

Education through Art for intercultural dialogue: Towards an Inclusive Learning Ecosystem

Educazione attraverso l'arte per il dialogo interculturale: verso un ecosistema di apprendimento inclusivo

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ABSTRACT

Is it possible to create intercultural and inclusive learning environments based on education through art? Can art enhance competences to foster inclusion of children with migrant background and/or belonging to minority groups? These are the core questions of "META - Minority Education Through Art", an Erasmus Plus KA3 Project (2015-2018). The central hypothesis, based on previous researches and experiences, considered arts capable to foster inclusion in primary school intercultural contexts. META adopted a holistic and transformative paradigm to approach the problem and consistent multi-methods strategy and mixed-methods research techniques. Main output are a tested competence framework for building inclusive learning environments and recommendations for a methodology centred on innovation in teaching, as key for genuine valuing of richness and potentiality of different cultures, discovered through artistic experience. In this work, we present research outcomes as elements of reflection indicating a transition from schooling to open learning environments. In doing so, arts become an important methodological tool to foster integration of formal, non-formal and informal education.

È possibile creare ambienti di apprendimento interculturali e inclusivi basati sull'educazione attraverso l'arte? L'arte può migliorare le competenze per favorire l'inclusione di bambini con background migrante e/o appartenenti a gruppi minoritari? Queste sono le domande chiave di "META - Minority Education Through Art", un progetto Erasmus Plus KA3 (2015-2018). L'ipotesi centrale, basata su precedenti ricerche ed esperienze, considerava le arti capaci di favorire l'inclusione nei contesti interculturali della scuola primaria. META ha adottato un paradigma olistico e trasformativo per affrontare il problema di ricerca, una strategia multi-metodi coerente e tecniche di indagine miste. I risultati principali sono un quadro di competenze testate per la creazione di ambienti di apprendimento inclusivi e raccomandazioni per una metodologia di insegnamento innovativa, come elementi chiave per la valorizzazione della ricchezza e della potenzialità delle culture attraverso l'esperienza artistica. In questo lavoro presentiamo i risultati della ricerca quali elementi di riflessione che indicano una transizione dalla scuola verso ambienti di apprendimento aperti. Le arti così diventano un importante strumento metodologico per favorire l'integrazione dell'istruzione formale, non formale e informale.

KEYWORDS

Inclusive Learning Environment, Cultural Awareness and Expression, Soft Skills, Teaching Learner-Centred.

Ambienti di Apprendimento Inclusivi, Consapevolezza ed Espressione Culturale, Competenze Trasversali, Insegnamento centrato sullo Studente.

1. Introduction¹

In recent years, international organizations and researchers expressed an increasing interest in arts education (UNESCO, 2006, 2010; Eurydice, 2009; CE, 2016) and studies on application of arts in education have been intensified, especially as regards to children from disadvantaged, migratory backgrounds or with learning difficulties (Penketh, 2017).

In 2006, UNESCO published its *Road map for Arts Education* containing basic comments on arts and cultural aspects as essential components of a comprehensive education leading to the full development of the individual. Therefore, arts education is a universal human right, for all learners, including those who are often excluded from education' (UNESCO 2006: 3). Further in this document two 'arts in education' approaches are described:

"The arts can be taught as individual study subjects, through the teaching of the various arts disciplines, thereby developing students' artistic skills, sensitivity, and appreciation of the arts, and seen as a method of teaching and learning in which artistic and cultural dimensions are included in all curriculum subjects" (UNESCO, 2006, p. 8).

In 2010, the World Conference on Arts Education produced the document *Seoul Agenda: Goals for the Development of Arts Education*, which identifies the following objectives for the artistic development of Education: A) Ensure that arts education is accessible as a fundamental and sustainable component of a high-quality renewal of education. B) Assure that arts education activities and programmes are of a high quality in conception and delivery. C) Apply arts education principles and practices to contribute to resolving the social and cultural challenges facing today's world.

In line with UNESCO's approaches, in the report *Arts and cultural education at school in Europe* by Eurydice (2009) it is affirmed that Member States share many aims for the arts curriculum and some goals are defined:

"developing artistic skills, knowledge and understanding, engaging with a variety of art-forms; increasing cultural understanding; sharing arts experiences; and become discriminating arts consumers and contributors. But in addition to these artistic outcomes, personal and social-cultural outcomes - such as confidence and self-esteem, individual expression, teamwork, intercultural understanding and cultural participation - were expected from arts education in most countries" (Eurydice, 2009, p. 10).

