Developing Distributed Leadership through Arts-based and Embodied Methods:
An Evaluation of the Romanian Action Research Trials of Narrative Writing and Expression

ROMANIA – UNIVERSITY OF IAŞI

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1. INTRODUCTION

The ENABLES (European Arts-Based Development of Distributed Leadership and Innovation in Schools) project aims to strengthen collaborative leadership of innovation in schools by developing and disseminating innovative methods of arts-based and embodied collaborative leadership development.

The Action Research Trials – ARTs – are practical workshops and activities conducted with a range of school-based leaders (including student leaders) to apply, test and evaluate innovative arts-based and embodied learning approaches to developing distributed leadership in schools. The ARTs are safe, creative, collaborative spaces where constraints of hierarchy are minimized and agency, reflexivity and formation of personal and collaborative intentions by participants are facilitated. Learning becomes visible as participants make tacit knowledge explicit, explore its applicability to other contexts and transform the knowledge into a shared resource. Approaches being systematically trialled include:

- ✓ Visual arts, such as photography, painting and drawing
- ✓ Drama & theatre-based activities, enabling creative problem-solving
- ✓ Embodied leadership development using vignettes, narrative and design-thinking approaches
- ✓ Literary art: creative writing and expression
- ✓ Embodied leadership development using 2-dimensional arts such as collage

The project team is grateful for the contributions of all participants, their dedication and enthusiasm encouraged and sustained the process greatly.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE ROMANIAN ARTs

ENABLES Partner:	Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi
Focus of ARTS:	Creative writing and expression
Timeframe of ARTs:	Three Workshops: 28th November 2020, 12th January 2021, 22nd March 2021
Location of the ART:	Virtual Online – Iasi, Romania
Number of participants	In total, 76 participants
Description of participants	school teachers, school principals, school inspectors, school psychologists, MA students in Policy and Management in Education
Duration of each ARTs	Three events, first of them 2.05 hours, the second one 2.10 hours, the third one 2.15 hours + and one reflective final meeting where the participants shared and celebrated what they have learnt.
Type of Outputs:	Photos, two of the workshops were conducted with the permission of the participants, journals/written thoughts

a. Arts-based/embodied activities

Introduction

Design of the workshop/workshops
- ✓ The UAIC team defined the objectives and goals of the workshops and established the possible target group and the agenda. The team established the topics, the subjects, the methods used in order to achive the objectives of the workshop, selected the tools for communication with the participants before and after the workshop
- ✓ The UAIC team would use email in order to invite the people to the workshop
- ✓ Because of the pandemic situation, the workshops were held online/virtually, in the evening, after working hours
- ✓ The link to the meeting would be generated by Ovidiu Gavrilovici or by Elena Seghedin
- ✓ Information regarding the Enables project would be presented at the beginning of the workshop, as well the workshop programme what is to be expected from the participants
- ✓ Regarding the workshop itself, the UAIC team assigned an estimated length of time to each aspect of the workshop
- ✓ Being a stressful period with a considerable impact on everyone, including on teachers, the facilitators decided to apply a method developed and proposed by Sabine Vermeire – ***"Care for the carers" –*** during the workshops.

Specific Outcomes:
- ✓ Reflecting on the content of the transverse competencies useful for the development of leadership capabilities
- ✓ Reflecting on own learning and own career development
- ✓ Trialling some narrative approach methods which use the spoken and written word, to construct a toolkit of narrative technhiques, useful for distributed leadership development.

Principles of our educational interventions

These principles underpin the three workshops and final reflective meeting, where participants shared and celebrated what they learnt:

- ✓ All the narrative and creative writing methods were used under the idea of an innovative *teacher/participant-centered approach*.
- ✓ *Adult learning principles* – useful because our goal is to develop a toolkit for teacher training and continuing professional development: realistic and intrinsic motivation, intellectual capabilities, time management, different experiences in the education field, teaching practice, pedagogical knowledge.
- ✓ *Narrative approach benefits*
- ✓ *Distributed leadership characteristics* and working principles.

About the Narrative Approach

The proposed narrative methodology was to use a range of written creative methods.

Collective narrative practice. *Tree of life.*

Tree of Life (ToL) has various sources as a community practice intertwined with narrative therapy principles. Ncazelo Ncube worked in collaboration with David Denborough, Michael White, Cheryl White and Shona Russell (Dulwich Centre in Adelaide, Australia). Initially applied to support alternative preferred identity stories of peope in situations of hardship and difficulties, ToL practice was presented later, in 2008, as a collective narrative practice bypassing what was named by Michael White and David Epston (1990) as "problem-saturated stories". Others view ToL as a "narrative-based expressive arts intervention" (Schweitzer et al., 2014, p. 2) or use the term ToL as a metaphor in their expressive art therapies (Hirschson, Fritz & Kilian, 2018; Gavrilovici & Dronic, 2020).

For the purpose of the ENABLES project, ToL was performed as an interactive narrative exercise orchestrating telling-retelling-re-retelling performance using writing, interviewing, (storytelling), documenting in the form of synthetic certificates intentional identity descriptions related to alternative desirable personal stories of identity, relationships, and life.

Methodology

ToL collective narrative practice comprises four "floors" of a guided scaffolding sequence:

1. ToL – Tree of Life – drawing a tree and writing text (initial telling, individually; may use creative artistic means of drawing and writing, may also combine with other expressive art means – collage, photos, etc.)

2. FoL – Forest of life - trees forming an exhibition of ToLs. Participants "visit" the exhibition and may add text – comments, questions to the initial "telling".

3. SoLR – Storms of life and responses. Sometimes this is used in cases of difficulties which participants had to go through. The narrative facilitation recruits descriptions and personal details of the responses to what is considered valued and important and that sustained participants through hard times.

4. Certificates – and celebration. Certificates capture important aspects delineating intentional identity descriptions, relevant relational skills and values that sustain people through life, relationiships and work.

The ToL is realised using the principle of rich story development (Gavrilovici & Dronic, 2020) and the narrative facilitation is based on an attitude of ingenuous curiosity and respect from a decentered but influential position (White, 2007).

