REciprocal maieutic Approach pathways enhancing Critical Thinking

Project n. 621522-EPP-1-2020-1-IT-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN

REACT GUIDELINES FOR MAIEUTIC WORKSHOP COORDINATION

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Dissemination Level	PU
Due Date of Deliverable	September 2022
Actual Submission Date	October 2022 (working version) April 2023 (final version)
Work Package, Task	WP3
Type	Electronic version published online
Version	0.3

History

Version	Date	Reason	Revised by
0.0	June 2022	First draft	FVM
0.1	August 2022	Peer review	FUSJ, RDE, CSC, CEI
0.2	October 2022	Working version for development of the train the trainers' sessions in implementing countries	FVM
0.3	April 2023	Final version embedding feedback after the train the trainers' sessions	FVM

Table of Contents

1. CHAPTER 1 – THE REACT PROJECT 4

1.1. Key dimensions of REACT project 4

1.2. How REACT fosters inclusive education 8

1.3. REACT to enhance Critical Thinking skills acquisition: a community process 11

1.4. The RMA as a Dialogic Learning Methodology to enhance critical thinking skills acquisition: the REACT approach 17

1.5. The innovative dimensions of the REACT Reciprocal Maieutic Approach 22

2. Chapter 2 – The pathway of REACT Reciprocal Maieutic Laboratories 26

2.1. Suggestions for Facilitating the Maieutic Dialogue 26

2.2. The role of the Facilitator 28

2.3. The setting of the Learning Environment 29

2.4. The maieutic Workshop Santa Margherita di Belice House of Health (youngsters aged 14 y.o.) 31

3. APPENDIX 44

3.1. Part 1 – The methodology for the development of the REACT workshops 44

3.2. Part 2 – Indications for the Teachers' training & piloting in classroom 60

1. CHAPTER 1 – THE REACT PROJECT

1.1. Key dimensions of REACT project

REACT project intends to develop and implement an innovative methodology for the **enhancement of critical thinking (CT) skills acquisition**, aimed at fostering **inclusive education and the common values** of tolerance and acceptance of diversity as an enriching value. The REACT methodology adopts a community-based approach, involving all the key actors of the Educating Communities: **teachers and educators, pupils and students, parents and families also institutional representatives and policy makers.** The overall objective of the project is **to prevent**, through the acquisition and continuous application of critical thinking skills, **marginalisation and exclusion phenomena that could lead to extremists' beliefs and/ or violent behaviours** inside and outside the school environment.

The approach starts from the drawing and development in classroom of a workshops with students based on the **Reciprocal Maieutic Approach (RMA) -** developed in early '50 of the last century by **Danilo Dolci**, initially applied to community education and later extended to include children's education – with the ambitious aim to unveil the implicit processes that leads to stereotypes creation and spreading, opening up to intolerant attitudes and behaviours that could lead also to violence and extremism. The Dolci's maieutic can be defined as a dialectic method of inquiry that aims to **stimulate the growth of consciousness** by guiding the participant to listen to different points of view and **focus on any contradictions that emerge**. So, the core principle of Dolci's pedagogy is that the first phase is divergence of opinion, and the second phase is the **coming together of ideas without compromising points of difference**. The RMA is enriched with some peculiar aspects of the **Montessori's experience**: even if Montessori does not isolate critical thinking as an explicit outcome, her model is congruent with key elements that recent research identifies as supporting the development of critical thinking and creative potential, such as **flexible use of space and time**, **respectful relationships between children and adults**, a **culture of intrinsic motivation**, a **balance of independent work and opportunities to collaborate**, **acceptance of non-conformity** and a **balance of**

freedom and structure[1]. Critical thinking is a particular a mental habit and to support the creation of the related skills requires students to think about their thinking and about improving the process, it requires students to use higher-order thinking skills – not memorize data or accept what they read or are told without critically thinking about it.

REACT project's defines critical thinking as a product of continuous education, training, and practice that should possibly involve not only students but also teachers and school staff, as well as parents, families and the overall local Educating Community. Innovative pedagogies should be used, even because the assessment of students in such analytical skills and critical thinking, in the adoption of certain common values and attitudes (such a sense of tolerance) and the active participation and engagement of students in school and community life is a complex task.

As previously mentioned, due to the community-based approach applied, REACT project's activities address **multiple target groups**. Directly, the project impacts **students aged 10-16 years old** that will benefit from the workshop activities in 4 EU countries, namely Italy, Greece. Bulgaria and Spain. During this period of pre-adolescent and adolescent life, research of autonomy often manifest itself as *a priori* opposition and the prevailing emotions in youngsters, not yet able to adequately process their emotional states, are the poles of enthusiasm and suffering. **This polarization makes young people more attracted to extreme ideologies and positions**. Moreover, the inclusion in the mainstream of education provision does not guarantee that the students individual needs will be met. Students should be placed at the centre of the framework, and this implies that **students are given responsibility for their own learning**. Applying the RMA as a cooperative and dialogic learning tool, combined with a proper attention to learning environment rebuild and application of observation principle will engage students with their learning, contributing to the definition of their needs (not only the educative ones) and then to the planning and organisation of proper responses.

[1] Vincent-Lancrin, S. et al., Fostering Students' Creativity and Critical Thinking: What it Means in School, Educational research and Innovation, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019, available here: https://doi.org/10.1787/62212c37-en

Teachers of lower and upper middle schools are impacted by the project's activities as well. The role of education in preventing extremisms has only recently gained global acceptance[2]. Recent research and EU projects' results demonstrate that **teachers do not have an adequate training offer available on the issues of development of critical thinking in terms of preventing extremism**. Most of the studies reported critical thinking aims that were limited to the cognitive level, underrating the fact that critical thinking is only developed with considerable practice and effort. REACT will give teachers practical tool to better understand inner needs of students in this peculiar growth phase through the development of critical thinking skills to apply also outside the RM workshops in all the other educative contexts such as lessons. In addition, while teachers can prepare and pre-plan lessons and discussions as part of the day lesson on sensitive topics, if trained to do so, there are other entry points for discussion that may occur on the spur of the moment. REACT RM workshops will be considered as "teachable moments", opportunities that should be seized to explain concepts difficult to understand and where teachers can learn (practically, being participants, experiencing themselves) how prepared, both personally and professionally they should be to not miss these opportunities in other educative moments.

As demonstrated by previous research, **parents have training needs related to their educational role, but there is a general lack of opportunities** to share them with professionals and/or other parents and become fully aware of them. The proposals addressed to them have a low participation, because quite often are organized without an active involvement methodology. This leads parents, when they need help in resolving conflicts with their children, to contact other subjects belonging to their "intimate" network. Moreover, it is precisely in the transition phase between childhood and adolescence that parents feel they need help most. Parents also play a key part in **whole school approach** and **community schooling**, and these have been shown to be effective tools in promoting social inclusion, through shaping students' attitudes towards other cultural groups. Parental involvement is linked not only to academic results but also to children's social and emotional development.

[2] UNESCO, 2016

REACT will involve parents in the core phase of the activities, making them responsible and key actors in the development of critical thinking skills. The competences acquired during the RM workshops will be key in building a better conflict-resolution strategy in familiar and educative contexts.

To achieve the above-mentioned objectives, it is not sufficient to refer merely to a single technical-professional group of teachers, educators of trainers, nor it is enough to focus the activities uniquely on students but must instead **extend responsibility to all categories without exception**: parents, instructors, facilitators, students, policy makers. The reason must be sought in the construct of critical thinking skills themselves, which emphasises the **active role of the individual to mobilise and orchestrate their resources by acting on material and social reality**; therefore, in order to be appropriately monitored and assessed, it is necessary to **trigger and sustain a community-appraisal circular process**, which should be addressed through consultation and participation with the entire **Educating Community**. It is worth to be mentioned that in our project, we take into account the difference between "society" and "community": the first term in fact refer to a group of subjects not united by a single goal, but committed to the pursuit of individual goals; the second refers to a **social grouping marked by a profound unity of purpose, a unity that goes beyond the interests of the individual**[3].Over the years, there has been a succession of different categorisation, varying in accordance with the type and degree of internal regulation and continuity of relationships. Here, a particularly interesting category is the "**community of practice**"[4], i.e. groups that form around shared work interests, nurtured by contributions and mutual commitment, based on an awareness of taking part in a "common undertaking"[5]. As evidenced

[3] The concept of "community" was reprised by various scholars, e.g. Durkeim, 1893; Parsons, 1951; Weber, 1922; Cohen 1985; Fernback & Thompson, 1995; Pravettoni, 2002; Mascio, 2008.

[4] Lave & Wenger, 1991.

[5] Milani, M., Educatintg Communities for the Development of Intercultural Competence, in Journal of Educational Cultural and Psychological Studies (ECPS Journal), June 2018, doi: http://dx.doi.org./10.7358/ecps-2018-017-mila

by Capogna[6] "**an educating community is possible only if based on the recognition and valorisation of authentic relationships where mutual listening, personal responsibility and solidarity prevails**. The educating community invokes, alongside the institutional mission of promoting learning, the much more important mission of *teaching to be* and the pursuit of social justice – by no means easy goal in the social complexity that characterises what we have seen this millennium, and to which no one should feel indifferent".

1.2. How REACT fosters inclusive education

To create and maintain a cohesive EU society, both an inclusive and high-quality education/training offer, and the EU dimension of teaching are paramount. EU wants to promote a **sense of belonging** – conveying common values, practicing inclusive education, and teaching about EU to help increase a sense of belonging to one's school, country, as well as the EU family[7]. **Inclusive education is an effective means to avoid discrimination and exclusion, promote tolerance and tear down stereotypes**. In its contribution to the Gothenburg Social Summit, the European Commission set out its vision for a **European Education Area (EEA)**[8] stressing the value of a good quality, inclusive education from childhood in laying the groundwork for social cohesion, social mobility and equitable society. Education is the foundation for personal fulfilment, employability and active, responsible citizenship. The EEA is now set out, ensuring an **access to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning** that is considered a right for all EU citizens, as enshrined within

[6] Capogna, S., Verso una comunità educante. Q-Times Webmagazine, 6(3), 2014, available here: www.qtimes.it

[7] Council Recommendation on Common Values, inclusive education, and the European Dimension of Teaching, 2018, available here: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32018H0607%2801%29

[8] Flash Euro barometer 466, 2018, available here: https://data.europa.eu/data/datasets/s2186_466_eng?locale=en

the European Pillar of Social Rights[9]. The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted that it is essential to **prevent structural barriers to learning** and skills development from impacting citizens' employment prospects and participation in society. Therefore, the European Commission and EU Member States are working to achieve their collective vision for an EEA, in synergy with the European Skills Agenda[10] and the European Research Area to harness knowledge, making it the foundation of Europe's recovery and prosperity. One of the focus areas for collaboration within the EEA is **improvement the quality and equity in education and training**: a top priority of the EU Commission is to boost education outcomes, inclusiveness and the efficiency of national spending on education and training, as well as proposition to maintain higher education inclusive and all the involved institutions well connected to their communities. With this regard, REACT project is aligned with the recent priorities defined by the EU, focusing a lot on **connection of all the actors involved** in the psycho-physical development of children and youngsters thanks to the synergies activated within the **local Educating Communities**.

The attention paid by EU institution to inclusive education is demonstrated also by the proposal for a new Erasmus + programme that doubling the programme's budget, including also an inclusion framework and national inclusion strategies. Ensuring that everyone has an equal and personalized opportunity for educational progress is still a major challenge for all educational systems in Europe. As follow up to the Paris Declaration, the EU Commission examined the existing international evidence regarding what kinds of educational interventions contribute towards promoting key dimension of inclusive policies, namely "tolerance and respect for diversity". The **Erasmus + program in the period 2021-2027** seeks to enable the

[9] The European Education Area initiative helps European Union Member States work together to build more resilient and inclusive education and training systems. Detailed information about focus areas for collaboration and the reinforced approach to achieving the EEA are available here: https://education.ec.europa.eu/about-eea/the-eea-explained

[10] European Skills Agenda is a five-year plan to help individuals and business develop more and better skills and to put them to use. General objectives of the Agenda and details of the 12 actions are explained here: https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223&langId=en

participation of a wider range of organisations and a larger number of participants. In this regard, the program **emphasizes inclusiveness as one of the keys and most important priorities** and seeks to promote equal opportunities and access in all its activities. Organisations and the participants with fewer opportunities themselves are now at the heart of the Erasmus + objectives. To implement inclusion and diversity principles and put them into practice, a **Framework on inclusion measures**[11] as well as an **Inclusion and Diversity Strategy**[12] covering all programme fields have been developed to support an easier access to funding for a wider range of organisations, and to better reach out to more participants with fewer opportunities.

