



Officina 2022: Spaces for inclusion and democracy

Red Table Report

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Participants*:

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** The group operated in hybrid mode, face-to-face and remote*

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE:

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Elena Gaudio (DGOSV-MI)
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The table is realised within the European project Erasmus plus INCLUDE

In reflecting on the spaces of inclusion and democracy, the participants at the table considered the current context and the possible futures of education, starting from the specifics of the educational system, from the attitudes and behaviours of individuals and groups, from the characteristics of organizations and institutions, up to the needs and prospects for change.

With reference to the variety of formal, non-formal or informal educational contexts, each member of the group, following the COMESE methodology inspired by the Metaplan, has individually developed one or two inclusion / democracy objectives to be enhanced. Each goal was collectively discussed and linked with the other goals that emerged.

General objectives that emerged from the reflection on spaces of inclusion and democracy

1 - It is necessary to make education a **factor of cultural development through processes of democratic participation and active citizenship**. The possibility for all students to experience **concrete practices of democracy and inclusion**, through projects and initiatives promoted or participated by the schools themselves, is seen as a central element in the fight against educational poverty, in the development of **learner-centered didactics** and promotion of **new competencies**.

In this way, it becomes possible to counteract the "adaptive" function with respect to the dominant narratives, enhancing instead the **transformative education, oriented to change** – of the inner change and of the change of external reality, as Dina Bertoni Jovine, John Dewey, Siebren Miedema and Gert Biesta would say, among others.

2- Closely related to the concrete practices of democracy and inclusion is the **development of socio-emotional competencies**. If the need for growth in the basic culture of the population is highlighted from several areas, it is even more stressed that emotional ignorance constitutes a major social problem. It is necessary to value the total well-being at all levels and in all educational contexts: feeling welcomed and being able to welcome.

3- A central objective is identified in the need for **personalization of the educational** path beyond the cases which are expressly provided. In particular, each and every one must have the opportunity to express themselves through different languages and tools - as personalized and varied as possible, responding to different abilities and to the multiplicity of attitudes and cognitive processes, to reduce the conditions of **educational poverty**, to guarantee a fair inclusion for everyone and not to lose the richness of the diversity and versatility of human contributions.

This aspect is particularly relevant in marginal educational situations, for example with reference to the need to guarantee access to education for minors in care of juvenile justice.

4 - **The need to enhance debate and communication** is expressed at different levels. In the first place, with reference to the student community and the **school context**: starting from the objective of guaranteeing every boy and girl the right to participate - in full implementation of the UN convention on the rights of childhood and adolescence - to the growth of the relationship and dialogue between peers and educators, starting from which it is also possible to "activate curiosity", to the creation of spaces for dialogue and group work between young and not so young people from different experiences and cultures, for the analysis of common problems and design of innovative solutions.

At a second level of abstraction, network is understood as being rooted in the **territory**, which leads to fostering the dialogue between the world of school and the other main actors of civil society, including associations, the world of culture, research, politics and of the "vita activa" in general. The importance of taking charge of the community by the educating community itself is also underlined.

At a third level of abstraction, we move on to the recognition of the value **of mutual interdependence at the family, social and political, international, global level** and to the promotion of local, national and international projects of intercultural exchange and comparison with each other to encourage understanding the meaning of inclusion and dialogue.

5 -Fighting inequalities in access to rights, and **stereotypes** in all contexts of growth also requires developing **tools to reduce any form of discrimination**: gender, citizenship, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, giving a voice directly to the protagonists;

A central competence in this context is identified in **visual education**, capable of nourishing a critical spirit and capacity for profound intervention on the central common narratives to consolidate practices of inclusion and democracy. In this regard, it was also proposed to foster the formation and growth of competence in **the critical analysis of texts and images** throughout the educational and scientific community, including the student community, also in this case looking for spaces that foster exchanges, awareness and possibilities of intervention.

At the same time, it is necessary to deepen the knowledge of situations of different abilities and diversity in general, necessary to develop an inclusive and non-judgmental attitude.

It is also necessary, as a specific need, to facilitate and support the learning of the Italian language by unaccompanied foreign minors and first and second-generation migrants.

