Love from the praxis, self-awareness workshops withlife stories

Mª Teresa González Uribe [1][2] Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

1. Introduction

Graduate School of campus Iztacala (FESI in spanish) is one of the five schools that depend directly on the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), this graduate school is the institution where I work as a teacher in the area of educational psychology for 23 years.

The FESI was created in 1975 and had distinguished himself as a school psychologist specializing in behavioral form. Students should put their knowledge of different schedules of reinforcement following the stimulus-response paradigm that is completely consistent with positivist approaches.

From this perspective, regardless of the “population” in which they worked remained the same behavioral model applied to the situation in which to perform an intervention: either a child with learning problems, family difficulties in their relationship with other members of the family, addictions, assertiveness, clinical institutions, labor problems among its members, communities with few resources and so on.

With this background, this article shows the path I have followed in working with students of psychology who carry out their professional practices of self-awareness workshops following a biographical perspective that leads them to a transformation, not just their academic practices but linked more directly with their daily practices, such as those dealing with the real world and also in a short time will act as professionals, in this case as psychologists.

2. Need a different education in various segments of society.

In my experience as a graduate of FESI, and the first job I realized that with the training I received, I had learned a concept paper and act always from the same behavioral pattern with which I had formed. Although people could temporarily improve, there were some aspects that were not touching intimate as it intervened to modify or eliminate the symptom but not the possible source of the problem.

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The relationship between psychologist and patient was impersonal, they followed the precepts of scientific neutrality, did not develop a reflexivity between psychologist and patient and therapist's personal issues in any way form part of the intervention.

So for me it was necessary to hear and investigate different perspectives within psychology and education among other social and humanistic disciplines that led to a change in my own daily experience.

I set out to conduct workshops of self-consciousness with a biographical perspective on FESI to get people involved in these workshops will "touch" themselves, talk about themselves and narrate events that deal with intimate life private.

Talking about the private life in academia was considered dangerous by some teachers, because they lost the scientific neutrality. It was as if we were divided into those different personalities that are unrelated to each other, one as a child, one as mother or sister, another as a bride, as a student. Into the classrooms relates only to be a student or a teacher, each one taking their own role as an authority-subordinate relationship.

That's why it was necessary to put into question the supposed impartiality with their own daily practices, adding that psychologists and educators, among many other professionals, we deal directly with real people who are not in the labs and respond to different stimulus context. But also that special way to respond is closely related to emotional dimensions, we have apprehended and interpreted in our experiences along our life path.

Therefore, if the psychologists themselves have not discussed their personal problems and the specific form and have built their identity. With what, cognitive, emotional and psychological tools I confront people who are attending? If I am not able to talk about me?

These questions have led me to develop some specific practices that I work with students. The teachers (one man and one woman) are the first to expose our daily lives, (telling and showing our autobiography).

We talked about our experiences, following different periods of the life cycle [3]. Together with students, we analyze the path of our individual careers, culminating with the approach of new forms of behavior and social relations in which there is a

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significant change (life project).

This form of teaching has involved interacting with students from a horizontal perspective and not as superior – subordinate. The change in practice has meant forming a paradigm shift that demands a change in ourselves because we are not only academically but also how we reflect on the significant experiences that have shaped our identity, becoming a model for training metamorphosed transformative practices as professionals.

3. From the workshops of self-consciousness to reach the life stories

When educators work with students and we are interested in our academic work not only stay in the classroom and in the pages of tests, passing grades to receive a salary for it. We are also interested in that knowledge transcends more space and promoting the welfare multiply personal and professional students we serve and in turn they develop new skills and abilities in themselves and the people who will work . We are talking about different processes by which we go for growth and development of populations in which we intervene. That means love yourself, your profession and your everyday practice.

As I said, do workshops for self-awareness in a university specializing in positivism was not easy, it meant having a clear and objective understanding of what the goals they hoped to achieve. And that is achieved with time, with training in other fields of education and participation in crisis and growth processes that occur when you are part of a group of self-awareness. Because you have worked yourself and know the process.

