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Università
Popolare di
Firenze



ERASMS+ Programme 2015 – KA2 Adult Education

Project n°: 2015-1-ES01-KA204-015937

Document name: **O1.- Complex research according to the ethnomethodological pattern by applying professiography to the target group of housewives - Italy**

Partner: Università Popolare di Firenze, UPF

Author: Università Popolare di Firenze

O1.- Complex research according to the ethnomethodological pattern by applying professiography to the target group of housewives – Italy

The five interviews took place in April and May 2016. Each interview lasted about 2 hours. It was based on a structural questionnaire provided by FEUP. The interviewer used also observation methodology.

The interviewers were four psychologists, experts in adult education, active in Università Popolare di Firenze, both in courses management and planning and in European Designing. All the interviews have been filmed and recorded in an informal and friendly atmosphere. Each housewife has been video recorded along one of her normal housekeeping days, while she was cooking, cleaning, calling, dealing with her children or gardening.

Selection of the 5 women has been based on geography, on our previous knowledge of them and on their agreement. We also accounted for the number of years they had been housewives, their previous experiences and their expectation and projects for the future.

Only one of them lives in Florence, in a residential suburb. The other 4 live in more rural areas, in villages of the Province, 30 or 40 km from the capital of the region. Four housekeepers are married, one of them is divorced.

Reviewed by: Cristina Demartis

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Finding

1. Each one of the women was observed while working in her house.

The following actions were observed:

- To cook
- To do the shopping
- To do the cleaning
- To look after all her social relationships
- To vacuum-clean
- To coordinate income and expenses
- To book the medical visits for the family
- To iron
- To look after homework of her children
- To look after free-time activities of her children
- Planning of the weekly duties.
- To wash
- To do the housework.
- Waste management/sorting of waste.
- To do part-time jobs
- To organize free-time.

2. The 5 women show various abilities, though mainly being unaware of them. To be multitasking is the ability needed by all, and they all have it.

3. All the 5 housekeepers are satisfied of this activity. Some of them have chosen to stop working or to be part time employee in order to take care better of house and children. They do not feel inadequate nor unsatisfied for what they do. They all are very busy in taking care of their family, in voluntary work and in social relations. Therefore they often lack time for closing all the started works, though in the course of time they have risen their skills in time-management.

4. Generally speaking, husband and children help little in homework. However in two cases children have been asked to do a few domestic duties, such as to clean their bedroom, to lay and clear the table, to do some service in the house. Sometimes husbands care for the family budget or are in charge of gardening. Only one husband helps his wife to do the heaviest shopping for the house. Children, with one exception, don't do any work and are totally dependent on their mother's homework.

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5. Only one housewife in 5 has got the full management of the house, including family budget, paying of bills and insurances, dealing with administration.

She tells us that often she keeps herself up-to-date about administration, searching for the best prices and comparing estimates. For the others women interviewed, their family budgets were totally handled by their husband.

As food or cleaning products are concerned, they all prefer department stores to small shops, in order to spare money.

6. All the women declare that most of their abilities in running the house has been learned by their family of origin, in particular by mother and grandmother. One of them remembers to have been taught by her father on how to cook. None of them has ever followed specific courses to learn how to run the house or how to do homework. Some of them get information and keep up-to-date via specific tutorials in Internet, youtube, or via TV programs. According to each one of them the best means to become proficient has been to practice, being alone and forced to learn.

For us, the abilities to be possibly improved are:

- to speed cleaning
- to reuse leftovers.
- to optimize and coordinate times.
- Cleaning and care of the house by means of natural methods and low environmental impact.

7. Four out five housewives offer themselves as volunteers. Two of them are involved into activities organized by the parish church of their village, one is a volunteer in Associations of clown-therapy and of children disability; one is a volunteer in the field of counseling and promotion of well-being.

8. Only one of the housewives is interested in joining specialized trainings to improve her abilities in running her house. The others show interest in courses connected with her interests and passions.

9. As posture and working conditions are concerned, no one complains severe effects on the body. But some of them think that, on the long run, a certain bearing of the body can produce pain and inflame specific parts of the body itself.

In particular the cleaning of the bathroom, more in detail of the china and the shower, can induce a wrong posture. If repeated many times, this will cause chronical pain, especially in the back and joints.



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For hard work, like washing dresses and kitchen instruments and vessels, almost all of them use appliances, such as the washing machine and the washdisher, which speed the work up and reduce strain.