Components of The Tree of Life (ToL)

- *Roots - places they were born and where they have lived until now; family history, legends, myths, origins; favorite places or objects; very influential persons in childhood and adolescence; preferred music, dance;*

- *Ground line - actual place of living; regular activities and hobbies;*

- *Trunk - important values; demonstrated skills – that the person or others have proof of; valued characteristics or qualities; engagements with a certain purpose, purposes or commitments;*

- *Branches - personal hopes, dreams, wishes, directions in life;*

- *Leaves - people who are important and valued (living or not) who they have met in their lives and people or characters (historical figures, musicians, authors, etc) that matter to the participant, influencing their lives;*

- *Fruits - "gifts", "legacies", especially relational contributions in their lives by important others (like being cared for) (*Gavrilovici & Dronic, 2020, p.6)

Narrative exercises from narrative psychology

In the 1980s, a new personal development method prompted a major shift in perspective. The new approach, called "narrative psychology," was the creation of two Australian psychologists, Michael White and David Epston, who set out to prove that each individual is a story and that each story can be reconstructed.

Each of us tells everyday stories about themselves, about what is happening to them. When stories are unraveled certain facts, situations, feelings are highlighted, being considered as important, relevant or significant. But often, what is negative is pointed out. People (re)construct themselves with each story, each intention, attitude, disposition, when they are in the position of narrator. The perspective from which the story is told it is very important. The stories bear the imprint of the narrator's beliefs acquired in their family, of personal points of view and values, of their cultural way. If the narrator is aware of this legacy, they would achieve an essential understanding: people constantly (re)interpret the reality they live. Therefore, there are thousands of ways in which one and the same reality can be told. The events themselves cannot be influenced or changed shape, but the way the events are viewed and analyzed can be changed. Changing mental representations changes the way life is viewed. And eventually, life itself could change.

A person is not the result of the events that marked their life, but the product of the stories told by them. The events are the product of the relationships one person maintains with others.

The goal of narrative psychology is to realise that we can detach ourselves, by our own strength, from the suffocating embrace of these stories; we can cross the line of the imaginary border they have drawn for us and step beyond, into the area of free wil, where we can retell ourselves, placing ourselves in a positive light. All our beliefs, our perceptions and, above all, all the interpretations we issue, shape the image we build of ourselves. They also influence the relationships we build with others.

While some of these stories help us grow and move forward in life, others lock us into suffering and failure. That is why it is essential to reconstruct these stories. An approach to this can be carried out in several stages.

Narrative Exercises applied in the workshops

The exercise "**Something Meritorious**" starts from the illustration of the contrast felt and narrated by a woman who was in (narrative) therapy at Dulwich Centre (Adelaide, Australia) and between the notes written during therapy by Michael White and what he had read in his file from the psychiatric hospital where she was treated as a patient.

The contrast was between the mentally ill, hopeless patient, who did not even feeling considered a "person," and the intense feeling that she was more and more "alive," more "she," as she read Michael White's notes about her.

Something of merit is an exercise used to engage and inspire the participants to get in touch with narrative ideas.

The method is in the form of five stages:

- ✓ Form a dyad with the person next to you
- ✓ Share with each other within a couple of minutes, something about yourselves you consider is worth telling
- ✓ Write in a couple of minutes on a piece of paper something important about the other person with whom you have been talking, something remarkable, that deserves to be shared and known by others
- ✓ Then read to each other what you have written down
- ✓ Share with others, from other dyads, what you have learnt/discovered from this experience

The Definitional Ceremony (White 1998, 2002, 2005) consists of a group (community) storytelling, with structured storyteller and witness roles.

The concept of the definitional ceremony as it is used in narrative therapy is elaborated by White (2007, p. 165) thus:

> *Definitional ceremonies provide people with the option of telling or performing the stories of their lives before an audience of carefully chosen outsider witnesses.*

The metaphor of a **Definitional Ceremony** (DC) structures the therapeutic arena as a context for enriching people's lives, identities and relationships. It is based on the

poststructuralist (non-structuralist) perspective of identity expression. Thus, the formation of identity:

✓ is a public and social result, and not private and individual

✓ is influenced by historical and cultural forces (rather than natural forces)

✓ depends on obtaining a sense of authenticity which is a result of the social processes of identifying and validating preferred expressions about identity and personal history (rather than being the result of introspectively identifying the essences or elements of the "self")

In the Definitional Ceremony space, people have the opportunity to choose to tell the story of their lives in front of an "outsider witness" audience. The non-involved audience, through its member or members, responds to the expressions in the story of the person in the centre of the DC, retelling certain aspects heard.

Any dialogue between the interfaces of these series of stories and re-stories is discouraged and even interrupted. Each person remains strictly in the role of auditor or narrator and, in turn, does not enter into dialogue or controversy. The narrative therapist is the "keeper" of this process. Through stories and re-stories, alternative themes and emerging counter-scenarios are highlighted and enriched, and people's life stories are linked by these themes and by the values, goals and commitments expressed by them.

Re-stories in the DC structure authenticate people's favourite expressions about their own lives and identities - thus contributing to the creation of opportunities to take action in people's lives, actions that would not otherwise have been available. Non-involved witnesses do not intervene in the form of contemporary supportive practices (approval, highlighting positive aspects, congratulatory responses, etc.) and avoid any evaluative practices (neither negative nor positive). Uninvolved witnesses are not allowed to express personal opinions or make statements about the lives of others, nor to set an example, or to give parables or moralising stories.

Basically, non-involved witnesses engage in conversations about what they heard and their responses to what they heard - interviewing each other about their answers and building on the responses of other members of the non-involved witness group. DC "moves" or "transports" all participants in a way that gives them the opportunity to choose to become different than they were in the beginning, to be elsewhere in life, as a result of the experiences they have participated in.

The core of the narrative facilitation consists of the engagement of the storytelling/auditory "communities" in the development of a richer story stimulating members' identity reflections of the participating groups (communities). Thus, this practice entails the concept of "narrative identity", where identity formation is a relational product, a public and social result of identification and authentication of personal preferences and desired expressions of experience, in this case, of learning experiences and conclusions based on them.

The practice consists of a final meeting "event" organised as a celebration of learning and transformation in a genuinely formative evaluation of master courses using narrative approaches

Rationale: The highly participative, interactive conversation is aimed at formally enriching the conclusions about the value of a course and/or a programme, beyond the quantitative quality measures already in place. The process focuses on participants' engagement and involvement in the co-creation of their own evaluations of personal and group experiences related to learning, centering on the participants' experience and facilitating reflective engagement with other relevant audiences (stakeholders).