To work with self-awareness workshops within the FESI was necessary the academic program was according to institutional requirements [4]. So we stand in the area of Development and Education in a subject in which students conduct their professional practices. That is, when they begin to make practical applications of knowledge that was acquired during the first 4 semesters.

This course has special characteristics as during the fifth semester the groups, which are integrated for 35 to 45 students, divided in half with half shall give the practice in the area of special education and the other half will practice development and education. For the sixth semester the groups exchange practices. Thus each student curse both subjects.

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With students coming to our subject, this group is further divided into 3 parts because there are three teachers who carry out educational research in different areas of interaction such as, nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools, high schools, focus groups people from the elderly, among other projects.

The three professors make a presentation to the group telling the qualities of our practice project and students choose the people who want to work with.

Thus, initially two teachers work together, so that both groups had at least 15 students. We talked about self-awareness [5] workshops from the perspective of gender, as a methodology in which analyzed the personality of women in various everyday practices. As we learned to talk about different issues, first among ourselves and then applying the knowledge gained. Then we did a workshop similar to what we have done with students but with each proposed topics and taught to various groups such as housewives, students and professionals in the neighborhoods near our school, thus making a part of student´s social service.

We went through different stages in the workshops of self-awareness. At first we accepted only girls for our practice, once it spread our way of doing an internship, the boys began to question why they could not participate with us. So open spaces for men doing workshops on masculinity [6], so that there were workshops for women only, men-only workshops and workshops for both populations, each group was led by 5 students .

This gave us the result that many students do their thesis with a gender perspective. Administered questionnaires, attitude scales and tests to investigate whether there were changes in personality after our workshops [7], still under the behavioral model to measure and quantify results.

The subjects taught were chosen for their importance in the vital moment in which we met, we talked about human development, due to its link with psychology, and the difference in socialization and education of women and men, their consequences treatment in different contexts of social interaction as some of the issues presented in the table below.

Subjects Related with the Feminine Identity

Fem Education	Self awareness	**Gender Roles**

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Informal education	Body	Psychological characteristics
Formal education	Self image	Equality vs. difference
PERSONALITY	LIFESTYLES	SOCIAL RELATIONS
Assertiveness	Social rule	Identity
Dependence	Civil status	Relationship between women
Mass Media	Human rights	Work
Appearance	Integrity	Spaces
Ideal model	Civil Status	Capabilities
Mothering	Fathering	ANAT. Y PHYOL.
Crafts	Traditional education	Genital
Desires	XXI century education	Pleasure
SEXUAL HYGIENE	SEX	CONTRACEPTION
Miths	Miths	Liabilities
Realities	Reality	Responsability
MENOPAUSE	ABORTION	RAPE
Sexual ability	Limitations	Fallaces
Femininity	Rights	Legality

Cuadro 1. González, (1997)

The strategies that were still in the dynamic experiential workshops were closely related to the topic we talked about in sessions. We did a discussion of the dynamics that we had developed and the students expressed their everyday experiences related to the subject matter, once the discussion pre-prepared cards were showing on the theoretical affirming or contradicting the topic reviewed.

After the workshop for students, we gave theoretical information on teaching strategies, dynamic, experiential, leadership groups and the theoretical perspectives that may influence the development of a self- awareness workshop in which students would be the guides. So that they should investigate a specific topic that has caught his attention during the stories in the issues they present and then develop a training workshop was taught to people outside the academic community or people: housewives, students of other races, construction workers, and

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professionals who came to college to attend that course. The average attendance was between 30 and 40 per workshop.

The results were accumulated in anthologies containing an organized all work material: letters descriptive of the organization of the course, a theoretical essay for each subject taught and the observations and results obtained through anecdotal records of students.

These anthologies have always been available to students who had prepared in order that they might re-do this workshop in other social groups and even resume it for other subjects, such as in social psychology, where they would apply their knowledge in other communities not so close to FESI and have done so.

Unfortunately, during this time, no time to make more specific analysis that records and questionnaires, as to diversify the dissemination and implementation of workshops, tutorials for making theses and dissertations left us little time for research results.

However we were making a political intervention, not in the traditional terms of going out and organizing protest marches, but-our-way politically intervening in families of students as the people attending them by making them aware of your personal situation and inviting them to make changes to their ways of being-done.

