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Learning Experience through Diary Writing: A Case Study

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Abstract: We carry out a critical thought on self-education process based on a learning experience structured around diary writing, namely «itinerant diaries». Diaries, due to their intrinsic critical and generative qualities, can become a locus of emancipation and investigation, in their inter-textual, personal and/or collective tissue, by giving a notion of the specific, expected and unexpected implications and conditions within the co-lived learning process. If a diary is constituted as a praxis analyser and a motive for learning experience, its meta-analysis leads to its meaning and legitimacy while self-education resource. This implies a change with regard to common education patterns of representation and their object, moving from theory to practice, from practice to authorship and finally from the subject to one's "work" (seen as reflexive itineration). In this sense, one's work can be seen as a totality that connects each one with the world: each one with oneself, oneself with Others and Oneself with Things.

Keywords: Self-Education, Itinerant Diaries, Writing, Experience, Creativity

Introduction

THIS ARTICLE EMERGES from a double will: to allow a comprehensive return to a collective writing experience from itinerant diaries, under the optional subject of «Education Models and Identity Strategies»¹ and to communicate it, that is, to make it public, allowing the passage of its testimonial.

This subject's first intention, through the creation of an institutional space for the critical debate in Education Sciences, was to hit two targets: on one hand, to question the different Learning processes in their typology, contents and objectives, in a time already marked by the institutional imperative of cyclic update of the professional knowledge in Education²; and, on the other, to intend that this would be a space for inter-subjective reflexive communication in which those knowledge-discourse, theoretical and/or technical-practical, could be shared, reviewed and re-interpreted with the subjective narratives assumed as a reflection of experience and knowledge singularities. This is why the teachers explained that:

“(...) this claim – not ignoring historically constituted knowledge while necessary information valued through a situated and significant critical appropriation – assumes

¹ Subject conceived in the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto, lectured by three teachers and taught for the first time in the degree Education Sciences in 1997/1998.

² Note that, until then, the students in this degree were mostly graduated professional adults, teachers and child educators with an already long professional experience.

strategies that focus on a logic of a knowledge “production-construction” (Geay, 1993: 189), in a self-learning point of view, subverting the reproductive and consumer logic of learning”. Furthermore, they add that, in order to achieve that objective, it would be necessary to activate: “(...) de-subjectivation strategies combined with the plausible analysis of the inter-subjectivities, formed by a path, in the sense of construction and development of **authorship**, just as Jacques Ardoine conceives it, **a skill, conquered through education and experience, of making you your own author** (1988: 256, note 2)”³.

The writing and sharing of diaries are, therefore, suggested, starting from the integration of this existential self-referential dimension, particularly itinerant diaries, as an education methodological resource and searching process for the mentioned de-subjectivation of the lived, that could perform learning consisting of the paradigm of production and not of the consumption of knowledge: “(...) *The writing and sharing of an itinerant diary consist as a strategy previously conceived as structuring and catalyst of this (education) process.*” (Pacheco, Terrasêca & Caramelo, 2000).

The Self in Learning Process

Every dimension which depends directly from the subjects’ subjective appropriation has become a subject field in several researches, even acknowledging that they are regulated by external influences and interventions⁴. Self-education appears as a generalist concept, which comprehends several models, with many perspectives according to the performed or intended purposes, techniques and practices.

In this sense, Carré (1992)⁵ mentions a *terminological inflation and polysemy* on self-education concept, which however lined the conceptual boundaries between two paradigms, one of an exogenous education, which overlaps learners’ desires and needs, and another, endogenous, designed around *self-education*:

“(...) Our starting point perceived self-education as a conceptual nebula based on education by itself as counter-model of the education practices imposed by others, which is based on archetypal pedagogy, typical of the transmissive, didactic, teacher-centred school.” (Carré, 1992: 17)

From self-instruction (technical training disconnected from direct organisational ties), to the individualised pedagogy (pre-programmed and without a present teacher), from the permanent self-education to the meta-cognitive education (to learn how to learn), Philippe Carré describes different currents which have developed the relevant role and the power of the individual relative autonomy, implicit or explicit, also revealed within the analysis of seven self-educational

³ Pacheco, Terrasêca, & Caramelo (1999) “Education/Self-education, which strategies?”, Communication in the *Third International Congress on Teacher Education in Portuguese Speaking Countries*, held in Cabo Verde