The method "***Care for the carers***" was developed by Sabine Vermerire in 2020, a time of extreme stress where people were affected on many levels. Starting from the question of who takes care of those who take care of others, Sabine Vermerire proposes a set of questions for those who work in the health sector (nurses, doctors, etc.) in order to develop a possible map for narrative conversations about their experience eof working throughout the pandemic.

b. General context of the ART event
Introduction

The spread of SARS-CoV-2 infection in early 2020 led European governments to take drastic measures to limit mobility and carry out day-to-day activities. Therefore, in many European countries, not only have quarantine and isolation measures been instituted, but educational institutions have been closed, including in Romania. The Covid-19 pandemic brought new challenges, leading to unprecedented measures: declaring a state of emergency (with varying degrees of isolation), limiting access to health and social services, adapting to online methods of work and communication.

In Romania, the decision to close schools at the onset of the pandemic (March 2020) was accompanied, in most cases, by the organisation of distance learning activities, in extremely diverse conditions, with or without the use of electronic means for teaching and communication. This crisis solution and isolation at home has put teachers, children and parents in a new position, with learning outcomes in the second semester of the 2019-2020 school year being in most cases unsatisfactory, compared to learning face to face from the pre-crisis periods generated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Universities have tried to carry on with academic activities by using various technologies and investing in different types of application which have facilitated comunication with students (online scenarios).

Originally, the Narrative Approach Workshop was designed as a face to face meeting but, in the context of the pandemic, the facilitators adapted the workshop in accordance with the current health and education situation. Thus, the 3 events took place online, using different applications such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams or the Webex platform within UAIC.

The events took place, as follow:

On 29th November 2020, on 12th January and on 22nd March, and one reflective final meeting where the participants shared and celebrated what they have learnt.

| Data when the event took place	29th November 2020	12th January	22nd March
Number of participants	29	21	26
Categories of participants	school teachers, school principals, school inspectors, school psychologists MA students in Policy and Management in Education	school teachers, school principals, school inspectors, school psychologists	school teachers, school principals, school inspectors, school psychologists MA students in Policy and Management in Education
Period of time	2.05 hours	2.10 hours	2.15 hours
How it was held	Online-virtual	Online-virtual	Online-virtual

First Workshop - 29th November

The workshop was set up as an online meeting with possibilities to create small groups. The design incorporated both the "***Something of Merit***" exercise - to engage and inspire the participants to get in touch with narrative ideas and practices and tap into

their own personal narrative resources and skills – and the "Tree of Professional Life", an adaptation of the community narrative practice "Tree of Life".

There were 50 registered participants of whom 35 were confirmed as present at the first workshop. The registered participants acknowledged that they use writing as a means to reflect on their personal/professional experiences as follows: 26.9% of them rarely use writing, 48.1 sometimes use writing, 25% use writing often (19.2% with 4.8% writing almost every day).

The facilitators used:

  ✓ immediate written feedback,
  ✓ personal notes (Journaling),
  ✓ *"Definitional Ceremony"* type of narrative participative practice to appreciate the effects of participation in this workshop.
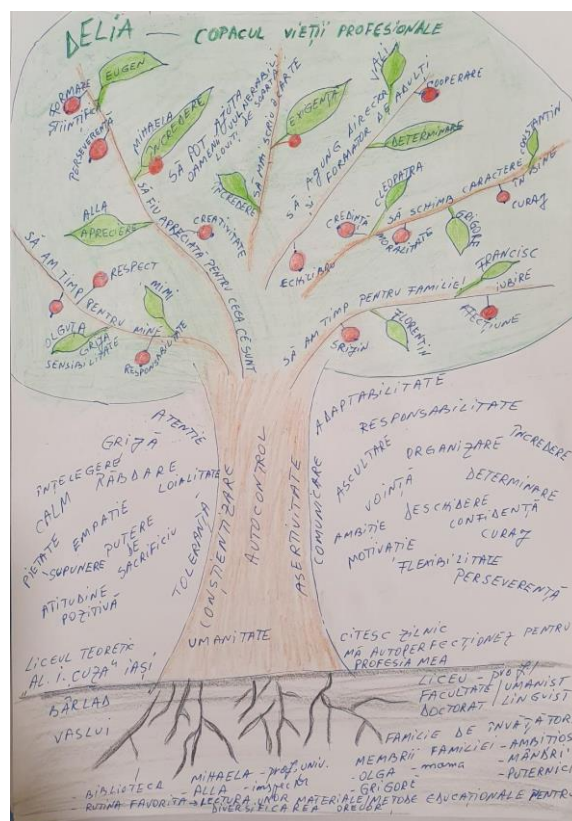

An example of ToL

The Covid19 pandemic has brought significant changes to our lives. Even though the events were organised online, the limits imposed by technology were overcome.

Through the involvement of participants and the coordination of facilitators, a warm and open atmosphere was created during each meeting.

This safe and welcoming atmosphere was established by the facilitators who used tools of communication in order to break the ice and also by the participants who showed their willingness to engage in discussions and debate.

Some thoughts shared during the workshop and on the chat:

✓ *Very fruitful this exercise. I would have needed a much bigger board.*

✓ *I didn't even feel how time went by.*

✓ *It's worth turning our eyes more often to who we are, where we come from, where we go, what we leave behind!*

✓ *I concluded that we were not taught/educated to look inside ourselves more (or at all!). Therefore, it is easy to talk about someone else and difficult to choose the essentials about yourself, to verbalise, to give it shape.*

