Strategie per la disoccupazione strutturale: un approccio alle capacità per l'orientamento

Strategies for Structural Youth Unemployment: a Capability Approach for Guidance

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Lo scopo di quest'articolo è di presentare un approccio innovativo all'orientamento scolastico e professionale. Si parte introducendo le cause strutturali della disoccupazione in Italia, per poi presentare il modello australiano di orientamento e le riforme che sono state introdotte in Italia sul tema. Successivamente si descrive un intervento di Change Laboratory realizzato nel 2012 in Australia che viene proposto come modello di orientamento basato sull'approccio delle capacitazioni. I diversi stakeholders partecipano attivamente generando una qualificazione formativa dell'orientamento basata sull'agency. Questo crea per gli studenti nuove capacitazioni sui possibili percorsi di carriera di studio o lavoro che vogliono intraprendere. Attraverso questo processo di dialogo pubblico informato si dà voce agli studenti, contribuendo così a formare lo sviluppo di un piano di vita personale verso percorsi formativi e o lavorativi, e questo processo è guidato dai valori degli studenti e delle loro comunità.

The aim of this article is to present an innovative approach for guidance. The article starts by introducing the structural reason of unemployment in Italy. It presents the Australian model of guidance and the new reforms on guidance which are being introduced in Italy. It then describes a Change Laboratory intervention carried in a vocational setting in Australia in 2012, which is proposed as model of guidance based on the capability approach. The different stakeholders actively participate in the process thus creating a formative characterization of guidance based on agency. This creates new capabilities for students on the possible career paths they want to undertake. Through this process of informed public dialogue, the students are given voice and contribute to shape the development of the personal life project into further education or work, and this process is led by their values and the values of their communities.

INTRODUCTION

This article draws from the Capability Approach of Amartya Sen (2000), an approach concerned with human development. Implicit to these works there is a commitment for social justice. According to Sen, human development should be based on the realization of the capabilities and wellbeing of the individuals rather than the search of mere wealth. Capabilities are defined as a set of opportunities which people own to fulfil various functionings that they may have reason to value. In education, this means that capabilities aim to guarantee students with a range of opportunities rather than simply granting entitlements. Agency freedom, that is the possibility for individuals to carry out the changes they value, is central

to the idea of capability. Agency freedom becomes an important goal of vocational education and training (VET) and guidance, since students should be supported in their autonomy and abilities to make choices rather than just be provided with a set of skills. Informed public dialogue becomes a cornerstone for identifying capabilities. A key consequence is that students should have their voice represented and heard instead of be provided with ready made solutions. Vocational education is often perceived as means of providing students with a set of skills; here education and guidance are redefined according to a capability approach, thus enlarging the objectives of VET to inclusion and diversity, and empowering the development of the life project of the individual.

After having discussed the structural issues of youth unemployment in Italy, the article shows that in Australia is emerging a need for guidance policies based on the activation of the student and the participation of the stakeholders of the school and the district. A change of the Italian guidance policies is proposed. These should be based on the development of the students' capabilities, as highlighted in the research conducted in Australia using the "Change Laboratory" methodology (Engestrom et al., 1996). Results from this project suggest that guidance according to a capability approach is based on the students' freedom to realize.

1) YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT: STRUCTURAL DEFICIT IN ITALY

In April 2014, Eurostat highlighted how youth unemployment in the Euro area stabilized at 23.5% from previous 23.9% in April 2013. At the same time Europe 28's youth joblessness dropped from 23.6% to 22.5%. It is important to note the differences between group of countries such as Germany (7.9%) or Austria (9.5%) and the Southern European countries, which have been strongly hit by the economic crisis, such as Greece (56,9%), Spain (53,5%), Croatia (49%) and Italy (43,3%). A study carried out by McKinsey & Company (Castellano, Kastorinis, Lancellotti, Marracino, Villan, 2014) states that these occupational differences are due to structural imbalances stemming from the lacking communication between school and industry. This report underlines diverse factors that should be tackled to overcome the structural youth unemployment:

a) *Youth joblessness (between the age of 15 and 29) depends only in part on the recent economic crisis.* On the contrary, this phenomenon has been affecting Italy for a long time, and has a structural nature. In the last twenty years the probability for a young person to be unemployed has been 3.5 times higher than an adult, while in Europe this ratio is 2. The structural component represents 40% of the overall youth unemployment rate, and it derives from the mismatch between the current and future needs of Italian the economic system in terms of human capital.

b) *There are three main causes for the difficult transition between school and work environment.* The first reason is structural imbalance between what enterprises request

and what young people choose. Many positions in the country are vacant, despite the number of unemployed.

The second reason is the general lack of competences needed by the economic system. Only 42% of the Italian enterprises think that youths have an adequate preparation to work, and 47% (against 33% of the European average and 18% of UK) believe that such lack has a negative impact on their activities. Furthermore, industries complain of the shortage of both practical experience and general skills, hence not only the mastery of foreign languages and numeracy, but also analytic skills, entrepreneurship and ability to work both alone and in teams, ethics and professional deontology. The third reason for difficult transitions is the inappropriate career building services: 80% of the unemployed under the age of 30 years old search for a job through their network of friends, relatives and acquaintances. Only one third of youth make use of institutional channels, while in Germany this percentage is 80%. In Italy, friends and relatives are still the most popular way to find a job for 23% of the graduates and 43% of the undergraduates. Filling an application for the prospective employer is also popular. Only 1% of youth's hiring is done through public channels such as the public employment services.

c) *A guidance program able to integrate the national and the local level does not yet exist in Italy.* This should take into account the local districts and specific industry sectors, thus operating in different ways. This calls for a number of strategies: an instructional, vocational and educational system able to match the industry requests, a widespread and transparent information system on guidance, the appreciation of technical and vocational training, a close cooperation between school and work - i.e. companies involving student and teachers and schools involving entrepreneurs, career guidance services for students together with strong pathways for employment.

