



Officina 2022: Spaces for inclusion and democracy

Blue Table Report

July 13th, 2022

Participants*:

Elena Gaudio (MI - coordinator) and; Claudia Pennacchiotti (CNR - IRPPS coordinator); Sabrina Soldati (CNR - IRPPS facilitator); Cristiana Rita Alfonsi - consultant; Giovanni Buonocore - IC Carducci King of Casoria; Flaminia Carocci - Student at Liceo Tasso; Sara Ciganotto - ISIS Malignani of Udine; Anna Rita Costanzo - ISIS Magarotto of Rome; Marina Di Berardo - Ministry of Culture; Alessando Esposito - Provincial Student Council of Viterbo; Elisabetta Falchetti - Ecom; Giordana France - CISP; Antonella Fucecchi - teacher and expert in intercultural pedagogy; Giorgio Garbrecht - Provincial Student Council of of Viterbo; Patrizia Malausa - C. Percoto-ESABAC Linguistic High School of Udine; Carmine Marinucci - DICultHer; Lorenzo Pontecorvo - Provincial Student Council of of Latina; Fabio Saglimbeni - Liceo Teresa Gullace of Rome; Flavia Salustri - Provincial Student Council of of Rome; Maria Josella Turcarolo - IC Pontassieve.

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE:

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

While dwelling on the spaces of inclusion and democracy, participants were asked to consider the possible objectives to pursue in order to promote educational processes, formal, non-formal and informal, that are truly inclusive and capable of relaunching the democratic dimension of our society. The table started off with an initial phase in which each participant, following the methodology based on the Metaplan proposed by the IRPPS research group "Social Studies on Science, Education, Communication", individually elaborated one or two inclusion / democracy objectives to be valued.

Consequently, each of the abovementioned objectives was collectively discussed and connected with the others.

The interdisciplinary characterization of the group, in which were represented not only the different actors embodying the educating community but also a multiplicity of disciplinary fields, has contributed to enrich the debate with a plurality of voices and heterogeneous points of view. At the same time, it has required an initial phase of confrontation on some conceptual aspects which were the starting point to the subsequent discussion.

A first point addressed is the relationship between the concepts of inclusion and democracy in educational contexts. In particular, there has been a long debate on the possibility / opportunity of considering these two dimensions as distinct aspects of the educational dynamic - each bearer of a variety of elements and implications that cannot be traced back to a unitary treatment - or if instead inclusion and democracy represent two faces of the same coin, in which inclusion is an essential dimension of the democratic dimension of a society and of an educational system. The debate was reassembled in a shared vision around the dual role of education in promoting at the same time the full development of each person's individuality (role defined by Siebren Miedema and Gert Biesta as *subjectification*), and the full development of the social and collective dimension of the individual to which Miedema and Biesta refer with the concept of *socialization*: a prerequisite for real and active participation. Considering that the action on one of the two aspects of education cannot fail to have a transformative impact on the other one, the two dimensions of democracy and inclusion, although conceptually distinguishable by their specificities and implications, both recognize educational objectives and closely integrated visions. For example, the themes of care, accessibility, the centrality of communication recurred in the working table; communication was understood not only as a transmissive process of a message, but also, in the wake of Dewey's constructivist vision, as a fully participatory and transformative process, in which meanings and visions are shared generating a change in the subjects involved.

Starting from these initial reflections, the group initiated a work of clustering the emerged objectives and of identifying possible action strategies / facilitators, beginning with the specific experiences of the participants. The following groups of objectives were therefore identified:

Participation: two distinct objectives have emerged around the concept of participation. On the one hand, the creation of communities aware and capable of exercising their rights and on the other hand, the creation, during the educational process, of the conditions for a real participation of everybody, starting from the awareness that everyone's contribution can make a significant difference for the group. The role of education therefore stands at the crossroads between the creation of shared values on which to base possible visions of the future and the creation of opportunities and spaces for participation that make these visions emerge. Some possible facilitators have been identified: as far as the first objective is concerned, it was proposed, for example, to strengthen the civic education curriculum by enhancing those transversal competences that are indispensable for the exercise of citizenship; with reference to the second objective, proposals were focused on improving well-being and positive mood in the classrooms, on promoting interventions aimed at fostering individuals to be an active part of the change; the realization of planning processes in participatory way, with particular attention to public goods and spaces, to the suburbs and to the

creation / making available of physical spaces in which these processes can take place. For instance, by opening school in extra-school hours and by identifying other places of sociality at the local level.

Inclusion: starting from a common perspective that intends inclusion not only as the act of including an element within a group or a whole, but above all as an openness to diversity, two objectives, linked to each other, have been identified: a real inclusion of socially vulnerable subjects; relaunching a constant focus on inclusion. Therefore, inclusion is considered not only as an action to be implemented in practice but also as a vision, there is as a daily approach to the practice itself. In order to attain these objectives, some possible facilitators have been identified: deconstruct the dominant narratives, promote the authentic involvement of school's leadership positions in objectives of inclusion beyond the prevailing neo-liberal logic; promote an ethic of care as a practice based on the concept of reciprocity, that activates interpersonal dynamics and processes of listening and recognition of the actors involved; create spaces for inclusion and contrast to educational poverty by promoting accessibility, understood in its broad sense - from access to infrastructures and digital resources to access to knowledge / culture, for example, also in this case, through the opening of schools beyond school hours, the transformation of cultural sites into social hubs and educational spaces, making the educational offer of museums accessible even for a blind public.

In relation to the subject of inclusion, a hotly debated issue was that of **identity**, intended as the totality of distinctive characteristics that make human beings unique, exceptional, different from one another and undergoing a process of development thanks to growth and social changes (it's important to cite some authors such as Shiller and Basch)

Communication as a transversal objective to the previous two. Communication was understood at the same time as the recovery of language (the ability to verbalize and translate one's structured thought into words) and as a space for the construction and sharing of visions and values through dialogue and comparison. As pointed out by Heidegger, words are not simply tools for expressing thoughts, but they are themselves the very condition for thinking. Therefore, without words to construct a reasoning, complex thinking risks to disappear. A general impoverishment of language was highlighted at all levels, including in peer language. It was therefore identified, on the one hand, the need to act on the promotion of linguistic skills in the strict sense and at all levels (the ability to understand and articulate forms of thought structured in words), on the other hand, the need to promote the horizontality and circularity of the didactic action including different actors of the educating community and strengthening the educational alliance (for example by implementing actions aimed at increasing the involvement of families in educational processes and improving the dialogue between school and family). Transversely to the two objectives, a possible strategic facilitator has been identified in the training of teachers with particular reference to the promotion, in the educational action, of meta-competences / transversal competences and of a transformative teaching.