✓ *As teachers we are oriented more towards listening to others, towards recognising and supporting them. Therefore, verbalisation about ourselves and recognition of personal qualities becomes difficult because it is a fairly rare exercise that we do for ourselves. Thank you for these exercises!*
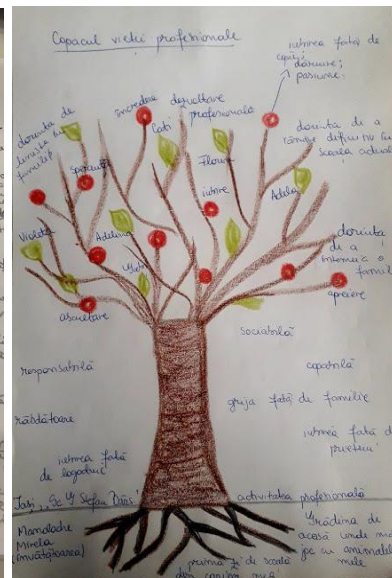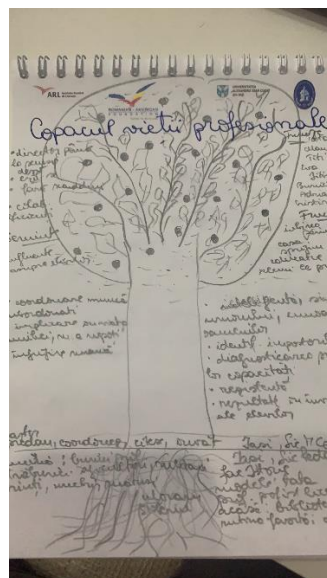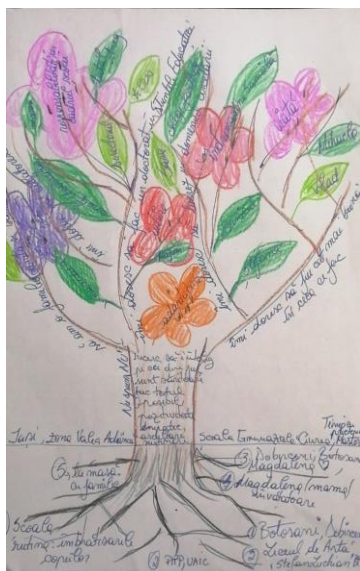

Examples of ToLs from the Workshops

Second Workshop - 12th January

At the beginning of every workshop, the facilitator tried to provide the necessary framework to create closer relations between the participants. For example, at the beginning of one of the workshops, the facilitator asked the participants the following:

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- ✓ Form a team of two with the person next to you.
- ✓ Tell each other, with three minutes each, something about you.
- ✓ Write individually in a minute or two on a piece of paper something worthy about the person in the pair you belong to. "Meritorious" may be something "important", something "remarkable" for you which can be promoted or learned by others. It does not have to be ALL that the person says about themselves.
- ✓ Each person has 2 minutes to read what they have written about the other person and explain why

This exercise aims to help participants discover something personal about themselves, something worthy as narrated by somebody else. It also offers participants the opportunity to get to know each other and to overcome the limits of being online.
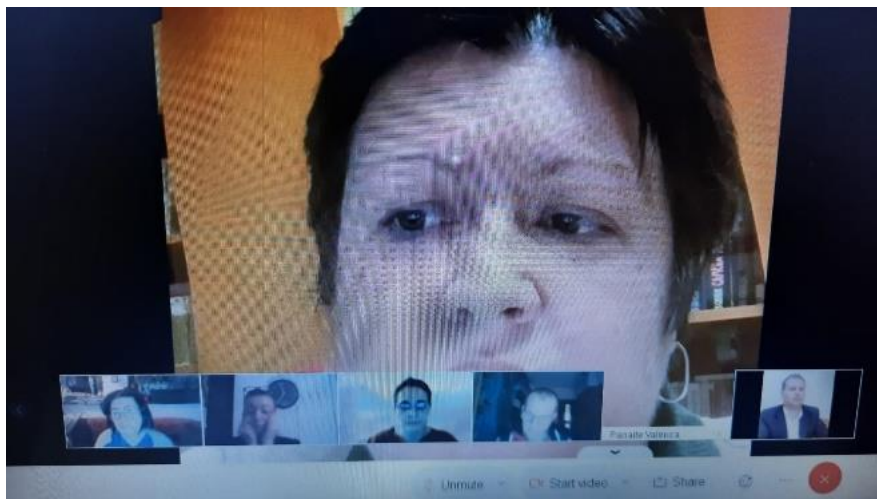
Screenshot of participants in the workshops

Some thoughts shared during the workshop and via the chat function:
- ✓ *Stories told after following the steps generated a reflective exercise, with the listener's attention focused on the action and its circumstances. A good leader is someone who can convince people's minds and win their souls. I believe that through these narrative techniques, this mission can be accomplished.*
- ✓ *Caring for values causes you to open up to other values. Through stories ... about us.... we can become new heroes... for those around us.*
- ✓ *Applying this technique, I felt, at first, excited, then, pleasantly surprised to get to know my masters colleague better and, finally, I was left with a state of well-being and pleasantly surprised to see that the partner in the dyad managed to describe me in such a way as to capture elements of detail of my personality.*

> *This technique can develop leadership skills, in the sense of coaching and coordinating a team of people, by facilitating their mutual knowledge.*

Third Workshop - 22nd March

The third workshop took place in the same way as the second. After the exercise, the participants were asked to share how they felt and what they had learnt.

Some thoughts shared during the workshop and via the chat function:

- ✓ *First of all, I want to thank you for that wonderful evening spent not only with my masters colleagues, but also with other people I met then. It was not in any way observed the distance or the retinence of the fact that we did not know each other.*

- ✓ *Through the technique applied, through all that was discussed, presented, confessed it was possible to create a connection between the participants, the power of the words being the one thing that generated many possibilities of (self)knowledge.*

- ✓ *The tree of life was one of the exercises that surprised me and that I did with great emotions. I realised that many of the special people in my life are now far away from me. Maybe I lost touch with some of them, maybe some went to a better place, but that doesn't stop me from considering them special. I reconnected with some of them after the workshop, so I can only be glad that I reconnected with loved ones.*
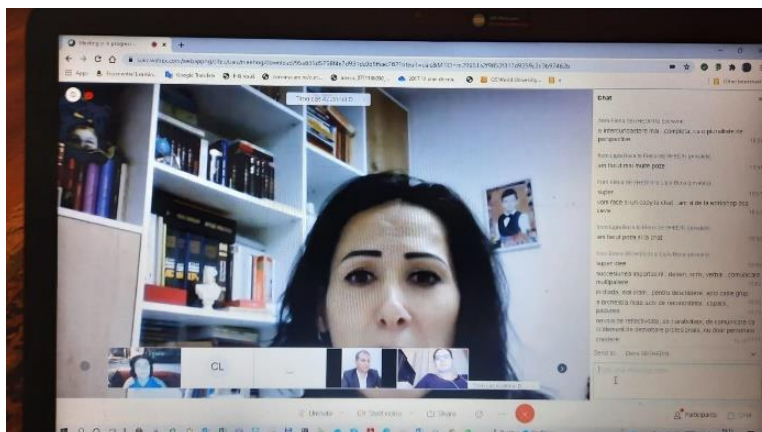
Screenshot of participants and the chat during the workshop

The participants sent to the facilitators via email a journal / some thoughts regarding their experience during the workshop.[1]

The final participative narrative formative evaluation included a short presentation of the ENABLES project outcomes and actions, as well as a special methodological summary explanation about the social constructionist positioning of this proposed innovation project and the principles that guide the facilitation and the participation with the participants (teachers, head teachers, master students, school counsellors) involved. That is, each party involved in this reflective and interactive event was briefed about the scope, the goals, the method and the principles behind its application before the meeting was organised, as a conclusive open meeting.

A total of 2 to 3 working days were used to prepare, contact, organise and clarify within the team the formative evaluation event.

c. Methods of data collection to evaluate the activities

During the reflective final meeting the participants shared and celebrated what they learnt. The method used by the facilitator at this final event was the ***Definitional Ceremony*** method presented and described in section chapter 3.a).

Also, during and after the activities the participants had the opportunity to share with the facilitators their opinion on the activity. The participants had access to the Chat and sent their impressions regarding the activity. Participants were encouraged to write down their impressions and thoughts on the activity in a Journal/Diary[2] and share them with the facilitators.

Participants' impressions of the activities they were part in are overall positive. In the opinion of the participants, the time spent at the workshop was one in which they gained both professionally and personally. Participants learned from each other and encouraged each other. Moreover, teachers had since used the methods in the classroom and in their private life - in family relationships.

d. Preparation and recruitment process

The facilitators – Associate Professor Ovidiu Gavrilovici and lecturer Elena Seghedin - are teachers at the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences. In this context, they

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[1] Thoughts of the participants are inserted into the appendix of this report (journal excerpts)
[2] See the impression of the participants related in this report, section 3b, as well the appendix (journal excerpts)

have collaborated over time with school teachers, school principals, school inspectors and school psychologists. Therefore, the facilitators invited to the workshop school teachers, directors and school psychologists, whom they have communicated and networked with over the years; they provided information regarding the ENABLES project as well as information regarding the workshop aspect of the project.

After recieving the confirmation of participation, the facilitators sent the link for the meeting to all of them. Register of workshop attendance were kept and photos were taken.

4. FINDINGS

a. Impact of arts-based/embodied methods on participants 'capacity for distributed leadership

During the workshops, the participants discussed and debated about the role of the teacher, which is vital for the development of a child's individuality. In addition to parents, teachers are the ones who can influence any child, hence the importance of this profession for society. More specifically, the role of each teacher, is primarily to help, mentor and guide the student to discover his talents, skills, interests and potential and then the student can evolve in the optimal area of proximal development. In addition, nowadays, because changes in society and in the labour market are so fast and varied, the teacher also has the mission to be continuously informed of new fields and types of jobs and in general about the requirements of modern employers. Related to the context of contemporary Romanian education, the teacher has the duty to be flexible, adaptable and open. This does not mean giving up values at all but implies a requirement to attend to one's own professional development. The mission is not impossible at all, but each teacher must free themselves from certain fears and prejudices and see in each child both his or her individual potential and that of society. When the teacher loves the child and helps them to develop integrity and to become confident in their own strength, then society also benefits. It creates a dynamic and organic balance. Teachers help children to develop into dignified and moral beings and they, in turn, contribute to the harmony, peace and prosperity of the community. Indeed, this is an ideal way to see things. But convinced that the human being is

perfectible, we need a common ideal, so that everyone from the class and from the school can constantly contribute to a better general sense of harmony.

In this context, the participants concluded that the teacher can be seen as a leader who influences the student not who dominates them.

In addition to the discussion about the role of the teacher, the facilitators presented to the participants the conception about distributed leadership.

The teachers were very receptive to hearing and learning more about this concept in order to see if this can be integrated into their methods of teaching-learning activities. Knowing that distributed leadership do not imply the action of dividing the tasks and responsibilities amongst individuals, but rather that it is concerned with the interaction between individuals, in order to drive instructional improvement and improved student outcomes, the participants considered that this vision of leadership can be implemented in order:

- ✓ to improve organisational effectiveness
- ✓ facilitate flexible working and collaborative relationships across traditional boundaries and hierarchies.

Distributed leadership refers to the joint effort of several people, who engage in multiple, extended tasks within an institution or organisation. It is what we might call collective or multiple leadership. Distributed leadership is based on human knowledge, interaction, learning and involvement in the workplace. Emphasis is placed on leadership as a collective activity, not just as an authority held by the director or someone in a formal leadership role.

Distributed leadership allows for a wider range of educational tasks at the school level to be fulfilled. Thus, the responsibility no longer falls only on the shoulders of certain people, but also creates the possibility to develop higher-order skills and abilities for teachers and students. By implementing distributed leadership, a director can share responsibilities with qualified staff, promoting the same organisational culture. Organising action through this type of leadership is essential because each one contributes to the achievement of common goals. Distributed leadership does not seek to eradicate the formal leadership structure, but to focus on interaction. This is also the case with arts-based and embodied methods, such as the narrative techniques used in the workshops; their focus is on interaction among the people involved in the activity, on their learning and their involvement in the activity.

The methods used during the workshops seem to have had a significant impact on the participants. When analysing the journals written by the participants, after the workshop, it seems that the impact has been on three levels:

✓ personal development ("*This week I had a unique experience by practising the educational methods*"; "*during the workshop, while elaborating my tree of life, I have remembered my grand-parents, my favourite teachers and good friends whom I have forgotten about*" etc).

✓ professional development, improvement of the didactic strategy and of ways of reflecting on educational practice ("*I decided to put into practice the exercise mentioned before with the students in my class, who are very impressed by the way in which "I made sense of a tree; With my 12th graders, I tried to create some Christmas cards and explain the choices in a short narrative exercise etc.*)

✓ impact on capabilities of leadership by using a narrative methodology

The participants gained an unexpectedly strong, positive experience. Each of them showed their graditude, being happy to have spent a couple of hours in the company of special people, learning useful things. Each participant went through different and various states of mind: gratitude, melancholy, good mood, introspection, analysis, awareness. The participants felt the joy of being together and sharing their thoughts, even though they did not know each other. They spoke about their worries, fears, successes, thoughts and stories of their lives.

The participants concluded that the narrative methods helped them:

✓ increase their capacity for self-knowledge and inter-knowledge

✓ identify common fears and common joys - professionally speaking

✓ identify personal and professional values – a common professional ethos - a discovery that they enjoyed - identification of common elements that give power to the professional community - teachers, leaders in education

✓ diminish fears about sharing their own feelings about something worthwhile in their lives - increasing cooperation and collaboration

✓ increase their expressive skills - verbal or written expression

b. Participants' views of arts-based and embodied methods and future use

The teaching-learning activity was carried out on the basis of some finalities, it was put into practice through a system of methods and procedures and used a series of technical means of achievement. The results were verified and evaluated through

specific strategies. In Romania, the school curriculum integrates all these components, of which a central position belongs to the methods that make it possible to achieve educational goals.

Teaching methods are ways of action with which students, under the guidance of the teacher, acquire knowledge, form skills, aptitudes, attitudes, develop their conception of the world and life.

Students have psycho-individual particularities, so it is necessary to use as wide a range of teaching methods as possible to capitalise their potential. The significance of the methods depends, to a large extent, on the user and the context in which it is used. Traditional methods give the impression that the students would no longer be in accordance with the new principles of active and conscious student participation. However, they can acquire a special value in the conditions of a large audience, having a cultural level that will ensure their access to the informational message transmitted in relation to the unit of time.

The workshop participants are a generation of teachers who have been through numerous changes generated by more or less efficient legislative initiatives. Also, they are the result of traditional teaching-learning methods. They consider the arts-based and embodied methods as active-participatory methods.

In their opinion, active-participatory methods emphasise cooperative learning, being in antithesis with traditional learning methods. Participatory education helps students to express their choices in the field of education, culture, leisure, they can become co-participants in their own training. Students are not merely receivers of information, but also active participants in education. In the instructive-educational process, encouraging participatory behaviour means the step from learning to learning to be and become, for example the preparation to do in the face of situations, acquiring the desire for commitment and action.

The workshop participants were open to testing the methods within their classrooms. The results overall have been encouraging. Still in order for these methods to be used in the teaching-learning process, it requires that the professors change their conception and methodology of instruction and education, to cooperate with students, to become a real model of lifelong education, to get involved in educational decisions, to ensure a quality teaching process.

Conclusion

The managerial training of the teacher, the acquisition of the managerial culture, not only the traditional psycho-pedagogical and methodical one, can ensure the understanding and application of the authority-freedom relationship, as a new meaning of education, through teaching-learning and solving other situations in the school educational process.

c. Facilitators' Lessons learned

The three members of the team had precise roles in each training activity and formed the group of experts within the impact assessment activity, called the Definitional Ceremony. We briefly reflect here on our workshops from our own perspective including its strengths and limitations / challenges of implementation / potential implication for wider practice).

Very important was the fact that the main facilitator - Ovidiu (O.G.) - has a lot of experience in using these narrative methodologies and in designing training activities (including Academic and Professional conference presentations, professional meetings and training with different categories of professionals, and workshops).

The facititators made their remarks on three topics:

- ✓ Duration of workshops, quality time in reflections - homework solution by email;
- ✓ Methods - virtual adaptation, structures adapted in duration,
- ✓ The environment of the teaching-learning process - how the participants felt.

Conclusions

- There were several challenges due to the move of workshop activities from the on-site environment to the online environment. The classes were held in the evening, after the participants finished their jobs. They were tired, yet everyone got involved in the activities. The activities in pairs (the exercise "Something Meritorious") was carried out in the virtual room, whereas face-to-face in-person communication could have brought more details about the participants' feelings; the connection between them would perhaps have been deeper. The participants who were not able to share their reflections had the possibility to send their thoughts via email.

- Methods were adjusted for online facilitation - brief presentations with Powerpoint support.

- The reflective exposure times of the participants was substantially reduced; thus, appeared the need to receive reflections, follow-up topics, via email a few days after the workshop.

5. DISCUSSION

a. Adaptations resulting from the pandemic

We had two perspectives for adaptation:

- ✓ Design and conduct online workshops – using the virtual environment for training (time, structure of the methods, adaptation of the discourse of facilitators)

- ✓ Use the advantages of new technologies with teachers for in-service training - useful for creating a virtual professional community for teachers, for leaders (respect for the adult education principles and saving time, money)

b. Implications for theory

We can contribute to a new perspective about the narrative approach and the impact of narrative methodology on teachers' professional development. At the same time, we can develop a model for the impact of narrative methodology for the future educational leaders' development.

c. Implications for future practice of your ARTs

The narrative approach – which include written and creative methods and the Definitional Ceremony - requires a degree of practice with narrative facilitation and a keen understanding of the potential uses of narrative identity descriptions in experiences of learning. Also, facilitation requires a certain degree of habituation with constructing safe contexts for student participation, maintaining the focus on their experiences, even if other constituents are invited to collaborate. Due to this higher level of narrative facilitation expertise the practice has some limits in its generalisation and dissemination.

A training phase and the establishing of a small community of narrative practitioners would greatly support further development of this narrative methodology practice and

its use for the development of distributed leadership capacities. Additional research is highly needed to strengthen and identify its specific use and test its potential in a variety of learning activities aims, objectives and structures.

What are the possibilities for extending and/or mainstreaming this narrative methodology for Distributed Leadership Development?
- Promoting these workshops on the ENABLES platform using a video-documentary and some interviews (facilitator and participant perspectives)
- Articles and studies prepared for Conferences and Professional Workshops
- A pilot experimentation on Educational Leadership MA degree course and on other learning processes or teachers training programmes.
- Designing systematic research in order to strengthen the evidence of desirable effects in terms of reaching learning objectives and institutional objectives (at individual, programmatic and departmental levels).

About the possible Sustainability:

Promoting these narrative practices as an instrument for formative evaluation both for coordinators of Master's programmes and for the Teacher Training department would be an important development to support their maintenance, research, and development. Offering the results to the various quality assurance practices relative to Master's programme evaluation (beyond course evaluation).

All three Departments of our Faculty (Sciences of Education, Psychology and Teacher Training Department.) are highly supportive of further documenting the results of this practice. There is a plan to develop field practicum activities for Master's students and training workshops for Master's students in order to develop narrative facilitation competencies thus supporting further experimentation and research in various (academic) settings.

How has the impact of the trial's innovative approach been evaluated?

The workshops and the participative "definitional ceremony" were digitally audio recorded and/or video recorded with the permission of the participants to allow a thematic qualitative analysis to be performed. Via increased sense of participation to a shared, intense, and varied learning experience, there is evidence of increased sense of belonging, of increased academic and professional affiliation, and increased further

collaboration with the programme and/or academics, potentially fostering stronger university-alumni ties and relationships, beyond the life of the programme.

Journal excerpt (1)[3]

This week I had a unique experience by practising the educational methods discovered during the workshop organised on November 28, 2020.

I knew that we can learn only if we are open to the new, but I realised how easily you can open bridges to knowledge and through simple methods, based on communication and positive relationships between people, through seemingly trivial exercises, but which invite personal reflection, to deep self-analysis, to sharing life stories that can become landmarks for others.

I told my 9th graders the experience of applying the "Something Meritorious!" exercise and how beneficial it has been for me to expose certain praiseworthy aspects of my personal life, which are related to my character or my achievements. I explained to my students how "healthy" and motivating it is to receive appreciation for what you are and what you have accomplished. It is an extremely useful method for cultivating self-esteem, which we all need, regardless of age, in order to continue the struggle to achieve personal success. I proposed this narrative exercise to them during the online leadership class and they discovered for themselves the benefits of the method and the joy at the end, the pride for what they are and what they can become. They built stories about them and had the opportunity to train their skills as narrators, giving value to all the information gathered from their colleagues, who had the courage to reveal themselves, to open to a careful and vigilant audience in ascribing "merits" to the others. It was an extremely effective way to unite the group, especially in the context of the pandemic, which did not allow them to communicate under normal conditions. Being in the ninth grade, they needed this communication game, because they changed the team, met new colleagues and teachers, different mentalities and working methods, and felt lonely, helpless, misunderstood, shy, alienated. I am glad that I managed to offer them the opportunity to interact in a pleasant, relaxing way, through play, be it in a virtual environment.

I promised them to continue practising these narrative techniques and I proposed them for the next hour to try the "Tree of Personal Life" method, which I really liked, because

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[3] In order to respect the REGULATION (EU) 2016/679 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation), there will be inserted only the initials of the people who shared with us their thoughts

I realised how valuable they are and how much more I can realise in the future. I also realised how important it is to know how to appreciate those who have had an impact on your personal and professional training: grandparents, parents, spouses, children, teachers, mentors, colleagues, etc. We all need a moment to pause, to look back, to analyse our future, and to dare to explore the future to see the chances we can create for ourselves.

We are all in fact the fruits of other people who have known how to capitalise on our human essence and we are obliged to thank them by cultivating our seeds in even more fertile fields, to carry on the love of fellow men and to give meaning to life.

Journal excerpt (2)

Participating in the workshop on November 28, 2020 helped me realise that sharing personal experiences can help you and those with whom you communicate / collaborate, by opening a door to personal relationships, sometimes even intimate.

I took the idea of the tree and transformed it a little to propose a new game to the 12th grade students, to whom I was a teacher for 3 years. The change in my career and the option for the role of principal also meant giving up leadership, which passed to another colleague, but the relationship with the students who grew up with me did not break. I continue to be their history teacher and the first person to address their problems, because over time I have built a connection based on understanding, communication, common expectations. So we continue a series of pleasant habits.

We used to make presents for Santa Claus. I brought sweets (candies, cakes), they brought greeting cards in the form of quotes from the great literature. Then we played team building games that I had learned in different classes, took pictures and had fun for an hour or two.

This year, starting from what we learned last week, we proposed to them to provide information about us through the "Tree of Personal Life" method, which we combined with online work techniques in Canva presentations. The task was to create a virtual tree on which to place photos with people who had impacted them over time. I preferred to offer them the exercise as a homework to give them time to reflect and search for images.

No one was allowed to use anything but personal photos, so there were cases where the tree could not be adorned.

Not all students worked, but those who did not expressed regret that they did not contribute to the general feeling of sharing, well-being, openness.

 The exercise will be resumed at Christmas, the Christmas tree ornaments being represented this time by personal and career aspirations. We will do a different kind of socio-professional counselling session.

Journal excerpt (3)

This week I participated in the pedagogical circle of history teachers, in online format, of course. We, at the 3rd high school circle, are theoretical, technological high school teachers from urban and rural areas, so that our experiences, although similar in form, are as different as possible in background. Inspired by the experience of the exercise "Something worthwhile!", Although I had not intended to do such a thing during the circle meeting, because I had a predetermined theme, when I noticed the discomfort of some colleagues who thought they did not do well in learning line, I proposed it to the participants. I first explained where I learned it, the benefits I had when I was able to expose certain praiseworthy aspects of my personal life, related to my character or my achievements. The fact that I felt appreciated and motivated to continue in certain professional aspects, the idea that some things I do can become examples for others. That it is an exercise in cultivating self-esteem and that we can do it in a few minutes to be able to identify notable aspects of our professional activity. Because they accepted the game, we turned the circle meeting into a narrative exercise focused only on the theme of online learning, identifying the positive aspects of personal experiences from spring to the present. Entering the game, colleagues built stories about themselves, then stories about their dyad partners, and in the end it was easy to understand that, despite the technological, epidemiological, social, personal challenges, we are dedicated, involved, attentive and active teachers. I believe that it was a success and that all those who "played" benefited from an increase in self-esteem and that they learned to appreciate themselves better in relation to their own person and their own achievements, not in relation to others.

Journal excerpt (4)

The exercise called "The Tree of Life" followed, which I initially considered simple, without thinking that it could have such an effect on me. I remembered my grandparents' garden, the experiences I had with them, what they taught me. The way

the requirements of that exercise evolved pleasantly surprised me, and in the end, during the dissemination, I teamed up with my best friend, not having one in the "tree" of each one.

Journal excerpt (5)
After the workshop, which went unnoticed, I wrote down the most important information in my personal diary and analysed which of those exercises can help me in my teaching career, from important meetings to capturing attention with the little ones, having the opportunity to to make the information accessible in such a way as to suit all types of age.

Journal excerpt (6)
The very next day after the workshop, I highlighted the most important ideas that were discussed, I wrote them down and I decided to follow them as auspicious advice, the messages having a not at all rigorous load, but rather emotional, metaphorical. I want to bring to the fore some sequences and lexemes that impressed me deeply:
- ✓ *"to support life on the keyhole";*
- ✓ *'narrative construction of a bridge';*
- ✓ *"narrative identity" - another form of describing reality in flow;*
- ✓ *"let's write our composition".*

Journal excerpt (7)
I decided to put into practice the exercise mentioned before with the students in my class, who are very impressed by the way in which "I made sense of a tree". Mastering to a lesser or greater extent the term "metaphor", depending on the specifics of their age, I managed to connect them to a different activity, to a new way of looking at things and I started to understand the term meaning figurative, connotative, metaphorical. They were delighted with the approach, and the work was great, the parents being very excited as well.

Journal excerpt (8)
It happened during the week of Christmas when, on one of those quiet days, when I had finished a series of activities with my family, I thought about the activity with "The tree of professional life". It was a good time to relive memories, for my parents to

remember many things from the past that, due to daily worries, we forget little by little. Many discussions followed and many delightful stories.

Journal excerpt (9)

After attending the meeting on November 28, I discovered that those who took part did not forget so easily what happened then, but on the contrary, they exposed in detail the feelings and moments of then, they brought additions to what they had. initially stated, they briefly recounted what had changed since that meeting. There were free discussions, which did not put you in an awkward position, you could express honestly and without any inhibition what you thought and did. Mrs. Seghedin said: "No answer is wrong."

After the workshop organised within the ENABLES project, I asked the students how they see education during the pandemic. I realised that they were trying to adapt to the new changes. They noticed the changes that teachers made in the teaching-learning-assessment process. Below I have resumed some ideas from what a 10th grade student sent me.

Pandemic and Education

The pandemic has affected millions of lives. Education has saved millions of souls; whose lives are full of love and peace. We, the students, were saved. Education SAVED US.

It was a difficult year for everyone. We felt and reacted, sometimes without realising it. We were in this situation this year. We ran to hide from the ruthless virus and ran into another problem. A problem that few were able to perceive and then comply with.

The problem related to "Online School" = Can we still talk about education, training, learning through a screen? The answer is simple. Yes, the school continues to train, educate and teach students. It does not matter in what form school is done, but it matters how the teachers decide to act in emergency situations, by changing the way the subject is managed and capturing the students' attention. Online education is not an impediment.

The pandemic did not affect education but accentuated the needs of the Romanian education system and forced teachers and students into another form of education, using technology. This makes the student's grading different, with teachers using students' active, sustained, consistent participation in online courses.

Online education does not affect, it has opened up an evolution of education in general.

I.N., 10th grade

Journal excerpt (10)

I returned to my students to resume the idea of the tree of life in a way adapted to that part of life in which they find themselves, according to the promise made earlier.

The theme of the work was to hang in a fir tree created on Google Jamboard a globe in which to write a single word representative of their professional aspirations, viewed for a period of 10 years.

Working time 10 minutes to make the globe and write the representative word for their future career.

Subsequently, each globe creator had to explain what the vision is about professional choice, how he thinks he will succeed in achieving that goal and then what is the time he intends to allocate.

If the choice of word was almost stereotypical, the explanations were difficult to give, many of them having only vague representations of the practical aspects of some professions they would like to practice. Very often invoked was the financial perspective, it dominating the social positioning or the pleasure of practicing a profession compatible with personality and / or training.

In the end, I had to erase the tree and promise to resume the exercise face to face, and they promised to seek information from practitioners about the trades they want to choose.

Journal excerpt (11)

With my 12th graders, I tried to create some Christmas cards and explain the choices in a short narrative exercise.

The theme of the work was given on Monday: to create a greeting card from the school / students for all the collaborators of the unit, but to think well about the message and the colours used. Congratulations were presented on Tuesday.

Most of them worked superficially, just to check the task, so it was difficult for them to find explanations for the elections. I had a lot of things: "I liked that" (without trying to identify the motivation) and "this is the text of a greeting card".

But, there were also some who associated the chosen colours with the season, the holiday, the inspired feelings, perfumes. And the simple messages were the ones chosen in the end for those that were posted on the Facebook page of the high school.

The tree of life - reflections on the healing role of this narrative technique.

Last week I worked with my ninth-grade students on the narrative technique "Tree of Life", through which participants were able to analyse different aspects of their personal and professional journey. Our workshop paid off. Then we all reflected, at the next zoom meeting, on what this game helps us. After being given the opportunity to present their own skills and to remember how and when they developed certain skills, or who helped them in their personal training, my students disclosed, by reference to life stories. of other trees, that they are now aware of the aspects they lack, of which their own tree of life is deprived. These elements became for them aspirations, a dream to follow, that of filling their gaps in the fruits of their tree.

We analysed this narrative technique together, first divided into groups of 4 participants through breakout rooms. They then presented their ideas in plenary through a team-appointed leader. I gathered their opinions and concluded that this narrative technique is healing, the "tree of life" is not a simple game, but a method that facilitates an emotional discharge. Even if participants are asked to discover only those meritorious, positive aspects of their lives, volens nolens, through this introspective exercise, they go through their minds and painful experiences or certain failures, obstacles in achieving a dream, which they have not yet done. they can place it on the "tree of their lives". This can be motivating. Aware of the failure now, one can motivate oneself to overcome it, turn it into a hope for the future. Thus "the tree of life" can be enriched with new, young branches, full of vigor given by the inner will of the participant, with new, tender leaves, in which the participant identifies his support in certain special people. Metaphorically, all the fruits of the past help the participant to rethink his life from another perspective, to strengthen his trunk with the confidence that only now he knows where to gather his sap to develop the crown of the tree.

There may be situations in which participants want to replant the tree in another place, on a much more fertile ground. I was asked by 2 students if they can restore their tree or if they can reconfigure it. Thus, participants may have a different perspective, give up certain branches in which they have been capped and which do not seem to develop other dreams, try to detach themselves from certain barriers (perhaps poverty, a disorganised family, an unfavourable environment, etc.) and to dream beyond these. The story built around the tree can thus have a healing role by stimulating the participant's intrinsic motivation. He also listens to the life stories of those around him,

analyzes and compares, then decides that he can also reconfigure his tree, replant his tree in a more favorable environment, surrounded by other trees, from which he can be inspired., in which he can find support.

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