These documents underline that "art" is a concept that should not be restricted to know art or to become an artist, but rather art as method that should assist the individual to develop oneself. Capable of opening minds and fostering creativity, in the broadest sense of the term, art helps our society to imagine and "to shape" the future. It seems therefore essential to let children develop their artistic and creative talent (Margiotta, 2018) and it would be desirable that school programs reserve a significant role to education through art within the curricula, not only as a, still welcome, extra-school activity.

At the same time, the theme of inclusion has become increasingly relevant. In

1 Questo articolo è stato realizzato in collaborazione tra le due Autrici, tuttavia sono attribuibili a Giovanna Del Gobbo i paragrafi 1 e 2 e a Glenda Galeotti 3, 4 e 5.

2015, Education Ministers and the European Commission adopted the *Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education*, which defines common objectives and calls for EU-level supportive actions for inclusion. Generally, inclusion refers to the promotion of contextual and relational conditions, which allow the recognition, and the empowerment of everyone as the right to be oneself and showing an attention to the difference in an open democratic society. Schools have been recognized as key partners in fostering inclusion also as core parts of communities that can work closely with parents and local associations, to deal with and to prevent drifting of young people to the margins of society. Teachers and educators, nevertheless, should be better equipped to deal with diversity in the classroom as richness and to construct common values with pupils (OECD, 2015a). If all children are recognised as bearer of immense potentialities and opportunities, it has to be considered that migrant and minorities groups represent a considerable number of young citizens and young learners in education system (OECD, 2015b).

In many OECD countries, immigrant students have more restricted access to quality education, leave school earlier and have lower academic achievement than their native peers (Potochnick, 2018; Brunello, De Paola, 2017; Janta, Harte, 2016; OECD, 2010). That makes improving the education of immigrant students a policy priority (OECD, 2018, 2015c). While studies on the integration of migrants into labour markets have been extensive (Hopper, Desiderio, Salant, 2017; Zimmermann, 2016; Ortensi, 2015) the researches aimed to examine the education outcomes of immigrant and minority groups children and to explore education policy interventions to improve their performance are not so spread at international level.

The relationship between art and intercultural inclusion are an interesting area to investigate and it represents an issue of research that could be more explored (McGregor, Ragab, 2016; European Commission, 2015; Stern Seifert, 2010). This paper intends to contribute to the ongoing debate presenting a research implemented in the context of an Erasmus Plus KA3 Project, META - Minority Groups Education Through Arts (2015-2018). The project promoter is International Yehudi Menuhin Foundation (Belgium) and the partners are Fondazione Nazionale Carlo Collodi (Italy), Department of Education and Psychology of University of Florence (Italy), Pfefferwerk Foundation (Germany) and European Roma Information Network (Bruxelles-based). The project activities were carried out in collaboration with MUS-E network (Belgium, Germany, Italy and Spain) and ATEE Association for Teacher Education in Europe.

Art and inclusion are the core contents of META starting from two central questions: is it possible to create intercultural and inclusive learning environments based on education through art? Can art enhance competences to foster inclusion of children with migrant background and/or belonging to minority groups? The central hypothesis, based on previous and on-going experiences and partners' researches (MUS-E network *in primis* and other EU funded projects, such as ART4ROM, Music4Rom, ARTES, ARTinED, E-ART-inED and Lingua Plus) considers arts as capable to foster inclusion in primary school characterised by intercultural contexts. Evidences collected by desk analysis confirmed that introduction of education *through* art in the classroom involves children into concrete, innovative and entertaining educational paths so as to facilitate their integration into the school and oversee cultural obstacles.

Having defined the problem, namely the relationship between art and inclusion in educational contexts, considering the objective of an Erasmus Plus KA3

(investigating a phenomenon and producing evidence for policies), the objects and levels of analysis of the research to be kept simultaneously present, were necessarily multiples, from the micro level (the classroom in its different components) to the meso-level (the context conditions), to the macro level (the educational policies and systems).

The simultaneous attention for different objects and different fields did not involve the same level of analysis in the planning of research design: some ones have been the primary object of problematization and research, others have been considered as a second plan or research background. The following reference fields have been identified as priorities:

- Educational theories, related to the meaning of inclusion and art
- Educational policies and educational systems in different countries as conditions of institutional and regulatory sustainability
- Local education systems
- Educational institutions in which piloting was carried out
- Professional skills of operators (artists),
- Targets (artists and students)
- Educational actions (methods, techniques, settings, ...) with the related outcomes in terms of competences for the impact and transformation.

