
Impacto del Proyecto AEi: Adultos, Empleo e Inclusión *Impact of the AEi Project: Adults, Employment and Inclusion*

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Edita Universidad de Oviedo



Universidad de Oviedo



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Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Oviedo

Edificio de Servicios - Campus de Humanidades

33011 Oviedo - Asturias

985 10 95 03 / 985 10 59 56

servipub@uniovi.es

www.publicaciones.uniovi.es

ISBN: 978-84-18482-58-8

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THEMATIC AXIS: 6. CHALLENGES, NEW PROFESSIONAL PROFILES.

6.2. PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION: A CRITICAL APPRECIATIVE MODEL FOR PEDAGOGUES AND SOCIAL EDUCATORS

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ABSTRACT

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a strength-based approach of Action Research created in 1980 by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva. The AI derived its theoretical fundamentals from Social Constructionism that believes “words create worlds” through conversations and dialogues between human beings. The AI analyses every process focused on what works in organizational contexts in order to promote a positive change process. AI has been applied in the fields of business and higher education. Recently, in Romania, Stefan Cojocaru led an experimental work using an appreciative supervision approach with social workers. He stated that results have been promising to increase the effectiveness of social supervision with practitioners and, secondly, with their clients. During my doctoral studies I conducted an Action research using a specific approach of educational supervision and Appreciative Inquiry as a framework. I lead cycles of supervision for various groups: university students of degree courses in Education Sciences, social workers without degrees and practitioners, pedagogues and social professional educators. I progressively improved the practical proposal of the social educational supervision approach. This speech offers an overview of results of the conducted Action Research and about the possibility to use the AI framework as a kind of supervision in social educational settings. The presentation also gives some examples about limitations and opportunities of this approach.

KEYWORDS: pedagogue; educator; supervision; appreciative;

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite a convergence towards educational theories and practices, an exclusively pedagogical orientation supervision today in Italy is rare, judging by the pilot sample of my preliminary survey of supervision carried out for the following study. The central focus of the psychodynamic models, is mainly on problems arising from the relational transference between client and professional. This kind of methodological approach sees the role of the supervisor as that of a correction of the professional’s functioning. The didactic learning objectives focus more on professional practice and the analytical one on the development and personal history of the professional concerned (Rock, 1997). The choice between models largely depends on the intended goal of supervision. The support for professional competence can take the form of one-to-one or group consultations. In

the latter case, organizing supervision meetings can be entrusted to an expert supervisor or to a group of senior professionals who question each other in what Hawkins defined as ‘intervision’ (Hawkins & Shoheit, 2012) and that in part characterized the proposal of the CCAII model described in this speech.

2. JUSTIFICATION AND INTEREST OF THE TOPIC

The justification of this research concerns a recent Italian legislation which began to define and recognise in law the professional profiles of pedagogues and specifically the socio-pedagogical professional educator with consequent implications for training.

A survey of available national and international sources revealed an inhomogeneous professional profile of these professions between the different European states regarding the study programmes and the roles and functions performed by socio-pedagogical professionals. With the Italian school reform of law 107/2015, implemented in 2017, an integrated education system was established from birth to age six. The uncertainty arising from an the absence of a unified professional policy, and the consequent disorientation of people employed in the pedagogical sector, already identified in the research by Paolo Orefice (Orefice & Corbi, 2017) were further confirmed by a survey of over 70 meetings of professionals meeting regularly as a network called ‘The Pedagogical Café’ which this author founded in 2015. It evidenced the feelings of disempowerment induced by the lack of representation at the institutional level, the scarce availability of resources and professional tools that can be used in the field, and the perception of a subordinate role compared to other professionals in multidisciplinary teams. The narratives of participants pointed out an orientation towards detecting shortcomings and risk factors in how they handled situations rather than highlighting and enhancing their competences and latent potential. In view of these findings, it was deemed useful to test the device of socio-educational supervision as a possible way of responding better to the need for better legitimation, technical-operational competences and not least the mental and physical health protection of pedagogical professionals.

3. STATE OF THE QUESTION

On the subject of supervision, research in Italy has not been launched at an academic level and this study represents the first attempt to address and evaluate the importance of this tool in the daily professional practice of social educators and pedagogists. Although the debate was also vigorously conducted in England, Scandinavia, Germany, Austria, Switzerland and the Netherlands, it was the latter that inaugurated the first training course for aspiring supervisors back in 1955. Cultural diversity gave rise to a multitude of models with two main orientations (Osvat, 2014):

1. The Anglo-Saxon model. Centered on administrative and control functions of the supervision process, it is aimed at institutional tasks, focusing on the evaluation of services rendered by the operators. The supervisor is generally internal and a member of the operational or managerial staff with direct responsibility for the quality of the service to users. This model is adopted mainly in the United States but also in European countries such as Romania.