The next chapter compares the Italian structural youth unemployment with the Australian context. Despite unemployment rate is much lower in Australia than in Italy, Australia shares with Italy some structural issues, especially in the transition from school to work in vocational education and training.

2) COMPARISON OF YOUTH'S EMPLOYABILITY BETWEEN ITALY AND AUSTRALIA

On the surface, Australia and Italy would appear to have adopted very different approaches to the structuring and delivery of their upper secondary education systems. In Italy, the delivery of university preparatory education and vocational education has, traditionally, been delivered within the context of very different and specialized upper secondary schools, ranging from traditional "grammar school" providers (licei) to occupation-specific or industry-specific vocational and technical schools (istituti professionali and istituti tecnici). More recently, all upper secondary schools have been accorded a parity of status in terms

of their role in qualifying young people for university entry, although in reality there continues to be significant differentiation of roles and curricula amongst the schools. By way of contrast, the Australian system of mainly comprehensive high schools locates both university preparatory and vocational subjects within the curriculum structures of the unified senior secondary certificates offered in each state.

If, however, we apply the concepts of education logic and employment logic (Iannelli & Raffe, 2007) and the type of welfare state (Murray & Polesel, 2013), whether neocorporatist (coordinated economy) or neoliberal (liberal economy) to these systems, we may note that there are considerable similarities between the Australian and the Italian cases. Bosch and Charest (2008) argue that differences in the way that skills formation is structured and delivered in different nations are related to the forms of capitalism which exist in different systems. These perspectives, which allow us to assess the importance placed on education or employment in vocational studies and the role of actors such as industry, employers' groups, chambers of commerce, trade unions and epistemic communities, suggest that Australia and Italy are more similar than might be expected.

Ianneli and Raffe's (2007) model distinguishes between those systems which deliver vocational studies to young people within a framework of apprenticeship training (combining both paid work and school-based studies) and those systems which deliver vocational studies within a predominantly school-based delivery model. The former – adopting an "employment logic" – is typified by nations such as Germany, Austria, Netherlands and Denmark. It requires significant input from employers and the social partners and depends on the type of close linkages between government and industry which Bosch and Charest regard as typical of neocorporatist approaches to the welfare state model of capitalism. By way of contrast, the school-based delivery model of vocational education adopts an "education logic" which does not include training in the context of paid work, though it may contain aspects of unpaid work experience or work placements. Here the linkages between government, schools, the social partners and industry are weaker. There is both less input on the part of industry into the design and delivery of the vocational qualifications and a lesser dependence on the skills and qualifications which it produces. This approach sits comfortably within the political framework of a number of systems which have adopted more neoliberal approaches to capitalism, such as the UK and the USA.

Using these frameworks of analysis, both Australia and Italy share the characteristics of predominantly school-based delivery of vocational education and training and relatively weak linkages with industry and the social partners. Apprenticeships play a minor role in the training of young Italian workers and a minor and declining role in the training of young Australians, despite recent rhetoric that the primary objective of VET in Australia is to meet the needs of "businesses, industries, communities and individuals" (Darwin, 2006, p. 57).

In Australia, it might be noted that the quality of the transitions of school completers directly into the labour market constitutes a significant weakness of the Australian approach. Recent surveys of school leavers in Australia (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD, 2013; Department of Education and Training, 2013) have found that while most young people make a relatively successful transition into university, vocational education and training and apprenticeships, about one-quarter make a direct entry into the labour market, where they are either unemployed or are relegated to mainly part-time, casual work in low-skilled and low-paid jobs, predominantly in hospitality and retail (DEECD 2013, Polesel et al. 2013). This phenomenon has been documented by Castles et al. (2010) and others as an emerging 'precariat' (Castel, 1995; Standing, 2011), made up of young people in insecure jobs with mainly short-term contracts or no contracts, with poor conditions and little training or professional development. While comparable data for Italy is difficult to locate, the high levels of youth unemployment in Italy suggest that the situation may be similar.

Moreover these patterns of transition negatively affect some groups of students more than others, with young women who are entering the labour market more likely than young men to be in part-time, casual work, with its associated insecurities, and young people from lower socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds more likely to be relegated to part-time work and unemployment. There is also evidence of regional disadvantage, with students who live outside the large capital cities like Melbourne and Sydney more likely to enter the job market directly out of school and consequently more likely to find themselves in part-time work or to be unemployed. A recent study further suggests that rural school completers are twice as likely to defer a university offer, citing costs, distance and the challenge of relocating to a big city as major barriers (Freeman et al., 2014).

In both Italy and Australia this has translated into unacceptably high levels of youth unemployment – 13.2% in Australia (Trading Economics, 2014a) and 43.3% in Italy (Trading Economics, 2014b). Importantly, in both countries this also reflects a relatively high differential of youth to adult unemployment of 2.1 in Australia and 3.1 in Italy.

Basing on the evidences above, the policies for guidance become strategic to characterize the relationship between school and work.

3) MODELS OF GUIDANCE IN AUSTRALIA

The provision of career guidance is increasingly recognised as an important element in improving the quality of these transitions from school (OECD, 2004; Miles Morgan, 2011), reducing the cost to both individuals and to society of poor career choices (OECD, 2004; Sweet et. al., 2009), including the costs of poor productivity of working in a job to which one is not suited, employer hiring

costs, course delivery costs and time spent in inappropriate courses (OECD 2004; Benjamin 2006, cited in Sultana and Watts, 2007).