From a pedagogical point of view, assuming the initial hypothesis that arts improve social and civic competences as well as cultural awareness and expression, the learning objectives – competences – of education through art and the educational conditions to foster them, become the core focus of research and the base to define the elements for an innovative methodological approach to art-based education.

The plurality of evidences gathered during project implementation indicates that education through art contributes to improving the intercultural competences of students, teachers and artists and to build inclusive learning environments (Dumont et al., 2010), in a circular and recurrent synergy.

In this context, major goals in this article are to:

- Present methods and main research axes
- Analyse principal results
- Identify elements that future researches should address.

2. Methods of research

META adopts a multi-method and mixed-methods approach (Byrne, Humble, 2007, Creswell, 2009, 2003; Johnson, Christensen, 2014; Matsaganis, 2016), in terms of object and context of research: desk review, analytical-comparative methods (case studies), methods based on data matrices (surveys, questionnaires) and interpretative research methods (interviews, focus groups, experiential observation) (Figure 1). The use of this approach characterizes the structure and the program of the research process in order to capture the complexity of the educational field, object of investigation (Creswell, Plano, 2011; Phillips, 2009).

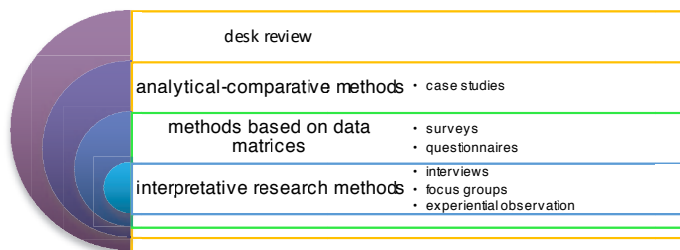


Figure 1- META Multi and mixed method approach.

Multi-method research designs are recognised as an advantage, especially when investigating complex phenomena that unfold at multiple levels of analysis and testing theories that account for such phenomena. Mixed-methods studies highlight also a second opportunity (Matsaganis, 2016) and the debate on mixed-methods approach (Creswell, Klassen, Plano Clark, & Smith, 2003, p. 4) stresses some aspect considered consistent with META research design based on holistic and transformative approaches:

- Focus on research questions that “call for real-life contextual understandings, multilevel perspectives, and cultural influences”;
- Opportunity of “rigorous quantitative research assessing the magnitudes and frequency of constructs” and “rigorous qualitative research that focuses on the meaning and understanding of constructs”;
- Multiple methods combination (e.g., intervention trials and in-depth interviews) building on the strengths of both;
- Framework of research investigation “within philosophical and theoretical positions”.

A transformative approach to mixing methods contemplates the notion that reality is socially constructed (Matsaganis, 2016) and that “all knowledge reflects the power and social relationships within society, and that an important purpose of knowledge construction is to help people improve society” (Mertens, 2003, p. 139). In this sense, a transformative approach is open to the use of any method—qualitative or quantitative—as long as the methods chosen help researchers to achieve functioning results to change and to benefit populations affected by disparities (Matsaganis, 2016, p. 1335). Another consistent point to consider for META research design is that mixed-methods based studies from inside the scientific community is amplified by a push from the outside, from a range of public, private, and non-profit organizations that are looking for research that can inform policy (Brannen, 2005).

In this framework research activities of META have been developed in three main integrated axes.

- a *Collection and analysis of case studies on education through arts for inclusion of children belonging to minority groups in Europe and beyond.*

Consistent with evidence based education (Vivanet, 2013; Vivanet, Calvani, 2014) and grounded theory (Gibbs, 2008) approaches, the first step was the review of academic literature, previous EU funded projects, EU and national legislation and

policies as well as other consistent practices. The 40 case studies selected through a comparative analysis have been the base to develop META pedagogical approach and a META competence framework. Criteria and indicators have been adopted to build research tools for the other research phases.

Specific inputs have been also collected through Stakeholders' Round Tables (a specific action expected from the Project²) involving relevant stakeholders as policy makers, activist, experts, members of minorities and migrant communities, representatives of national and international institutions. The process guaranteed different perspectives of interpretation of the problem at stake (inclusion) and hypothesis of answer (art-based education) and also consistency with participatory dimension referenced by a transformative and holistic approach. The output has been a data matrix to define criteria and indicators as base to construct tools for collection and comparison of practices. A second, and consequent step was a questionnaire constructed to implement a survey to collect the information according to identified indicators.

- b *Training teachers and artists and piloting in classrooms on education through arts for inclusion of minority groups in order to build capacities for an inclusive learning environment.*

A second phase of research was to adapt and apply META pedagogical approach and a META competence framework as educational tools and procedures for training of trainers (with a specific focus on artists) and for piloting in primary schools.

In this phase, META Piloting and META Training involved:

- 6 schools in four European countries
- 83 primary school students in Berlin (73 non-German)
- 287 primary school students in Madrid (103 non-Spanish)
- 60 primary school students in Liege (51 non-Belgian)
- 87 primary school students in Florence (23 non-Italian)
- 62 Teachers
- 6 Head masters
- 35 Artists.

- c *Evaluation as cross action-research to accompany implementation of project, to monitor and to assess effectiveness, sustainability and transferability of outcomes.*

Effectiveness and potentialities of META methodology have been under systematic monitoring through META evaluation design and assessment toolkit (Galeotti, 2016) built in the framework of Theory of Change (Cathy 2011; Vogel, 2012;

- 2 Stakeholder's roundtables are a specific action of META finalized to advocate for the inclusion of minorities groups and migrants. Four events took place during the Project. Each roundtable brought together from fifteen and twenty key stakeholders in the META project. The participants included representatives of minorities, educational experts and practitioners from the public and private sectors, civil society organizations, and local authorities. These sessions were intended to be used as the basis for these local stakeholders, as well as the challenges in implementing education. They also provided an opportunity to share good practices and to deep some questions. in terms of research these events represented a form of focus group and they offer the opportunity to gather many elements from different points of view.

Clark, Anderson, 2006), where plan, action and reflection go hand by hand. The scope was taking into account the causal chain linking resources to tasks, activities to the achievements (output), achievements (outcomes) to change (impact). Along this line, evaluation is the result of processes involving researchers and stakeholders, with the aim to obtaining their feedback and evaluation on outcomes and to assuring their full involvement as essential success factor (Anderson, 2005) and, in parallel, accompany the evaluation-research process in a consistent way (Del Gobbo, 2014).

The evaluation methodological design included:

- Case study analysis;
- Context analysis: data collection from stakeholders' round tables and data on schools and classes involved in piloting;
- Training needs analysis of artists and teachers focusing on activities design and implementation, based on META competence framework and relative methodology (planning design and sessions records templates for piloting; entry and exit questionnaires for Training for the Trainers).
- Participatory and critical analysis of design, implementation and effectiveness of activities based on education through art (initial and final focus group with artists and teachers).
- Detection of change in levels of inclusion in the classes (entry and exit questionnaires for students).

The table below (Figure 2) shows the research tools and type of data collected.

Research tools for evaluation of META piloting and Trainings	Type of data collected	N. collected	N. used for the analysis
Questionnaire for case studies	Quantitative-qualitative	40	40
Sheet for data collection (context of piloting)	Quantitative-qualitative	6	6
Template and sessions records	Qualitative	12	12
Entry questionnaire for META Training of Trainers	Qualitative	11	11
Exit questionnaire for META Training of Trainers	Qualitative	11	11
Incoming questionnaire for students	Quantitative	483	339
Outgoing questionnaire for students	Quantitative	477	333
Initial focus group with teachers and artists	Qualitative	4	4
Final focus group with teachers and artists	Qualitative	4	4
Interviews	Qualitative	8	8

Figure 2 - Tools for evaluation META piloting and trainings³

3 Relative to the total number of questionnaires for pupils collected, analysis took 339 questionnaires in incoming phase (out of a total of 483) and 333 questionnaires in outgoing phase (out of a total of 477). For standardizing the data collected based on a fair number of questionnaires per country in which piloting was carried out, the questionnaires of some classes of CEIP Miguel De Unamuno School of Madrid were selected on the basis of presences of foreign children and respondents age.

Evaluation action gave the opportunity to define if and which factors, identified through the first phase of research and formalized in methodology, make possible and effective an educational device for inclusion. In the complex frame of analysis, implementation of META methodologies in training and piloting has been considered as an expression of a “causal package” in combination with other ‘helping or disturbing factors’ - such as target populations’ behaviour and interests, context programs and policies, institutional capacities, cultural factors or socio-economic trends, just to mention a few. Multi and mixed methods led to more sensitive analysis of the different components.

As above underlined, META evaluation processes had a participative focus with the aim to obtaining not only stakeholders’ feedback on the activities, but also their direct involvement in the collection and analysis of data. Their full involvement (teachers, students, artist, parents, head masters, referents of minority groups, policy-makers, etc.) at different levels of school system (from policies to actions) was an essential success factor: they are the protagonists and their contribution has been necessary to switch from a theoretical to an operative methodology, creating conditions to impact.

Participatory evaluation focus more on knowledge generated and constructed (Stame, 2016, 1998) through lived experience and following a holistic approach that take into account the diverse perspectives, values and interpretations of participants and evaluation professionals. For increasing the rigour of this method, META research used data detection format and reporting processes.

Quantitative data of questionnaires were analysed via SPSS Software.

Analysis and management of qualitative data collected by focus groups, interviews texts and project documents have made use of “content analysis”, a process applied for encoding qualitative information, which can be thought of as a bridge between the language of qualitative research and that of quantitative research (Boyatzis, 1998). This procedure consisted of the analytical segmentation of content into categories and conceptual areas through “units of meaning” useful to explain a phenomenon (Gläser, Laudel 2013). In this case, the analysis and systematisation of the units or core meaning are the result of triangulation and of classification procedures of quantitative and qualitative data. Domains and categories for this analysis were defined through desk analysis, collection and comparison of art-based education practices, advocacy round table. During the work, these same categories have been confirmed or reviewed thanks to the identification of the relationships among them.

3. Principal results

META Case Studies Report showed (META, 2015) that against a not so strong theoretical reflection on relation between art and intercultural inclusion, there is a richness and diffusion of projects designed all over Europe to foster innovative pedagogical models involving all types of arts, especially in pre-primary and primary schools. The case study (40 selected projects) thanks to a rigorous collection research flow⁴, confirmed on seven principal dimension, assured the holis-

4 Starting from desk analysis (scientific literature, political documents and previous projects), a grid with quantitative and qualitative indicators has been developed and discussed within the partnership. Based on this grid, a questionnaire was constructed to select and to collect the information

tic vision and demonstrated to offer the opportunity of analytical/theoretical generalizability crossing data: results confirmed and enriched the first step of research aimed at the construction of a theoretical-methodological framework, presenting interesting levels of compatibility with the knowledge acquired through the analysis of scientific literature, strategic/politic documents and stakeholder opinions detected by Stakeholders' Round Tables (Figure 3).

Dimensions	Key Criteria/Indicators
1. Normative and institutional dimension	Normative and institutional sustainability, continuity, systematization, consolidation, integration, transferability, consistency with national/international guidelines or indications, presence of evaluation tools, duration, scalability/replicability, dissemination in other schools/network of schools, consistency/ integration with curriculum, consistency/ integration with school programs, networking (partnership projects).
2. Endogenous dimension	Integration, relevancy, enhancement of territorial heritage, enhancement of the forms of arts of minorities, intra-group cultural transformations
3. Professional dimension	Specialization, differentiation, inter-professionalism, teachers, mediators, artists, experts, teamwork (teachers), teamwork (teachers/operators) and specific training activities.
4. Methodological dimension	Theoretical framework, educational integration, planning (objectives, contents, methods, techniques and evaluation) integration wiring disciplinary curriculum, relationship between non-formal and formal education (workshops), involvement of families and communities, learning assessment/evaluation.
5. Individual dimension	Acquisition of competences, development and promotion of identity and personality and social competences, the acquisition of creative, cultural and artistic skills and competences, social competences as team cooperation, sensitive body perception and awareness to be in training, experience of self-effectiveness and competence are important to consider.
6. Economic dimension	Financial sustainability, type of financing, systematic funding, channels / forms of financing, range.
7. Impact dimension	Effectiveness/efficacy, transformation/change, relevance, learning results achieved (measurable), results in term of change, regional / national / international dissemination.

Figure 3 - Matrix of dimensions/criteria and indicators⁵

On the other hands, crossing data from analytical-comparative methods (case studies) and participatory research processes (advocacy round tables, focus groups with teachers and artists) gave the possibility to identify different needs to deal with and some relevant elements to consider for the effectiveness of education through art.

