

Local history and identity building: a case study in the field of active citizenship education

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Citación: Fredella, C. & Zecca, L. (2020). Local history and identity building: a case study in the field of active citizenship education. *Investigación en la Escuela*, 100, 88-102. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.12795/IE.2020.i100.07>

Abstract: The case study, carried out in a primary school, examined whether and how inquiring into local history can support identity building in pupils and promote active citizenship. The research was part of a broader Erasmus Plus project that assumes citizenship education to require participatory experience in the students' local territory and activities based on interaction between the environment, heritage and communities, with both local and global dimensions. The investigators' choice of method, namely Teacher Professional Development Research, was guided by the awareness that analyzing teaching practices and promoting a reflective posture in teachers demands a solid alliance between researchers and teachers. The data was collected via questionnaires, interviews with teachers and conversations with the children and analyzed using a coding system that was both data- and theory-driven. It was found that the more children have the freedom to engage in independent inquiry, discuss and share with others the discoveries they made and the knowledge they acquired, the more their learning became meaningful to them. Supporting the building of an inclusive identity fosters their appreciation of local heritage, encouraging them to take responsibility for preserving and communicating it.

Key words: “Citizenship Education”; “history teaching”; “local history”; “identity”; “primary school”; “teacher professional development research”; “teacher education”; “heritage education”.

La historia local y la construcción de la identidad: un estudio de caso en el campo de la educación para la ciudadanía activa

Resumen: El estudio de caso, que se llevó a cabo en una escuela primaria, tenía como objetivo investigar si y cómo la historia local puede apoyar la construcción de la identidad de los alumnos y promover la ciudadanía activa. El estudio forma parte de un proyecto Erasmus Plus que asume como base común que la educación cívica requiere la participación en experiencias relacionadas con el territorio local y en actividades que involucran el medio ambiente, el patrimonio y la comunidad, entre dimensiones locales y globales. La metodología elegida, Investigación-Formación, está basada en una alianza entre investigadores y docentes y se enfoca en promover una postura reflexiva entre los docentes. Los datos recogidos mediante cuestionarios, entrevistas a los maestros y conversaciones con los niños se han analizado con un sistema de códigos tanto *data* como *theory-driven* y muestran como los niños, cuanto más libertad tienen de investigar por su cuenta, debatir y compartir con otros los conocimientos que han logrado, más significativo será su aprendizaje. Apoyará la construcción de una identidad inclusiva y los estimulará en comprender el valor del patrimonio local, a asumir la responsabilidad de preservarlo y comunicarlo.

Palabras clave: “Educación para la Ciudadanía”; “enseñanza de la historia”; “historia local”; “identidad”; “escuela primaria”; “investigación-formación”; “formación del profesorado”; “educación patrimonial”.

Histoire locale et construction de l'identité : une étude de cas dans le domaine de l'éducation à la citoyenneté active

Resumé: L'étude de cas dans un école primaire, visait à déterminer si la recherche sur l'histoire locale peut soutenir la construction identitaire des élèves et promouvoir une citoyenneté active. L'étude de cas fait partie d'un projet Erasmus Plus qui part du principe selon lequel l'éducation à la citoyenneté nécessite soit la participation à des expériences qui impliquent le territoire local des élèves, soit à des activités basées sur les interactions entre l'environnement, le patrimoine et la communauté, avec des dimensions à la fois locales et globales. Le choix méthodologique, la Recherche sur perfectionnement professionnel des enseignants, a été guidé par la conscience que pour étudier les pratiques d'enseignement et promouvoir un esprit de réflexion chez les enseignants, un' alliance entre les chercheurs et les enseignants est nécessaire. Les données recueillies par les questionnaires, les entretiens avec les enseignants et les conversations avec les enfants ont été analysées par un système de codes axé soit data soit theory-driven. Résultats: si les enfants ont la liberté de faire des recherches tout seuls, de discuter et de partager avec d'autres les découvertes et les connaissances qu'ils ont obtenues, leur apprentissage est plus riche et soutient la construction d'une identité inclusive qui les encourage à comprendre la valeur du patrimoine local, à assumer la responsabilité de le préserver et de le partager.