Quality career advice can also improve labour market efficiency by creating better alignment between the needs of the economy and the profile of the work-force (Access Economics, 2006; Sweet et. al., 2009). This allows young people to make better choices, for example, by electing to study for a role in which there is a shortage of qualified staff rather than one in which there is an oversupply; that is, they increase the alignment between supply and demand (Bimrose, Barnes and Hughes 2008, cited in Miles Morgan, 2011). Further, such programs can enhance students' employability skills (Beddie et. al., 2008, cited in Miles Morgan 2011).

Career development is usually seen as comprising careers education, careers advice and guidance, and work-related learning (Hutchison, 2013). Careers education is usually delivered as a separate subject in the school curriculum, as a core component in another subject or through infusion across all subjects. It includes exploration of the student's needs, interests and abilities, the development of skills to support transitions through various forms of work, and the provision of information about careers and the labour market. By contrast, careers advice and guidance comprise one-on-one discussions that support students in identifying career needs, career pathways and appropriate responses. Typically these will be provided by a careers counsellor.

The services which comprise career education are normally carried out in one of three ways: wholly through the school; wholly through external providers (funded separately by government or subcontracted to a third party); or as a combination of the two, with schools and external providers working in partnership.

Traditionally, most provision of career development services for school students in Australia has been carried out by the school (OECD, 2004). The strengths of such an approach include the fact that provision allows for developmentally-appropriate activities that support students across a number of years, with the careers education component often commencing in early secondary school, allowing students to build their skills and knowledge gradually as they mature. Also, career education delivered as a subject, or as a component within a subject, has the capacity to increase substantially students' knowledge and skills of work for a fraction of the cost of one-on-one counselling. It also allows for the integration of career knowledge with the broader school curriculum, allowing students to build a better understanding of, for example, how mathematics is needed in managing finances for a business. These connections not only support better quality decision making for students, but also increase student engagement and achievement in school (Hooley et. al., 2011; Lapan, Gysbers and Sun, 1997; Lapan, Gysbers and Petroski, 2001; Lapan, Gysbers and Kayson, 2007). Furthermore, school-based careers staff usually have detailed first-hand knowledge of the complexities of the senior secondary curriculum and a broad, long-term

knowledge of students, their backgrounds and their levels of achievement spanning the student's time at the school that can allow them to tailor their delivery. Finally, the location of careers services on site at their school may facilitate student access.

However, there are also weaknesses in the Australian approach of school-based career development for school students. For example, a number of researchers have identified weaknesses in relation to the provision of information about pathways directly into work and into vocational training. Several studies of school-based provision have found that the provision of information to students tends to be skewed towards information about university courses, with less information provided around vocational education and training courses and work-related options (OECD, 2004). Sweet et. al. (2009) found that provision of senior secondary course-related information in some secondary schools was strongest for courses articulating into university but weaker for students studying vocational subjects. The OECD (2004) notes that schools' efforts are often focused on those aspiring to a university education and that many careers teachers feel most comfortable with this approach given their own predominantly academic backgrounds.

A further weakness of this approach is that schools' own funding and accountability requirements may subtly influence the advice and guidance provided by school-based staff, so that this advice may not necessarily be in the students' best interests. This can lead to schools advising students to stay in their school to maintain enrolment numbers (even if this is not in the best interest of the student) or conversely advising them to leave the school should their academic performance be regarded as a potential liability for the school. Finally there is evidence that where the career counselling role is combined with a more general counselling role in schools, there are considerable risks to quality delivery. Sweet et al. (2009) note the research evidence that attention to the career guidance needs of all students tends to get squeezed by organisational pressures to attend to the personal and social needs of the few, particularly those leading to behavioural problems within the school; such attention as there is to the needs of all tends to be on course choices, with little attention to their longer-term career implications. (p. 27)

This suggests that, while the Australian approach has some strengths, it also displays some apparent weaknesses, and that a partnership model, which combines both school-based and external elements would be preferable. Such an approach would require schools to be responsible for some areas of career development but to partner with external agencies for other elements of provision. Sweet et. al. (2009) see this ideal model as providing "structured links to external resources and programs, including state and area based and local or community resources and programs, and the integration of these resources and programs into the career development curriculum" (p. vii).

The data emerging from the analysis of the Australian context suggest re-thinking the guidance policies basing on both a better involvement of the local district and an active capability of the student. These are the two major tenets discussed below to reshape the guidance policies in Italy.

4) RETHINKING GUIDANCE POLICIES IN ITALY

The monitoring report of ISFOL (2013) highlights how in Italy the frame-work of placement and guidance services organized by the regions are rather un-even from both norms and services viewpoint. The ISFOL report therefore calls for a erventions are visible particularly in terms of empowerment of services and increasenational policy in regards to guidance that can stop fragmented actions, practices, services and professionals. Recent interventions in guidance policies, which are in line with European lifelong directives on guidance, have shown the importance of systemic approaches. These int in quality of the services provided, as well as improved coordination and integration between systems and subjects of training and job market. The national Italian guidelines on guidance were ap-proved by the Unified Conference State-Regions in December 2013. They repre-sent an important step in the ongoing process for the definition of the National System of Permanent Guidance in education, professional training and employ-ment[86]'. The actions proposed in the Italian guidelines on guidance deal with a multi-level governance[87] and entail:

a) The resource coordination and interventions at several levels in order to overcome the fragmentation of interventions;

b) The support to the development of the local, regional and national net-works on guidance;

c) The sharing and development of instruments and technologies to create a homogeneous network of information and support on work and training offer;

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[86] The main features recognized to guidance in the guidelines are: the educational role, aiming to develop the self-management skills, helping individuals to manage autonomously their career; the informative role, to empower the individual's ability to select and evaluate the owned infor-mation and look for new information; the accompanying role to specific transition experience, supporting the ability to make choices and monitor their progress during transitions in order to contrast failure; the consultation role, to support the individual ability to make personal planning in a work related domain; the systemic function (technical assistance, training of the personnel, quali-ty insurance, research and development), to back the quality and effectiveness of the actions of guidance in each local context.