The table below (Figure 4) shows the outcomes of these research activities.

according to agreed indicators. In a pre-survey the questionnaire has been tested and other elements has been collected for finalize final survey questionnaire to derive the final cases.

5 See Deliverables of META Project: 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3; 2.1, 2.2; 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3. Available at: <https://www.meta-project.eu/en/> (30.11.2018).

Stakeholders	Artists	Children
<p>School system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of special support in education for non-native speakers - presence of discriminatory practices such as long-term segregation or 'special' schooling - feeling of rootlessness and low self-esteem - low expectations from education - low parental involvement in schools and participation of local communities - low access to qualified cultural programmes - low awareness on value of cultural differences - low capabilities for identifying specific needs of target groups; - low presence of cultural mediators and representatives of migrant communities - low cooperation and coordination among different agents - low flexibility and heavy workload for teachers and school headmasters - scarce attention to training needs of teachers in the field of emotional management - low intercultural openness/awareness of teachers and students - low interaction between different schools - low positive attitudes towards migration, 'foreignness' and minorities - low attention to cultural education as a tool for school inclusive environment - low systematic and mainstreamed approach to art based learning - inadequate and not organic finance and structural resources - Fragmentariness of the interventions and low integration to the curriculum. 	<p>Pedagogical design, implementation and evaluation of inclusive environments for learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clear identification of objectives in terms of learning outcome to be achieved - educational planning oriented to the development of soft skills for inclusion - systematic assessment of art-based learning activities to verify effectiveness - preliminary planning and structuring of activities - upstream definition of consistent assessment methods and tools - integration with curricula and ordinary teaching - effective team working of artists and teachers beyond sharing information - poor formalization and documentation of the processes - lack of research and evaluation activities for a more effective impact assessment achieved by the practices <p>Educational planning linked to real needs to face social inclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - connection with stakeholders - connections with families and their communities - focusing on children and not on content and activities - looking to impact on life skills for wellbeing in society <p>Professional needs for improvement of art-based learning in the school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - more experience and positive contamination among artists with different backgrounds - critical reflection on methodology and structure of educational activities - detecting specific need of each classroom to identify learning outcomes and to choose consistent activities - connection with the curriculum topic as main challenge - centrality of competence based learning - openness and awareness on intercultural issues as key skills of professional. 	<p>The learning needs of children by the point of view of teachers and artists.</p> <p>Personal level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to improve communication skills using different channels and expressive forms and control of oral expression - to empower self-esteem, trust and emotional intelligence; - to build awareness of oneself and others - to develop a positive relationship with one's own body, finding contact with others' bodies through different forms of body expression - to trust and work with one's own emotional sensitivity - to be creative and capable to find personal solutions, trying to overcome stereotyped solution. <p>Relational level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to develop respect and capacity of listening to others - to develop sense of welcome as responsibility - to improve the ability to recognise and to relate with different cultures - to collaborate to achieve common goals and to create shared products or projects in intercultural contexts. <p>Classroom level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to raise motivation; - to contribute to inclusion/inclusiveness - to strengthen the class group, grouping - to promote cultural discovery and integration between different cultures of origin; - to support students with special cultural needs - to prevent any form of exclusion in the classroom of migrant children and of any "different" child - to promote accountability.

Figure 4 - Needs/focus from different targets: stakeholders, artists and children
 (Sources: Erio, 2017; Del Gobbo, Galeotti, 2018).

Focusing on children, the interpretative and heuristic phase of the data management, suggested that implementation of education through art can contribute to improve and strengthen:

- Communication skills using different channels and expressive forms (oral expression, body expression, etc.)
- Creativity, understood as the ability to find personal solutions to the proposed stimuli, trying to overcome the stereotyped solution and by imitation
- Self-esteem, trust and emotional intelligence, perception, awareness of oneself and others.

On the basis of these results, META developed a competence framework, consistent with UE key competences, and innovative methodology guideline to enhance potential benefits of art in intercultural education (Margiotta, 2015; Margiotta, Del Gobbo, 2017) to adopt for training of trainers and for educational activities with children. META tested methodology and competence framework during the piloting phase, involving 11 artists, 517 children from 6 to 11 years old and of which 250 foreign students, 6 schools in Belgium, Germany, Italy and Spain.

The quantitative and qualitative evaluation of learning outcomes of artists and of students, involved in training of trainers and in piloting, presents interesting results. It is an evaluation and it is not a true assessment: considering the real time for piloting and the complexity of the levels of the experimentations, evaluation is aimed at providing some evidences on the relevance and effectiveness of qualitative elements emerged during the first phase of research, and operationalized with methodology. The purpose has been of judging them and of determining their “value,” by comparison to data detected before and after the educational action.