Mots-clés: “Éducation à la citoyenneté”; “enseignement de l'histoire”; “histoire locale”; “identité”; “école primaire”; “recherche sur le perfectionnement professionnel des enseignants”; “formation des enseignants”; “éducation au patrimoine”.

The research framework

This study is part of an Erasmus+ STEP project (Pedagogy of citizenship and teacher education: an alliance between school, territory and community) devised by an interdisciplinary

group of researchers in the social and human sciences and teachers from three EU countries (France, Spain, Italy) and one non-EU country (Switzerland).

The project assumes that active citizenship¹ education cannot be reduced to the teaching/learning of an additional school subject, given that understanding citizenship concepts and acquiring citizenship competences is transversal to several disciplines and also requires knowledge of the local territory (Blanc-Maximin & Floro, 2018). Indeed, citizenship education is best defined as the practice and exercise of citizenship in the public and democratic space of the school itself and in the community (Di Masi, 2010; Losito, 2009).

Today's children live in complex territories, subject to rapid and continuous change, and they are required to construct new representations of identity and belonging that are attentive to the "gaze of the other" (Di Masi, 2010). In the construction of identity, the part and the whole are linked by a bi-univocal relationship of descent and ascendancy, in which the individual acquires identity according to the role he or she plays in the collective and the community is formed by the contribution of the parties (Assmann, 1997, p. 100). The concept of belonging is also key to the thinking of François Audigier, who identifies it as the main characteristic of being a citizen in a democratic society. Whether it is at local or global level, citizenship "is always a question of belonging to a community, and a reference to politics and rights, particularly political rights. In this sense, the citizen is always a co-citizen, a person living with others" (Audigier, 2002, p. 167). A belonging, therefore, which, although acquired at birth (as in the Latin term *civilis*), can only be built up and developed via the contribution that the individual can and must make to the life of the city; a belonging that restores to the term politics, "the most abused words of our times" (Zagrebel'sky, 2005, p. 36), its deepest meaning, as defined by Aristotle, of looking after public affairs. Politics is "art, science, the activity dedicated to coexistence" (Zagrebel'sky, 2005, p. 36) and, as Hannah Arendt reminded us, it is precisely the depoliticisation of the contemporary world that has contributed to the emergence of totalitarianism (Arendt, 1999), placing constraints on political action as a direct expression of citizenship. The concept of citizenship strict sense concerns the relationship between the individual and the legal-political order, but at the same time, this relationship plays out in multiple ways: «expectations and claims, rights and duties, modes of belonging and criteria of differentiation, strategies of inclusion and exclusion» (Costa, 2005, pp.3-4).

A second focus of the project was Teacher Education, based on the assumption that, as recent studies on teachers' representations of active citizenship have brought to light (Ávila, Borghi & Matozzi, 2009; Losito, Damiani & Ghezzi, 2019), teachers commonly view citizenship education not as requiring curricular knowledge and skills, but rather as concerning more general and generic personal feelings and civic or social and ethical skills. This perspective only widens the gap between the school world and the world of life, which is perceived as alien. At the same time, not nearly enough importance is attributed to initial teacher training in citizenship education (García Pérez, De-Alba-Fernández y Navarro-Medina, 2015).

The first output² of the project was the co-construction of a set of Guidelines for a Transnational Curriculum for Citizenship Education, with a particular focus on the complex and plural relationship between school and territory. This curriculum is not a list of disciplinary contents but presupposes the integration and structuring of teaching objectives and strategies that include, in addition to civic and social education, education for sustainable development and heritage education linked to the local territory. These Guidelines were designed to overcome the dichotomy between

¹ A "tautological expression" according to Étienne Balibar (Balibar, 2012).