Reflecting on the processes of change, both for students and people attending our workshops and contrasting them with other applications, we realized that we were analyzing life trajectories. Only such an analysis we conducted ourselves by topic, so we decided to work first life histories as participants in a group by our own history.

In 1997 we implemented this form of self-awareness workshop limiting the number of students to no more than 10 people (men or women) to narrate our journey of life from different periods of psychological development. We continue to coordinate the group in a teacher-student relationship from the horizontal in which the teacher is actively involved with students.

The workshops were having a lot of acceptance by both students and people from the community but we could not grasp what was happening in these people to achieve substantial changes in their behaviors and ways of being-done. Therefore we decided to record audio sessions, the attendees asked for permission to record

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the sessions, we set aside the questionnaires and evaluations to make transcripts of what transpired during the sessions.

The themes that emerged in the narratives were closely related to love and recognition in different meanings, but we still missing time for the analysis of the stories. So I gave myself the task of giving me a unique time for research on life stories, doing a PhD in women's studies and gender in order to replicate the workshops I did in Mexico, now at the University of Seville.

4. The encounter with another culture to learn more about the culture of origin

When you have clear objectives that you meet, not always your projects are consistent with models of teaching or academic content to be offered in some programs for research. I discovered that the practice I was developing several years ago, had no place in a doctoral program directly dependent on experimental psychology.

So I had to on the one hand meet the program that was already registered and the other search options for training in the areas of knowledge where I really wanted to develop my practice. This is why I made a specialty in participatory action research, I joined an elective course in social constructivism and life histories offered from clinical psychology and did university extension courses in pedagogy and Isabel López Gorríz y Dolores Jurado Jiménez [8] among others courses.

From the existential crisis is also developed rhizome growth as a dialectic in which to grow despite the conditions, but the salts which further strengthened.

So I gave myself the task of making various inquiries to join a group of people who were willing for us to do an investigation together with stories of life, through a process of self-awareness workshop from the perspective of gender as it had done since years.

The group was composed of 6 Mexican women who had migrated to Seville, the age range was between 32 and 62 years of age with an average of 44 years, the objectives were to analyze the actual psychosocial conditions in which they lived and analyze which of these conditions favored the presentation of problems and behaviors that focus on abilities and limitations of psychosocial development, from their stories of life [9].

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I as a coordinator and researcher I joined the group as a migrant again, with some privileges such as fellowship at my university but I knew the culture and learned more from her through this research.

The space that held the workshop was my house, where all sessions were filmed in an atmosphere of privacy and confidentiality, participants were asked for permission to record this activity, they signed an informed consent form.

We took on the task of telling our personal trajectories, following the procedure of self-awareness workshops and performing various dynamics that were in line to the subject in question.

Reflect on significant events in our life path and those who led them to decide to lie in the range of Seville -stay was between 2 and 20 years and the degree of academic preparation went from being housewives to doctoral students, One of them was a journalist and another had a Mexican restaurant.

There were 10 sessions held once a week for three hours, plus a session for the return, a month and a half after making the workshop and have given their drafting history of life.

During the narration was listening and empathy for all participants, there were several that were never repressed emotions and when necessary intervene therapeutically is, sometimes the sessions lasted as long as needed to participants.

The topics discussed were :

- Self-Awareness
- Cultural Identity
- Genogram
- Lifeline
- The most significant memories in each developmental period
- Differential socialization
- Affective relationships
- Control and power
- Violence in social relations
- Immigration stories
- Future projects

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I transcribed all sessions and did a content analysis of both stories as stories of life.

Some aspects that stand around the themes revolve around love, self-love self-concept, your culture and your country, your ancestors, people who have seen you grow in the path of life, the couple the children…

We could also think about those negative experiences in each period of development where it is often necessary stimulation and recognition of parents and teachers and other important people.

For example, in the family, when we are born in large families, mothers are so busy attending to the housework neglected, without intent to harm, self-concept of young children, when not paying attention to behaviors such as sibling rivalry, compare them and stick more to a son or daughter with significant resemblance to the parents either do not give recognition in activities such as good student, work at home and activities that make small “as saying” hey mom I’m here, I love you, love me!

