UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Theories and Models of Educational Consultancy

2425-2-F5701R011

Course title

The theoretical experiential knowledge of pedagogical consultancy: a clinical and interdisciplinary perspective on helping processes in teams and organisations

Topics and course structure

It is widely agreed that the development needs of today's organisations are related to the ever-increasing speed of technological change and the globalisation scenario in which they are set.
In times of economic instability and turbulence and faced with an employment horizon in crisis, the development of organisations takes on a social significance due to its connections with the possibility of building the future, through the constant design of new organisational assets and new devices capable of conceiving the correlation between workers' needs and desires of growth that leverages motivation and self-realisation processes, as well as investments functional to the achievement of results and profits.
Thinking of consultancy with a clinical perspective that knows how to interpret the peculiarities and needs of each context, starting from a focus on the demand of the client system, means giving back to an organisational system the responsibility and tools to grow and evolve autonomously.
In order to produce a widespread awareness in the client system, the assumption of a clinically oriented consultancy is that one cannot have an understanding of the context and the human system if one has not tried to transform it.
The negotiation dynamic between the client and consultant system at every stage of the intervention focuses on joint research and diagnosis processes that involve an interactive, relational dimension where a central role is assumed by the consultant's clinical posture and professional deontology.
The history of an organisation is marked by its tendency to place the processes of innovation and preservation in a constant and dynamic dialectic, consistent with the development needs of the market and the specificities of its organisational culture. But every organisation also has a history, in the sense of a heritage of experiences, implicit assumptions, and cultures rooted in time, which reacts, not always in an entirely productive manner, with the tendency towards instantaneousness and acceleration of times required by the labour market.

The tendency to demand high performance from workers often conflicts with the time devoted to training, which has contracted considerably, taking on increasingly sporadic forms and less oriented towards an organisational development that takes into account the complexity of the demands circulating in a specific organisational context. Also in the psycho-socio-educational field, as well as in the enterprise field, the need for second-level support figures who are able to promote a concerted work between the organisation's objectives, the task of the work groups and the reading of the needs of the beneficiaries of the interventions has become increasingly cogent. . professionals are expressing demands for new cultural and intervention models and techniques that place them up to the challenges of the new areas of intervention in the educational sector. These are contexts where professionals are called to an exposure and a quality of presence that cannot but consider appropriate devices and settings of maintenance and elaboration of the lived experience.

In the face of this highly complex scenario, expert consultancy interventions characterised by asymmetrical and directive approaches, if they can constitute partial solutions for some work areas, are not able to think about the complexity that characterises the network of communicative, relational processes related to role positions within an organisation. Technical interventions risk to produce divisions and separations rather than acting for the functionality of the whole system that sees intertwined, according to a logic specific to each organisation, its structure, procedures, decision-making processes and internal culture, seen as a system of shared values, models and styles of behaviour.

The element that builds a necessary mediator for the interconnection between 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.

Furthermore, organisations are places where, in addition to the sharing of result objectives, people share cognitive and affective representations of the context. Their dynamic interweaving forms the basis of the values and meanings attributed to a given reality. The share of emotional investment that professionals bring into the exercise of their roles and functions is an essential factor in being able to read a request for consultancy posed by the client system and being able to respond to it.

In fact, the process of understanding and reading the 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. Reviving the recovery of a sense for professionals is of crucial importance today, as well as supporting them in the search for targeted spaces to revive forms of reflexivity and planning, both within profit and non-profit organisations and the third sector.

The course will approach pedagogical consultancy as a knowledge provided with a complex epistemology and as a device capable of valorising the client system's implicit knowledge in order to overcome moments of impasse and critical situations, thanks to the consultant's clinical, implicit and conscious gaze that works towards the redefinition of the problem and the search for new and possible lines of intervention. Educational consultancy sets up work settings in which reflexivity is put at the service of a change process that reinforces, over time, the system's resilience and cohesion and the capacity to produce transformation and innovation processes.

The course will focus on the work of teams as driving forces in the life of an organisation. The efficacy 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 is a subject capable of elaborating new ideas and divergent strategies that arise by drawing on the creative area of group thinking. Solutions to a problem will certainly be more forward-looking, perspective-rich and elaborated if it is a group rather than an individual alone that elaborates them.