² All the project outputs are available in open access mode on Valor: <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplu-project-details/#project/2015-1-IT02-KA201-015190>

formal and non-formal education, fragmentation and disciplinary reductionism; to identify key concepts (territory, common good, global-local); and integrate knowledge and skills (observation and reading of the territory, representations of space, the construction of a network of cognitive, social, emotional, and metacognitive relations). The second phase of research consisted of 18 case studies involving pre-school and primary schools.

Guidelines for a Transnational Curriculum for Citizenship Education (GTCCE)

We now present a summary of GTCCE which emphasizes the aspects of the theme of citizenship education that are common to all the participating countries and research partners, with the aim of constructing a common language.

1. Education as a political project. It involves learning to «live in society» in the first instance. In all the participating countries, education is a national priority. It thus becomes a political priority at the European level too, particularly in relation to the knowledge and competences required for living in society, or civic coexistence. Action draws on methods of seeking harmony among different points of view, communities, and religious confessions. However, the methods chosen to construct a shared culture do not always take social differences into account.

2. Adapting to social change. National documents suggest that the directives concerning citizenship education represent an attempt to adapt to changes in society:

- some propose an alternative view of humanity and the living world, in terms of space and time;
- others focus on mentalities, in the sense of greater justice, respect, freedom of conscience and existential freedom for all.

3. Social diversity. Social diversity is problematic, but nonetheless is rarely addressed in the legislation, therefore it should be explicitly pointed out that “lack of school success” is - still today - often underpinned by social issues such as poverty, or poor working and living conditions.

4. A complex and pluralistic territory. Given its diversity and pluralism, the territory should be analyzed in terms of its physical, human and social characteristics, with its local and global phenomena, and not only at the geographical level. Knowledge leads to discovery based on key meaningful elements of past heritage and the exercise of active and responsible citizenship to develop creativity and produce new forms of culture. Territory as a witness to a particular vision of the relationship between human beings and nature. The first level of prescribed knowledge about the environment is informed by an anthropocentric perspective that mainly views the environment in terms of how it can be exploited and conserved. A position that calls into question the relationship between human beings and nature. Territory is perceived as the stage on which human activity and the production of culture take place. At the complex level of knowledge, delocalization helps to generalize from different national viewpoints to construct a shared cross-disciplinary and transnational language.

To facilitate understanding of social and territorial environmental issues extending from the local to the global level, education must make visible the connections between these two scales. In the territorial context, taught heritage is a complex set of assets to be discovered and protected. Although heritage knowledge is very much anchored in the local, heritage education contributes to enhancing students’ general cultural knowledge. Heritage education is predominantly perceived as concerning protection and conservation. Knowledge is expected to culminate in a global holistic perspective that relates all manifestations of culture with one another, as well as in engagement in active citizenship initiatives aimed at valuing and safeguarding heritage.

Citizenship education requires participation in activities and experiences aimed at fostering discovery of the students' local territory. To be educational, these activities must be viewed as interactions between the environment and the human community, with both local and global dimensions brought to bear. Forming the citizen requires action and experience, but also theoretical learning, given that all knowledge imparted is an educational tool in itself.

Finally, citizenship education also demands learning by observing the world from a complex critical perspective. Educating means leading the setting up of activities in the local territory with the involvement of a range of actors, with a view to developing an intelligence that is territorial, intercultural, and sustainable, and focused on actions for disseminating and exploiting heritage. The key aim is to adapt to the processes of social change that are increasing the need for active citizenship. Educational action that is driven by problems in the world, will draw on diverse cultural models. School is a place where social experiences are compared and shared, and in which the values of civic coexistence for open and democratic societies are constructed.

The research methodology

The chosen methodology was Teacher Professional Development Research (Asquini, 2018), which draws on qualitative research tools such as focus groups and interviews (Mantovani, 1998; Silverman, 2002) to collect data such as the teachers' representations and educational practices from the research context. Our choice of this methodology stemmed from our awareness that teaching-learning practices based on inquiry as an educational strategy help teacher-researchers to develop a more conscious understanding of their experience and facilitate the construction of new knowledge underpinning the construction of new skills (Zecca, 2016).