Locating a gender perspective allowed us to analyze, for example differential socialization, when given every opportunity to develop a girl who wants to study a university degree and was not allowed because “she was getting married soon and her husband is going to maintain (economically).”

Teens and young dating couples are formed, through the analysis of more meaningful relationships, we can see the kind of links they choose and the role of social openness submission or who develop at different bonding.

In the case of immigration stories we saw in these women why they came to Spain in some cases was for graduate studies and in other cases because they had met her husband in Mexico and immigrated to follow her husband who wanted to return home. Or whether or came to Spain or stayed in it for love.

When we reflect on what they had left the shop among the many comments made by participants were:

“I lived in Sevilla away from other people because I believed I was the only “ mojada [10]” here. Now that I know other Mexicans I feel as if I have sisters, I am very happy about that.”

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“For me it was very important to attend your workshop because I had relationship problems and believed that was because my husband is Spanish and I am Mexican. Listening to you I realize that my relationship problems are not racial discrimination but if gender discrimination.”

“When I came to you I did not talk much because I could not even ask what my problems are. So, to listen to you was like opening a range of possibilities and each turn of the fan was an option in my life, just had to choose what I want do now.”

The changes were individually varied widely, ranging from learning to be more assertive with their employees, demanding that she perform the tasks requested in the time they were required and given time to travel after having worked all his life.

Understand that in her relationship she was behaving like his mother with her father, manipulating, screaming and demanding to her husband any kind of activities in the time and with the characteristics she demanded it.

Decide completing his doctoral studies and approved the Spanish educational system to access employment in their area of expertise.

These conditions allowed us to encourage these women to develop a culture in the care of themselves that allowed them to co-build new relationships with themselves and with others beyond the borders.

These Mexican not only “became” individually but also formed a group of Mexicans in Andalusia [11] intended to support other immigrants, celebrating important dates together, teach their children those games, songs, children’s stories and cuisine typical of Mexicans. But without making a separate group, joined to the partnership to all those wishing to do so even if they weren´t Mexicans.

5. The meeting with another professional that captures the importance of my work from a loving practice

Having attended the course on life stories that taught Isabel Lopez Górriz, allowed me access to other models of knowledge not found in my doctoral program, because she had an approach from an experiential perspective and existential theory was unknown to me.

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During class, Isabel asked us to each of the participants reported the practice was doing with life stories or what they intended to do with the knowledge we were acquiring.

Its always been attentive listening and open, inviting us to theorize practice with life stories, for me to theorize that the workshop process was already doing with the Mexicans.

She saw the potential of my work and challenged me to write and describe the process of constructing meaning for instance in the dynamics that I applied with my students in Mexico and now I was doing [12], because, as his words were very wealth. Because positioning myself as an immigrant and to make use of smells, tastes, textures, sounds, music, children's songs... for me were well known because they belong to my culture, my dynamic was making a link between scientifically and the existential experiential to achieve these women told without restrictions.

She saw the significance of the human perspective that was posing with my workshops at a job that took more than two decades and knew how to drive it by saying:

"Teresa, existential education is one that allows people to build, designed and modeled from their questions, experiences, feelings and experiences expressed or narrated in oral or written and thoughtful and you're doing with these women because you've worked yourself"

(Lopez Górriz, 2007).

These conversations Isabel invited us to transform our teaching practices in areas rich in knowledge of our know-how. Helping to put in a theoretical framework experiential learning that helps locate educational practice and biographical perspective on education.

For Isabel, many of my words were echoed and meaning to talk about the position of the educator or researcher from the bottom to up [13], which she translated in the horizontal teacher -student relationships by implementing our sensibility and our modeling as a career women.

From her I learned to believe in my work, jumping to the theorization of my daily

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practices, but to get that I had to go to another continent and continue to reflect experientially.

From here, the difficulties I faced in the academy did not understand my positivist know-how to integrate an emerging and qualitative analysis were alleviated because now he had another key, a different vision in which not necessarily had to quantify narratives and life stories of the women who had worked, I did it because they were proper requirements of the doctoral program in which it was registered and ready to defend my thesis.