⁴ According to Edgar Morin, “As far as we can conceive the meaning of *self (auto)*, the autonomy capable of organising leaving processes is condemned, either to float in emptiness as a ghost, either to dissolve itself by heteronomous determinations.” (in Carré, 1992: 22)

⁵ On the polysemous galaxy and the seven research currents about self-education and autonomy read in Carré, *op. cit.*

tion models experiments⁶. And this undeniable relationship between the *Self* and personal experience, will also, gradually, guarantee a more *existentialist* character to self-education:

“(...) regardless the names at which it’s linked, the prefix self seems to hold the most significant conceptual key that come out from educational experience or solitude lessons.” (Pineau, G., in Carré, 1992: 19)

Writing’s Critical-creative Rationality

Structured around writing, this notion of self-education is still based in the belief of individual cognitive/reflexive education and its progressive ability to become autonomous. The act of writing, thus, becomes the generating means of a specific rationality, one of heuristic potential. One of the ontological features implied in this rationality is its critical dimension.

Criticism is, in a broader sense, the ontological dimension of deconstruction, the possibility of denial or even rupture. Hence, criticism it’s dependent and it’s connected to the sense of reflecting over what is observed, what is seen, what is heard, what is said, what is done, what is communicated. In this intellectual dynamics, one may find the mirror, not only, by bringing the past to the present, reflecting its signs, but also to preserve it, recreate it, or abandon it. This critical attitude implied in the liberation of the reflected is, ultimately, what enables us to free from the sameness, to change, to anticipate, creating others possibilities.

To create is the other side of this rationality; it is the ontological expression of continuity, of the overwhelming expression in search for the image, for other figuralities or even to return to lost reflection. And, therefore, it is perhaps an absolute action, a (re)active side, inseparable from the critical thought, which by means this contiguity becomes an attitude. And, by its narrative, becomes a fact.

Along with the implicational paradigm of education through writing, the conceptual frame of this self-education project seems to point out to other believes around at least two more interrelated referents, the emancipation and the knowledge referents, as we will describe further on.

In short, writing is assumed as a privileged heuristic means, capable of producing, in its discursiveness, a critical-creative rationality, empowered by its generative-structural and analytical qualities.

As exposed, the development of this critical-creative meaning, crucial to this concept of education through writing – as an area of debate in which the critical-creative attitude, while a *praxis*, is a major intervention in the established – becomes a means of education and investigation device, *via* the so called diaries.

Diaries writing as a Formative Situation

But diary writing is a technique and, as such, its mastery depends on a (daily) routine and the context and validity of its appliance depends on a (formative) function. Writing a diary in an educational context can be considered, in a broad sense, as an institutional diary and, for that purpose, it’s also ruled by an ideal-type, must be self/hetero-formative, although it

⁶ Gaston Pineau (*in Carré, 1992*) sets as self-education target “to allow each one’s life self-production”, knowing that self-education articulates with hetero and eco-education in a triploid relation of the global education – the Self would determine the Self-education,/the Others, the Hetero-education – and the World and Things, as Eco-education.

can include multi-referential notes, such as experiences, thoughts, theories, doubts, concepts, readings, in an almost “fits-all” type. This institutional diary must be shared and commented in the belonging group, and the learner is forced to ego-descentration, to *become Other*, in order to make it dialogical and a vehicle for hetero-education.

This diary seems to gather, in only one model, the institutional deviation, as well as its normative dimension: in its existential sense, the author has the right to privacy in search of him-self. On the other hand, its expressive sense takes advantage of the impulse for dialogical communication, in quest of the world. In its institutional sense, it holds the knowledge *locus* in quest for wisdom, comprehensible, communicable, and transmissible not only among learners but also, eventually, between these latter and scientific community - with whom, ultimately, if it's not *falsified*, could be legitimated and justified.

I.D. – Itinerant Diary: Crossing Multiple Writings

Also defined by René Barbier (1993a) as an “imaginary expression technique”⁷, this diary becomes a “*search resource about one-self connected with the group*” through the development of a *sensitive listening* in which “(...) *each one writes down what he feels, thinks, meditates, rhymes, but also what he apprehends about a theory, a conversation, about what he builds to give a meaning to life (...)*” (Barbier, 1993a). The author, in this sense, confers to it an instrumental meaning, led by the *existential investigation-action in an education situation* standing out, by its specificity, from other kinds of diaries.