6 - The ethics of care, not separated from Jonas's ethics of responsibility on which the discourse on sustainability is based, comes into consideration as a disposition to care for people, heritage and the environment. Involving young people and adults in the care and management of common goods is considered a priority objective, necessary to build a widespread culture of behaviour and respect for others and the environment. The objective of enhancing the cultural and literary heritage must also be declined with a view to promoting awareness and care.

7 - Enhancing exposure to cultural and research processes is an articulated objective that implies allowing young people the possibility of being protagonists of cultural and scientific narratives.

It is necessary to encourage the construction of spaces and opportunities for participation in the cultural life of the country as well as to start integrated educational processes in order to make young people of all ages aware of the value of culture through knowledge, experiences, diversified activities that can have a weight in the path educational of each. At the same time, the encounter with the world of scientific research should be encouraged, creating opportunities for more direct collaboration between the world of research, teachers and the student community.

As a specific initiative, the enhancement of a well-managed school library also constitutes an important bridge towards the construction of articulated cultural processes.

8-Finally, it is necessary to strengthen the **education to knowledge and learning**, necessary not only and not so much to guarantee flexibility in the world of work, but to allow students to seek and find motivation and meanings.

Barriers and facilitators:

Even starting from the background of the participants at the tables, it is possible to identify experiences and practices that go in the direction of the indicated objectives. It is necessary to **enhance** these experiences, extend them to geographically and socially marginalized realities, put them into a **system**. Therefore, the barriers and facilitators that emerged at the table are transversal and strictly refer to these needs for **knowledge, access, enhancement, sharing and large-scale implementation** of these practices. To this end, however, it is also necessary to grasp the specific needs of the various institutes and educational contexts, in order to be able to meet the specific needs.

Barriers:

Therefore, among the barriers, we encounter the institutions' struggling in **listening** to needs and emergencies, in addition to the lack of correspondence between the **emergencies** of institutions (educational, cultural ...) and the **investments** and resources of the public administration;

Training needs do not just concern students and teachers. The need for **education of administrators and politicians** is reiterated, which leads to enhancing the correspondence between the single objective and the set of elements that make up a trajectory of educational policy.

The **dispersion of resources** constitutes an additional barrier. For example, with reference to the PNRR, the table agrees in the appreciation of the choice to directly allocate funding to schools, but believes that it would have been preferable to assign it against a project provided by each institution, to avoid the effect of "watering can" funding, and at the same time to support schools with major problems - of geographic marginalization as well as a lack of tradition of access to national and international projects - in the drafting of the project.

Among the barriers, the **educational responsibility of universities** is also highlighted, relating not only to the teaching staff, but to society as a whole, including politicians and administrators.

There is a **cognitive problem** with respect to the initiatives of the various scientific, social and cultural bodies and the opportunities for collaboration. Knowledge is an indispensable requisite to encourage the possibilities of collaboration to allow cultural and scholastic education to work together.

It is also highlighted that, in the face of a copious amount of **data relating to the educational situation** in the territory and the projects carried out, these data are collected and requested, but frequently **not read and in any case scarcely used** in the preparation and implementation of policies.

Finally, the limits linked to the **co-presence of different discrepant or unamalgamated objectives** within each institution were raised.

Facilitators:

The facilitators are expressed, more than in the form of elements already available and immediately usable to facilitate the transformation of educational practice, in the form of **instrumental objectives necessary to implement and contextualize the objectives indicated above**. This gives us the measure of the urgency of the changes that the table deems necessary to make for the promotion of paths of inclusion and democracy in the school.

A first facilitator is to **value what has been done**. The public administration should collect and disseminate the initiatives carried out.

It is also necessary to **foster dialogue between different institutions**, just as it is essential to enhance education at all levels, not only of teachers, but also of the executives of the institutions responsible for writing calls.

It is also essential to move towards **a rational use of resources**. This aspect includes lead **times** which cannot be too tight, as in the case of the PNRR.

A further facilitator is constituted by the **openness and connection between different professions** in support of education, further expanding the concept of the educating community.

The **enhancement and comparison of practices and experiences** is a fundamental tool for promoting inclusion and democracy practices, in concert with the increase in mediation and communication between institutes and institutions.

Finally, greater attention is required with respect to the **recruitment of technical and administrative staff** in schools and institutions, to ensure that the objectives of exchange, planning, networks and system implementation are made achievable.