The various case studies were selected (Mortari, 2007; Yin, 2013) with a view to conducting in-depth analysis of existing teaching practices and co-designing new ones.

This phase of the research involved children, teachers, school leaders, and parents of pre-school and primary school classes, as well as education practitioners operating in the local area, e.g. museum educators, environmental guides, etc.³

In this paper we present in particular the results of the case study conducted in Cornaredo, a town of around 20,000 inhabitants in the Milan area.

The questions that guided the action-research were:

How do children build a sense of the past starting from the present?

How the relationship with the heritage, preserved in their territory, can support the growth of a sense of belonging?

How the relationship with the heritage can promote the desire to become active in preserving and communicating its value?

We used mainly three different tools to collect data during the experimentation phase (Sept. 2016- Oct. 2017):

- semi-structured interviews with the teachers involved in the case study about how active citizenship and citizenship education featured in their professional development (and about the role of heritage education and sustainable development),

- documentation on teaching practices (teacher's diary and Didactic Work Plan) and children's portfolio.

- focus groups with children at the end of the project.

³ All project outputs are available in open access on the European Valor platform <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplu-project-details/#project/2015-1-IT02-KA201-015190>.

The focus groups, the interviews and the teachers and children documentation were transcribed and analyzed with the software Atlas.ti 8, before being coded onto a grid of categories (García Díaz, 1995; García, Porlán y Navarro-Medina, 2017) comprising three types of knowledge: simple, analytic (knowing how to be or attitudes) and complex (knowing how to act).

We scheduled monthly meetings with the teachers to work on analysing documentation on their teaching practices in the classroom and field activities (video-observation). During these encounters, the teacher's leadership role was analysed in depth. This analysis was aimed at revealing the specific features of the teachers' professional profile but also the personal identities and socio-cultural beliefs that guided, in their teaching practice, the choice of one topic rather than another, "because a teacher brings into the classroom all his experiential baggage, personal and valuable, which should not be hidden just because it is not objective" (First Focus Group, R1⁴).

The Teacher Professional Development Research design provided for data to be collected from the entire team. For each activity implemented, the teachers used a tool called the Didactic Work Plan, where they indicated the curricular content involved, the competences targeted, and why this activity was motivational and meaningful for the children. Furthermore, during the monthly meetings this tool was shared with the researchers. The goal was to develop professional reflexivity (Schön, 2006) concerning educational design and documentation skills.

Evaluation of the research process was ongoing from the early stages, and was structured around the categories listed in the Curriculum Guidelines, comprising three levels (knowledge, attitude, and active behaviours), at three different degrees of complexity (descriptive, analytic, and complex), and involving three different areas (living together in society, sustainable development, and heritage education). During the research-professional development meetings, analysis of the children's work and conversations constituted evidence that could be assigned to different levels in the curriculum grids.

Classroom action-research: data and results

The case study analyzed in this paper involved a class of 25 eight-to-nine-year-old children at the IV November Comprehensive Institute, in Cornaredo.

Before experimentation in the classroom, the researchers asked the entire teaching staff and families to complete a questionnaire investigating their ideas, as teachers and parents, of Citizenship and Citizenship Education. We cannot present here in depth the results of the survey but from the teachers' questionnaires emerges a prevalent idea of citizenship education linked to the concept of respect for rules and the ownership of rights and duties, which we could define as "traditional" or "prescriptive". Also in the representations of parents the most frequent themes are related to civic education (respect for rules, rights/duties) and to solidarity. Transversal themes such as sustainability and heritage education are scarcely perceived as being immediately linked to being a citizen.

The data from the questionnaires were cross-referenced with the analysis of the two individual interviews with the teacher, the first one carried out in the first phase of the experimentation and the second at the end. One of the salient themes that emerge from the interviews concerns the contents that the teacher declares she wants to pursue, which we will see later on how they will be only partially transferred into the didactic practice, which should keep together the experience of the territory, the protagonism of the children during the activity, the reflection on it. As far as the objectives declared by the teacher are concerned, there is a hoped-for acceptance by the children of the care of the heritage they have known.