In fact, apart from the literary and the intimate diaries, the notion of an itinerant diary (I.D.) combines, in one model, relevant features from other diarist techniques, which have represented different investigation or (self)education practices and methodologies. The log-book in ethnography, the institutional diary for the socio-institutional analysis, the life stories and the autobiographies in sociology, teachers' diaries in psycho-sociology and education, the *freinetian* class or group diaries in pedagogy or in the analysis of the ethnographic scientific production, the controversial, but not less remarkable, research diaries are some examples of that.

By focusing on the *itinerary* concept, the I.D. also emphasizes the self-directed existential process taken in a certain segment of an individual life time, which is responsible for its own path. As the itinerants' footsteps are trenced according to vital choices, between shadows and faces, sightings and recollections, traces and marks, those paths are drawn in the symbolic relational game where each one plays with himself and with the world. The referential analytical stabilisation of its narrativeness unveils, through writing, the purpose of a personal itinerary. And this purpose gives a meaning not only to the existential moment, making it an “essay” of life, but also gives to it a new direction, becoming (self)formative.

The I.D. is a personal writing diary which contains a triple diary – an existential one (recollected from the *intimate* diary, subjective), an indexical one (recollected from the *log-book*, objective) and a dialogical one (common to the *institutional* diary – communicative).

According to Barbier, in a progressive self-analysis procedure, it expands in three diary stages: the *draft-diary*, with an *accidental writing*, spontaneous, the *elaborate diary*, with a

⁷ According to René Barbier (1993a) there are other techniques which can also be used in this existential investigation action, such as photo-language, the collective drawing, video, comics, the improvisation theatre, the socio-and the psychodrama.

rewriting originated by the rereading, analysis and clipping of extracts which are made significantly sharable by the personal *analogical drift* and *creative resonance* of the contextual and group motivations, and, finally, the *commented diary*, the moment of proofing in which the learner allows the reading and subsequent exposure of a part or of the whole elaborated diary. According to this, and in this stage, the chosen theme must represent an interest to the other and shall seek a non-polemic inter-subjective communication,

“(...) I’m listening to their reactions but I do not look for polemics. I try to understand what one says in his criticism or his compliments. I identify in what it expresses an analysing resonance of its own condition and in what can I find an echo of myself. (Barbier, 1993b),

producing some kind of synthesis-discourse which becomes the group’s democratisation tool, or

“(...) a trace of critical conscience in the inter-personal relationship (...) becoming (the ones who surround us) active players of an existential research-action on the theme withheld by the elaborated diaries.” (Idem)

It is not by chance that the itinerant diary is elected, in the mentioned framework, the formative writing. This choice is more than a methodological adhesion; it also denounces a non-directive pedagogical attitude by the teachers towards the instituted and towards self-education: *“indeed, our project with the group would only be a project if it was a group project.”* (Pacheco, Terrasêca & Caramelo, 2000), which is a simultaneously implied, ethic and political attitude:

“(...) the experiences and wisdoms of these students/professionals (learners) contribute not only for their colleagues’ education, but also for our education as teachers. In fact, their practical wisdoms are a challenge which prevent us from falling in the theoretical void and which guide us towards a questioning of our practices’ meanings.” (Pacheco, Terrasêca & Caramelo, 1999: 2)

and further, they restate according to P. Dominicé:

“(...) we believe – investing in an utopia – in the possibility of the Education Sciences graduate to intervene in the Portuguese society as a citizen – “knowing why he thinks what he thinks and why he does what he does, the graduate will be more and more an ethic person. The right to become oneself will be the true grounds of his Human Rights defence – Dominicé, 1993: 250)” (idem, ibidem).

