UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Theories and Models of Educational Consultancy

2324-2-F5701R011

Course title

Pedagogical consultancy as a learning process for professionals, teams and organisations: Theoretical paradigms, intervention models and consultancy experiences.

Topics and course structure

It is widely believed that the development needs of today's organisations are related to the ever-increasing speed of technological evolution and the globalisation scenario in which they are embedded. In times of economic instability and turbulence and in the face of an employment crisis horizon, the development of organisations takes on a social significance due to its connections with the possibility of building a future through the constant design of new organisational assets. The history of an organisation is punctuated by its propensity to place the processes of innovation and preservation in a constant and dynamic dialectic, consistent with the needs of development in the market and the specificities of its organisational culture. However, faced with the acceleration of work times and the demand for ever better performance, the time devoted to training has contracted considerably. In the face of this highly complex scenario, specialised consultancy interventions, if they can provide partial solutions for certain areas of work, are not able to take into account the close interdependence that links the sectors of each organisation. Technical interventions run the risk of producing divisions and separations rather than acting for the functionality of the entire system that sees intertwined, according to a logic specific to each organisation, its structure, procedures, decision-making processes and internal culture, understood as a system of shared values, models and styles of behaviour. The element that builds a necessary mediator to the interconnection of these levels of the organisation is the development of a widespread relational capacity, of a competence to interact aiming at the construction of effective communication networks within it. Moreover, organisations are places where, in addition to sharing outcome goals, people share cognitive and affective representations of the context. Their dynamic intertwining forms the basis of the values and meanings that are attributed to a specific reality. The share of emotional investment that professionals bring into play in the exercise of their roles and functions is an essential element for being able to read a demand for advice posed by the client system and being able to respond to it. In fact, the process of understanding and reading a demand for counselling relies on time: reflecting on one's own

internal processes, attributing sense and meaning to needs and transforming them into questions, in a logic of sense making, allows for an active participation of the client system in the definition and design of interventions that support its autonomy and ability to learn from experience. Relaunching the recovery of a sense for professionals is of vital importance today, as is supporting them in the search for focused spaces to revive forms of reflexivity and planning, both within profit and non-profit organisations and the third sector. he course will address pedagogical consultancy as knowledge endowed with a complex epistemology and as a device capable of valorising the client system's implicit knowledge to overcome moments of impasse and criticality, thanks to a practice of reflexivity in which consultant and client develop a concerted process of negotiation and redefinition of the problem. Pedagogical consultancy establishes work settings in which reflexivity is put at the service of a process of change that reinforces, over time, the resilience and cohesion of the system and the capacity to always welcome new challenges. The course will develop a focus on the importance of teams as driving forces in the life of an organisation. The effectiveness of a team lies in the convergence of all members towards a common goal. A functional group is a multiplier in both a quantitative and qualitative sense of the thoughts and dynamics that develop within it, and it is an entity that is able to elaborate new ideas and divergent strategies that arise by tapping into the creative area of group thinking. Solutions to a problem will certainly be more far-sighted, perspective-rich and elaborated if it is a group rather than an individual alone that elaborates them. Moreover, a work group is a multi-layered entity that, in addition to a formal direction made up of roles and functions, may go through phases in which emotional/affective dynamics constitute resources or obstacles in contributing to the cultural change of an organisation both in terms of shared values and implemented behavioural models. The productivity of a work group is interconnected to its internal well-being and to that of each actor in it; pedagogical counselling works in the direction of supporting the group's engagement in relation to the actions of the leadership in order to promote reflexive and meta-reflexive processes that keep the group task-oriented even in the critical phases that any organisation may go through. Promoting in groups a good harmonisation between the sharing of objectives and the sharing of emotional experiences, means developing the ability to consciously recognise the more intangible aspects that punctuate organisational life and orient them towards the enhancement of the task. The underestimation of these dimensions and/or their ousting can over time generate deadlock situations, widespread states of dissatisfaction that hinder the group's productive process and foster its bureaucratisation. The course will focus on the theoretical and experiential nature of the group construct. This knowledge about the group as a trans-disciplinary object will be approached through a didactic device that relies on learning to inhabit a group, to know its dynamics from the inside.

The course will think together clinical-pedagogical theories on counselling and training models to translate this knowledge into competences. Within a theoretical-experiential training perspective, each student and the group as a whole will be involved in the experimentation of a counselling posture in the context of live and participative class work. The dialogical dimension, the focus on specific moments of intensive and laboratory work in small and large groups allows for the maturation of knowledge that is not only theoretically grounded, but which summons each student to re-examine his or her own implicit epistemologies, allowing for the assumption of a clearer awareness of the value assumptions that guide one's positioning within an organisation and developing communication and relational abilities that qualify as transversal skills of primary importance for a productive integration in the world of work.

A complex knowledge is built through a pedagogical device in which the group assumes the role of active protagonist who, starting from specific and targeted stimuli (analysis of cases taken from the scientific literature, shared construction of self-cases, etc..) is stimulated to train not only its own capacity to elaborate contents but also a positioning aimed at negotiating its own cultural assumptions, pooling its own training models, and sharing the emotional processes that concern the life of work groups.