However, Isabel was opened with a covenant and a commitment: self teach my workshops with PhD students so that together we could analyze and theorize the life stories of his doctoral students.

Another compromise was inevitable that all this experience is captured in a book that was just released recently [14], with the intention that other professionals in psychology and education-related areas could implement what I have worked for over 20 years.

6. Conclusions and reflections

As we noted in the first pages of this article, when you love your profession and your daily practice you love yourself. This helps you deal with many obstacles that occur in everyday life, both personally and professionally.

With the support of people like Isabel, who consistently made a practice of teaching love as a model of interaction in various contexts, to be achieved and committed political interventions that promote change and improvement in educational practices that go beyond mere covenants and commitments because they are part of our daily tasks.

Having self-made workshop with the life stories of Isabel´s doctoral students was a challenge to his death, because these girls were facing grief and any other teacher who tried to continue his work was compared with a woman who was a model of improvement.

Although I never tried to be neither take the place of Isabel, I had trouble getting these women drafted his autobiography because he had several questions. Where are going to publish their stories? and why they were asked to write about some

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issues that have caught his attention during the workshop? and stories of his memoirs and writing a chapter that could be integrated into a collective. Plus it could serve as the blueprint of his thesis, though it continued to fulfill the commitment even though they have taken a long time.

Working from an autobiographical perspective requires careful listening and empathy to deal with all aspects that emerge from the narrative, demand involvement and an ethical commitment to the person you're working on.

Didactic and experiential techniques we do in our practices to emergespeech are one of the evidences of our experience that allows scientists to link the plans with the experiential and existential.

Other social groups in which I put in the workshops with the stories of life in addition to my daily practice with psychology students were:

Students of psychology at the University of Guadalajara, which right now are doing their research on autobiographical narratives artisans town of Tonala, Jalisco and will soon have publications and theses on this theme.

Also a workshop on life stories with seniors in a home day after stories of their children and grandchildren.

A workshop with housewives and peasant Lora del Rio, a town in the province of Seville, the workshop of the Mexican was my doctoral thesis as a product that is also just published in Spain.

The practices involved are multiplied by themselves, because when other people see and feel the changes generated from reflections of the life course are doing a job that involves intersubjective paradigm shift and all that change requires a change in itself.

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Notes

[1] **Esta traducción ha sido realizada por: Iram Amor Martínez González**

[2] Mª. Teresa González Uribe, Associate Professor “C” full-time definitive in the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México campus Iztacala. Teaching in the area of Development and Education .

[3] See González (2011)

[4] See Hernández y González (1999).

[5] Self-awareness workshops we have conducted since 1988, see Hernández and González (1989, 1990). The main objective of these groups has been to stimulate and promote the development of the capacities of women through enhancing communication spaces from a feminist perspective and gender interaction networks

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multiply visible the actions of production and empowering women to defend their rights (women's Agenda, 2010). These groups have been the main methodological tool of the feminists, because from consciousness-raising groups of women organized for political and personal actions that have transpired globally. Thanks to these groups has made it to the highest vertex of the iceberg of power as the UN and other international institutions. It has to legislate on issues affecting women as unequal pay to equal days, the right to abortion and sex education, prevention and attention to gender-based violence, ethnic discrimination, racial and environmental improvement between other topics (Salazar et al., 1996).

[6] See Ruiz, (2003)

[7] See González 1989,1997 González y Hernández 2002

[8] Experiencial investigation: the history of life like methodology of investigation, training and intervention in the processes social-historical and of reconstruction of identities. Course of University extension 2004, University of Sevilla

[9] See González (2005)

[10] Mojado is a derogatory term that applies to immigrants who illegally cross the Rio Grande to reach the United States in order to work on whatever it takes to obtain funds for their families.

[11] www.mexicanosenandalucia.org

[12] See González, (2005)

[13] The researcher is in the same plane as the subject of critical inquiry, take a reflective stance to emphasize the importance of studying ourselves and investigate the bottom up rather than top down (Harding, 1987).

[14] González (2011)

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