⁴ We report in italics the words of the children (C), teachers (I) and researchers (R).

...if you know the territory and you know it because someone tells you, through your grandparents experiences, how was the life of the past, how a territory has changed, , you also start to take care of that environment, [...], if you respect it then you know that you do not even throw garbage on the ground, those little things that make the child really become a responsible citizen. (First teacher interview)

Starting from this declaration the teacher, along with two university researchers, a student-teacher and a coordinator-tutor, chose to explore the concept of identity construction in relation to the children's social context and through experiencing heritage preserved in their local territory.

The class organized two field trips, the first to the Museum of Peasant Civilization at Cascina Favaglie and the second to the Cornaredo courtyards, a heritage site representing rural life in the past, with the aim of discovering the rural identity that Cornaredo had in the past and linking it to the present.

The teachers' sensitivity to local history provided an opportunity to reflect together on how the territory, «the great book of history» mentioned by Bevilacqua (2007, p. 92), could prompt the children to reflect on their daily lives and address socially acute questions (Borghi, 2016; Legardez, 2017).

Archaeological evidence represents a treasure of information through which we can strengthen active citizenship activities and promote the civil consciousness of pupils, as well as their sense of belonging to the territory. School-Family-Local Associations collaborate to construct a concrete pathway of education to beauty and appreciation of the place where you live. (Teacher, First Interview)

We worked on the assumption that the territory holds the shared memories of the community and is a field of experience that can provide tools and sources for teaching history, with the aim of fostering the exercise of citizenship and the construction of a plural and inclusive identity (Cuenca-López, Estepa-Giménez y Martín-Cáceres, 2017; Molina, Escribano-Miralles y Díaz-Serrano, 2016). Rooting history teaching in the present, by posing problems based on “socially acute questions”, can contribute to the growth of active citizens (Audigier, 2002; Morin, 2001).



Image 1. Visiting Cascina Favaglie.



Image 2. The classroom corner display “Our grandparents’ past”



Image 3. Organizing the Courtyard visit.



Image 4. The Courtyards visit.



Image 5. The exhibition at school

During the visit to the Cascina Favaglie Museum, the children's questions and observations centred around the theme of preserving and exhibiting the museum artefacts, restoring such sites (the museum is hosted in an ancient piggery) and the theme of memory, both individual and collective.

But has it always been like that? (C1)

My own grandmother has a sewing machine but she doesn't use it anymore because she bought a new one. (C2)

We returned to these themes in the classroom by observing photographs, describing objects and rethinking the spaces visited: the children's words brought to light the experience of their grandparents, many of whom had conserved objects from the past. Some of the children began to bring these objects to school and together we decided to set up a small museum with their family artefacts, pictures, diaries and handbooks. During the museum visit, the guide had also told them that some "old sewing machines" had been collected by volunteers with the association Italia Nostra that manages the museum, reconditioned, and donated to less-industrialized countries in Africa. This allowed the children to link the theme of re-use with the theme of solidarity; they also encountered this theme during a presentation at the school by volunteers with the association Humana, who described to them the lives of children in a school in a Malawi village with which the class was twinned.

For the courtyard visit, the classroom was divided into four groups and each child had a task: photographer, journalist, special correspondent, artist. They had prepared in the classroom, coordinated by the student-teacher and their teacher, the questions for the interviews that they were to conduct with older people who had lived in the courtyard building as children (some of whom still lived there).

Their questions were aimed in particular at discovering what life had been like in the past (what people ate, how they used to go to school, how they played) and how the building, now mainly renovated, had looked in the past (the outside bathrooms, the open area, the common spaces, the spaces related to farming life). After the outdoor activities, they worked collaboratively in small groups, sharing the information and images (pictures and drawings) collected. They then discussed all together what they could and should do with this new "knowledge" that they had gathered, eventually deciding to organize an exhibition.

