR VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

One of the more significant actions of vocational guidance from an educative point of view is counselling. This practice is normally used with the learner at the end of the university path, after graduation. A large number of personnel involved in this activity, often lacking a professional educative profile, declare that vocational guidance is a practice finalised at answering the specific needs presented by the learner to accompany him/her to a definition of their own profession, however they are lacking the necessary educative competences to perform some functions; form an appraisal of competences, strengthen capabilities to plan. In hindsight, it deals with typical objectives of the practice of an educative type, which «is addressed in the proper sense to the adult world […] promoting the chosen competences»396.

Educational counselling may represent a valid support tool in the reflective process of young adults preparing to enter the workplace or the adult returning to employment following a period of further instruction. This practice configures as adult education and may offer the learner the opportunity to explore, discover and clarify the schemes of thought and action inherent to actual professional profile compared not only to requests from the workplace but also and above all compared to the real chances of professional development, followed by personnel available for the transformation, and to educational self-challenge. It is essentially a study of research, listening to oneself and comparisons in the world, aimed at increasing ones own level of knowledge. The education counselling intervention therefore, stands as a moment of specialised support and strengthening (within a path having solid educative characteristics in all the course of its performance) in which the consultant – in this case has to be an educator – temporarily takes over in support in the process of development of the professional career, in particular in the beginning and in the phases of professional updating e/o retraining. Through a relationship which intentionally transforms the representations the learner has of himself, his environment and the rapport with same,

compared to his professional standing. This means for operators of guidance to work on educative plans which go further than the classic reference to aid: focusing on action is the investigation on professional identity (see § 2) and intervention is connected to the area of individual empowering.

Education counselling in vocational guidance privileges dialogue as an instrument for reflection: διάλογος is that which comes about through and by means of thought. Dialogue in the practice of vocational guidance begins not when the operator/learner is found in the learner/operator setting of guidance, yet rather when the first queries on what to dialogue with the other. Thus, finding himself in front of the learner, the education counsellor has to ask the question of how the individual, through a pre-reflective condition, founded on implicit knowledge, not validated, will arrive at a reflective condition, aware of what he knows and can do in a professional perspective.

Establishing reflective conversation groups of people of different ages, culture and cultural standing sharing one or more training needs could be of assistance: starting employment, redevelopment, job seeking etc. Group work is particularly efficient in realising processes of destruction and reconstruction of one own professional identity. In such an educational setting, the educational counsellor first of all, performs a function of co-ordination in the role of 'facilitator' of communication, having the intention of acquiring from the learner a critical spirit and reflective capabilities. To assume the perspectives of another person, his personal way of thinking as a professional, his awareness, competences and attitude, means to be able to see his point of view and that of others, placing himself in the position of an external observer: this is the essential condition on which to hone attention on his own professional development.

One of the privileged ways to active processes of this type of reflection, is that indicated in the autobiographical approach which allows to combine knowledge by oneself, in a reflective process of continuing education: this use of biography allows for the telling and therefore the representation of the outcome of the story.

Narration is the educative means utilised in the auto-biographical approach: as an interpretative and cognitive means which man adopts in his life experi-

397 See P. FREIRE, op. cit.
ence, these allow to give voice and set an object of reflection shared with knowledge and professional competences possessed and those to develop further, such as through simulation, role playing, focus group, recounting critical events and "stories of war", discussions on videos and films. Experiences of this type determine the construction of collective knowledge product of the sharing of common experience of reflective learning, aimed at the transformation of meaning schemes and meaning perspectives adopted to deal with professional development.

To allow the learner to work on his own levels of knowledge, the operator has to stimulate the identification of the meaning schemes connected with the perspectives adopted: representing the whole knowledge, beliefs, judgement of values and sentiments which are shown in the experience of vocational guidance that he is living. Adopting a deformed look and taking distance from his own experience, every individual can generate new reconfiguration of his own professional identity, thanks to the dynamic of negotiation meta-cognitive and conversational meta-communicative which activate tras-formative processes of the meanings generated by reflection. So, for example, a young graduate who has just finished a work experience post lauream can distinguish his ideas on a certain type of employment which he feels prepared for (his explicit theory of work, learned and processed) and the theory implicitly implemented during the experience of work experience conducted in a business, that is within a community of practices.

In such paths of vocational guidance, doing becomes the object and at the same time product of thought. Doing a certain type of work for which one is prepared follows a path of study, meaning, in fact practice professional actions of reflection. Courses of educational counselling point at furnishing the learner with a professional meta-competence of a type transversal in truth to that when living the work experience, as a continual process of inquiry, to be achieved in transaction with materials present in the situation. If the young graduate referred to above, during the work experience encounters an unexpected situation which interrupts the planned course of work experience, he finds he has to redefine the situation to reduce and delete the sense of uncertainty connected to the new situation. This situation determines a state of uncertainty and this uncertainty plac-

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401 See J. MEZIROW, op. cit.

402 See E. WENGER, op. cit.
es the graduate in a position of reflective conversation with the situation\textsuperscript{403}, identifiable with inquiry\textsuperscript{404}, so configuring as a heuristic knowledgeable process mediated to the reflection of the situation and on his way of knowing himself and the reflection on the course of action which allows the activation of a reflective conversation with the situation, from which may emerge new knowledge, capable of redefining his own meaning schemes and perspectives, or to supply confirmation of his professional actions deriving from same meaning schemes and meaning perspectives of adopted in that specific situation.

In the example above, vocational guidance as an educative practice is realised by consultancy given to youth during all the course of work experience post lauren\textsuperscript{405} not only at the beginning or the end of the course. This deals with courses of comprehension of ones own professional identity to cope with through the access to knowledge of ones own professional self, in the attempt (not easily followed) to learn and confront with the fallibility of ones own interpretation, beginning with critical analysis of the personal heuristics adopted to decide, from time to time, and how to perform a certain type of job or which job one feels suitable for.

The passage from wishing to be a certain professional, to being a professional is mediated by heuristic processes of awareness, of reflection delineated as interviews with the problematical situation. Every problematical situation becomes exemplary and beginning with this, it is possible to re-write a personal story and share it, fruit of a "meaningful learning"\textsuperscript{405}, active mediate process of reflective conversation with oneself and with the contests of life and work which represent the community of learning permanent generating knowledge situated.

Educational counselling for vocational guidance – of which in this paper we have only slightly mentioned – is surely inserted in a significant manner in the panorama of activities, realised by the educator in guidance. The specifics of such an activity is represented by the chance to contribute, in a skilful and professional manner, to support the process of research and continual redefinition of the professional identity of the learner. It is an activity realised by the educator, being the professional performing intellectual functions, using his own scientific autonomy and own deontological responsibility, by the use of cognitive instruments specific in theoretic and methodological order. As the practice instigated by a professional expert in the management of the educative practice is endowed by professionalism allowing him to recognise the 'codes' of reflective rationality, vocational guidance counselling may be considered as an educative practice in itself the proprium of guidance as education.

\textsuperscript{403} See D.A. SCHÖN, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, cit.
\textsuperscript{404} See J. DEWEY (1938), *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, cit.
\textsuperscript{405} See D.P. AUSUBEL, *op. cit.*
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