10. Each one of our interviews is using the appliances for saving money and optimizing time, because they speed up the domestic cleaning and make the food ready in a lower time. One of the housewives, to save more time, does the shopping on-line. Directly from the site of the shop, and so the purchase is delivered directly home from a carrier. This method is more expensive but it saves time, allowing our woman to deal with other thinks.

11. The 5 housewives are spending a lot of time, at least 6 or 7 hours, for the housekeeping. Further, they have to be ready to face accidents and any unexpected occurrence. There is a high probability that unexpected events occur, due to the fact that they are implied in many different functions, in which the looking after their children.

That's the reason why they underline the importance of flexibility, the speed in problem-solving, the decision-making, the ability of facing unexpected events and of struggling to overcome problems.

12. The interviewed housewives pay a particular attention to the environment and to saving energy. Almost all of them do the sorting of waste and are careful in the choice of cleansing agents for the house, choosing the ecological and of low environmental impact ones.

13. All the five women of the interview have had a job, either full or part time, before being totally involved in the care of the house. All of them agree that all the abilities and the expertise developed at work have been useful for the work to be done after at home: one of them was a professional educator in an association of social promotion in the little town she had taken up her residence in; another one was an estate agent; a third one was an entrepreneur in the field of textile; the last two were employees in 2 firms of the area and are still working at reduced time in the same firms.

14. For the majority of these women the social abilities are important to organize and start in on the housekeeping and to delegate some duties to family members. All of them being involved in voluntary work or in various activities, they have the opportunities of experimenting many more skills, in particular:



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-Skills in communication

-Capacity of a Leadership oriented to reach a goal or to create a good atmosphere in a group

-To handle conflicts (discussion about where the conflict start from; to understand the view of the other; to propose solutions; to find a satisfactory mutual consent)

-To solve problems (to define the problem; to look for alternative solutions; to co-ordinate the resources while searching for a solution).

-Ability in decision making (to co-ordinate the resources at disposal, to evaluate the best alternative, to plan its execution, to take into account the possible obstacles)

All the 5 women believe that the so-called Soft Skills capacities are more important than the merely technical ones, such as:

- Autonomy
- Problem solving
- Flexibility
- Initiative
- Precision
- Creativity
- Pragmatism
- Decision making
- Coordination of times
- Negotiation
- Capacity of communicating
- Leadership
- Self-control
- To handle the stress
- Organization
- Adaptation and flexibility
- Responsibility
- Accepting delegation



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Suggestions:

Looking at all the observations and interviews, we can summarize:

1. None of the housewives think useful to do up to date courses to developed their domestic skills; It's not interesting for them to attend courses oriented to develop their expertise for entrepreneurship; On the contrary their interest is in going into and developing their own interests with specific courses.
2. Some of them aspire to improve their expertise on: the use of leftover food of the day before, methods to speed the cleaning up; how to substitute the commercial products used daily for cleaning with homemade biological ones.
3. Three out of the five housekeepers are more interested in training courses to improve and strengthen their soft skills, that is interpersonal, social and communicative skills because these can be useful for every kind of activity, at home and in the working world.
4. None of the women of our sample showed interest in courses to reinforce self-estimate. All of them show a good level of self-estimate, a sign that they don't feel frustrated by domestic work. In addition, for some of them to go back to housekeeping has been a choice, enabling them to take care of their children in the stage of growth.
5. Comparing the housewives with a successful business women, during the workshop hold in Polimoda, Florence, was definitely fruitful. After having introduced the interviews and analized the successful female business activity and the match of housewives competences with business women competences, the attending housewives have revealed, even if small, their entrepreneurship "hidden dream".

To get in touch with a successful female entrepreneur and to participate in the workshop in a site where creativity, production and entrepreneurship are typically feminine, has resulted in a stimulus for the housewives, who have realized they own expertise to be used for business.

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During the Workshop, in an informal and fruitful discussion among housewives and successful businesswoman on the necessary skills to become entrepreneurs, the group has identified the following conditions and key points:

A-The conditions necessary for a woman who wants to start a business, such as:

- to have time,
- to have information and a technical support,
- to have sites of comparison with other entrepreneurs

B-The key points which allow to fulfill entrepreneurship, such as:

- to be given public services of Welfare which allow women to work out of home, using kindergarten, after-school activities, nursing homes, old people's homes and services to people;
- to obtain days off also for the husband and stimulate the fathers to take care of children and of the family;
- to have a flexible timetable at work, also thanks to telework;
- to keep oneself up-to date, at least every 5 years, with public training courses low price, or private ones with vouchers;
- to promote women enterprises and to cut exercise duty for the small enterprises;
- to create co-working sites, in order to make it easier to meet and to create enterprises.