And, as mentioned before, by implicitly betting on the possibility of a critical-creative rationality development, it allows not only to question *habitus* (the critical sense), powers, institutional representations and action schemes, but also to consciously integrate the possibility of its transgression (the creative sense), and, also, of its desire (sense of project):

“The internal coherence of the chosen education model implies a definition which is inherent to the group as far as it concerns the ways of being in Education that underline

conflictive boundaries with the instituted in higher education. In that sense, this pattern's implications are still put in doubt to the extent of the power relations that are established in the education system.” (Idem, 2000)

But risks and unexpected events are awaited and assumed, if not desired:

“(…) The writing of an itinerant diary (…) constitutes the possibility of its own transgression or of being assumed in different ways in terms of a self-project building (…) that is, it requires an immediate intense negotiation process and it keeps its long path as a part of the originality, availability and implication in a creative relationship (…)” (Idem)

Through the Act of Writing

“For the majority of people, the act of writing is not spontaneous. Writing is a technique connected to an acquired cultural abstract code, but I believe it appeared due to a strong need to communicate and to reflect, that allows lived retroaction. Without the codified written language the abstractions on reality wouldn't be produced and it would vanish in the defactualised void. Without facts there is no experience and without experience there is no knowledge”⁸

In these sense, we'll be able to infer that the ontological origin if the general communication impulse (iconographical, artistic, literary, linguistic), in its evolution since the most primitive forms to the most complex and contemporary ones, must have been articulated with two other ontological impulses: obsession for duration and obsession for truth, or, in other words, to struggle against time and to struggle against loss.

It is also understandable that the written language, in the dialectical game it plays between memory and oblivion (information storage / selection) is also influenced by the facts that have affected (or still affect) human beings. This is the random intersection point between the rational and the emotional, the remembered and the forgotten, that writing about the past becomes a construction (a re-writing) and is the creator of a *quasi* fantasy almost truthful. At the same time, it makes their authors' itineraries and projects, both implicit and explicit, subjective and objective.

In this way, and resuming the central theme of the diary writing in the self-education processes, dialectic pairs within education narratives, such as memory/oblivion, reason/emotion, objective/subjective, reality/fantasy, intertwining as if they were threads from the same rope, conspire in the same process of knowledge, making that writing a triple device for duration (struggle against time), knowledge (struggle against illusion) and communication (struggle against loss).

⁸ Manuel Matos, speech on the Internal Seminar of the Project “Escritas Interditas”, October 2002, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, at University of Porto

The “inter-dit”⁹ Writing

According to René Barbier (1993b) the foreseen experience of sharing diaries relies on the fact that the writing reflexion is refined in the stages of elaborate and commented diary, and to the before described.

When writing departs from the intimate-private realm to the public realm and it is submitted to a collective sharing,¹⁰ its author is forced to not only leave the solitude of his acts, that is, the *oneself to himself*, but to search, through a conscious effort, for a communicative alterity, widening his vision of the world with a whole of social interchange possibilities. But this awareness to the Other is neither simple nor immediate. On the contrary, it is often perceived as a risk or threat.

Indeed, besides the ‘solitary’ appropriations of each one, the individual strategies are part of the collective ones and in that process each person uses several devices according to the established relations of power, his personal features and his conscience regarding his status and the social relations in which he, or she, lives (Pacheco, 1996).

If, on the individual level of rewriting (stage of the elaborate diary) the author is supposed to listen, distinguish, separate and select, in the commented diary, as described, the learner leads a dialogue of “*inter-dits*” psycho-sociologically contextualised. The author develops, in his *exposée*, an intertextual diary, perceived as a circumscribed and partial text (Lourau, 1988).

For practical reflexion reasons, we will further on denominate this (commented) diary the “*inter-dit*” diary, resuming the sense that Roland Barthes gives to the term, by influencing a suggesting, evanescent writing, in which the not-said – the unworthy or irrepresentable intimate personal - belongs to it even not being there, not through the process of the explicit memory, but through the complementary process of the intentionally erased memory.

A Collective Diary

In response to a request made by the teachers to write an essay on communication to be presented in the Second Congress of Education Sciences in the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, at University of Lisbon, six elements of the class, school year 1997/98, spontaneously decided to, instead of writing a theoretical text, write a communication in the shape of a diary, likewise it was assumed as the core and structure praxis of this learning experience.

This collective narrative was developed along seven days. This was considered the minimum timeframe in which the time unit – one day – as an *existential unit*, tells the meaningful themes and circumstances around seven critical moments. The discourse of a collective narrator (C.N.) seeks a discursive line centred in and coherent with the itinerary, and either directly transcribes fragments of different learners’ diary writings or creates a theoretical text which he tries to articulate in an analytical way.

⁹ In the terms of Roland Barthes (1980), “*inter-dit*” has the meaning of unspeakable, which cannot be said, or which can only be said between the lines, which is suggested.