[87] Coherently with these guidelines, a public consultation in 2013 for school workers empha-sized the centrality of territorial networks for the construction of partnerships between school and enterprise linked to the local networks for lifelong learning. These are included in the Agreement of December 2012 about the policies for lifelong learning.

d) The provision of a monitoring system of evaluation of the guidance policies;

e) The accreditation of the guidance services and competencies validation of the operators;

f) The promotion of a coherent guidance offer thorough the local networks from the diverse systems (school, training, university, work and social policies);

g) The support to the development of a continuous process of innovation of instruments and shared intervention methods.

Within the school system, in February 2014, the MIUR - Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research, put forward the national guidelines for a lifelong guidance, developed according to the National Guidelines on Guidance agreed upon at inter-institutional level with Youth Guarantee within Europe 2020. These Guidelines replace a previous version of 2009, and point out the value of guidance with respect to school and work transitions and the value of lifelong development needed by the individual to adapt to constantly evolving contexts. The document also emphasizes the importance of teaching guidance needed to acquire basic and interdisciplinary competencies. It is also highlighted the value of consulting and help that can be provided during transition for individual or group specific needs[88]. The document clarifies that schools have the responsibility to promote guidance actions aiming to support the student's choice, hence favouring personal and professional success, social inclusion and work employment. Moreover, schools have to empower cooperation with industry, third-sector and associations in order to strengthen and develop networks and partnerships on a local level. Eventually, secondary schools should develop entrepreneurial workshops in cooperation with enterprises and other economic actors, and they should promote the following didactics part of the curriculum: they should encourage work based learning, work experience, internship plus workshop for competence development and career management. These opportunities put young people in contact with the work market. Besides providing a solid basis for the competences required by the job market, they also represent a chance for students to promote their reflective approach. This is because students have to choose among a range of possible options, make sense to action, and develop personal and professional planning.

A new form of guidance is emerging. This form encourages the development of an active agency between the conditions for action, the shaping of one's personal preferences and the process of choice during the action (Costa, 2012, 10). The guidance process is embedded in a new perspective of personal capability:

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[88] The guidelines also introduce the tutor for guidance. Starting from the primary school, this new professional profile, which is being designed, will manage and coordinate the activities of guidance.

the student develops learning experiences within the school contexts and outside, causing new modalities and perspectives to signify his or her actions, making new challenges and requiring adaptations, giving new stimuli and creating opportunities to convert the learned practices, stimulating new capacities for self reflection (Costa 2014). These conditions promote the creation of new mental and behavioural processes producing in the student an improved awareness, mastery and autonomy. It is a continuous educational task aiming to a maturity of the person according to a capability for choice approach. This entails the abilities to make choices, finding the possible options and resources and giving direction to one's individual project.

The decision process within an aware guidance becomes a set of steps or stages of development through which the individual's vocational professional plan takes place. The act of guidance generates a decision and a connection between the self-image and the result of the interaction between the other people and the environment. This is obtained through a continuous and progressive gain of knowledge, abilities and competencies on the type of school and vocational choice the person longs for, the analysis the person has done, the possible issues, and the used strategies. The ultimate aim for the individual is to gain methods and instruments in order to make choices autonomously. Thus recognizing their own resources and habits, respecting his or her own wishes coherently with the real opportunities of the job market. According to Pellerey (2008), guiding and self-guiding becomes a competence which can be defined as the construction of a personal asset useful to read and interpret the cultural, social and professional reality, as well as deal with the various tasks and activities that one can meet inside or outside the school. This competence has a circularity between thinking and personal action, between practical experience and reflection on it, between knowledge, making and acting of the learner. This qualifies guidance as an holistic development of the individual in his own personal and professional identity. In addition, guidance is considered an educational path towards the right to choose, and achieve personal targets within a context of aware and mature sense of citizenship and social inclusion (Costa 2014).

In order to strengthen this model of guidance based on capabilities, a research carried out in Australia is reported below.

5) An example of a capability approach for guidance: Change Laboratory workshops in Australia.

Career education can be done according to a capability approach: the different stakeholders participate in the process, and the different points of view become a value. This creates new capabilities for students on the possible career paths (either in paid or self employment) they want to undertake. Through this process of informed public dialogue, the students and their communities are giv-

en voice and contribute to shape the possible transitions into further education or work. Specific career paths are created, and this process is led by their values and the values of their communities.

In order to illustrate a possible capability approach to guidance we will show the Change Laboratory workshops conducted in Australia in 2012. This project was part of a larger comparative project between Italy and Australia. The aim was to experiment a new type of workshop, the Change Laboratory[89], for entrepreneurship education (Morselli, Costa, & Margiotta, 2014). These workshops were conducted according to a capability approach, emphasizing public dialogue and the opportunity for the participants to make choices after having reflected collectively on the issues that were important for them.