Table 1
Analysis of the levels of the children's learning during classroom discussions

	Memorizes the content (descriptive perspective)	Analyzes the content (analytical perspective)	Uses and critically builds content (complex perspective)
Discussion after visiting Cascina Favaglie	9	10	0
Discussion "Why we're going to visit the Courtyards?"	0	5	7
Discussion after the activity in the Courtyards	0	2	14
Discussion during the setting up of the exhibition	0	24	2

As shown in Table 1, the more the children were allowed freedom to conduct their inquiry on their own and develop their own ideas about a topic, the more their learning reached the complex level.

During the conversations, a crucial role was clearly played by the intervention of the teacher, classified by the researchers as shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Co-occurrence between levels of the children's learning and types of intervention by the teacher

	I1 Teacher leading/closed interventions	I2 QAE (teacher's question – student's answer – teacher's evaluation)	I3 Interventions that stimulate inclusive participation, continuity of action	I4 Interventions by students who offer comments or questions " <i>de motu proprio</i> "
Ap1 Memorizes the content	8	9	1	9
Ap2 Analyzes the content	15	5	15	52
Ap3 Uses and critically builds content	11	2	11	20

During the follow-up conversations, conducted with the children at the beginning of the following school year, a different system of analysis was adopted, more oriented towards developing the topics that had been addressed (Krippendorff, 2004) than towards observing learning and

interactions between children and teachers, in part because these conversations were moderated by the researchers.

The children were divided into five groups by the teacher, making sure to mix the Courtyard visit work groups, and sent outside the classroom to chat with the researchers about the previous year's project. A discussion of about 30' for each group was planned, but the duration of the conversations actually varied greatly depending on the children's level of participation and the interest elicited by the topics addressed and, unfortunately the last group conversation, held just before lunchtime, was limited to 15 minutes, while the conversation with Group 3 lasted 42 minutes. Furthermore, the experimentation focused on the theme of local history and its relationship with the local community and territory. Therefore, the questions posed to the children during the follow-up phase focused on the connection between history and citizenship education and were designed to explore whether and how the children had connected these themes, and to elicit their ideas about the concepts of history and citizenship.

The pattern of questioning devised by the researchers was very simple:

- Why are you studying history?
- Does the study of history have anything to do with citizenship?
- What do you remember about last year's project on Cornaredo's past?

Clearly the discussion took very different routes in the different groups, since the researchers followed the prompts provided by the children's utterances, acknowledging and relaunching cues and reflections in order to encourage participation and avoid interrupting – except where strictly necessary, because the thread of the discussion had been lost – the children's flow of thought. Analysis of the pupils' discourses and the topics they raised led to the identification of a set of themes that may be divided into:

- personal and universal memory: births and deaths, sharing memories, body and soul;
- daily life and family of origin;
- conceptualizations (creationist and evolutionist) of the origins of the earth and mankind;
- history and citizenship: a question of power (wealth and poverty, sovereign and slaves, war and its causes).

The link between history and citizenship emerged with difficulty and there were conflicting opinions across groups as to whether it existed or not. Confusion concerning terminology and meanings was evident at some junctures, and this issue was linked to the theme of how history is taught. History is often presented as a linear path from a primitive to a sophisticated stage, without taking into account the intrinsic complexity of the process (Brusa, 2007). This clearly does not allow children to problematize the issues involved in civil coexistence among human beings, but leads them to develop a simplistic division between "civilized" and "uncivilized".

Some children, on the other hand, had made inferences connecting the present and the past and raised issues such as war and hunting; most of the connections concerned how we should behave, things that were done in the past and are no longer done in the present, or should no longer be done in the children's view, and - vice versa - things that in the past we had not yet learned how to do.

R: What is citizenship then?

C: I know! People's behavior, like people who throw garbage on the ground, who pollute the seas...

R: So good behavior? How should you behave?

C: I remember this: respect for the environment.

R: Respect for the environment.

C: And for other people.

R: For other people.

C: In citizenship, we also said that to understand how we should behave we needed to understand how we had behaved from the beginning... like... that's why we asked our grandparents, we asked them for clues, some photos...