¹⁰ As it is mentioned by Anne Vancrayenest (1990), the communication of the diary to outer people changes, in its path, the initial project. The initially diffuse object becomes gradually more precise.

Collective Diary in Seven Learning Days

(Short Summary)

1st day – Moment of the general collective seduction for the learning proposal perceived and interpreted as a desired legitimate challenge, that is, a viable project:

CN – «(...) We saw ourselves delighted in a process of profound personal, social and professional identification which intertwines the ideals we seek in the paradigm in which the learning was inscribed and lived (...) the formative meaning of this experience occurred from the fact that it assumed the shape of not the space and time of the predilection and the prelection of the discourses, but the space and time of the (re)construction of paths, not as the monological space and time of blind reverence to wisdom, but as the dialogical space and time where the experience and the existence get importance.»

2nd day – The manifest representation of the education models and the meanings given to the *locus* and knowledge status, as well as the conventionally asymmetrical roles in the relationships between teacher/student, creates generalised hesitations, anguishes and uncertainties.

CN - «To build a learning process by means of non-formal models creates a whole set of anguishes regarding knowledge».

... ..

«(...) I am much more contradictory than what I thought, in these learning things... sometimes I acted as if I was caught red-handed: I even blushed... I criticise (...the) classical education model a lot (...), but then I have the chance to experiment another one and I don't behave properly (...). Unconsciously, I wait for the teacher to progress (...). Theory has its perverse effects, it's a perverseness to whom has the illusion of its origin, it's pathetic...

There's nothing like reality to remind us that we are mere sorcerer's apprentices.»

... ..

«(...) Thus, moments of enchantment (...) struggled with moments of disenchantment (...).».

... ..

« (...) when we interiorise the non-knowledge as a dimension of knowledge, we will be able to live a relationship with knowledge and non-knowledge, free from anguishes (...). It is important to take risks in this class».

... ..

3rd day – Generalised moment of strong resistance to sharing, bringing up several questions about the learning process taking place, specially the «making it common», the intersecting «writings»: How to write a diary to be read? Should we experiment a model or should we create our own? Which strategies should we take? Why should we take risks and what for?

CN - « (...) *We have exteriorly accepted to practise the diary, which is like becoming another; to practise another angle of sight, another way to look for the (...) origins, or even to find a second perspective – a possible intersection. Or a third perspective – an intrusive vision, (...) which replaces all pieces. Or a forth perspective – which may even change the whole game’s course (...).*»

... ..
 « (...) *It seems, thus, that there are several kinds of diaries: ones are made to forget and are never read; others were meant to be read (and either they become confessions or they lose truthfulness, credibility (...). And others are meant to be looked at as a mirror. These are the ones which interest us. We project ourselves and we stare at... or even, through the incidental transactional power they possess (...) we will start seeing the same, with other eyes, yours, for example.*»

4th day – The conscience of the group – from the feeling of belonging to trust and from trust to the expected openness:

CN - « (...) *As time went by, due to the sharing experience, the growing confidence in the group diminished the fear of exposure (...).*»

... ..
 «(...) *Indeed, the process starts to be outlined in a sense of collective construction. The fear of self-exposure becomes obvious in the shared notes (...) although the writing in diaries continues to be filtered by the existing consciousness on their sharing (...)*

... ..
 «*To equate the individual resistances, interests and expectations with the group’s desires and interests was not an easy task. Sometimes, tensions and conflicts came to surface; particularly in moments in which each one’s singularity, when exposing, somehow shook the other’s singularity.*»

... ..
 « (...) *The analysis of the ‘feelings’ of living in group was happening in a permanent dialogue, established with my diary... increasingly, the individual ‘shell’ where I covered for shelter gradually started to show some deep cracks, thus allowing the passage of small and not so small details of my subjectivity and the entry of other points of view which lead to discussions, confrontations, the (re)construction of different skills and knowledges ...*»

The «cracks» that threaten to wound the individual «shell» – perhaps instigated by what Jacques Derrida (1967) called “*blessure du groupe*”¹¹ – change into breaches not of rupture, but of openness – of overcoming one’s closure through the ability to *become other* and to *change*¹². Everything seems to happen as if the itineraries in a diary could be trans-biographical, dialectically narrating between the individual and the social in a constant quest for integration and personal statement, but which is also of acceptance and of search for the complicities within the group.