The setting for the research was a Catholic College within the Melbourne suburban area which provided diverse vocational courses, included courses provided within a TTC (Trade Training Centre)[90] such as picture framing, hospitality and signs, with students coming from the network of schools of the district. The class selected for the project was a VCAL[91] certificate a Certificate III in Childcare. The course was a school year long, two days a week. One day a week the students went for their theoretical lessons and workshops at the College, and an-

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[89] The basic idea of the Change Laboratory is to arrange on the shop floor a room or space in which there is a rich set of instruments for analysing problems and constructing new models of work practice (Engestrom, Virkkunen, Helle, Pihlaja, & Poikela, 1996). The members of a pilot unit of a larger organization meet weekly for a couple of months (plus follow up) with the researchers and other representatives of the organization (such as the management) and the neighbouring interacting organization (such as providers and clients). The basic equipment to arrange a Change Laboratory workshop is a 3*3 set of writing surfaces (for example flipcharts) on which to brainstorm about work activity, plus video or audio recording of the meetings for later analysis. The participants sit in front of the surfaces and a person appointed as writer jots down their thoughts. The horizontal dimension of the surfaces represents the degree of abstraction and on one side of the line the mirror materials are presented. Mirror materials are materials promoting reflection, active participation and dialectics among the participants in the workshops. At the other end of the surfaces there is the model/vision representing the model of work activity. In the middle there is a surface for ideas and tools at an intermediate level of representation. The vertical dimension of the surfaces represents the historical analysis of the activity system and contradictions, which encompass the present, past and future (see also Virkkunen & Newnham, 2013).

[90] In Australia it is often difficult for students to find work experience in the industry; TTCs are thought to be a possible solution to this impasse, providing the students with equipped workshops where they can learn trade skills.

[91] The Australian school system is different from the Italian system: while secondary courses last four years, vocational education is generally delivered within general education. In the state of Victoria, for example, Students can choose to undertake general education courses and, at the end of the last year, obtain their VCE (Victorian Certificate of Education) necessary to enrol in university courses. Alternatively, they have a 'hands on' option, the VCAL (Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning), allowing them to learn a vocation. At the end of their secondary path, they can either look for a job or continue with more advanced tertiary vocational courses such as Certificate IV, Diploma and High Diploma.

other day they went to local kindergartens for work experience. The other three days of the week the students would sit for their regular lessons at their school (some of the students attended the course from other colleges in the district). As the Certificate III in Childcare was delivered at that College for the first year, the school had to find an external provider who had the necessary expertise and licenses to deliver the course. In other words, the courses were jointly delivered by the College and an RTO (Registered Training Organization) who provided for course materials, teachers and, for most of the students, a work placement. Furthermore, the RTO in charge for the organization of the course withdrew its participation one week before the course started, and another RTO took over that resulted in significant disruption. The choice of the Certificate III in Childcare as setting for the research was not casual: Change Laboratory workshops are organized when an organization is facing a major change (Engestrom & Sannino, 2010). The idea was to have many actors sitting to solve the many issues that such a complex course delivered for the first year would cause. Hence, after having visited diverse VET courses in the College and spoken with the people in charge of VET training and teachers, the decision was that the Certificate III in Childcare would be the one which could benefit more from a formative intervention. Also the RTO teacher and coordinator of the Certificate III in Childcare was happy to participate in the research, as the Change Laboratory was intended to improve the course program.

When the researcher started field observations in the class it was apparent that students were misbehaving. For example, some would come late to the lessons or not show up at all. Sometimes the girls put their feet on the desk during the lesson. Other students would play with their smart phones or talk and laugh loudly when the teacher or other schoolmates were talking. The teacher asked the students to hand in their completed booklets of competence, and many students had not been able to meet the deadlines. A few students dropped the course while the researcher was doing field research. The researcher could also observe the formation of sub groups in the class. Students would spent most of their time in those groups and interact with their other school mates. There was also negative feedback from the students' workplaces as some of their participation was limited. During the field research a student was dismissed by her workplace as she was deemed to be unable to deal with children. Another couple of students refused to undertake work experience as the childcare centre was too far away. As the practicum component is mandatory in these apprenticeships, the students risked failing the course. In summary, the atmosphere in the class did not appear cooperative.

When the Change Laboratory were presented to the students, 5 students from the group of 17 decided to participate. The other participants in the weekly

Change Laboratory workshops were the course teachers and coordinators for the RTO, and the career counsellor[92] for the College. The workshops were held from June to August 2012, and were preceded by a period of observant participation to collect mirror materials[93] to be showed during the meetings to trigger discussion. Out of the six meetings plus follow up that were carried out in the school, the first three are particularly interesting to show a possible model of capability approach for guidance.

During the first workshop the students were acquainted with a meeting that took place the week before, involving the VET coordinators of the schools at which students were undertaking the Certificate III in Childcare at the college. The issues discussed in that meeting among VET coordinators were presented during the workshop as mirror material. The researcher asked the course teacher and coordinator to summarize the outcomes of the meeting, that is the changes in the recruitment process the Certificate III in Childcare would undergo the following year. The outcomes were summarized for the discussion in form of table, as from the picture below.

The teacher explained to the participants that student selection process had become necessary. In implementing a selection process the RTO and the schools aimed to find the students who really wanted to undertake the course and would therefore be committed to participating in it. The process is also aimed at providing families with all the necessary information to make the right choice for their children. One of the main concerns related to the students' and parents' expectations about the course in childcare, "which was not merely about playing with children and babysitting" observed the teacher/course coordinator. The participants were encouraged to think about the new recruitment process with the help of the Engestrom (1987) triangle. A problem in the community was identified: this dealt with the recruitment process, that is how to choose the suit-

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[92] School counsellor is an educator who works in elementary, middle, and/or high schools to provide academic, career, college readiness, and personal/social competencies to all students. The College object of the research had one such a professional who worked only as school counsellor. She had an office where she sit with students.