Measures that were found to be especially effective so far include, among others: whole school approaches, community schooling approaches, a strong school ethos promoting respect, interactive student-centred methods, inclusive curricula, teacher professionalization and strong community-school relationships (NESET II Report, 2016). One of the most researched methods that overcomes passive teaching-learning binary and that has been found to effectively promote inclusion in education is **cooperative learning**. There are many variations of cooperative learning, but they tend to share some fixed elements: positive interdependence, individual and group accountability, promote interaction, appropriate use of social skills and group processing. Even if some of the established benefits of cooperative learning have ben globally accepted (e.g. higher achievement scores, greater creativity, greater acceptance of differences, more inclusiveness in the classroom, prejudice reduction, more empathy), the challenges involving the implementation of cooperative learning have been less underlined, involving lack of training (by teachers), **lack of personal experience** (on the part of teachers) during their own school career and continuing professional development (CPD) pathways,

[11] Commission Implementing Decision – Framework of inclusion measures of Erasmus + and European Solidarity Corps 2021-27 available here: https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/document/commission-decision-framework-inclusion-2021-27

[12] Implementation guidelines – Erasmus + and European Solidarity Corps Inclusion and Diversity Strategy available here: https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/document/implementation-guidelines-erasmus-and-european-solidarity-corps-inclusion-and-diversity-strategy

attempts to promote cooperation in a culture of competition[13]. Within this framework, the **Reciprocal Maieutic Approach** (enriched and sustained by peculiar Montessori's principles) is completely in line with the findings about the cooperative learning and its effectiveness in promoting inclusive education, since RMA is a "**process of collective exploration that takes, as a departure point, the experience and the intuition of individuals**"[14]. RMA is a group communication strategy (Habermas, 1986)[15] that enables all the elements in the group to give their ideas and opinions, contributing through this to the development of a final common idea to make a change in the individual and collective social/political/economic/educational spheres. **Reciprocity, a peculiar nuance of cooperation**, is at the core of the entire REACT methodology, defined as a dialectic method of inquiry and a "group" self-analysis for the empowerment of school communities and individuals.

1.3. REACT to enhance Critical Thinking skills acquisition: a community process

Since the Paris Declaration in 2015[16], the EU institutions continue to encourage the development of **critical thinking skills** and to strengthen the ability of children and young people to **exercise judgment through their education and training**[17]. Critical thinking is an essential component of **citizenship education,** and most education systems tend to favour critical thinking components, including them at all or nearly all education levels. Critical thinking is a mental habit and to support the creation of the related skills requires students to think about their thinking and about improving the process, it requires students to use higher-

[13] ET 2020 Working Group on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education, 2017

[14] Dolci, 1996.

[15] Habermas, J. (1986). Teoria dell'agire comunicativo. Bologna, Il Mulino

[16] Declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education, Paris, 17 March 2015

[17] Eg. Council of the European Union, Developing medial literacy and critical thinking through education and training, 2016, available here: https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9641-2016-INIT/en/pdf .

order thinking skills – not memorize data or accept what they read or are told without critically thinking about it[18]. The European Commission declared the **2023 the European Year of Skills** to tackle the mismatch between unemployment and education and the Lifelong Learning Platform chose "Key competences for all: a lifelong learning approach to skills" as its Annual Theme for 2023[19]. The **most recent approach to critical thinking skills** considers that in life and in the workplace, **cross-functional competences are useful in a wide variety of situations** and are the right combination of skills, knowledge and attitudes that ultimately lead to more fulfilling, active citizens who can adapt to fast-paced changes. Thus said, the skills of critical thinking – together with problem-solving and digital literacy – are **relevant to every sector, field, task, era and life stage**. Critical thinking is now widely understood, at EU level but not only, **as a set of interdependent skills and dispositions** that are unquestionably needed, with slight differences, across vary professional fields[20].

Within the REACT project's framework, this set of interdependent skills and attitudes is not only considered fundamental to be acquired for **pupils,** but also for those who engage with them in formal and non-formal educational environments, such as **teachers, parents and the Educating Community** as a whole. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, when **teachers** are on the spotlight, there are some key considerations to keep into account, for example the teachers' need to: "[…] not only […] foster the critical thinking of children and adolescents, [but]

[18] Scriven & Paul, 2008; Schafersman, 1991; Templeaar, 2006.

[19] LLLP launches its annual theme 2023 – the key competences for all: a lifelong learning approach to skills. Press release available here: ttps://lllplatform.eu/news/lllp-launches-its-annual-theme-2023-key-competences-for-all-a-lifelong-learning-approach-to-skills/

[20] For a detailed review of different kind of professional fields in which practica application of critical thinking skills is welcomed and required (e.g. biomedical sciences, STEM, social sciences, humanities) please refer to D. Dumitru, J. Elken, L. Jiang, "A European Collection of the Critical Thinking Skills and Dispositions Needed in Different Professional FIelds for the 21st Century, 2018, UTAD, ISBN 978-989-704-256-0. For an in-depth about language teacher cognition about critical thinking in a context ehere English is taught as a foreign language (EFL), please refer to Li Li, Critical thinking from the ground up: teachers' conceptions and practice in EFL classrooms, March 2023, available here: https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2023.2191182

to question information they themselves regularly receive […]"[21]. Teachers are **not equipped with the skills and pedagogical knowledge**, thus an in-depth understanding of teacher cognition about critical thinking will provide a strong foundation for teacher training to prepare them to implement a thinking-based curriculum[22]. Moving from what stated at application stage, further research have been conducted by the REACT consortium' members to **identify the perimeter of teachers' cognition of critical thinking,** meant as a complex concept concerning all aspects of teachers' lives. In a recent review, Borg offers a sophisticated definition of teacher cognition, defining it as "understanding, with reference to the personal, professional, social-cultural and historical dimensions of teachers' lives, how becoming, being and developing as a teacher is shaped by (and in turn shapes) what teachers (individually and collectively) think and feel about all aspects of their work"[23]. Some consensus has been made regarding understanding of critical thinking by teachers, that **generally hold a positive attitude towards promoting critical thinking**[24]. Nevertheless, research also shows teachers demonstrate "fragmented" or deficient understanding of the concept. In terms of promoting critical thinking, research suggests several obstacles and dilemmas. The first and foremost factor concerns the **lack of subject and pedagogical knowledge about thinking skills**[25]. A second influential factor concerns training and professional development: **professional learning opportunities** are important factors in implementing critical thinking and researchers pointed out an **inadequacy in teacher education programmes**, particularly in offering student teachers opportunities to engage in systemically conceptualising and actualising critical thinking in practice. In that regard, challenges in practical work and multi-

[21] RAN Ex Post Paper, Dealing with fake news, conspiracy theories and propaganda in the classroom, 2017, available here: https://conspiracytheories.eu/_wpx/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2017-Ran_Dealing_Fake_News_Conspiracy_Theories_Classroom.pdf

[22] Zhang et al., 2020; Li, 2016

[23] Borg, S., Language teacher cognition: Perspectives and debates, 2019, in X. Gao (Ed.), available here https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58542-0_59-2

[24] Among others, Asgharheidari, F., & Tahriri, A., 2015; Zhang et al., 2020; Ketabi et al., 2012; li, 2016

[25] Zhang, L.F., & Sternberg, R. J., Thinking styles and teachers' characteristics, International Journal of Psychology, 2002, available here: https://doi.org/10.1080/00207590143000171

cultural experience might have a positive influence on fostering (student) teachers' critical thinking skills and awareness[26]. The most recent literature underlines that **social interaction and context are now perceived as the most significant aspects of teacher cognition**, therefore some researchers and experts[27] proposes to study teacher cognition by analysing moment-by-moment interaction. Within the REACT project, teachers are stimulated to appreciate **not only cognitive but also affective skills,** as critical thinking is conceptualized as making purposeful, goal-directed self-regulatory judgements that involves both. Cognitive skills are important as underlined throughout the REACT Manual, however also self-regulation is considered as an important factor in REACT methodology. The Appendix to the present document defines a set of pathways for the development of RMA laboratorial activities underlining the **adaptive nature of the critical thinking skills acquisition's process**: both students and teachers are encouraged to plan, adapt, and monitor their thoughts, emotions and behaviours during the development of the laboratories in a shared and common way. Critical thinking is important to be developed, specifically by the teacher, as well as parents. This is because teachers can train students to develop their critical thinking skills at school, while parents are at home. Both teachers and parents may create a habit of learning that makes it a custom or culture. Culture is a word meaning and symbol that is manifested in value, norm, belief, tradition, ritual, ceremony and myth of a certain group of people. Parents become a facilitator, motivator but also a director for their children in learning how to acquire such skills, besides other factors such as parents' education, environment and even logical intelligence[28]. Another aspect that would benefit of REACT activities and related impact analysis concerns the promotion of critical thinking skills acquisition in the family context, more specifically the

[26] Yuan, R., Liao, W., Wang, Z., Kong, J., & Zhang, Y., How do English-as-aforeign-language (EFL) teachers perceive and engage with critical thinking: A systematic review from 2010 to 2020. 2022, Thinking Skills and Creativity, 43, 101002, available here: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2022.101002

[27] E.g. Li, L., Social Interaction and Teacher Cognition, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2017.

[28] Ardiansyah, M., Contribution of parental education level, environment, and logical intelligence to mathematical critical thinking ability. Jurnal Pendidikan Matematika (Kudus), 3(2), 163–178, 2020, available here: https://doi.org/10.21043/jmtk.v3i2.8578

parents' role. Accepting the premise that these skills can (and must) be developed via formal education from the teacher and a proactive attitude towards learning by students, we can deduct that the **parents must also have a role in this equation**. Critical thinking often involves making certain habits, questions and thought processes explicit to oneself. Parents who are confident in their own reasoning are most likely to succeed in instilling these qualities in their children, as far as example being open to new perspectives; eager to argue rationally and dispassionately. The role of the parents in such a process is **not a mere mediation in helping with homework** and hence support the skills that are expected to be developed through the completion of such activities: parents should **be active part in the process of developing such skills**, stimulating children **deliberately** and according to the attainment of **specific learning objectives**[29]. This is important especially during the students' age range impacted by REACT project, from 10 to 16 years old: during this phase, children begin to learn and practice the rules of formal logic and further hone their critical thinking skills. Even if children are learning these skills at school, parents can help by discussing how to analyse concepts and arguments. More than this, parents can be proactively involved in learning activities, co-planning the shape of extra-curricular activities focused on critical thinking skills acquisition together with teachers and school's management and being addressed by external experts from third organisations in attending events to increase their knowledge, from a theoretical and practical point of view.