Another topic that emerged in Group 3 was solidarity and most of the discussion, once the theme of citizenship was introduced, centered around stories of charitable episodes that the children had witnessed.

C: I wanted to talk about having power and a lot of money and having difficulties because my mother every day when she leaves the office there is a gentleman in front of her. He asks her for money and then my mom goes into the bakery and gets him a sandwich and then gives him a sandwich instead of money and there are people who want money instead of a sandwich. Instead that person needed to eat.

C: Also, always in front of the church door.

C: And at the market.

R: Why did you think of that when you were talking about citizenship?

C: Because a person in difficulty needs help.

Concerning the project carried out the previous year, the children remembered particularly well the activities in which they had played a leading role and articulated their sense of knowledge about the past by linking it to their own experience, and they argue that knowledge of the past can help us understand the present and become better citizens.

C: The teacher told us to ask our grandparents for an object from the past.

C: From a long time ago.

R: And what has this got to do with citizenship? Why has this got to do with citizenship, or does it?

C: Yes-

R: Why do you think your teachers asked you do this? Is there a relationship with citizenship in your opinion?

C: They did it because otherwise we would not have understood... the way things were. How can we understand our past, if we then study other subjects and we don't know this fundamental thing that is studied in citizenship? We can't study other subjects. I mean if we didn't study the courtyards we couldn't know that a long time ago there were the courtyards...

[...]

C: Like, how can I put it... you see a movie, you only see the end and you never know how it went. You have to see the introduction to understand the whole film, you have to have seen it all, you can't only see a piece at the end.

Conclusions

The analysis of the debates conducted with children at the beginning of the following school year showed that most of the participating students took full advantage of the proposed activity, linking the project carried out on Cornaredo's Courtyards with the study of the past and present of its citizens. It also clearly emerged that it was of crucial importance for them to be co-producers of their own knowledge, as shown by the marked difference in their analysis and reflection on the contents learned in the field versus those read in a book or explained by the teacher in class.

Analysis of the conversations with children in the classroom showed a progressive increase in analytical and complex learning and growth in reflectivity on the knowledge acquired. In the sequence of their conversations, the co-occurrences I/Ap increased significantly over the time span

of the project: for example, in the initial conversations in October 2016 only three such co-occurrences were observed, while in the conversation recorded at the end of March 2017, there were 16 of them with a clear prevalence (14) of the Ap3 type. At the same time, it is evident that it is not possible to trace a unidirectional path of the children's learning that, starting from the descriptive, passes through the analytic and finally arrives at the complex, but rather, depending on the different activities proposed, the reactions of the children oscillate between the various levels.

It was also possible, thanks also to comparison with the other case studies conducted within the STEP project, to codify the class's relationship with the territory in terms of different levels of complexity:

1. "ready-made" field trip;
2. conscious choice of activities in the local area based on an educational project designed in the classroom;
3. co-design between school and local cultural institutions (i.e. museums, libraries, archives).

Another meaningful topic that emerged from the pupil's voices confirmed the "solitude" of the teacher researcher, because the children emphasized that, when they organized the exhibition:

We invited all the classes and only our own parents came, not the others. [...] because they're not interested in our work. If their [children] haven't done it, they won't come. (C3).

To facilitate exchange and sharing among teaching colleagues, it would have been appropriate to involve more teachers from the same school, especially in cases where the culture of research was not already part of the habitus of the Institute.

In the small group conversations, the children displayed full awareness of the autonomy they had been granted and expressed their satisfaction with it, as well as some criticisms.

Despite the difficulties highlighted, we can conclude that the intervention fulfilled the objective of connecting historical knowledge and heritage education with active citizenship, supporting the children, albeit with variable degrees of freedom and participation during the path, to become active interpreters of the past, to recognize through it their belonging to a community with a shared heritage and to develop the pride of preserving and communicating it.

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Revista académica evaluada por pares y de acceso abierto

Número 100

30 de abril de 2020

ISSN 2443-9991



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La revista Investigación en la Escuela desde su origen en 1987 hasta su n° 87 (2015) fue editada por Díada Editora.