[93] Mirror materials are gathered by the researcher through field research, and can be videos, interviews, documents and charts illustrating regular work activity, but are especially problems such as critical incidents, conflicts, dilemmas, or ruptures of the regular activity. Field research is also necessary for the researcher to understand the history of the activity system. In other words, the knowledge gathered by direct exposure will be essential during workshops to guide the different learning actions, characterizing a complete cycle of expansive learning (Engestrom & Sannino, 2010): questioning and criticizing parts of the present practice; analysing the problem to find the explanatory mechanisms; modelling the new explanatory relationship in a visible form that explains and possibly solves the problem; examining and challenging the new practice to find its limitations, implications and potentials; implementing the model in practice with its applications and enrichments; reflecting on the model to stabilize and generalize the new practice.

able students for the course. Another issue related to the object of the activity: this course had to be undertaken to learn how to be a good child carer and not just to earn money[94].

Necessary steps to enroll in the Certificate III in Childcare school year 2013

	Pre - requisites	This Year	Next year
1	Information sessions for both parents and their children	No	Mandatory
2	Application Form	Yes	Yes
3	Year 10 voluntary work Experience	Not needed	Better to have some industry experience during year 10, i.e. 1 week
4	Admittance interview	No	Yes
5	Orientation day both in the class and "on the field"	Not needed	Mandatory

The new rules to enrol the Certificate III in Childcare the following year required for the RTO and the school to hold a mandatory information session for students and parents. The students were asked their feelings about this new rule, and they said it was a good idea, as when they enrolled they had not been told the criteria and what was expected from them. The RTO and the school wanted families to understand that the course was a School Based Apprenticeship and that involved the student being considered a worker during work placement. The families also needed to know that the workplace provided by the RTO might not 'just be around the corner' and this could raise problems in accessing the workplace by public transport. A new criterion for enrolment was that previous work experience would be considered favourably. When asked about this matter, the

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[94] This course was a school based apprenticeship. The students received a scholarship from the Victoria Government. This created an issue, as it appeared that some students engaged in the course because of the salary.

students argued that it had been good for them to undertake work experience in Year 10, as this helped to clarify their expectations of the Certificate III in Childcare. Hence this criterion looked reasonable to them. Another rule, probably the most important one, would be an interview to understand why the student wanted to enrol in the certificate. Examples of inappropriate motivation for enrolment could be: the student just wants to be paid; she was performing poorly at school; or there was not anything else she could undertake. The girls in the meeting agreed with the course teacher and career counsellor that the motivational interview was also a reasonable request. The final thing that could be put in place the following year was a two day orientation just after enrolment, one day in the class and one day in the workplace. This would enable the students to have a clearer idea of the course and what was expected of them. The following is a transcription of part of the workshop:

Teacher	*This is research, but the reason why we were so happy to be involved is that it helps us! We want this feedback from you girls, all we can do from this is to have better outcomes like a stronger program.*
	[...]
Student 1	*I think that any work experience in a childcare centre helps the student to understand much more about what the kids are like.*
Teacher	*Absolutely! It is a very frightening experience the first day when you work in a childcare centre. By having a short work experience the students can have a clear idea about what to expect. I spoken with a couple of coordinators here and we think that some students may have been pushed into this course by their teachers or career counsellors: 'you don't really know what you want do next year, so why don't give this a try?' You know various different reasons. I do not want to say that the parents or teacher are wrong in that instance, but by having an interview where somebody like myself or somebody who is involved in the program... With a short interview just to have a little idea on why you are actually involved in this course: interest or were you pushed? [This] would just give us an idea on why students are wanting to enrol in this course. We would then have the option to say that there are students that are not accepted into the course.*
Student 1	*I know there are few girls in our class who were forced to be there.*
Teacher	*Well, I am not sure about that... (embarrassed)*
Student 1	*Oh no, we talked about that! They said they don't really want to be there. They said they had no choice.*
Teacher	*I do not want this, as it destroys the all class, we had the issue this year. And it is not fair for the rest of the students who want to be there, and nor for the students who could be elsewhere.*
Career Counsellor	*Yes, if you are not interested, that's a big chunk of your week*
Teacher	*Yeah, so do you all think that the interview is reasonable?*
Student 1	*I think it is fair*
Student 2	*Absolutely*
Student 3	*Yes that's fair!*

Researcher	*OK girls I know that t is difficult to put people together and to work productively. It also takes time to feel confident and express their thoughts. Could you give us a feedback?*
Student 3	*It was good...*
Student 2	*Awesome!*
Researcher	*Are there other people we should involve?*
Student 4	*Like you said before, I agree that with this requirements we can know what the course is about and not just jump into the course.*

During the conversation the problem is unfolded: the underlying atmosphere of the class appears to be due to students who are not happy to be there. So in order for the student to choose the right career, actions are taken to select the students who are willing to be there: interview, orientation sessions and previous work experience. With their feedback the students participate in definition of the steps for the enrolment the following year.

At the end of the first workshop the students were happy and looking forward to the following one. Their opinions had been taken into consideration for the new recruitment process. They had actively participated in the meeting right from the beginning, possibly because of the small number and the encouraging environment. Also the teacher/course coordinator was pleased as she could collect feedback needed to improve the course.

The second meeting was interesting as the students raised the issue of what course they could undertake the following year. The problem here was twofold, as the class was composed of Year 11 and Year 12, and different alternatives were called for. Following the transcript of the dialogue taking place

Researcher	*I would like to raise the problem of what the girls will do next year..*
Teacher	*A lot of students are year eleven and asked what to do next year...so we can get some feedback from them... Any Year 12? You finish your Certificate III you can do to work or start a Diploma. The other girls [Year 11] should look at what they are able to do as VCAL course or what other options would you like to see offered to you next year?*
Student 1	*[Our course] should not be a two years course?*
Teacher	*It is a two years course only when it is one year a day... because you do one day in the classroom and one day in the school place - because it is a school based apprenticeship- it is a 12 months' course.*
Student 1	*Because my friend is doing it in two years...*
Teacher	*Is it a school based apprenticeship?*
Student 1	*Because she is not paid for, I think it is not...*
Career Counsellor	*Now our problem is that, if our students want to stay in VCAL, they have to take another vocational course, which must be finished in one year.... This creates a bit of an issue, unless they undertake the Community Services...*
Teacher	*Isn't the Certificate II in Community Services one or two year?*

Career Counsellor	*Two years, but they might be able to get a partial completion in Community Services, it would be probably the best they could do...*
Teacher	*Would it be something that the school would prefer to offer it as two years' program?*
Career Counsellor	*I think so. Just so that it fits better the school program...*
Teacher	*Yeah, yeah! Because I am still a little bit unfamiliar with the way VCAL works...*
Career Counsellor	*Because would they be able to undertake a Certificate IV or Diploma in the same way, in two years?*
Teacher	*We are trying to look at offering a Diploma in the second year, because if it is done in the same way, one day in the classroom and one day in the workplace the diploma can also be done in one year. However, according to the researchers I have been through to the last couple of weeks we think that Diploma do not count as VCAL subject. My principal and I are very aware that this is an issue for you girls, and we want to do something for you... We would like to offer a Diploma or a Certificate IV for you next year. [...]*
Career Counsellor	*The other option is that we offer a Cert II in Community Services on Year 11 and this Cert III in Year 12-*
Teacher	*Yes, absolutely! Sorry girls, we wanted your feedback! Do you think that for the next students, it would be better to offer it as Year 12 course only?*
Student 2	*Yep! Yep!*

Hence, the fact that the Certificate III is a year' long creates an issue for the Year 11 students, who have to undertake another vocational course (for example a Certificate II in Community Services) to stay in VCAL and be able to finish high school. Furthermore, the Certificate II proposed is lower than the Certificate III they were acquiring, and would not be completed. In so doing it would only be suitable for VCAL completion. The problem is discussed between the career counsellor who represents the school and the teacher and course coordinator who represents the RTO, being the students present. Students ask questions and take informed decision thanks to the involvement in the discussion. The solution found is that the career counsellor and the teacher commit themselves for the following year to find a solution: the students undertake the Certificate II, and certain units will be separated and certificated, so that they can count towards a Certificate IV in After School Care delivered by the RTO as work based certificate.

The third meeting started with the discussion of how the Certificate III in Childcare would be offered the following year, and what course the girls could undertake. Some of the problems discussed included the accessibility of government funding for the girls, whether the Certificate counted towards VCAL, and if the learning packages embedded in the Certificate could also be used in other advanced vocational trainings. The following slide was projected to the students in order to sum up the results of the second meeting.

**Problem year 11 and 12 together in VCAL Cert III in
Children Services: *what course to take next year*?**

Next year	This year
•Year 11: one year VET Subjects Cert II in Children Services. (Frequency: one afternoon a week).	• Year 11 VCAL Cert IV in outside school hours (possibly in one year)
•Year 12: Cert III in Children Services (twice a week, one day in class and one in the workplace).	•Year 12: Partially Complete (one year) VCAL Cert II in Community Services – with credits for a Certificate IV in After School Care

The second slide summarizes the issues about how to continue studies on Childcare. For the students Year 11 next year, a one year' s Certificate II in Community Services will be offered, which will continue in a one year's Certificate III in Childcare the following year. Concerning the students Year 12 of that course enrolled in the Certificate III in childcare, a year's certificate IV outside the school would be available for the next year. This could lead to a diploma or a bachelor in the field. For the others students Year 11 that would still be at school something similar to a Certificate II with credits counting towards a Certificate IV in After School Care would be made available.

After having shown a possible example of guidance, this article returns now to theory, and shows how a model of guidance in line with a capability approach should be like.

6) CONCLUSIONS: CAPABILITY OF GUIDANCE AND PERSONAL AGENCY

In a job market affected by the economic crisis and characterized by growing youth unemployment guidance plays a key role to coordinate work, education and social policies. In this regard, the basic choice of guidance entails a complex decision process where different factors play a role, some of them with a subjective nature (interests, values, aspirations, abilities, intelligence and motivation), and others with a more objective nature (social conditions, job market, economic

and cultural origin of the family, local opportunities). Guidance, in fact, involves the capacity for the individual to understand and interpret a complex reality where the youth have to live in, and the ability to make life choices according to a personal project and environmental contingencies with which the individual has to deal with. It is important that the school be responsible of process guidance (careers education, career advice and guidance, and work-related learning) and also starts to involve actively the students and the other stakeholders (Kuijpers, Meijers, Gundy, 2011). The capability of guidance moves the focus of choice of the student from the means – that is the competences needed to match the requests of the job market – to the ends, one's realization, which can be projects in school or work context (Costa, 2012).