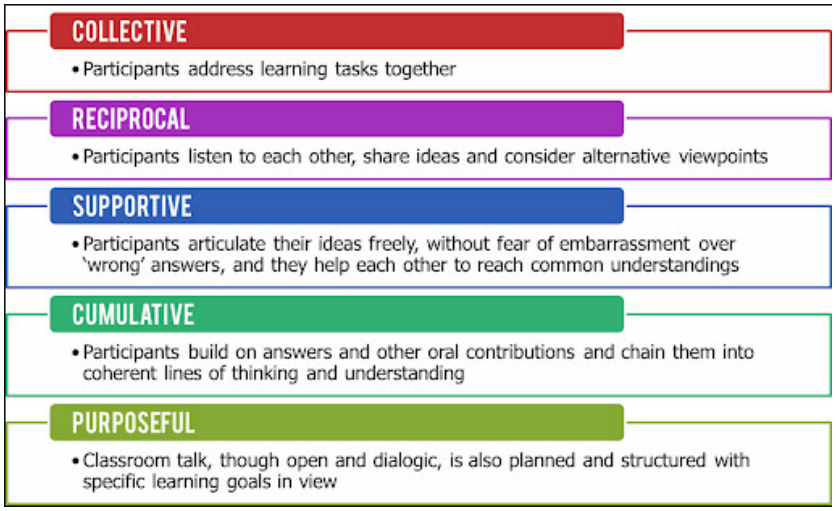
Since various actors are targeted directly by REACT actions, the **local Educating Communities** (being formalized or not) have a paramount role in transmitting and reinforcing the educative message to children and pupils, demonstrating that there is a **unity of purpose** and a high level of cooperation between these actors. Unfortunately, even if the Educating Community ideally embeds all the key educative actors that play a role in the psycho-physical development of youngsters, these structures often suffer a **lack of coordination** of the various actions undertaken. Usually, initiatives and activities are undertaken at different levels: activities

[29] da Silva Almeida, Leandro, & Helena Rodrigues Franco, Amanda. (2011). Critical thinking: Its relevance for education in a shifting society. Revista de Psicología (Lima), 29(1), 175-195. Available here: http://pepsic.bvsalud.org/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0254-92472011000100007&lng=pt&tlng=en.

organized officially by schools and educative institutions, events promoted by sportive/cultural sector organizations addressed to students and/or parents; other activities promoted by third organisation somehow linked to the network of schools are often perceived as spot interventions, unrelated to each other. By not taking the form of an articulated path, these actions often do not demonstrate a long-term impact. Implementing a comprehensive community approach, **REACT project builds a transnational and coordinated path, developed during an entire school year and involving directly all the actors of the educating community**. The contribution REACT can give to the local Educating Communities relies on the **acquisition and practising critical thinking skills by students, the improvement and updating of the teachers' professional competences, the increasing of the sense of responsibility and proactive involvement of parents as well as of the other actors of the Educating Community in a long-term perspective and with the possibility to evaluate the impacts**.

1.4. The RMA as a Dialogic Learning Methodology to enhance critical thinking skills acquisition: the REACT approach

it is widely believed that to effectively enhance critical thinking, the application of **dialogic learning techniques** is more effective than other methodologies[30]. In fact, current research in educational psychology has shown that **explaining, asking questions, arguing and using language in other forms lead people to develop critical thinking and meta-cognition**[31]. The dialogic learning, as a specific declination of cooperative learning, emphasizes the **importance of dialogue for learning**.



Dialogic learning components, © Structural Learning, 2022

[30] Among others: Angeli, C., & Valanides, N., Instructional effects on critical thinking: Performance on ill-defined issues, International Journal of Learning and Instruction, 19, 2009; Boghossian, P., Socratic Pedagogy: Critical Thinking, Moral Reasoning and Inmate Education (Doctor's thesis, Portland State University); Lip man, M., Thinking in education, new York: Cambridge University Press, 2003; McPeck, H., Teaching critical thinking: Dialogue and dialectic, New York: Routledge, 1990: Hajhosseiny, M., The Effect of Dialogic Teaching on Students' Critical Thinking Disposition, 2012, Pr5ocedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences 69 (2012) 1358-1368, 10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.12.073

[31] Bereiter & Scardamalia 1987; Fischer, 2007; Frijters, ten Dam & Rijlaarsdam 2008; merce, 2000; Renshaw, 2004; Salomon & perking, 1998; Wegerif, mercer & Dawes, 1999.

If in our day-life speeches the term *dialogue* is used to refer to almost any kind of social interaction; however educational psychology and philosophy education refine the meaning of the term. According to Bakhtin, considered as a major source for recent approaches to dialogic education "[..] if an answer does not give rise to a new question from itself, it falls out of the dialogue"[32]. The aim of the approach is to engage students in sustained stretches of talk which enables speakers and listeners to **explore and build on their own and others' ideas**[33]. In the Reciprocal Maieutic Approach developed by Danilo Dolci and extensively exploited by REACT project, the creation of a **dialogic environment** is based on the **whole reciprocity communication**[34] and empathy of the participants addressed to empowerment of groups for social change. RMA today represents a powerful tool to promote active citizenship and dialogic learning and it is meant to be a **dialectic method of inquiry** and "popular self-analysis" for empowerment of communities and individuals and it can be defined as a "process of collective exploration that takes, as a departure point, the experience and the intuition of individuals"[35]. The **RMA approach is particularly relevant for developing a critical thinking process** and the way it engages the student and the teacher in a reciprocal communication brings out the knowledge, with all participants learning from each other. The responsibility of educators is to motivate learners to **question and make them question themselves**. The RMA workshops offer a space to confront one another to propose and formulate projects, even if they seem utopian. They also become a **moment to search for the real meaning of words,** by using lexical and conceptual analysis. The RMA workshops give to participants the chance to look deeper above all the superficial occurrences and the fragments of concepts. With this regard, knowledge is never meant as direct knowledge of an external world but always emerges only within dialogue as an aspect of the workshop, thus becoming "reciprocal": the **reciprocal**

[32] Bakhtin, M. M., Speech genres and other late essays. 1968. Austin, University of Texas.

[33] Alexandrer, R. J., Towards dialogic teaching: rethinking classroom talk. 2006, Cambridge: Dialogs.

[34] Rorty, R., Pragmatism as Anti-Authoritarianism, Revue International de Philosophie, 53 (207), 7-20, 1999. Rorty argued that a human collective life depends on the vulnerable forms of innovation-bearing, reciprocal and unforcedly egalitarian everyday communication.

[35] Dolci, D., La struttura maieutica e l'evolverci, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1996.

knowledge must take the form of an answer to a question arising in the context of dialogue. Because of its wide applicability, RMA can be easily applied to a variety of other themes and fields[36].

To set up properly the REACT workshop pathways, the partnership carried out an extensive literature review on RMA and Montessori's experiences applied to several contexts (e.g. local communities, adult educations and school education)[37] to combine the two approaches. REACT project in fact merges RMA methodology with Montessori Method's key elements, starting from the famous *motto* "teach me to do it myself". One of the meaningful concepts about Montessori schools is that they provide the environment and activities that allow children to learn new skills and responsible behaviour in a natural way: **children learn to care for their learning environment and to take responsibility for their learning**, promoting the development of a higher self-esteem and an enhancing sense of dignity in the learning process. In the Montessori approach, one of the key phrases is the "**prepared environment**". The approach is based on the child's development of his or her individual characteristics within the "prepared environment"[38]. Montessori refers to the prepared environment in the schools by the concepts of freedom, order, beauty and atmosphere, educational materials, community life, reality and nature[39]. Prepared environment is a **modified environment that provides top level of opportunity** for the child to explore and learn[40]. To practically embed Montessori peculiarities in REACT project's activities, consortium focused on some key design decisions that we can take, obviously within the boundaries of the project and considering the nature of the

[36] For a detailed overview of components of RMA, please refer to the next chapter of the present document.

[37] Please refer to REACT Manual, actually available in its draft English edition here: https://www.react-erasmus.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/3_1_REACT_Manualallcontributions.pdf

[38] Orem, R. C., Montessori, her method and the movement. Nerw York, Capricorn Books, 121, 1970

[39] Jesus, D. R., Design guidelines for montessori schools, Center for Architecture and Urban Planning Research Books, Milwaukee, 28, 1987.

[40] Islamoğlu, Ö., Interaction Between Educational Approach and Space: The Case of Montessori, EURASIA Journal of Methematics, Science and Technology Education, ISNN: 1305-8223 (online), DOI: 10.12973/ejmste/79799 2010 14(1):265-274 available here: https://www.ejmste.com/download/interaction-between-educational-approach-and-space-the-case-of-montessori-5258.pdf

workshops we plan to realize in classrooms. Among the various Montessori's design decisions, we paid particular attention to **visual contact**, exploring the most the "**circle time**" tool that is a contact point with Dolci's RMA too[41]. The Montessori Circle Time is a period within the school day when the children are gathered with the teacher to do group activities. It is called "circle time" as children and teachers sit in a round formation, facing each other, valorising the visual contact among peers and between children and teacher. Usually in a Montessori-prepared learning environment, Circle Time has an open format, but can include such activities as games, singing, lessons and routines: every typical Montessori school's day begins with Circle Time. While the Montessori method's focus is in training the child to work independently and in a self-directed manner, Montessori acknowledges the **need for cooperative interactions that group** provide:

"[…] there would be all kinds of artistic occupations open to free choice both as to the time and the nature of the work. Some must be for the individual and some would require the cooperation of a group. They would involve artistic and linguistic ability and imagination […]"[42]

Thus, a re-thinking of the learning environment is needed to re-define it as a place "**where is possible to be happy**"[43], a conceptual and physical space **where the knowledge is a circular process that involves all the participants as protagonist and not just as beneficiaries**. Within REACT project **critical thinking in enhanced as the development of the ability to see the world in a more open way**[44] and Circle Time, boosting the sharing of power and equality, will be fully exploited for the development of the REACT workshops. In Montessori schools, during a circle-time activity, everyone has the same distance from the centre and can look others in the eyes. The space is clearly a metaphor of relations, communication, expression

[41] Please see the pictures below: on the left, a maieutic circle led by Danilo Dolci in Sicily; on the right Maria Montessori with "her" children

[42] Montessori, M., From Childhood to Adolescence, ABC-CLIO, ISBN: 1851091858, 1994, p. 75

[43] Quote by Alice Hallgarten, 1910, in Bisi Albini, S., Il trionfo di una donna Maria Montessori, Vita femminile italiana, a.IV fasc. V, may 1910, pp. 482-485 (Italian only)

[44] ten Dam, G., & Volman, M., Critical thinking as a citizenship competence: Teaching strategies, learning and Instruction, 14(4), 359-379, 2004, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2004.01.005

and creativity. During circle time children listen to a story, talk about special events in their day, they are presented with new materials in the classroom, and they often recite chants or do a rhythm and movement activity. Throughout circle time the children experiencing important social concepts, learning how to take turns talking, respect the rights of others and understand the need for rules. During this circle times, students learn in all areas of development: social, emotional, cognitive and physical. **Both for Dolci and for Montessori it is necessary that the activities' location is very peaceful**, because participants need to have the optimal atmosphere available to express themselves. In RMA, as for Montessori's, **the space should be organized to create a democratic, non-hierarchical environment**.

The REACT application of this "Montessori-enriched" Reciprocal Maieutic technique assumes that critical thinkers are habitually inquisitive, well-informed, trustful of reason, open-minded, flexible, fair-minded in evaluation and persistent in seeking. This is another way in which the RMA encounters and includes in the practice the Montessori idea of education, related to the **exploration** as a best way to support the children development, physical and cognitive. For Maria Montessori, as the floor is the "first book of the child" and he/she uses his/her tactile approach to learn about the surrounding world, the mind is a path of daily exploration of the reality[45].

[45] Regni, R., Fogassi, L., Maria Montessori e le neuroscienze, Cervello, mente & educazione, Fefè Editore, 2019, ISBN: 88-95988-95-7

1.5. The innovative dimensions of the REACT Reciprocal Maieutic Approach

REACT project combines the development of an innovative methodology with an **inclusive, totally pro-active and peer-oriented process** involving the three key actors of educative environment (students, teachers and parents). This innovation has its own basis on the analysis of the relevant literature in the sector and on the results of several previous initiatives and projects that the partners of the REACT consortium have implemented in their own countries and transnationally[46]. The innovation of the proposed methodology stands on the weak points raised from several projects carried with the aim of apply the Reciprocal Maieutic Approach directly to educational sector and, specifically, in lower and upper middle schools.