In this framework, all instruments are aimed to detect opinions and attitudes and the evaluation technique used for questionnaires was based mainly on the Likert scale (1-5 in the questionnaires for artists and 1-3 in the questionnaires for children⁶).

Data collected with questionnaires for artists before and after Meta Training of Trainers express their perception on the main learning outcomes achieved.

6 The standard Likert scale presents from 5 to 7 levels and certainly allows an adequate distribution of the results, and is theoretically more correct. However, being even very small children, in addition to opting for a graphic form using smiles, a scale was defined with a very limited range of levels, only three. This choice has the advantage of a better clarity of interpretation by the child and has nevertheless allowed a sufficient detail of the results and an adequate accuracy of the answers. The questionnaire was introduced and illustrated by the class teachers.

Artists and teachers' skills	Entry	Exit
To recognise diversity as opportunity	3,7	4,4
To know and use different form of communication of themselves	3,8	4,2
To work in harmony with others	3,8	4,4
To recognize richness in others	3,7	4,6
To feel part of a group	4,0	4,5
To be responsible of a common work	4,0	4,6
To listen to each other	4,0	4,6
To recognize own emotions and their effect	3,8	4,5
To collaborate for reaching a common objective/work in intercultural context	3,9	4,5
To integrate life stories into a coherent whole	4,0	4,3
To be free to express own emotion and thinking	3,8	4,2
To deal with problem solving in collaboration with others	3,7	4,5
To imagine positive solutions for intercultural conflicts	4,2	4,2
To include forms of art belonging to minority group	3,7	4,3
To give meaning and value to one's life and life story	4,5	4,5
To collaborate with school staff, family, stakeholders	4,4	4,1

Figure 5 – Artists' perception on their main learning outcomes achieved

Moreover, the data collected with focus groups and interviews with artists, during and at the end of the pilotage, demonstrated the increase in artists' attention for some main qualifying elements such as:

- To foster active involvement in the classroom of all children, no matter their background or learning difficulties
- To enhance through art open-mindedness and problem-solving competences in children;
- To use arts as opportunities of free cultural expression
- To assume holistic approach to learning objectives (go beyond disciplines) and to look for integration with curricula and ordinary teaching
- To be aware of cultural background of children
- To design actions oriented to the development of soft skills for inclusion (objectives-oriented and not content oriented) focusing on children learning
- To develop team work and collaboration with school staff, for planning, implementing and evaluating activities of education through art
- To reinforce networking skills for connection with stakeholders, cultural and immigrant organizations, families and communities.

Data collected with questionnaires for children gave the possibility to detect some results in terms of learning outcomes before and after META Piloting, on the basis of children' perception. Although the questionnaire is a self-assessment tool, it allowed to include students' point of view in the analysis and evaluation of the implementation of the META methodology.

Data demonstrate an improvement of three principal META competences:

- Creativity: Being creative and seeing several ways to overcome problems and move forward
- Leadership: Making choices and taking actions in accordance with own values
- Self-awareness & Self-Empowerment: Give meaning and value to one's life.

It is interesting that these results⁷ are more significant in schools where art-based education was applied for the first time.

4. Discussant

A research of Duhram University on impact of arts education on the cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes of school-aged children identifies the most promising ways in which learning through the arts can support disadvantaged young people to achieve key educational outcomes (Beng Huat, Kokotsaki, 2016). Although the study found no defined evidences that demonstrated a causal relationship between arts education and young people's academic achievements and other wider outcomes, it is to note that successful arts activities often involve professional artists. For successful implementation, professional training of teachers and collaboration with artist seems to be a must, so the effectively integration of arts (like drama, visual arts or music) in the curriculum. There is some suggestion that the mechanisms or factors that contribute to the learning processes in most arts education are related to elements of enjoyment and engagement (Beng Huat, Kokotsaki, 2016; DeMoss, Morris, 2012). META also confirmed these points.

As pointed out above, research and evaluation in META proceeded in parallel: the overall process did not use an experimental or quasi-experimental approach, rather a participative, collaborative and transformative approach carried out with different methods. The full involvement of the actors appeared an essential success factor: they are protagonists and their contribution appears necessary to create connection and to enhance integration from a theoretical to an operative methodology to obtain change and to remove obstacles to real intercultural inclusion. All relevant actors of the project (stakeholders) including project partners and external subjects were enabled to detect, diagnose and plan according to their mission and role.

The participatory research and evaluation pattern made it possible to promote a hermeneutic effort shared by all the actors involved in the project that could be supported, precisely through the same actions, strengthening both the social dimension (empowerment) and the cognitive (learning) level.

Art demonstrated to be a powerful and effective tool if used with intentionality and awareness, paying attention to some conditions.

The research evidences, carried out by META, present elements of reflection on education through art:

- Art as a tool for promotion of cultural diversity, accessibility and equality of opportunities and the counteraction of discrimination and exclusion
- Art as an educative instrument for strengthening personality development and for enhancing key competences for lifelong learning

7 For student from 8 to 11 years old, the questionnaire previewed some open questions that confirm what emerged from the quantitative data.

- Art as a tool for holistic learning processes among formal, no formal and informal education
- Art needs qualification (preparation and training) of teachers and artists to really bring changes in school life
- Art as method to face intra-cultural dynamics and intergenerational relations in process of definition of open identities.

A main innovation seems the possibility to go beyond “learning art” and to operationalize *learning through art as a methodology and to use art-based education for introduction changing in curriculum and school organization*. Art becomes a tool in the discussion of equality and integration/inclusion of minorities groups by promoting individual and group competences, diversity-approaches and bringing about changes in organisations and educational systems as a whole.

The main outcomes are *enabling-factors for building inclusive learning environment*, where children actively participate and express themselves independently of their cultural backgrounds. These key factors suggest a transition from schooling to open learning environments.

Like the OECD’s proposal (CERI/OECD, 2013, 2015, 2017), even META rethinks school: design, implementation and connection of learning environments, to look beyond the conventional categories of education organization and to define the education system in terms of learning processes. This means that the school system becomes a learning ecosystem, where there is balance between informal, no formal and formal learning, and partnerships share learning leadership. Considering the OECD/CERI’s framework (2017), what differentiates the two proposals is the question at stake: in one case the attention is to innovation processes, in the other one to inclusion processes. Therefore, we can describe META findings as proposal for an Inclusive Learning Ecosystem, capable to conjugate cultural and art resources, arts-based teaching and learning sessions, network communities and initiatives with cultural, arts, migrant and minority organizations. This level is largely weak in formal system, but it is critical for growing and sustaining inclusive learning.

Conclusion

Main research results demonstrate the possibility to develop *inclusive learning environment* based on education through art, fostering cultural awareness and expression (Margiotta, 2015). Crossing data collected through various activities and plurality of methods, some recommendations for teachers, educators and school system are already available:

- Educational experts and practitioners should recognize that *all children have talents and potentialities* that can be elicited valuing their cultural background; the knowledge of the cultural background (also through history and life path) of each child allows to focus on his/her own characteristics in constant and open dialogue with others.
- Each educational institution should develop a *diversity management plan* as part of an organizational change in order to foster inclusion and find the most suitable methodological devices, among these in particular art and cultural heritage-based didactic.
- Teachers and experts should *explore and assess more potentialities of art-*

- based education* for inclusion of children with special educational needs, different abilities and coming from different cultural backgrounds.
- Teachers should be trained during initial, early career induction and in-service training on innovative methodologies based on art and cultural heritage-based education.
 - Teachers should be supported in the *use of diverse and innovative assessment methods* to detect and address students' needs and learning styles, according to their cultural background.
 - School system should *mainstream art-based education to develop and strengthen transversal competences* and soft skills of children, as well as of teachers'.
 - School system should increase *involvement of parents and extended families through valuing their cultural heritage* and their own forms of arts and cultural expression.
 - *Evidence based research and impact evaluation* needs to be strengthened and financed.

By restoring confidence in the worth of own cultural background, META highlights that art education may be a way to shift the risks of a choice between two identities, that of the impoverished minority and that of the mainstream society. That appears possible when education systems are equitable and context of learning are inclusive (Deardorff, 2013, 2009), when they support students to reach their learning potential without either formally or informally pre-setting barriers or lowering expectations. In other words, art allows individuals to take full advantage of education and training irrespective of their background (Faubert, 2012; OECD 2012). Art education could represent an innovative field for intercultural dialogue if school will be supported to give value to arts not as “another content to learn” but as a method to construct competences for life.

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