The career choice capability is a problem of individual agency (Galliott, Graham, 2014) and the school education and career advice, as a means to freedom in the space of career development is a pedagogical problem that involves teacher education. For the teacher, a specifying guidance calls for ensuring that the student matures the capability to activate new relational and communicative devices (for example empathy), new modalities of management and organization, as well as new strategies for action. Different contexts of interaction, which can be school or work based, stimulate the construction of new perspectives and interpretations of reality. In the teaching practice this becomes the promotion of an aware and critic expansion of the student's ability to gather and choose the opportunities or resources important for the enhancement of his/her agency of capability (Sen 2000)[95].

Shaping guidance and personal agency according to a capability approach means to make affective choices to realize one's life project (Alsop et al., 2006). Behind this process there is the personal empowerment which is associated to terms such as enhancement, emancipation, awareness and corresponds to whatever improves the subject's power to impress directionality and effectiveness to one's own will[96]. The connection between a capability approach for guidance and

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[95] Sen proposes an exhaustive definition of the meaning of agency as freedom of action which can be declined as professional development. He believes that the individual's agency freedom refers to what the person is able to do and acquire in the pursuit of objectives and values important for him or her. The agency freedom is freedom to acquire whatever thing the person decides to acquire. The open conditionality makes the nature of agency freedom completely different from the freedom of well being, which is aimed to specific goals and evaluates the opportunities as consequences (Sen, 2000, 203-204).

[96] Rowlands (1997) claims that the main principle of self-empowerment is participation in decisions, including a process which brings people to perceive themselves as able to make choices and having entitlements of decision-making. From this point of view, during guidance students have to be considered as actively involved in the construction of their professional development. Jackson (cited in Rowlands, 1997, 15) defined empowering as the process leading people to become aware of the power relationships influencing their way they act in the workplace and to develop abilities

empowerment refers to structures of the opportunities of activation (the capabilities) which become substantial preconditions for the exploitation of agency. The school has the role to promote, through a didactic of guidance opened to extra school knowledge, the students' capabilities to promote their own functioning (Sen 2000). In this perspective, guidance is not only the process to answer to market labour needs but should become fundamentally:

a) Expression of self-determination and agency. Self-determination entails the activation of two categories of guidance: first the ability to control and manage one's own emotional and affective domain. This supports the students' self-efficacy for personal development (Cheung Lai, 2013) and the own cognitive gains. Second, the ability to organize and manage knowledge. This helps to overcome axiomatic thinking; and recognize the otherness, the other individuals as others, in a dimension of social and ethical responsibility.

b) Access to and utilization of the information and opportunities. This refers to awareness of the opportunities that school, industry and life offer to select a personal track in relation to the choices previously made. Often overwhelmed with countless information, youth need cultural tools helping them to decode, select and discriminate their choices in the direction of their professional projects and personal realization. The education value of information becomes a dimension characterizing capacities, choices and personal motivations linked with the future work or training context.

c) Exercising responsibility and autonomy. Guidance can be seen as a process of awareness and autonomy that favours decision making and the procedure of taking responsibilities when facing choices about future (Mura, 2005). The challenge is to help adolescents to learn how to be autonomous in their judgment, developing critic and self-critic skills, an autonomy in the action, accepting themselves and apprising one's own resources, attitudes, dispositions, interests and values. This means to educate to make projects that take into account personal aspirations, environmental requirements, chances of success, available means and probable effects.

d) Opportunity to explore oneself and to develop a reflective thinking. This is the ability to value the reconstruction of the subjective point of view towards habits, resources and personal competencies, as well as one's personal and family story. This is translated into awareness of one's own inclinations: it is important to understand everybody's identity, skills, needs and motivations. Students will be helped to improve the perception of themselves, through the three sides of inclination, namely habit, motivation and desire. On the other hand, they

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and competencies necessary to gain power on one's own professional life, exercising it without violating the other's rights, supporting their empowerment within their community.

will be helped to look forward enhancing their social position, participation, responsibility and reflectiveness. This is accompanied by an enhancement of the levels of learning and development of abilities, critical thinking, reflexivity and agentivity (Striano, 2010), which are capitalized and appraised through a model of capability of one's personal and professional life projects.

e) Shaping one's own projects focusing on capabilities. This entails the possibility to shape one's own project, that is organizing and finalizing information, utilizing resources, preferences, habits and values according to ideas for future projects, professional choices, or direction of self-employment projects. Loiodice (2012) defines this as the creation of an existential project, meaning decision capacity of continuous and flexible choice able to answer and give personal, social, work meaning to the different changes during the transitions of students into adultness. Self-orienting means to choose among different alternatives that we face during the evolution process and in general during our life. This calls for adequate decision skills of the individuals. In so doing, the person will be able to manage properly his or her choices, learning to evaluate risks and consequences of a certain project, thus learning to be responsible. The important turning point originates from the possibility to generate capabilities within the student (Sen, 2000), which is necessary to manage the different resources and opportunities. Within a personal project, this allows students to promote the activation choice, by which they can encourage their personal fulfilment.

f) Openness and awareness of the learning contexts and the work practices outside school. Guidance becomes openness in two ways. The first one is the most immediate and consists in bringing the school into the external word. It brings the school into the social and work environment by favouring direct experiences within the realities that the person wants to know. It includes work experiences, school visits, alternating school-work program. The second one consists in bringing the outer world into schools. External consultants share their experiences inside schools, in order to confirm that school does not represent all possible experiences for young people, but it is only their workshop to be prepared for future responsibilities.

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