The first innovative dimension of REACT project is related to the target groups composition. **Reciprocal Maieutic Approach is strongly connected with the concept of "nonviolent communication"**[47] and it can be considered as a **group communication strategy**[48] that enables all the elements in the group to give their ideas and opinions, contributing to the development of a final common idea to make a change in the individual and collective social, political, economic and educational spheres[49]. **Reciprocal Maieutic Approach** in education has proven to be a **more than effective tool**, especially in **adult learning**. In particular, a

[46] A non-exhaustive list of relevant projects: Fostering resilience, inclusive education and non-discrimination in schools (FRIENDS); Adapting learning in inclusive communities and environment (ALICE); Soft skills outside of a school learning environment (SOUL); Multiple Intelligence – new approach for effective education; Innovative ICT-based training approach to reshape school education and traning (sCOOL-IT); Preventing radicalism through critical thinking competences (PRACTICE).

[47] Rosenberg, M., Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life, Puddledancer Press, 2003, ISBN: 1-892005-03-4

[48] Habermas, J., Teoria dell'agire comunicativo, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1986

[49] Mangano, A., Danilo Dolci educatore. S. Domenico di Fiesole (FI), Edizioni cultura della pace, 1992

methodology like RMA gives a perfect tool for adult learner staff to **create a supportive environment** and thus help adults find their way in society by means of education[50]. At the same time, RMA has been widely used in a **general "youth" context**, mixing different categories of youth such as disadvantaged ones and ones with (or without) migrant background[51]. However, little experiences have been developed considering an approach to RMA that **mix very different target groups** (young people independently from their cultural background; teachers independently from the subjects they teach and/or their age; and parents independently from their previous participation to school activities in terms of representation). A step back, if considered the way RMA is born in Sicily in the middle of '50 of the last century, or **an historically return to basis in terms of composition of participants to the "original" Danilo's laboratories**. At the same time, **little experience in school environment with this mixed target groups** have been carried out. It is worth to be mentioned the historically exceptional example of Mirto's school (today called the Experimental Educational Centre in Mirto) where RMA has been applied to plan all the educational activities, starting from the formal ones, with the participation of all the school's actors. Mirto's educational centre was designed in 1975 according to the suggestions of the local community; the construction of the school was funded using donations from crowd-funding and foreign donors, without any contribution from public institutions. Several maieutic laboratories facilitated by Danilo and participated by citizens of Partinico have brought to light that there was a need to **rethink the school and more widely wonder about a new creative dimension of education**. Thus, the conception and creation of the educational centre of Mirto began with the same process of popular self-analysis that now is called RMA. The "Borgo di Dio" training and research centre in Trappeto hosted the seminars to define together what kind of pedagogy could be invented in response to local needs and in relation to international research and methods. During the seminars, the population and the educators of Mirto were frequently joined by important

[50] By way of example, please refer to the project "To Educate is to Make Possible the Discovery of Life" - EDDILI

[51] By way of example, please refer to the project "Inventing the future: reciprocal maieutic approach for conflict transformation". In general terms, here are collected some EU funded projects focusing on Reciprocal Maieutic Approach carried out by the Centro per lo Sviluppo Creativo Danilo Dolci.

thinkers from all over the world, such as **Paulo Freire and Gianni Rodari**[52]. REACT project aims at fill in the gaps and weak points above described, accepting the challenge in building an inclusive **path** for the educative systems involved with the contribution of all the key actors and using the educational environment as a springboard for an improvement of the whole community. To better understand the methodology behind Mirto's peculiar educational experience, REACT partners organized a study visit there in March 2023 that let them know more about the actual experience, the characteristics of the spaces and curricular activities, the heritage of Danilo and the nowadays application of RMA in classroom and outside the class, in the open spaces nearby the school thanks to focus groups and light interviews with teachers and educators. What Mirto's experience teaches to us, among many other lessons, is the **value of having an adequate timeframe to develop the full potential of RMA workshops**, meant as a long-term and structured process, involving the same participants during all the stages - from the definition of the topics to be investigated to the evaluation of the workshops. If this is not the case, RMA workshops risk to be considered just a "spot" intervention, triggering interesting reflections and contributions but unable to make a real change in the group they were applied. Most RMA experiences transnationally carried out, forecasted RMA experiences as ancillary tools (quite often associated with other non-formal activities developed by partnership/experts/teachers' representatives) for other purposes. REACT intends to overcome this approach, fully exploiting the potential of RMA laboratories in a long-term perspective and enriching RMA features with peculiar aspects of Montessori's approach to children's grow and learning, as explained below.

An adequate duration of the RMA workshops' experience will lead to the evaluation of (a) **acquired critical thinking skills**, (b) the **change in perceptions** about certain key concepts (that would potentially bring to the disempowering of stereotypes) in participants as well as (c) the measurement of the **impact in the Educating Community** of RMA activities. REACT

[52] The maieutic laboratories that have preceded the construction of the new educational center in Mirto were reported by Danilo in the book "Chissà se i pesci piangono – Documentazione di un'esperienza educativa", recently re-published by Mesogea (2018) with a contribution by Gianni Rodari and a preface written by Amico Dolci, one of the Danilo's sons, that actively participate to REACT project.

project relies on a solid basis for the evaluation of activities that will follow a double-track: the first track is the definition and application of a **biographic evaluation approach for students, teachers and parents**. This biographic research, that has been conducted ex ante and will be repeated after the piloting of activities, investigates the perception of others and will give important information about how to model the REACT workshops accordingly to **foster reciprocal understanding, combating exclusion and spreading of stereotypes as well as violent attitudes and behaviours**. 2) The second track for evaluating the activities is a **qualitative analysis on the meaning of key words and concepts,** developed before and after the piloting actions. This qualitative analysis has been administered through scenario-based questionnaires delivered to representatives of target groups. This will lead to the drafting of a diagram on individual and group perceptions, helping partners, external experts and other involved actors in developing activities really targeting the participants as well as enriching the data collected with another point of view. The findings of national and comparative analysis on questionnaires delivered before the piloting are available on the REACT project's official website[53].

[53] Please refer to REACT "National and European Biographic Report", 2022, available here in English. Please note that this document will be emended to include feedback and data also from the ex-post evaluation.

2. Chapter 2 – The pathway of REACT Reciprocal Maieutic Laboratories

2.1. Suggestions for Facilitating the Maieutic Dialogue

Facilitating maieutic dialogue is a seemingly easy operation since the group participates in a reflective process, filled with doubts and afterthoughts, but with a natural capability for harmonisation. However, as we already said, conducting a maieutic workshop is not about asking questions and waiting for predetermined answers. It is the art of disseminating doubts and asking questions from which creativity, debates, critical thinking and a general sense of satisfaction and well-being are born. All the participants are protagonists of the process and contribute to developing a dialogue that never fades or produces a stagnation of thoughts. Conversation ignites action and helps start future proposals to keep working and reflecting. To explain how we can create such a generative dialogue, we should refer to concrete experiences to describe all its different phases. We should emphasise here one of its principles: we cannot improvise a maieutic dialogue. It is a well-organised plan stemming from a needs analysis of the group or a process that pushes its participants forward. To start this procedure, we must choose carefully the documents we need to work on, the space where such sessions would take place, and the questions from which our reflections would start. We can resort to Danilo Dolci, who suggested "a certain formalism" in the beginning. His long experience inspired the following statements:

"Choosing a topic: in the beginning, we should base our discussion on real facts we are knowledgeable about. Then the discussion becomes broader and more precise according to its development and the participants' interests. (…)

Methodology: it is a group meeting where everyone can share their experiences. The discussion evolves roughly this way: each participant expresses their point of view. Usually, it is essential to have the people who might intimidate others due to their culture or prestige speak in the end so that everyone can have their say. At this point, each participant can talk, and an open debate starts. Forcing everyone to take turns and share their opinions can seem too formal and puts pressure on each person (that's quite natural). However, this strategy has the advantage of

letting the shyest person and those who, for cultural reasons, are supposed not to intervene (e.g. women) speak.

Everyone should listen and talk: some people prefer to speak later when they have clarified their ideas. Currently, I coordinate the sessions and usually allow people to express themselves. I recap all the common points that emerged toward the end of the discussion [...].

Even though I know there are different ways to achieve better engagement, I believe it isn't easy to reach such a high level of participation using other techniques in this environment. Of course, when the atmosphere becomes more intimate, deep, and filled with intellectual and moral tension, that's not due to mere technicalities but to the capacity to inspire mutual respect and attention towards people. The friendliness characterises such sessions [...].

Documentation: only recently, after nine years, we started recording the sessions using the magnetophonon. People are at ease and do not feel intimidated or altered by the fact that the conversation is being recorded. Franco diligently transcribes the text as it is, clarifying and deleting some digressions which are not relevant. I help him with this.

Relationship with developing actions: during the sessions, ideas become more explicit and inform social initiatives; however, it is a mutual relationship. Participants understand their intentions, feel the need to do something, do something different and elaborate new initiatives" (D. Dolci, Conversazioni contadine, Il Saggiatore, Milano, 2014, pp. 8-10).

2.2. The role of the Facilitator

Following a Montessorian inspiration, the RMA coordinator does not intervene in the discussion to propose solutions but promotes them and observes the group and the individuals grow. They try not to force ideas on children but encourage these thoughts to emerge according to a principle of freedom and independence. Maria Montessori imagined a new role for teachers who would help and facilitate learning processes, carefully observing children's psychological life. In Maria Montessori's vision, the coordinator contributes to developing creative and cognitive functions, i.e. learning. More specifically, they assist children in acquiring critical thinking skills.

To create this learning path, the teacher needs to observe the interactions between children and, conversely, understand the relationship between these people and their school environment. The environment should feature a series of characteristics so one can be open to ideas and novelties and respect the learning styles and pace of all the community members. Montessori's approach prescribes a peculiar preparation of materials and workspace organisation.

Considering Montessori's perspective, who can act as an RMA coordinator? Reciprocity is one of the main characteristics of the maieutic approach; therefore, changing roles and allowing different community members to serve as coordinators is fundamental. Initially, a teacher or an external expert familiar with the process should carry out this task. As we have already said, it would be beneficial if children could take on the role of RMA coordinator to promote greater autonomy in the educational community and give proper space to individual creativity.

Creativity is a central element of Maria Montessori and Danilo Dolci's approaches and embraces all the research process through the maieutic dialogue. Children must participate in the discussion so that opinions and views are the product of their experiences and factual knowledge and are not too generic or fuzzy. To help them become more aware of the topics discussed and avoid unverified information from superficial research carried out on the

Internet, we advise suggesting references and allowing the RMA coordinator to prepare learning materials to get ready for future sessions.

2.3. The setting of the Learning Environment

As highlighted by Maria Montessori's experience, we should set up the space properly. When setting up such a space, we should not only think about organising its physical, structured environment (an aspect Montessori had in high regard) but have a clear and shared plan of the activities. The goal is to create a cultural and linguistic community (a topic well-documented in Danilo Dolci's work). Preparing the cultural environment means gathering information on the issues discussed, but that might not be enough. Thus, we should probably plan some workshops focused on analysing the keywords.

For this reason, it is advisable to start with "terminological" sessions so children can learn to use the words consciously. Reflecting on words and analysing terminology is essential to prepare the learning environment. Once we have clarified the linguistic aspects, participants discuss which topic to choose. Such a topic cannot be too generic: it must be analysed and selected carefully according to shared interests, needs and problems.

The attention to terminology is a fundamental component of Dolci's approach, while the careful preparation of the learning environment pays tribute to the Montessorian vision. The discussion implies a comfortable environment. Maria Montessori has diffusively written about such topics. Since one cannot grow in a lousy environment, the workshop's space should be well-organised. If possible, children should participate in re-organising the room, creating a circular setting and identifying all the furniture that may convey a good atmosphere, or starting a discussion about the best places of the school in terms of adequacy and comfort to organise the workshop.

Montessori and Dolci conceive the educational act as an inherently transformative one. Montessori repeatedly refers to this idea pointing at the fact that some educational efforts

attempt to impose the mark of the so-called "adultness". It happens every time adults ignore the original and creative development of childhood and the pure nature of children.

The transformative power of education calls for freedom/liberation. Apart from discussing the topic and the activity around semantics and terminology, the workshop's aim should activate a transformative process. By finding inspiration in the social fights of Danilo Dolci and the liberating nature of the educational act highlighted by Maria Montessori during the workshops, we can favour discussions targeted at creating projects. This action aims to modify situations and contexts according to children's needs. We can speculate that children can identify a situation they relate to and would like to change. When a concrete problem connected to participants' experience during the maieutic workshop emerges, it may be possible to design a solution together to modify it, starting a transformative process of the self and one's life context. Therefore, following the first semantic phase of the workshop, one can analyse the issues the school faces, working on how difficult it is to change the school system, especially the Italian one. The lack of dynamism and susceptibility to change that inform the static and immutable nature of the Italian school system can explain the complicated character and the resistance one may face when implementing these activities. The chance that the RMA workshops can activate transformations within schools by starting concrete actions designed by children, going in a different direction than the usual formal education paradigm, can represent a twist promoted by the legacy of these two great teachers.

2.4. The maieutic Workshop Santa Margherita di Belice House of Health (youngsters aged 14 y.o.)

Operational information	RMA workshop with a group of fifth-grade children (aged 10-11)	RMA workshop with youth from "Casa della Salute" in Santa Margherita di Belice (aged 14)
1. The group sits in a circle in a class and starts by sharing the carefully chosen documents, taking into consideration, on the one hand, the group's needs and, on the other, the learning project. This document can be a passage from a book, poem, video, song, or painting that will inspire the generative question.	*Let's return to a sentence from the book we read together yesterday at the library. "We need to defeat fear and be aware we are doing the right thing ("Serve vincere la paura e sapere di essere nel giusto" (Silei F., Quarello M., L'autobus di Rosa). In your opinion, which is the link between this sentence and the act of disobedience of Rosa Parks? Let's find an answer to today's question: What does disobedience mean?*	*After a brief introduction from the teacher, we agreed to introduce ourselves and think together. This phase lasted about one hour due to the number of participants, but it was very intense and participated.*
2. Silence is crucial to allow participants to **reflect before starting the discussion**. Please remind participants to pay attention to turn-	*Before speaking, please remember that I want to collect your beautiful thoughts. Have you seen that I already have a notebook, just like you? I am sure all your ideas are*	*Each person introduces themselves, sharing their primary interests and deepest desire quickly. Following this part, I will give some examples connected to the superficiality*

taking. To avoid too much frenzy, the RMA coordinator may transcript the interventions so that each speaker needs to express themselves slowly. In this way, they favour reflection. Moreover, they can document the work done and present it later on. If the question is too complex, allowing participants to write their thoughts on paper and read them later to start a discussion might be helpful.	*important and exciting, I will try to write quickly, but I expect you all to help me if I cannot catch up. If necessary, you may repeat what you have said and that I didn't have the opportunity to write in time. You may also write down your reflections before reading them to the rest of the group if you want.*	*which often characterises our modes of expression. Generally, we don't know the actual meaning of our words. This lack of attention generates misunderstandings and ambiguities. At times, it can even hinder our thinking processes and the ability to reflect in a more precise and efficient way. Knowing the meaning of each word (sometimes very ancient words) surprises us and helps us understand our reality better.* *I will now give you an example: the Italian word "cattivo" (mean) derives from the Latin adjective "captivus" (prisoner). It conveys the idea that when you imprison someone (either animal or human), you limit their agency; therefore, they will become cruel and react to the violence they endured with even more violence.* *Going back to our topic, let me summarise the definitions I have found for the Italian term salute: Salus (from "salvus") = safe, integer, healthy; salutare = to*

		wish somebody good health and wellness. *So, here's our question: what does health mean according to our experience? What does it mean to feel good? Let's try to find an answer together by focusing on the following aspects:* - *personal, individual;* - *collective, family;* - *social, community;*
3. Those who wish to speak can raise their hand in an **orderly and respectful** way. If participants experience some issues, it is possible to use the same procedure. Anyway, allowing participants to intervene in the conversation whenever they see fit or not talk if they feel unprepared is vital. Being attentive to turn-taking is an excellent **exercise in democracy,** and it cannot be taken for	*In my opinion, to disobey means to oppose an order one deems unfair without resorting to violence. But it is essential to understand whether an order is fair or not.* *You disobey something you have been told to do without being violent. You disobey when you act as you please, but it is necessary. Sometimes disobedience has its drawbacks, and one should practise it even when there are no benefits in sight. Disobedience can do you good sometimes; some others don't.*	*We take turns sharing our opinions; we should listen to every person. Then we will start discussing, and everyone can be free to intervene.* *Health is a synonym for life and feeling good.* *It is all about physical and mental well-being and understanding our feelings.* *Health is connected to feeling good or bad in our bodies. It is about our mental state and how we relate to others.* *It's when we feel good and don't have any health issues, e.g. physical well-being.*

granted since it is a goal the group can achieve little by little.	*Disobeying your mother is banal; it's an everyday matter. While civil disobedience is disagreeing with things we repute unfair for us or others, it means acting for a good cause.*	*Feeling good with other people and with oneself.* *We are referring to something beautiful and a harmonious relationship with our bodies. Health is about describing the way we feel.*
4. The RMA coordinator must help participants clarify their ideas by considering their shared observations. They should impose their vision in this initial phase. The goal is to stimulate free thinking and discussion.	*I can see that you distinguish between family disobedience and civil disobedience, which involves the whole community and does not imply any form of violence. Therefore you have identified different levels: personal, familial, and social. We disobey whenever we refuse to do something somebody has asked. Think about Rosa Parks's story the teacher has read. However, disobedience may be both fair and unfair.* *How can we understand whether disobeying is the right thing to do? One should disobey only when necessary. In the story we have read, the act of civil disobedience changes the world.*	*Let's try to find a word which describes the time we have spent together, the underlying feeling: just one or two words.* *"Very intense", "debate", "outburst", "debate", "dialogue", "it was beneficial", "very interesting", "we opened up", "I found out many similarities", "a good opportunity to get to know other people", "very educational", "I put myself to the test", "we hardly think about how we reflect", "discovering similar characters and so much more", "I really feel at ease", "I am grateful", "Discovering other people and a part of us", "I thought it was a waste of time, but then I discovered new things"; "I was expecting something different and I would like to thank you for the things*

		we have said"; "I didn't know about this special side of Anna, my best friend, I still didn't know many things about her"; "Not all the people think as I do, but the dialogue is always a possibility".
5. The RMA coordinator should **elicit doubts,** even instilling them if necessary. Any reflective process cannot stem from certainties or pre-established truths but from a collective quest.	*She had no idea her gesture would change the world, then how did she realise that her act was the right thing to do?* *She protested against injustice. Disobedience means to oppose, meaning not to do something we have been asked to do. However, civil disobedience is not about not wanting to eat broccoli because we'd rather have chips. We should protest for more remarkable and essential things. Otherwise, it is just a tantrum.* *For instance, a schoolgirl stood outside her institute during the pandemic to connect to the distance learning lesson. She was engaging in an act of civil disobedience. To disobey means refusing to do something somebody else wants to impose on us. When your mum asks you*	*To me, it's always new, every time, fantastic; thank you.* *Why should we think about death?* *There are good days and bad days.* *Sometimes I wake up on the wrong foot.* *It is essential to smile! (Looking at her, one says, "You pushed me to smile").* *I do think about what it takes[…]* *I feel lucky to be alive. If I ask myself, "What do I live for?" I would answer that ideals greatly help me: they help us live meaningful lives.* *I wish there could be more justice in the world, more attention to other people, sharing things with others, being capable of giving; […]*

	not to play with your phone, and you oppose it: that's unfair. If somebody neglects your rights, then it is right to disobey.	*Difficulties can become strengths, and talking is really helpful.* *It's the knowledge: it helps us to achieve meaning.* *Each of us leaves a mark: what if Dante, Manzoni or Leonardo had never been born?* *Life is meaningful: happiness is an abstract concept but also very real.* *I think life is meaningless; not all of us will have the same impact as Manzoni[...]*
6. The RMA coordinator should collect all the reflections and try to **summarise** ideas we do not want to lose.	*I will try to collect your ideas; it seems that civil disobedience is not a tantrum but a non-violent protest to reclaim your rights. Sometimes protests can be violent. Then we cannot talk about civil disobedience! Vandalism, e.g. damaging public property by writing on the walls, is a protest, not civil disobedience. It doesn't do good. Creating graffiti, such as Banksi does, beautifies the city, even though it is an act of civil disobedience. Those who*	*[...]voices were overlapping, a sign of apparent disagreements... Somebody exclaims, "He didn't say: I want to die" Some others: "We are all meant to do something"). At this point, since it's late and the energies are going low, as well as the concentration that helped us to be attentive and silent, I propose to finish our meeting by stating that being healthy doesn't simply mean not being ill.*

	disobey show up for the common good. To understand whether infringing an order is fair, we need to think about it. In the book, we have read that protests and acts of civil disobedience result from thinking about social injustice and the awareness that black people must not be maltreated. Simone: when somebody tells you to clean after yourself, and you don't do it, that's not an excellent way to disobey because you're disrespecting others.	
7. The coordinator should pay attention to **any input** from the group that deserves further exploration to keep reflecting together.	*Is there a connection between respect and disobedience? You deceive somebody if you say you will do something, but in the end, you don't. One should never hide from an act of civil disobedience: it takes courage. Deceiving is an act of cowardice, such as people from the Ku Klux Klan killing black people when masked. We are running in circles because civil disobedience cannot deal with falsehood. You should take*	*Feeling good in your body is part of the physical dimension of health; sometimes, we may think: "I do not like myself"; we need to cooperate by accepting ourselves the way we are. The psychological aspects are connected to our way of living and relating to others: not being too self-centred. We cannot experience well-being only when we are in good health from a physical point of*

	responsibility for your action. It's not a matter of cowardice. Civil disobedience is a courageous act to protect others; even though others have no guilt, you must deal with the consequences. Someone imposes something on you, and you do not agree to do that because it is too complicated or unfair. How can we decide whether a request is too harsh or unfair? We realise it when we are doing something for other people's good. Sometimes we can be hurt when acting for other people's good, but that doesn't mean our actions are unfair. There can be violence! If I carefully observe everything surrounding me[…], I can understand whether I am doing the right thing. If I am watchful, I can understand! I can see if other people are happy or sad, or unwell. If everyone is satisfied, disobeying is unnecessary because everything is alright. However, when we feel that somebody is	*you. It is crucial to think about our mistakes.* *Our actions can make a difference. Therefore to feel good, we should also be at ease within society.* *Our health is fundamental.* *We should feel good about others and ourselves.* *In my opinion, mental health is more important than physical health.* *It is essential. Moreover, it is fundamental to help others feel good.* *I know many people that, even though they are not feeling good, can give energy to others by doing what they think is better: they do their best at work, in their relationships and commit to their goals.* *The most important thing is to accept yourself and live in harmony.* *That's the main point: it's like a bridge connecting us to other people.* *If we destroy this bridge, we don't know how to express*

	not at ease, we must intervene and disregard all the rules in the interest of everybody's happiness.	*ourselves and fight against others.*
8. When the discussion is almost over, the RMA coordinator seeks to sum up **what has emerged, valuing the interventions of everybody, even the shyest ones.**	***Let's sum up what you have said: it is a protest that does not tolerate violence, derives from neglected rights, and is a courageous act. What you say is essential because civil disobedience is heroic and never connected to cowardice.*** ***To disobey is not doing what we have been asked to do.*** ***Let's start from here to close our discussion.*** ***Civil disobedience is an act of courage; of dignity; it is helpful to protest and do the common good.*** ***We do the right thing to contribute to other people's happiness.***	*There is no separation between the physical and the psychological components.* *For instance: I was feeling bad, and I didn't manage to think at all (Usually, I am a pretty joyful person, but in that period, I used to tell myself that I was ugly).* *I am generally very attentive to being fit, especially when a competition is approaching. But I can't say what I feel deep inside me during this period. When a match is coming, I cannot perform at my best from a sporting point of view.* *(I would like to thank my parents for the attention they always pay to my health)* *In the sports world, these tensions, these difficulties and how we face them (in particular) help me move on, set and achieve a goal.* *You die without health.*