In particular, the course content proposals will cover the following aspects:

1. Reading and analysing the demand in its manifest and latent aspects;
2. The centrality of the organisational context in shaping the meanings that professionals attribute to work;
3. The languages and symbols that circulate in a work group and in an organisational reality;
4. The relationship between work group and group work;
5. The ways of learning in a working group;
6. The feedback phenomena within work groups;
7. The emotional dynamics that characterise the life of a work group between individual meaning construction and collective beliefs;

8. The levels of group functioning between content and relationship;
9. Counselling work as co-construction of change processes;
10. Trust and empathic movement in counselling processes
11. Active listening, observation and meta-reflection in counselling work;
12. Feedback processes in counselling work
13. Resistance phenomena in counselling practice

It becomes significant, at the educational level, to work on developing skills in students that allow them in their future professional role to creatively combine elements belonging to the technical area with the soft dimensions of organisational life in order to understand their interconnection points and move them in a creative and generative direction for the organisation itself.

Objectives

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The following objectives are to be pursued with this teaching:

1. Knowledge and understanding of the main counselling models and their epistemological references;
2. Knowledge and understanding of the theories and models proposed as frames of meaning for an interpretation of counselling questions in organisations;
3. Knowledge and understanding of theories of group functioning and its dynamics;
4. Development of meta-cognitive skills and self-awareness of one's own cultural assumptions;
5. Definition and recognition of counselling skills related to the development of individuals, groups and organisations.

Expected learning outcomes (disciplinary and transversal) consistent with the cultural, scientific and professional profiles identified by the CdS':
At the end of the course, students should be able to understand the theories underlying counselling models and be able to translate them into practice through the application of some counselling methodologies (coaching etc..) . More generally, they will have to show that they know how to activate processes for building generative training relationships and for supporting staff development in organisations, as required by the professional profiles at the end of the degree course; they will also have to show that they have transversal skills in communication, dialogue, relations, reading of explicit and implicit individual and group demands, which are indispensable for those who are called upon to manage and develop human resources in order to operate in dynamic and inter-functional organisational contexts.

Methodologies

The methodologies used in the class work will include:

1. Lectures,
2. Exercises on professional cases in small groups;
3. Plenary discussion and reflection moments;
4. Use of aesthetic stimuli;
5. Work on scientific articles that can be downloaded online;
6. Case histories

Frontal lectures allow us to get to the heart of theoretical and methodological approaches to counselling; large group discussions are aimed at elaborating theoretical concepts, developing an active and participative relationship

with knowledge, and getting involved in order to implement observation, listening, self-listening and reading group dynamics skills; the analysis of professional cases contributes to the development of metacognitive skills and self-awareness of one's own cultural preconceptions. In fact, the cases are, through the reticular process established by the group's thinking, subjected to a multi-focal analysis that allows one to see the different implications, the possible exports in other contexts (generalisations) and the retroactions at the level of the transformation of one's own cultural assumptions. The analysis of scientific articles makes it possible to compare different approaches to the course topics also from a multicultural perspective (articles in English will also be studied). The case histories a are instrumental in developing learning that is consolidated through identification with situations and intervention models implemented by those who already have consolidated experience of consultancy work in organisations

Online and offline teaching materials

All teaching materials, such as slides, articles and working outlines, will be provided during the lessons and uploaded to the on-line platform.

Programme and references

- E. Schein (1999), *Process Consultation: Building the Helping Relationship.* Prentice Hall.
- S. Ulivieri Stiozzi (2013), *Il counseling formativo, Milano:* FrancoAngeli.
- C. Kaneklin (2010), *Il gruppo in teoria e in pratica. L'intersoggettività come forza produttiva.* Milano: Cortina.
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Assessment methods

The examination, which will consist of an oral colloquium, will focus on verifying the theories proposed in the bibliography and in the classroom work and on the ability to make appropriate connections between the texts through critical revision.

Specifically, two dimensions will be evaluated:

Knowledge and understanding

The knowledge of the pedagogical models of counselling will be ascertained through an oral interview aimed at verifying, with appropriate questions, the level and extent of understanding of the fundamental concepts and cores of meaning.

The ability to critically elaborate the proposed knowledge, both in relation to the individual text and with a view to dialogue and comparison between authors and models, will also be ascertained.

For the students attending the classroom the material is a specific object of verification, with particular reference to the formative and self-training dimensions produced by the classroom experience.

Ability to decline knowledge into competence

In relation to the models of pedagogical counselling, it will be ascertained the ability to translate theoretical knowledge into reading skills of the counselling questions that are developed within the services and professional

groups, knowing how to articulate them with reference to concrete experiences.

The ability to plan consulting actions and the methodological skills related to teamwork will be verified.

The ability to manage effective communication with particular reference to group contexts will be verified.

The skills of self-reflection on one's own role positioning within a work context and a professional group will be evaluated.

The ability to learn to learn will be assessed with particular reference to Problem Soling and critical connection between the proposed knowledge, as well as the translation of knowledge in multiple professional contexts.

Office hours

In the 2023/2024 academic year, the reception will take place, by appointment, in person on Thursday afternoons in the professor's office.
It is also possible, at the student's request, for the reception to be held remotely.
To book, please write to the following address:

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Programme validity

The programs are valid for two academic years.

Course tutors and assistants

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Sustainable Development Goals

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS