**Title: Idealizations of knowing in education professionals’ imaginations**

Starting from what my doctoral research on professional narratives of knowing and becoming in education has produced, in this paper I would like to reflect particularly on aspects of idealization of ‘expert’ knowledge and rationalistic ways of knowing. Are we aware as professionals in education of the idealizations of knowing that we live by?

The study has used an auto/biographically oriented co-operative inquiry (Formenti, 2008; Heron, 1996), with two groups in two countries, to interrogate from an insider’s viewpoint the interplay between one’s relationship to knowing (in the sense of Bernard Charlot, 1997) and one’s self-construction as professional. The narratives that were produced during a series of co-operative workshops evidenced, for me, that idealizations of ‘higher knowledge’ and of knowledgeable professionals framed the professional imaginations of the participants, and resonated with my own, auto/biographically (West, 1996).

It seems interesting to leave aside for a moment important contributions that have already critiqued the arising of the bureaucratic and performative university (Barnett, 2011; Readings, 1996) and professional educative contexts, to explore a route of ‘aesthetic’ reflexivity on such questions. By this here I mean that different ways of knowing were accessed through Heron’s model, which produced embodied narratives that include among others drawings, artworks, writings and group conversations.

The paper examines some of the mixed material produced by selected participants (a social service co-ordinator, a young researcher, a Head of school, and an art-therapist) with a focus to illustrate what idealizing discourses of knowing and identity bound these people’s thoughts and actions in their professional lives, both in higher education and in social work.

The paper will take a reflexive approach, intertwining some of the researcher’s idealizations of ‘experts’ and ‘culture’ uncovered by doing the research, in relation to the production of an academic piece of research, and with it of a researcher identity.

In summary, the hypothesis of the paper is that *we* embody rationalistic and performative relationships to knowing, and that resonates with R.D. Laing’s critique of alienated knowing lives. Theoretical friends John Heron (1992) and Donald Winnicott (1965, 1971) will help piece the fragments in terms of emerging narratives of integration of knowing and self.

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