		It is a right we have to pursue a healthy life with others, *That's my interpretation: well-being. Being/feeling well.* *In my opinion, we should overcome the concept of illness; it is not just about a lack of something.* *Once again, when we don't feel good, we realise our health's importance.* *There are many achievements: feeling good with my pupils (I have a cheerful class); achieving my goals (I couldn't do it if I were unwell); What do we communicate? We face complex daily challenges, and we need to find strength.* *It is essential to have the opportunity to express yourself. When you are feeling trapped, you cannot feel good.* *You are afraid of judgements: sometimes, even though one has noble goals, other people's decisions can feel like an obstacle.* *You cannot feel good if others are not there.*

		Not feeling upon you the others' guilt. Once, my aunt accidentally ran over a person (the incident wasn't too severe) but felt so guilty she was unwell for some time.
9. In this case, the group did not need to organise a new workshop the following day. Each workshop can last for no more than three hours so as not to tire participants. It is better to have a further discussion and not haste to reach unsatisfactory conclusions.	*Do you think we have clarified the idea of disobedience? Is it OK like that, or would you like to continue? That's OK; let's have a break!*	*I would like to continue with that[…] We need "moments" during the day when we may think about what we have done: these moments help us stay with others…* *It would help if you stopped for a moment to understand it better.*
10. The RMA coordinator should collect and share the findings **with the whole group in another moment to go deeper or modify them if necessary.**	*Today we will read the excellent discussion you have participated in. If you feel there have been misunderstandings or you want to go deeper, please stop me. If you agree, we will archive our discussion because you all have made impressive statements, and I realised that when I was typing*	

	them on my computer. You have been amazing. *Thank you, teacher!*	
11. The discussion can result in different operational proposals and stimulate creativity and autonomy**. It can be a starting point for discoveries.**	*The following day they asked me to transform the discussion into a chant, and they wrote down their reflection, giving a different interpretation. Being aware of disobedience as a protest against violating one's rights pushed them to claim their need for autonomy: going to school independently. Children who live in the city cannot go anywhere on their own. Moreover, they lived through the pandemic, which limited them further. This request was seen as a gesture of solid independence that provoked resistance in their families. From then on, however, a joint community action and a discussion between the school and families allowed us to satisfy their need for autonomy.*	*Maybe feeling good means doing good. It is a matter of reciprocity. "A reaction"... have you done something good, and it reflects on you.* *I want to share a thought: in my opinion, to make it happen, we need to "respect each other" and be ready to discuss.* *Not to distance ourselves from others.* *Health is a dynamic thing. With time, we need to build society. We need to be less judgemental to live better with others. It is a collective commitment.* *Personally, especially now, I feel the power of Education, Knowledge, and Awareness. It is the foundation helping us live.* *Life can also be described as an illness, and somebody has defined it like that.*

What is the product of the Reciprocal Maieutic Approach, and what distinguishes it from traditional methods?

Unilateral transmissive model	**RMA**
Inhibition of thought	Critical thinking
Competition	Cooperation
Revolt/Resignation/Impatience	Independence/Autonomy
Passivity	Ability to research
Repetition	Creativity
Indifference	Participation
Closure	Empathy
Surliness/Anger	Kindness
Unilaterality	Reciprocity
Fear	Respect
Repression	Freedom
Immobilism	Transformation
Mistrust	Trust
Me	Us

3. APPENDIX

3.1. Part 1 – The methodology for the development of the REACT workshops

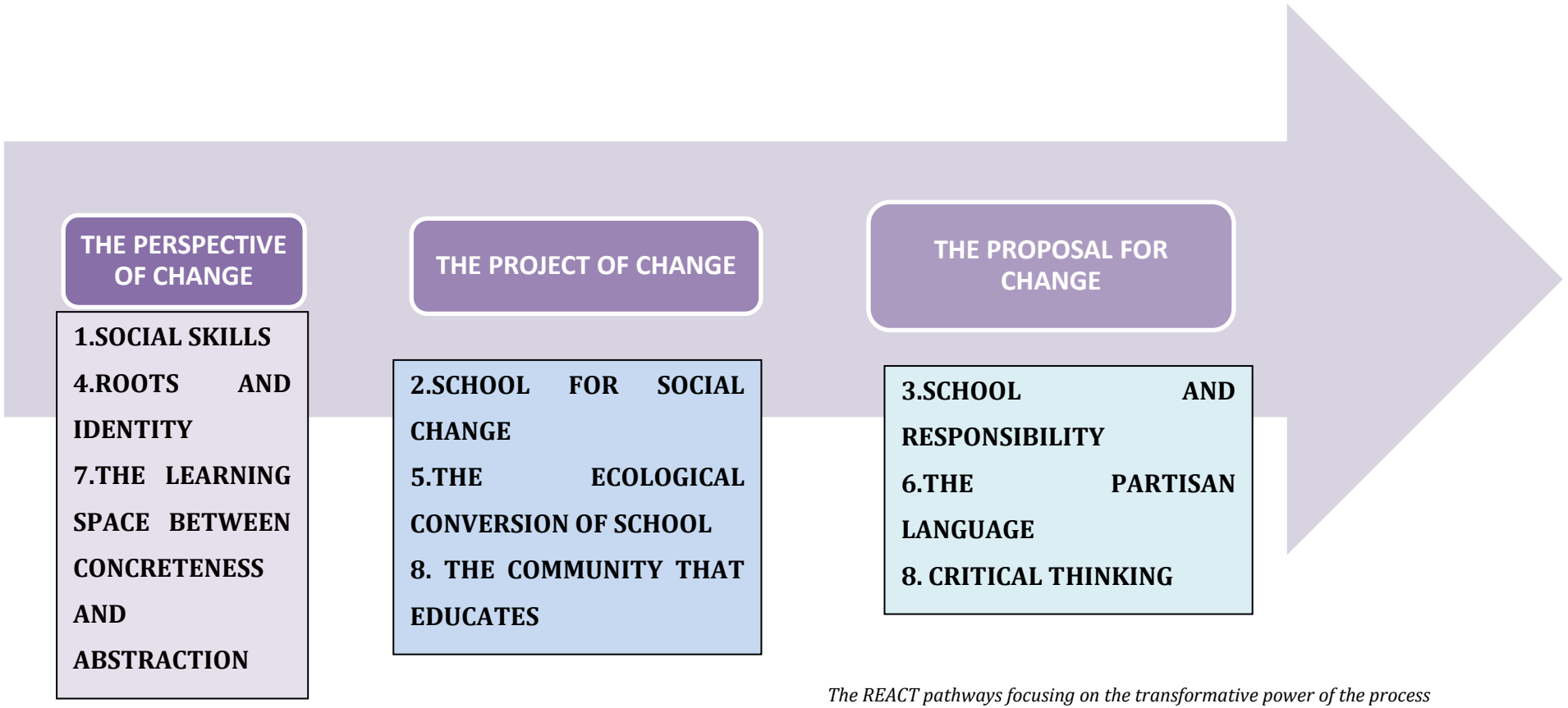
THEMATIC AREAS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORKSHOPS

The nine workshops that constitute the Appendix to the REACT Manual are grouped in three Thematic Areas, thus constituting three complete and independent (even if interconnected) pathways that could be realized in the classroom.

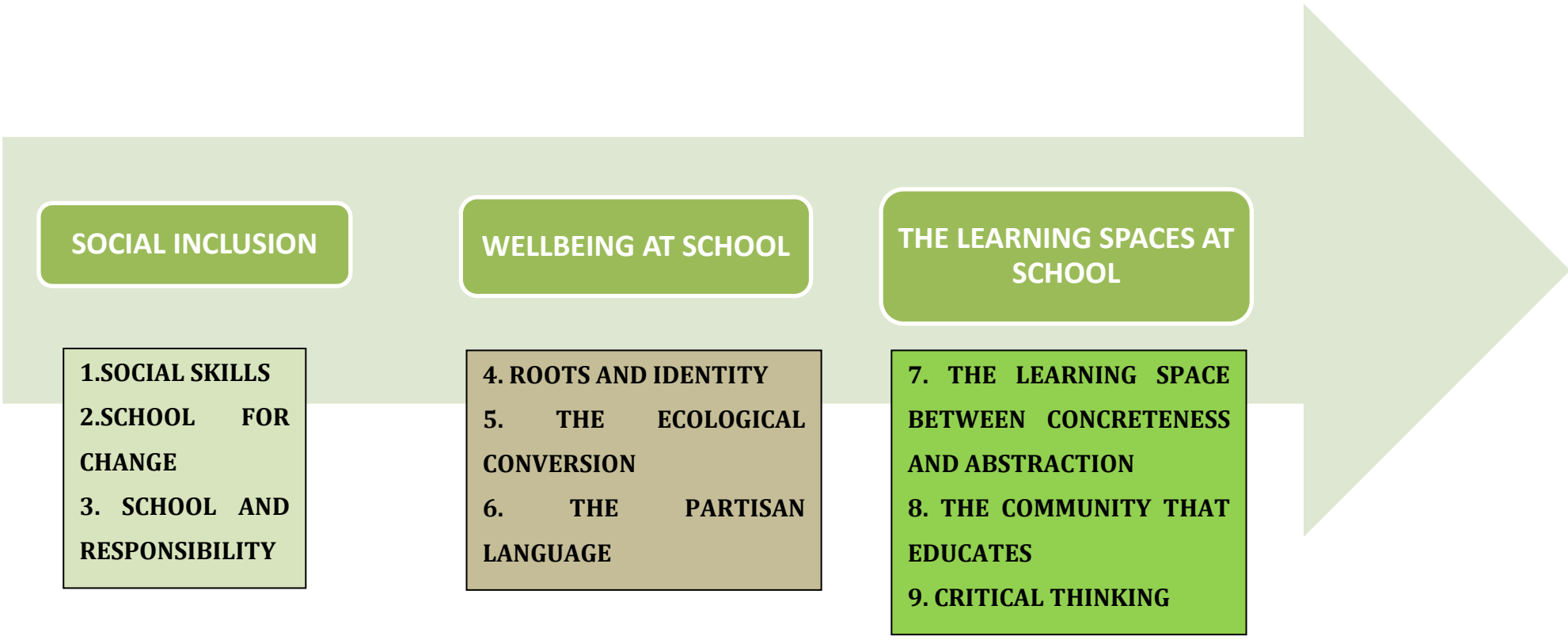
	SOCIAL INCLUSION AT SCHOOL	WELLBEING AT SCHOOL	LEARNING SPACES AT SCHOOL
First workshop: *the perspective of change* (STEP 1)	**1. Social Skills**	**4. Roots and Identity**	**7. The Learning Space between Concreteness and Abstraction**
Second workshop: *the project for change* (STEP 2)	**2. School for Social Change**	**5. The Ecological Conversion of School**	**8. The Community that Educates**
Third workshop: *the proposal for change* (STEP 3)	**3. School and Responsibility**	**6. The Partisan Language**	**9. Critical Thinking**
Closure activity (optional)	***See below***	***See below***	***See below***

Each thematic area could be explored fully with the development of three workshops (the closure activity is optional). The methodology for the development of each workshop is the Reciprocal Maieutic Approach, enriched with observations and strategies borrowed from Maria Montessori. Alongside the focus of each workshop, each triad (1-3; 4-6; 7-9) constitutes a pathway:

1. Step one is meant to let participants know each other and identify and agree on the topic that will be problematized during the second workshop - in a shared and democratic way (**the perspective of change**)
2. Step 2 is meant to turn the identified perspective of change into a proactive action (**the project of change**)
3. Step 3 is aimed at transforming the project into a concrete proposal, to be addressed to the school, the educating community and/or other educative actors (**the proposal for change**)



The REACT pathways focusing on the transformative power of the process



The REACT pathways focusing on the thematic areas

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE THEMATIC AREAS

1. **Social Inclusion at School**. Schools in Europe are required to become more inclusive, and rights based. The UN convention on the rights of the child (UNCRC) recognises that every child has a right to an education that develops their "personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential". These rights are also set out in other leading international and European agendas; for example, the UN 2030 Agenda, and specifically Sustainable Development Goal 4, aims to ensure "inclusive and equitable quality education". Quality education is also a core recommendation of the new European Child Guarantee, and a focus of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child. Every child has the right to education, regardless of ethnicity, gender, religion, language, abilities or immigration status. School is a space where children develop academically and provides opportunities to develop socially and emotionally. The REACT pathway concerning Social Inclusion moves from the identification of social skills, not only in terms of defining those skills, but also to a shared understanding of the existence of those skills within the school subjects that are proposed to students – overcoming their tendency to "hide" themselves due to their transversal nature. The second step of this path is focused on a "hot topic" related to school identity: the promise of education, the idea that everyone will receive an education which will equip them for success, both personally and professionally, has been broken. The promise of meritocracy and the idea that schooling will activate the social elevator is no longer believed by students: they see their parents unemployed or in meaningless jobs for which they're overqualified and so on. Students will be guided and sustained in developing autonomous reflections about the meaning and the value of school for social change in their daily lives. At the end of the pathway – during the last step – students are called upon to reflect on the other side of the coin, namely their responsibility in learning not only from a personal perspective of improvement of their social condition(s), but also from a community perspective in which each contribution is invaluable and irreplaceable.

2. **Wellbeing at school**. Wellbeing is a state in which students can develop their potential, learn and play creatively. Specifically, wellbeing at school means feeling safe, valued and respected; being actively and meaningfully engaged in academic and social activities; having positive self-esteem, self-efficacy and a sense of autonomy; having positive and supportive relationships with teachers and peers; feeling a sense of belonging to their classroom and school and feeling happy and satisfied with their lives at school. Among other international and European institutions, the latest Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results indicate that pupils' sense of belonging at school is dramatically declining as time goes by. School bullying has devastating consequences on learners' health and academic achievement; around 20% of school children experience mental health problems (e.g. anxiety and depression), and the COVID-19 pandemic has made this issue even more prominent, with many pupils suffering from reduced emotional wellbeing and motivation. In addition to this premise, it is worth mentioning here that the REACT approach to the psycho-physical wellbeing of students is strictly connected to the perception of one's own identity and the possibility of expressing it in a safe and respectful school environment. Moreover, we cannot avoid focusing on ecological themes when the wellbeing of students is in the spotlight. Even if aspects of environmental education have been introduced into school curricula across Europe over the last 30 years, this has done little to alter our trajectory. This said, the REACT proposal is to move forward from the simple transfer of notions about recycling to a renewed, meaningful commitment of students, triggered by the real possibility of identifying a problem, analysing it and proposing solutions to the school community.

3. **The Learning Spaces at school**. "Learning Spaces" (LS) is the term used in a report published in 2006 "as a way to embrace a different view of future learning". This report moves the discussion of Learning Spaces forward by refining the concept and linking it to possible policy initiatives. The report builds on the premise that the context for learning is already changing and thus the characteristics and enabling infrastructure and learning spaces may also be changing. The iTEC project 2010-2014 has been the largest initiative across Europe on the design of learning and teaching for the future classroom – validating future classroom scenarios in 2,600 classrooms. School architecture is an

area of research that focuses on studying and analysing the relationship between educational space and learning time/schedule. For a long time, the classroom has been the main place for schooling; other spaces were only peripheral: each place in a school was designed for a specific use and remained under-employed if the specific activity for which it was conceived was not carried out. The REACT project focuses on the need to see schools as a single, integrated space in which various micro-environments, used for several purposes, have the same status. Learning spaces should be flexible, accessible, simple and able to meet people's needs at any time. More than this, if the educative process is meant (and it *must* be considered this way) as an on-going and abstract phenomenon that lasts the entire lifecycle of a human being, it suddenly becomes clear that there is room for education not only at school but also outside the school. The REACT project, since the beginning of its activities, has considered as a key reference point the Educating Community – meant as the group of actors that play a role in the psycho-physical development of young generations, encompassing formal, non-formal and informal educators, teachers, organisations in a view that it is the community that educates, more than the school. With these premises in mind, the present pathway moves from the attempt to share a definition of learning space, applying the RMA, and then proposes that students reflect on their community, the actors that contribute to their education during their entire life. The last step of this pathway is devoted to critical thinking, considered as the fundamental set of abilities that should be acquired and applied to maintain such an educative process always open, fair, logically developed and democratic.

STEP 0 – SET UP (SPACE OF THE WORKSHOP, GROUP COMPOSITION, PREPARATION & TOOLS) (indications are common to all the workshops)

Maximum number of participants suggested	20
Number of RMA coordinator of each session	1 (+ supervisor, if any)
Maximum duration suggested	3 hours

Suggested organization of the space	Room or outdoor space, classroom or another area of the school (e.g. labs) with enough space for all the members of the group. The space is organized to create a democratic, non-hierarchical environment and seeks to convey the concept of space as a metaphor for relations, communications, expression and creativity. As a preparatory activity for the group, RMA can ask the group to reflect about which setting is preferred by group members to convey this concept, and why. However, the circle is one of the most powerful and evocative settings to convey such a concept of space. Sitting in a circle means sharing of power, equality, same opportunity to contribute for everybody. Everyone is the same distance from the centre and can look each other in the eye.
Tools	It's useful to have a flipchart, a notebook and/or an Interactive WhiteBoard where the RMA coordinator writes down the diverse interventions (key words, key points) and records the outcomes of the session. This action has a twofold objective: on one hand, it is a way to avoid impetuosity of participants - because taking time to write promotes the slowness of the exposition and creates a greater reflective process. On the other hand, it allows the group to document the work done during the workshop and take stock of it later. It would be useful that each participant uses a notebook to take notes.
Preparation of the RMA coordinator and/or participants	It's not necessary as a first step to introduce the RMA theoretical framework to the participants. However, additional preparatory materials are linked to each Thematic Area. The additional materials could be further readings, videos and/or other useful resources to create a homogeneous environment in terms of words, key concepts, historical framework and so on. Students aged 14-16 could prepare themselves autonomously at home before the workshop. If the participants are students aged 10

	to 14, they could be guided in reading or watching materials after step 1.

Independently of the subject that is focused on in each workshop, below are suggestions on how to fully exploit the transformative power of each step of the pathway.

STEP 1 – THE PERSPECTIVE OF CHANGE (Workshops 1, 4 and 7)
(towards the identification of a shared perspective of change)

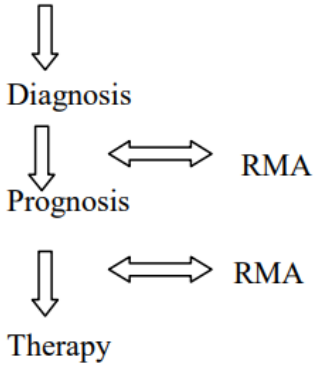
Scope of the workshop	The first workshop has the scope of reflecting towards the identification of a shared perspective of change. **Thematic Area** / **SUBJECT of the corresponding workshop** Social Inclusion at school / Social Skills Wellbeing at school / Roots and Identity The learning spaces at school / The learning spaces between concreteness and abstraction
Step 1 – Opening **45'**	During the first meeting, the RMA coordinator will start briefly presenting him/herself, his/her background and sharing a personal dream. After this introduction, it is important that participants introduce themselves in a personal way or by presenting their personal dream. [What is your personal dream?] Sharing dreams, especially within a group in which people do not know each other in an intimate way, helps to find common interests and desires, stimulating the rising of mutual empathy. **Suggestions for the RMA coordinator:**

	During this first exchange with participants, the coordinator will invite participants to express themselves respecting the circle order, avoiding interruptions while others are speaking.
Step 2 – Implementation **45'**	The coordinator asks the participants what the subject means and what are the problems/needs/worries of the participants in relation to the subject according to his/her personal experience. **What is the meaning of SUBJECT to you? Do you think that there are problems, needs or worries to take into account according to your personal experience?** Each participant expresses his/her opinion freely on the meaning of the subject. The RMA coordinator takes notes and summarizes the most important outcomes from each participant's reflexion. **Suggestions for the RMA coordinator:** • Those who want to intervene raise their hands and take the floor, in a respectful way. If they have difficulties, the RMA coordinator may suggest following the order (of the circle, for instance) but always leaving them free to intervene when they deem appropriate, or to not intervene if they do not feel ready. Being autonomous in following the order cannot be taken for granted and it could be considered as a specific objective, especially during this first workshop. • When (and if) some concepts are not clear, suggest to the participant to rephrase starting from the etymology of the word used. • The RMA coordinator might intervene and give his/her own contribution in order to enable effective reciprocity, but he/she should not influence the group discussion by expressing his/her personal opinion on the topic being discussed.

Step 3 – Debriefing/reflection **20'**	At this stage, the RMA coordinator summarizes the problems/needs/worries that are mostly felt by the participants and asks them to confirm what s/he has said and give a short evaluation of the session. The RMA coordinator closes the workshop by making a short summary of what has been said during the session and drawing conclusions on what emerged from it. The RMA coordinator should talk about the next encounter and propose when, at which time, about what.
Outcome of the session	Notes by RMA coordinator and a shared idea of the "perspective of change" that the group agree on discuss in depth during the second workshop.

STEP 2 – THE PROJECT OF CHANGE (Workshops 2, 5 and 8)

Scope of the workshop	The second workshop has the scope of **reflecting towards the resolution** or, in other words, **towards the conflict transformation**. **Thematic Area** / **SUBJECT of the corresponding workshop** Social Inclusion at school — School for change Wellbeing at school — The Ecological Conversion of School The learning spaces at school — The Community that Educates Conflict can be defined as a disagreement through which the sides involved perceive a threat to their needs, interests or concerns. Usually, conflict is associated with violence and destruction, accompanied by feelings of anger, frustration, hurt, anxiety and

	fear. On the other hand, conflict is not necessarily destructive if handled properly. In our vision, it is the lever/tool for building up skills, strengths as well as an opportunity to apply creativity and find new solutions – from a group point of view. To use the RMA as a tool in such a way, it is important that during the development of the workshop, the RMA approach is used during all the steps:  The final objective of the workshop is to empower participants in the transformative process that, moving from the previously identified conflict, transforms it into a proposal for change.
Step 1 – Diagnosis **20'**	Participants are asked to work on a specific conflict, the one that has been problematized during the first workshop. The aim of this first step is to clearly identify shared causes and consequences of the conflict. Participants are invited to provide a **Diagnosis**, that means the process of identifying the causes of the conflict. The RMA coordinator asks the question: What questions should be asked to examine the causes of conflict?
Step 2 – Prognosis **45'**	Then, participants are invited to develop the **Prognosis** (which is the analysis of the direct consequences of this kind of conflict). The RMA coordinator focuses, summarizes and presents to the group questions that have arisen.

	As everyone enunciates their personal questions, the others should write them down in their notebooks. **Suggestions for the RMA coordinator:** • Try to guide the participants in using a plurality of visions, alternatives and voices when enunciating the causes and consequences of the conflict
Step 3 – Therapy **45'**	After defining the root causes and the consequences of conflict, it's necessary to discuss **Therapy** perspectives on how conflict can be transformed using creative, viable alternatives to violence and indifference. The RMA coordinator asks participants: <u>How to transcend positively/creatively the causes (relations + structures) that create/maintain the conflict?</u> Each participant initially reflects on questions that must necessarily be asked to respond the questions.
Step 4 – Debriefing/reflection **20'**	At the end of the workshop, the RMA coordinator closes by asking for a short evaluation by all the participants and by making a short summary of what has been said during the session. Then, the RMA coordinator enunciates the Therapy/ proactive action agreed during the workshop. The RMA coordinator should also talk about the next encounter and propose when, at which time, about what.
Outcome of the session	Notes by the RMA coordinator and a shared idea of the "project of change" that the group agrees on to transform into a proposal during the third and last workshop.

STEP 3 – THE PROPOSAL FOR CHANGE (WORKSHOPS 3, 6 AND 9)

Scope of the workshop	The third and last workshop has the scope of **reflecting towards the definition of a proposal, in other word on how to communicate the change.**

Thematic Area	SUBJECT of the corresponding workshop
Social Inclusion at school	School and Responsibility
Wellbeing at school	The Partisan Language
The learning spaces at school	Critical Thinking

This is meant as the last step of the transformative process that guided the group during the reciprocal maieutic pathway – in the framework of the selected Thematic Area. It is aimed at communicating the therapy/solution identified during the second workshop to the community of peers, to the school, to the whole Educating Community.

