

Proposal Information of Contribution 3026

ID: 3026 / 22 SES 14 C: 1

22. Research in Higher Education

Paper

Alternative EERA Network: 01. Professional Learning and Development

Topics: NW 22: Academic work and professional development

Keywords: Social Education, Case Study, Narrative Inquiry, Training Practices, Socialisation

Recognising oneself as educator. Findings from a Case Study Conducted in the Internship Training for Social Education Bachelor's Degree.

María Victoria Martos-Pérez, Ester Caparrós Martín, Nieves Blanco García

University of Malaga, Spain

Presenting Author: **Martos-Pérez, María Victoria**

In this paper I share the results of the analysis of a case study of a Social Education student through a qualitative enquiry with a narrative approach (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994, 2000; Van Manen, 2003, 1990). It delves into her experience and formative trajectory within the Practicum course of the Bachelor's Degree in Social Education at the University of Malaga (Spain); a course that took place during three consecutive years, oriented to the realisation of training practices in professional contexts.

The focus of this study, which is part of a larger thesis project, is to approach the development of professional knowledge in the initial training of social educators in the context of this subject. Being a social educator requires more than just knowing what to do and how to do it. Social education professionals develop their profession in situations and problems that cannot be solved by applying knowledge, but by developing practical knowledge that allows them to make situational judgements about what is appropriate and desirable (Biesta, 2013, 2017) at each moment and with each person.

Initial training plays an important role in the development of professional identity and critical thinking that allows students to construct their own knowledge, which is indispensable for the educational profession exercise: determining who they want to be and how they want to do their profession. That is, learning to act on the basis of who they are, becoming aware of their own pedagogical being and taking responsibility for their actions (Blanco and Sierra, 2013).

In this sense, this context of theoretical-practical and professional training is one of the most important and highly valued subjects within the Degree in Social Education, mainly due to its proximity to professional practice. During these practical periods, students attend socio-educational centres attached to the university, for several days a week, and are accompanied by an academic tutor. This tutor may have a group of several students at a time who are accompanied in their training path: (i) individually and periodically through the reading, revision and return of different reflective writing devices (diaries, stories, internship reports) and in tutorials; and (ii) in a group and organised way, in seminars that are given throughout the internship process.

Given that the shaping of knowledge about the educational profession is always a singular relational experience, here we present the case of Zoe, a student who did her internship in various socio-educational contexts with minors and women. We try to show her experience of the educational relationship lived during these practical periods and, also, the type of mediation offered by her academic tutor.

We start from the idea that educating, says Milagros Rivera (2012), is "something that is done in relation and is also the fruit of the relationship" (p.36). Therefore it is in the experience of the relationship practice where what happens in that very moment of the relationship phenomenon and what happens in the individual perception, takes on a new meaning and becomes symbolic. The human being learns to socialise in continuous interaction with others. At this time, they learn the behaviours that are considered appropriate in the context, as well as the set of norms and values that govern them. In other words, in educational processes there is always a socialisation process, as it always has an impact on the student as a subject, either enhancing or restricting his or her capacities (Biesta, 2021). Educating is, in this sense, "to bring out what each student has hidden inside" (Montoya, 2011, p. 211), the singular, "the new that each human creature that is born brings to the common world" (Rivera, 2012, p. 64).

Methodology, Methods, Research Instruments or Sources Used

This research was developed during three consecutive academic years: 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22, in the Bachelor's Degree of Social Education Practicum training at the University of Malaga. Specifically, we studied the training trajectory of a group of six students and the mediation of their tutor in this process. The purpose of this study is to explore the way in which the devices encourage reflective and deliberative thinking proposed by the tutor: writing assignments (diaries, stories and reports), readings, seminars and tutorials, have enabled the students to build themselves as social educators.

As enquiry tools, we used: (i) participant observation (Van Manen, 2003) in the context of internship seminars (meetings of a tutor with her group of students); (ii) hermeneutic conversations (Van Manen, 2003; Sierra and Blanco, 2017) through three narrative interviews with each student; (iii) two focus groups (Suárez, 2005; Finch and Lewis, 2003) (with students belonging to the participant group and others from outside, i.e. peers from the same degree course, in order to broaden the views on training); and (iv) documentary analysis of several students' reflective writing devices (diaries, experience accounts, narrative planning and final internship reports) and of the research diary. Within this methodological framework, we elaborated a research narrative for each student, reflecting: the epistemological views from which they start (a), the concerns that arise in the practice of the profession (b) and the way in which the tutor addresses and mediates these concerns (c).

The following are some of the conclusions drawn from Zoe's case in relation to the overall purpose of the study. This student did her internship in three different contexts: a residential centre for minors (course 2019/20), a women's association (course 2020/21) and an emergency reception and referral centre for refugee minors (course 2021/22).

Conclusions, Expected Outcomes or Findings

From the beginning of her training process, Zoe expressed some concern about her place as a social educator, saying that, at times, rather than feeling like an educator, she felt like a mother, psychologist, carer or even a mediator between the educators at the training centre itself and the children or women. She did not feel she was a professional in social education, given that the proximity with which she experienced the situations faced by the people with whom she intervened were also situations of her day-to-day life.

Zoe's story allows us to focus on the way in which, as a part of her training, this student begins to think about her roles and functions as a social educator, reflecting on how her encounters with the people she works with make her consider her place in the relationship and the very nature of her job: whether she should teach them something, as this is the teachers job; whether she should transmit her culture to them in day-to-day matters, as this is the mothers job; whether she should attend to their basic needs, as this is the carers job; or whether she should accompany emotional education processes, as this is the psychologists job.

We observed in this student how the activities proposed by the tutor, as well as the conversations held in the seminars, were key to the development of knowledge situated in the profession, insofar as they allowed her to put words to the things she did and felt, and to question herself from other possible places to better understand the essence of her profession: the socialisation. A process that requires him to put himself at stake in the first person and to pay attention to the singularity of each person with whom he comes into contact.

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Intent of Publication

It is planned to publish a larger text based on the topic presented in a research journal as a publication of the results of the thesis of which this study is a part.