¹¹ In the terms of Jacques Derrida, it is the “shock” with the group which guides the self-analyses, making the breaches articulation (communication) joints: ‘La brisure est la jointure’ (Derrida, 1967: 435).

¹² According to Jacques Ardoino, the “*changing*” is conceived as a bilateral interaction “*which makes us become other through the action of the other*” (Ardoino, 1988: 256)

5th day – The critical-creative power, combined with the unpredictableness and the timelessness of writing in the narrative processes, seems to grant it an autonomy dimension. It is accepted as a powerful means of search for signs of the lived, as an almost compulsive gesture, of filling the blank pages with subjective impressions. But the questions multiply: How to dominate it? How to make it reasonable? How to update it? How to authorise it? How to *transmit* it? Theories cross between doubts and questions which emerged on the surface, and the CN also records:

CN – *«As Chené wrote (in Nóvoa & Finger, 1988: 95) «We noticed that no time system dominates the narratives; many verb tenses from the past belong to the narrative as much as the verb tenses from the present belong to the discourse (...).»*

... ..

(...) This way one can even regenerate the slippery present time which is the time of writing; taking the role of single possible meaning of temporality, the meaning of its story; because the story, by having its times unified (...) becomes sensitive to its own intelligibility (...).»

Thus, writing is foreseen as an almost magical act. Besides the evident need of technical mastery, the theoretical acceptance of writing as an heuristic and reflexion means is led by the direct experience of its continuously reconstructive *bricolage*¹³ of the meaning of the facts, discloser of signs, creator of hypotheses and solutions, accurate in the sight of targets.

CN – *«(...) And it is through this relationship of intimacy which I establish with writing (...) that I start to find meanings in this process... it is in this involvement that I find the ‘thread’ of my self-education: Thinking of questions which were by me taken for granted, because they were instituted, class standards, teacher and student standards, learning standards... (...).»*

Even becoming half-privileged from ego-descentration, discursively converging towards another centre, another gravity, desubjectivated:

CN – *« (...) According to Zabalza (1994: 95) “(...)the writing self speaks about the self who acted a while ago; that is, the writing self is capable of seeing himself in perspective, in kind of a three-way transaction: I myself the narrator, I myself the narrated and the reality”.»*

« (...) It is following the words, where it takes us, that we obtain the narrative or the story which ought to be revealed.»

6th day – In this education context, the final assessment – a prerogative certification and *proof* of the formal learning success – emerges as a contradiction to the ongoing process:

¹³ According to Jacques Derrida (1967), corroborating the meaning given by Lévi Strauss «there is, therefore, a language criticism in the shape of a *bricolage* and it was stated that the *bricolage* would be the very own critical language».

CN - « *We have decided that students' assessment work would take the diary as the object of analysis and critical reflexion, which had been the pretext in the revelation of learning through our meta-narrative*»

... ..

« (...) and, in this sense, to proceed to the quantitative evaluation of the students, within a process like the one which was lived and experienced by this group, didn't make any sense.»

7th day – The true issue of *proof* may have appeared in a graphic and visual outcome, which is also a symbolic image of the *game's assumption* – the finished puzzle, assembled in the last page of the last day – where the intersected differences fit in an actual puzzle, symbol of the whole: the game's assertion which all the players accepted and were willing to play. Like the definition of an itinerary, product of the juxtaposed narratives, the puzzle appears as a *paratext*, which has become unifying pretext of the group itself and the meaning of learning; that game which has hidden, but actually also allowed to emphasize, the complicity of the voices and not only what has separated them.

*From the Disturbing Personal Intimacy*¹⁴ to the *Disturbing Institutional Intimacy*

The intersection of diaries in a single transpersonal text doesn't represent just the research analysis, but it constitutes a collective means of «placing yourself in the abyss»¹⁵ going from an insinuating “*inter-dit*” to an explicit *hypertext* – in the sense used by René Lourau (1988) in which what is selected as narratable, «not being innocent nor random», cannot help being an anamorphism (optical illusion game between figure and background) – which in this case showed a transpersonal blend of the narrated facts.

In this learning experience, the collectively written word confirmed the co-lived process and clarified what the spoken “*inter-dit*” word had the difficulty in stabilising. The outcome appears to be some sort of final agreement or a simple approval. But it may be more than that.