"Communication" is a bidirectional process which is close to creativity and human development. Conversely, the concept of "transmission" is based on a channel connecting a sender and a receiver of a message, thus there is no active participation of the receiver in this case. The receiver only must acquire information from the channel used by the sender, even though it is not always approachable for him/her.

Moving from this premise, the objective of the workshop is to analyse the meaning of the words "transmission" and "communication", the differences existing between them and the potential effects of both concepts on the transformation process.

The RMA coordinator opens the session recalling what has been done during the last workshop. Then, the coordinator asks the participants the following questions:

Step 1 – Reflection on the meaning of the action (transmission VS communication)	What is the meaning of "transmission" according to your personal experience? What is the meaning of "communication" according to your personal experience? Each participant expresses his/her opinion freely on the meaning of the concept of "transmission" and "communication". **Suggestions for the RMA coordinator:** • If, and when, the discussion needs to be sustained, propose to participant to do so by starting from the etymology of the words: *trans-mittere,* literally "send across" and *cum-munus,* literally "gather gifts". • You are requested to intervene and give your own contribution to enable effective reciprocity. However, pay attention to the boundaries: your intervention should favour reciprocal communication, re-launch discussion, ask for further explanations and/or examples taken from personal experience of participants.
Step 2 – Germination of ideas for change	Gradually during the discussion, each of the two initial words are associated to an adjective, an idea, a point of view and these associations are the beginning of the second step. The second step is meant to transform this process of exchange and reciprocal enrichment into a germination of ideas related to the communication of the Therapy to the "receiver". This said, the RMA coordinator invites participants to reflect on the following questions: In your own view, what is the relationship between transmission and domination? The RMA coordinator sets the tone of the group and writes down participants' interventions. Outcome of the session would be like the grid quoted below. The RMA coordinator should allocate each word, idea, concept to "transmission" or "communication".

Transmission	Communication
(trans-mittere) literally "send across"	(cum-munus) literally "gather gifts"
Unidirectional	Bidirectional/pluri-directional
Receivers and transmitters	Participation
Passivity	Respect and valorization of differences and diversities
Impersonality	Creativity
Selfishness	Empathy
Immobility	Sociality
Isolation	Solidarity
Alienation	Dialogue
Closure	Spiral, as a symbol of growth and development
Homologation	Reciprocal disclosure
Hierarchy	Critical Thinking
Dogmatism	Nonviolence
Automatism	Free flow of information
Violence	Planning together
Propaganda	Discovering oneself and others trust
Indoctrination	Reciprocal growth
⇓	⇓
Domination	**Power**

Suggestions for the RMA coordinator:

- This step could be considered as closed once the participants find agreement on the conceptual link between "transmission = domination" and "communication = power".

Step 3 – Debriefing/Reflection	During the workshop, many other questions may arise, even if they don't receive exhaustive answers. Instead, participants experienced what it means to learn to listen to one another, to question and try to find answers all together.

	At this stage, depending on the decision of the group, the RMA coordinator closes the session by asking for a short evaluation to all participants and summarizing what has been said during the session and drawing conclusions.
Outcome of the session	The outcome of the session is the chart seen above and filled with inputs and key messages derived from the interventions of participants. This outcome has been built through dialogue, discussion and reciprocal confrontation with everybody's ideas.

CLOSURE ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL)

Each school participating in the piloting experience, namely the development of the REACT workshops, could organize – with the support and under the coordination of the REACT implementing partners – an open session to share with peers and/or the Educating Community what they've received from the activities, what they would like to communicate to others as well as proposals for further activities.

This event could also be the occasion to give participants the opportunity to evaluate the efficacy of what they've experienced, collecting useful feedback not only from them but also from teachers who guided them during the work, the whole school as well as the Educating Community.

PREPARATORY AND IN-DEPTH MATERIALS FOR EACH WORKSHOP

Workshop	Materials
1. Social Skills	• Importance of Social Skills in the Elementary Grades (pp. 409-419) Catherine R. Meier, James C. DiPerna and Maryjo M. Oster • https://www.jstor.org/stable/42899893 • https://www.unesco.org/en/education/inclusion/need-know
2. School for change	• Irit Sasson, Yael Grinshtain, Tamir Ayali & Itamar Yehuda (2022) Leading the school change: the relationships between distributed leadership, resistance to change, and

	pedagogical practices, International Journal of Leadership in Education, DOI: 10.1080/13603124.2022.2068187
3. School and Responsibility	• Helker, K; Wosnitza, M; Responsabilità nel contesto scolastico - Sviluppo e convalida di un quadro euristico, 2024, Frontline Learning Research 4(2014) 115-139; ISSN 2295-3159, Doi : http://dx.doi.org/10.14786/flr.v2i2.99
4. Roots and Identity	• The Cosmic Education in Maria Montessori. Please refer to the Accademia Montessori definition quoted here: https://montessoriacademy.com.au/cosmic-education/
5. The Ecological Conversion of School	• Omerod, N., Vanin, C., Conversione ecologica: cosa significa?", 2016, pubblicazione SAGE, 330.
6. The Partisan Language	• A. Duranti; Antropologia linguistica: lo studio del linguaggio come mezzo non neutrale, Cambridge Handbooks in Language and Linguistics, 2011, Parte I, capitolo 3, pag. 28 ss., https://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/anthro/faculty/duranti/Non-neutral.pdf
7. The Learning Space between Concreteness and Abstraction	• https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1152583.pdf
8. The Community that Educates	• http://www.cefa.ie/uploads/1/5/8/8/15883224/co_donegal_vec_-_research.pdf
9. Critical Thinking	• https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1156618.pdf

3.2. Part 2 – Indications for the Teachers' training & piloting in classroom

INDICATIONS FOR THE TRAIN THE TRAINERS' SESSION

REACT project aims at developing a piloting experience in their respective local territories, namely Italy (two Regions: Umbria – Città di Castello - and Sicily – Palermo and Partinico) Greece (Corfù and Kefalonia) Bulgaria (Pernik) and Spain (Zaragoza, Épila and Segovia). To successfully develop the piloting in classroom, REACT consortium organizes a Train the Trainers session. The training is addressed to three main points:

1. Make clear **how critical thinking skills' acquisition is related to a decrease of marginalization, exclusion and bullying phenomena** inside and outside the school environment and, at the same time, how this acquisition fosters social inclusion and civic competences;
2. Make clear **why dialogic learning** (and the Reciprocal Maieutic Approach as understood in the REACT project) **is a useful methodology to reach these goals in comparison to other methodologies**;
3. Give **practical support to teachers** in organizing and monitoring the piloting experience in classrooms.

Each partner involves at least 3 schools (at least one lower and one middle secondary schools) and identifies, in accordance with participating schools' management board, a minimum of 5 teachers to be trained (25 teachers in total) for a minimum of 4 hours/training. The participation is open to teachers of any subject; however, teachers of classic subjects (e.g. Literature, History, Geography, Social Sciences…), teachers of civics and religion teachers are the primary targets of the training sessions. The training sessions are managed by REACT partners' staff members and could be organized in face-to -face sessions, online or both; however, face-to-face training is warmly recommended. A very practical part of the training should be devoted to the explanation of monitoring and evaluation tools that will be used by teachers for the evaluation of the piloting (please refer to D5.3 REACT Evaluation Plan and Compendium).

At the end of the training experience, each participant receives a certificate of attendance issued by Centro per lo Sviluppo Creativo Danilo Dolci (CSC). Of course, each partner is free to issue its own certificate attesting the completion of the training.

After the training experience, each partner assesses the learning activities through the evaluation questionnaire (to be translated in each partner language) to be filled in by participants. Partners are free to adapt the questions and the structure on the basis of the specificities of their training sessions; however, the data should remain comparable, and the topics suggested should therefore be covered.

The questionnaire, together with observation by partners, will be the basis for the National Reports on the Training that each partner is recommended to draft, in English language. The feedback of the trained teachers will be the basis for adjustments and improvements of the Handbook "A Certain Formalism" that will be finalized after the conclusion of the training.

EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE SAMPLE

Dear Participant,

THANK YOU for taking part to the REACT training for teachers' initiative promoted by [name of the partner]!

We would be very grateful if you can respond to the following five-minutes questionnaire, to evaluate the overall training experience and to give us the opportunity to appropriately follow-up the activity.

The questionnaire is anonymous, and no sensitive data is requested.

Thank you again!

The REACT project team

Part 1 – General Information

Age:

Gender:

Subject(s) taught:

School (e.g. middle or upper secondary school):

Part 2 – Post-training experience

1. To what extent was the thematic information presented in the RM Manual and Handbook useful and comprehensible for you to help you conduct the session? **(scale 1-5)** Please explain:

2. Would you suggest any changes in the thematic information (topics) of the RM Manual and Handbook **YES/NO**. If yes please explain:

3. To what extent was the suggested learning method, presented in the RM Manual and Handbook, useful for conducting the learning sessions? **(scale 1-5)** Please explain:

4. Would you suggest any changes in the learning methods of the RM Manual and Handbook? **YES/NO**. If yes please explain:

5. Is there anything that you would consider changing so as that Reciprocal Maieutic workshops would work better? **YES/ NO**. If yes, what that would be:

Part 3 – Logistic arrangements

How do you rate the adequateness of the training venue?

How do you rate the preparedness of the trainers?

How do you rate the timing and agenda of the training?

Other suggestions and remarks (*free text)*

INDICATIONS FOR PILOTING IN THE CLASSROOM

After the closure of the training for teachers, the piloting phase in the classroom will start.

In each involved school, a minimum of 90 students will be involved in the piloting, 3-4 classes per school, reaching the minimum number of 240 students per implementing partner.

We expect that each classroom completes at least two out of the three pathways for each Thematic Area. Due to the length of each workshop, therefore, the minimum requirement is:

[3 workshops (2 hours each) for 2 Thematic Areas] + [1 closure activity for 2 Thematic Areas (optional, 2 hour)] =

12/16 hours of piloting in classroom/per group

However, partners are encouraged to guide teachers in piloting all three Thematic Areas and related workshops, as well as to endorse the realization of closure activities for each pathway.

Teachers are asked to fill in a **simple template** for each workshop, quoting:

- School involved
- Class grade
- Number of students attending the workshop; their age and gender
- Date, title of the workshop (e.g. Thematic Area 1 – workshop 2 “School for Change”), duration of the workshop (e.g. 90 minutes, 120 minutes …)

- Written feedback by teacher on the development of the workshop (e.g. degree of participation of students, problems occurring – if any; and any other relevant information)

Partners' staff member will collect the templates as evidence of the development of the piloting experience in the schools of their territories. Templates will be annexed to the National Reports on Piloting Experience (in English language)– even though this evidence will be confidential in nature and no publication will be made of data collected.

INDICATIONS FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE PILOTING

Ideally, the teachers who participated to the training sessions would be able to guide the workshops in the classroom without any supervision or support. However, **huge flexibility is accorded to partners** – also in relation to the experimental nature of the piloting. REACT partners' staff members will attend **at least one workshop per Thematic Area**, to complete the evaluation procedure. Again, partners will be free to adapt their attendance to the workshops: they can guide the first one, to guide teachers for further development; they can participate in an entire pathway; they can simply observe the development of the workshops for evaluation purposes. The degree of involvement of partners' staff members depends a lot on each school's peculiarities, the degree of autonomy acquired by trained teachers and other specificities.

The evaluation of the piloting experience is defined as follows:

1. Participant observation by REACT partners' staff member (participant observation questions, please refer to D5.3 REACT Evaluation Plan and Compendium) during the piloting
2. Written feedback by teachers (evaluation questionnaire, please refer to D5.3 REACT Evaluation Plan and Compendium)
3. Written feedback by students (evaluation questionnaire, please refer to D5.3 REACT Evaluation Plan and Compendium)