- The European Model. Of Dutch origin, it focuses on personal development and learning of skills by the operator and is the first model that identifies the supervisor as a professional outside the agency. It addresses the support for professionals on two interconnected levels of self-improvement, it examines professional intervention methods in the helping relationship, and it supports the professional in dealing with personal aspects concerning anxieties, difficulties, turning points and inevitable mixes between the individual experiences of the operator and the projection of the latter on the narratives of their users that influence the quality and effectiveness of the helping relationship.

4. OBJECTIVES

The objective of the present action research was to identify a possible pedagogical and positive orientation approach to professional supervision. The Appreciative Inquiry framework turned out to be suitable for producing the desired change of perspective by recontextualizing the basic scenario of the participants, from problematic assumptions and representations of deficits in helping relationships with service users to the enhancement of successful experiences capable of furthering the acquisition of constructive skills in their respective professional contexts.

5. METHOD

Pre test phase	Intervention phase	Post test phase
<p>Exploratory survey - Elaboration and administration of a questionnaire on the topic of supervision (101 responses received)</p> <p>Organization of 8 research groups, 4 experimental and 4 control for a total of 64 participants (29 GS / 35 GC)</p> <p>scheduling of supervision; meetings signing of privacy and consent to supervision statements</p> <p>Presentation and administration of scales Spencer & Spencer and Perceived self-efficacy in managing Complex problems</p>	<p>Five supervision meetings for each group (GS and GC) every two weeks</p> <p>Duration of the meetings 2 hours</p> <p>Exploration - This phase aimed at detecting signs, codes and expressions that are biographically structured participants and their implicit values (Orefice, 2006) - .</p> <p>Intervention - Starting from the experiential, conceptual, emotional, reflective worlds of the supervisees, the most suitable intervention profile emerged for responding.</p> <p>Data collection: audio recording, ethnographic transcription, first analysis and understanding of the processes</p>	<p>After five meetings - Administration of the scales as in the pre-test phase Analysis of the meetings - Type of feedback between the supervisor and the participants and vice versa; circularity and rhythm of exchanges; elaboration of empathic references structured on different levels; alternative working hypotheses; conscious re-elaboration of emotional experiences.</p> <p>Implementation of the supervision approach based on the circularity of the investigation process: Diagnosis - Planning - Action - Evaluation.</p>

6. RESULTS

The feedback obtained, despite the limited sample analyzed, confirmed the encouraging results already obtained in the field of professional supervision of social workers in a comparable study in Romania (Cojocaru, 2010).

With reference to the second research question, some characteristics of the experimental approach to professional supervision with an Appreciative orientation have been outlined. The intervention device shows some distinctive elements of the supervision model applied attributable to a continuous exchange between theory and practice.

- The use of a CC.A.I.I perspective: Critical-Comparison Appreciative Inquiry - Integration.
- The importance of the three Rogersian conditions.
- The presence of generative questions
- The use of positive language
- Constant S.E.P. orientation

Further details will be provided during the conference.

7. DISCUSSION

The development and verification of a model of professional supervision intervention was based on the analyses of data and feedback collected in the field. The narrative units extrapolated from the protocols of the supervision meetings express in detail these requirements of supervision in different situations and professional contexts. The work therefore responds to the challenge, always present in the educational field, of reaching a synthesis between theoretical disciplinary knowledge and professional practices. The development of a supervision approach, included within a theoretical-methodological framework of the Appreciative type, allowed me to identify a professional support device capable of enhancing the educational work process, in its positive, constructive and propositive dimensions. without denying those problematic aspects which continue to receive the right attention and consideration by the supervisor and supervisees.

8. LIMITATIONS OF THIS WORK

The limit of my research concerns the number of participants at the inquiry and the necessity to adapt this approach, from time to time, to the requests of professionals. It is at an early stage and must be progressively implemented. It also needs to identify some kind of measures of its effectiveness.

9. CONCLUSIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

In conclusion, these research findings help to fill the gap in literature on the need for and form of pedagogical supervision in socio-educational contexts, the need for which in Italy becomes urgent in the light of recent professional recognition and the spread of forms of self-employment in the not-for-profit sector.

10. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

This work will be published at the end of this year.

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