Indeed what happens depends on another level of writing, which derives from a return which is stated not through its repetition, but through its retroaction. And this return will have its consequences.

If the initial process implied the individual retroaction of the experienced made subjective through writing, followed by a double retroaction in a collectivised “*inter-dit*”, the collective text, seems to not only treble the process, but also to show an almost everlasting possibility of its multiplication.

If we get inspiration from Barthes' thinking by relating Text with Tissue, it seems clear to us the notion that the text is a keeper of meanings of truth: «(...) *this tissue which was always taken as the product, finished with a veil, behind which is kept, more or less hidden, the meaning (the truth)*» (Barthes, 1980: 112).

Furthermore, as also Barthes states, the return to the text makes its centre shift, when he affirms that *it never describes the same passages*. Thus a sense of infinitude is this way as-

¹⁴ Appropriation of the similar expression used by René Lourau, “*the field's disturbing intimacy*”, in the compared analysis of the ethnographic diaries related to the context of discovery (Lourau, 1988)

¹⁵ In the terms of René Lourau's concept «mise en abîme» which represents the retroaction of the investigator ethnographer over the experienced, *op. cit.*

sured connects the Text to a profound ontological interpretation – due to the multiplicity of experiences – which seems not only to *authorise* the inspired creation of other similar re-narrations but also to make them plausible.

On the other hand, the already mentioned descentration it's not only a field deviance – the content field of the narrative – it also implies the author's deviance, that is, it discloses the author's precariousness when he's immerse in his writing, as stated by Michel Foucault¹⁶ «(...) *in writing it's not about the manifestation or the praise of the gesture of writing, nor the settlement of a subject in a language, it's a question of openness of a space where the subject of writing is always disappearing*» (Foucault, 2002: 34).

The Collective Narrator (CN), taking advantage of this Foucault's sense of *disappearing of the subject*, not being just *one* nor a *subject*, seems to instead represent the *locus* of an *authorship* (legitimised or not), crossed over by a multiplicity of Selves, paradoxally creating the opportunity for writing to become autonomous, resuming its most expressive task, the liberation of the text(s) and its(their) idea(s) - which includes the possibility of the return to the originary "*inter-dits*".

The generic concept of return in Michel Foucault indicates «a specific movement which characterises the originators of discursiveness» (idem: 64). Considering that «in order to have return, first of all it's necessary that might have been oblivion, not an accidental one (...) but an essential and constitutive oblivion (...) an oblivion invested in precise and cognitive operations, that could be recovered and analysed by returning to the very founder act.» (idem: 63-64).

In this formative perspective, the path from the spoken to the written (which does not have to be the mere path from the *commentary* to the *documentary*), in a *texture* (Barthes, 1980)¹⁷ which is finished and consensually produced through the intertwining of the original threads/texts, the insinuated *inter-dit* became central, *le deuil*¹⁸ of the narration. If we perceive it as the collective *work*, in its finished web, it contains and embodies the very discursive founders, the gaps and the omissions, the unspeakable, the expressed and *les inter-dits*, highlighting, from its intertextuality, its own game, not only the chosen itinerary, but along with its story's facts and circumstances.

In the context of an institutional education, its production's specific circumstances – weaved not from an order or a rule but from a spontaneous and expressive response from a group of learners – give it peculiar features which connect or have connected it to the descentration whether from the subject(s) writer(s) or from the meaning of their work; and, consequently, from the expressive realm and quality and the appropriation of the very (self)education project.

In this point of view, we perceive this text as *the* final Text (*the* story), which shows traces of formal coherence regarding the initial proposition (for instance, a diary, subdivided in days), but that when processing in return and in an unpredictable situations includes signs of discursive constitution which lead to some subversion of the initial formal project:

¹⁶ Michel Foucault analyses the connection between the subject and his writing, in its complex transmutation as an author and his work.

¹⁷ According to Roland Barthes, the texture, tissue or Text, is made through an endless intertwining, in which the subject dissolves him- or herself "*like a spider which dissolves itself in the constructive secretions of its web*" (Barthes, 1980: 112).

¹⁸ According to Jacques Derrida (1967), "*le deuil*", the core of writing is the attraction point of the narrative game.

1. The retroaction is collectively written and it is not *inter-dit*, which means it is explicit and not insinuating, slippery.
2. The collective retroaction does not return to the single individual, but it returns to his «work», which contains the *founders of his discourse*.
3. The collective narrator (CN) becomes a transcendent, nameless entity which, by getting out but still staying inside – as in a *moebius strip* – elects *this* itinerary, instead of the itinerant.
4. Finally, and curiously, in the return to the origins and through the subversive act of publishing “*le inter-dit*”, regarding the formal proposal, the CN subscribes one last transgression:

CN : «*Now I feel everything in its place. And I also know on which side I am, regarding the diary shape. I'm on the side of the children and teenagers' diaries, because of the advantage they have of not letting themselves be contaminated by the pseudo-need and the opportunism of the useful and the functional*».

Locus of Emancipation and of Investigation

If, in an education context, a diary, personal or collective, is considered a praxis analyser (formative, professional and socially), then its meta-analysis leads to its meaning and legitimacy while learning resource.

The specificity of the I.D. technique as we know it indicates a translation of the self-education model representation, not only of its contents towards the practices or from these towards to its subject, in the feedback process between the lived and the inter-subjective communication.

In this learning experience, the self education essays through diaries (similar to the I.D. model), have, in their practice, exceeded the typical log-book; they also escaped to the *locus* of institutional control to which the typical institutional diaries seems to lead, creating another space, undertaking links of inter-subjective communication.

Nevertheless, the deviating experience – because it was not predicted nor requested – of the collective diary writing seems, through its total referential descentration (from the referent subject and the referent institution) to contain, in its trans-discursive return, constitutional signs of the action conditions and of the genuine involvements, on other words, the signs of not only the game which was agreed to be played, but also the subordinate reasons of that choice.

This self-education essay, in the described conditions – prodigally returned to its *work* (authorised or not) – contains, in its complexity, a value of establishing intervention, singularly creator and generative of an emancipation urge. Through the imaginary of obedience (the established power *over* the establishing responsiveness) it legitimised the change (expected target), listened, searched, tried, concealed, yielded, changed and theorised. Through the disobedience imaginary (from the establishing *over* the established) it legitimised the difference, the resistance, went back to the “*inter-dits*”, it listened, imagined, made a choice, *falsified* the dissolution of the contradictions and, through the return, it prevented the oblivion possibility and someone has experienced learning.

Concluding Note

These final notes are as far as we feel prepared to go in trying to draw some educational and formative implications from the framework introduced in this paper. The framework has been taken mostly from Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault's theories on writing and authorship along with René Barbier's Itinerant Diary concept and practice.

We can now summarize two general response patterns envisioned by this learning experience through writing, one of conflict and another of cooperation. This dualism led us to a triple debate: the first one is connected with the institutional and its universal values, framed by Knowledge establishment and assessment needs. Also in this sense has been questioned Knowledge status as a process of development and growing, by means of personal research according to one's motivations, cultural background and needs. In this context teachers cease to have the sole responsibility for the learning process, becoming facilitators who help the class to access knowledge and experience in a reflexive proactive way. This new pedagogical attitude provoked personal insecurity and anxious feelings among some students, by fear of losing scientific information and rigour.

The second one is connected with the individual as a part of a community brought about by each one's diaries sharing and discussion in a collective space. In fact, a diary is commonly assumed as an intimate artefact process of writing. But in this case the itinerant diary had turned possible to alter several singular narratives into a collective one, which became quite expressive in the group option to rewrite spontaneously a collective diary, retelling the formation story as a particular narrative itself with everyone's contribution, assumingly written by a collective narrator (CN).

Finally, the third one is connected with the applicability of the experienced methodology. The diary itself has been questioned as a self-education resource, principally due to its almost imposition and as a way of evaluation and assessment, which was expressed in two major questions: is it reasonable to impose to write a diary, as a learning experience whereas by common definition it comes out from personal will and desire? Is it reasonable to use a diary as an evaluation tool?

We find inevitable to meet the heuristic potential of writing in its critical and creative rationality also implemented through the Itinerant Diary (I.D.), shedding light to the unavoidable inter-subjective dimension on learning processes. This doesn't mean that the I.D. is a miraculous receipt for significant learning nor it seems that every learner was definitely convinced on using it on his/her educational matters. What has been clearly consensual was that this learning collective experience through writing made them much more aware of his/hers professional and personal experience built as a psychosocial integrated path, where conscious openness to other's ways of acting and thinking broadens meaningfully new terms of Education.

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