A work group is, in particular, a multi-layered entity that, in addition to a formal organisation 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 enacted behavioural models.

The productivity of a work group is interconnected to its internal well-being and to the well-being of each actor that inhabits it; pedagogical consultancy works in the direction of supporting the group's engagement in relation to the leadership's actions in order to promote reflective and meta-reflective processes that keep the group task-oriented even in the critical phases that any organisation may go through.

Promoting in groups a good balance between the sharing of objectives and the sharing of emotional experiences means developing the ability to consciously recognise the more intangible aspects that characterise organisational life and orient them towards the valorisation of the task.

The underestimation of these dynamics and/or their exclusion can generate deadlock situations over time, diffuse

states of discontent that inhibit the group's productive process and favour 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 consultancy 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 consulting posture in the context of the live and participated work of the class. The dialogic dimension, the focus on specific moments of interactive and laboratory work in small and large groups, enables the maturation of a knowledge that is not only theoretically founded, but which invites each student to re-examine his or her own implicit epistemologies, enabling 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 work environment.
Complex knowledge is created by using 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 cases, etc.) is encouraged to train not only its own ability to elaborate contents, but also an attention to the work group processes, questioning the positions of all participants regarding the sharing of their training models and the evolution of emotional processes that allow the group to accomplish the set task.
In particular, the course content proposals, developed in the course of lecture delivery and then re-elaborated by individual students and the group in an interactive manner, will concern the following aspects:

- An interdisciplinary theoretical reconstruction of the models guiding educational counselling;
- An in-depth study of the clinical paradigm of counselling;
- The scenarios and models underlying organisational cultures in for-profit and non-profit organisations;
- The reading and analysis of demand in its manifest and latent aspects;
- The centrality of the organisational context in shaping the meanings that professionals attribute to work;
- The languages and symbols that circulate in a work group and in an organisational reality;
- The relationship between work group and group work;
- The feedback phenomena within work groups;
- The emotional dynamics that characterise the life of a work group between the construction of individual meanings and collective mentalities;
- The levels of group functioning between content and relationship;
- Counselling work as co-construction of change processes;
- Trust and empathic behaviour in counselling processes;
- Active listening as an indispensable resource for an implicit understanding of the context;
- Observation and meta-reflection in counselling work;
- The feedback processes in counselling work;
- Resistance phenomena in the demand of the helping relationship.

It becomes relevant, at the training level, to work towards developing in students theoretical/experiential knowledge that will enable 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 course will be conducted in presence according to the following teaching methods:

- 27 hours conducted in delivery mode (DE) equal to 48% of the total course time;
- 20 hours carried out in interactive mode (DI) equal to 35.71% of the total course time and oriented towards the involvement of the students and the class group by means of the following methods :
- plenary discussions;
- small and large group work;
- performance of exercises (*examples: exercises on scientific articles, case histories, video materials, etc.).
- 9 laboratory hours carried out in interactive mode (DI) amounting to 16% of the course timetable and supervised by the professor.

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.
- L. Regogliosi & G.Scaratti (2007), *Il consulente del lavoro socioeducativo. Formazione, supervisione, coordinamento*. Roma: Carocci.
- C. Kaneklin (2010), *Il gruppo in teoria e in pratica. L'intersoggettività come forza produttiva.* Milano: Cortina.

Assessment methods

The examination will consist of an oral discussion on the topics developed the lessons and the examination texts. There are no planned mid-term assessments.

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.

Although this course is held in Italian, for Erasmus students, course material can also be available in English, and students can take the exam in English if they wish to do so.Interested students are invited to contact the professor to make arrangements regarding the examination and bibliography..

Office hours

In the 2024/2025 academic year, student reception will take place, by appointment, on Thursday afternoons.
Students may choose between face-to-face and distance modes.
To request an appointment, please write to the following address:

stefania.ulivieri@unimib.it

Programme validity

The programs are valid for two academic years.

Course tutors and assistants

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Sustainable Development Goals

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