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"Scuola Diffusa" and Widespread Education as a Socio-Educational Resilience Practice for Inclusion. A qualitative study.

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Abstract

In Reggio Emilia, thanks to the "Officina Educativa", the educational department of the Reggio Emilia municipal government, "Scuola Diffusa", a specific model of Widespread Education, emerged as a response to the constraints resulting from the lockdown due to a health emergency situation. It shaped the educational ecosystem of the town, offering extensive educational opportunities for inclusion. It is based on deep alliances between different social, educational and community actors who co-design curricular projects that connect multiple contexts within a community and take the learners' everyday life interests and needs as a point of departure. In this study, and using qualitative methods to document the implementation of Widespread Education in the city of Reggio Emilia, we address the following question: What characteristics of Widespread Education facilitate inclusive practices? Three key conditions that seem to facilitate inclusive practices and experiences are identified in the educational model, namely: cooperative learning, learning from interests and real situations, as well as social support in small groups with the different professionals involved (teachers and educators). This requires training processes to address strategies and practices that allow different curricular units and objectives to be shared with areas of the territory.

Keywords

Inclusion; Education Outside the Classroom; Socio-Educational Resilience; Co-Design.

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"Scuola Diffusa" y educación ampliada como práctica socio-educativa para la inclusión. Un estudio cualitativo

Resumen

En Reggio Emilia se ha consolidado un modelo educativo, «Scuola Diffusa», impulsado por la Oficina Educativa del Departamento de Educación del Gobierno Municipal de Reggio Emilia, que emergió como respuesta a las limitaciones derivadas del confinamiento producido por una emergencia sanitaria, y que ha modificado el ecosistema educativo de la ciudad ofreciendo amplias oportunidades educativas para la inclusión. Se basa en alianzas profundas entre diferentes actores sociales, educativos y comunitarios que codiseñan proyectos curriculares conectando múltiples contextos dentro de una comunidad, y que toman como punto de partida los intereses y necesidades de la vida cotidiana de los y las estudiantes. En este estudio, y utilizando métodos cualitativos para documentar la implementación del modelo en la ciudad de Reggio Emilia, abordamos la siguiente pregunta: ¿qué características del modelo "Scuola Diffusa" facilitan las prácticas inclusivas? Se identifican tres condiciones clave en el modelo educativo que parecen facilitar prácticas y experiencias inclusivas, a saber: el aprendizaje cooperativo, el aprendizaje a partir de intereses y situaciones reales, así como el apoyo social en pequeños grupos con diferentes profesionales involucrados. Ello requiere de procesos de formación para abordar estrategias y prácticas que permitan compartir distintas unidades y objetivos curriculares conjuntamente con agentes sociales y comunitarios del territorio.

Palabras clave

Inclusión; Educación Fuera del Aula; Resiliencia Socio-Educativa; Codiseño.

Introduction

As a response to school lockdowns and distancing measures during a health emergency, "Scuola Diffusa" (SD) emerged as an attempt to draw on the Reggio Emilia area's distributed educational resources beyond the school. In this approach, classrooms of students aged 6 to 14 spend a week in the school year in significant places outside of the school (e.g., an agricultural cooperative, a public theatre, etc.). A co-design process is conducted before, during and after these visits to reinforce and connect the curriculum with real learning experiences in the local communities.

Reggio Emilia municipality and the local "Istituti Comprensivi"—which gathers pre-primary, primary, and lower secondary school institutions—have a long-lasting relationship that goes well beyond the municipal responsibility on school buildings and furniture that is codified in Italian law. This relationship was strengthened in 2010 with the establishment of "Officina Educativa" (OE) which is a municipal organ offering educational services for the schools and was formalized in 2017 with an agreement for education co-designed and ratified by all the parties involved (Municipality of Reggio Emilia and the city's Comprehensive Institutes) through the "Pact for Education and Knowledge" who considered the territory as "school", crossing the boundaries between places and learning experiences.

This allowed the SD to start in 2020-21, seeking to improve educational opportunities for all during the crisis. As social distancing became necessary during the health emergency that took place in the 2020 year, this established relationship opened a wide range of possibilities

to move educational activities out of school buildings. Classrooms transferred for a whole school year to non-educational institutions (the formal central bank building, a parish, etc.), cultural institutions (museums, exhibition centres, etc.), and informal education institutions (farms, atelier centres, etc.). All of these experiments, known collectively as SD, offered new opportunities for schools and learning to move beyond their traditional walls. The project involved 82 class groups serving a total of 2000 students during the first 2 years. Since the school year 2022-23, the project has evolved into a permanent structured feature of Reggio Emilia's educational landscape, involving currently 205 class groups with 5100 students, 620 teachers and 3100 hours of co-designing during the past 2 years. The approach and its potential are being adopted and explored beyond this original context and structure in what is becoming known as Widespread Education.

By Widespread Education (WE) it means a pedagogical approach that engages primary and secondary schools in developing curricular objectives in cooperation with other organizations and actors outside the school across time on contextualized, real, and authentic issues and questions that matter to students and communities. Co-researching, co-designing and co-teaching processes are implemented by formal, non-formal and/or informal agents. This connects not only learning experiences in and out of school but also social, educational and communitarian actors. Table 1 shows some characteristics of this approach.

Table 1.

Widespread Education

Characteristics
The out-of-school visit experience is not sporadic but occurs over several days (minimum 1 week).
The collaboration among formal, non-formal and/or informal agents is sustained over time.
The learning environment is considered a "community funds of knowledge and identity", that is, a "contextualized board" to extend and link the schooling practices and empower collective/shared identities.
Learning environment planning is an integral part of instructional co-design.
Learning objectives are chosen considering both learners' curricular needs, interests, motivations and inquiries and the potential that the space and the skills of the agents involved can bring to reach them.
Multiple actors co-design and are present together during the teaching action to support active student learning.
Learning becomes a co-research of issues and questions that matter to students and communities.
Some kind of involvement and support from local government (i.e., municipality) are provided.

Broadly, WE is in line with other approaches challenging the school's boundaries connecting the school with local communities to address local challenges, such as *open schooling* (Tasquier et al., 2022) or *community funds of knowledge and identity* (Esteban-Guitart et al., 2023). Of relevance is the concept of *community socio-educational resilience* (Iglesias et al., 2022), which involves the active engagement and commitment of different educational, social and community agents in the design, implementation and evaluation of creative and transformative educational practices that challenge adversity and uncertain circumstances. WE thus can be considered a pedagogical transformation at the crossroad of formal, informal, and non-formal education with a vision of territories as resourceful educational ecosystems (Kutsyuruba, & Walker, 2015; Toh et al., 2014). The idea of an educational

ecosystem here refers to dynamic relationships, collaborations and interdependencies among social and educational actors (agents from schools, families, universities, entities, and companies) who co-design an educational project while cultivating co-responsibility and mutual trust (Boned et al., 2024; Díaz-Gibson et al., 2021; Esteban-Guitart et al., 2024).

The original SD implementation has inspired a variety of WE experiences. However, its relationship with and potential for educational inclusion has not yet been the object of research studies. By inclusion, we mean here a participatory educational practice that allows incorporating the voices and agencies of all learners involved, regardless of their capacities, sociocultural circumstances, and characteristics (Esteban-Guitart et al., 2024; Lalueza, & Crespo, 2012; Martínez-Lozano et al., 2023).

In this regard, this article aims to provide a global re-consideration of data collected throughout the years of implementing the SD-specific and general WE in Reggio Emilia with the aim of finding a preliminary reply to the following research question: What characteristics of Widespread Education facilitate inclusive practices? By this we mean both what are the characteristics of WE that make it an inclusive experience, and how can these experiences of We have an impact on teaching methodologies making them more inclusive for all.

Methodology

The "Centro di Ricerca su Insegnanti e Innovazione didattica (CERIID)" at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia (UNIMORE) has started co-operation with schools and the local museum since the school year 2020-21, observing and analyzing the weeks at the museum and other experiences under the SD and the general WE framework described above. The data collected is listed in Table 2 and includes focus groups and interviews carried out to address particular research questions such as what are the characteristics of the educational experience at the museum, or what the gains are for students in terms of learning and understanding.

Table 2.
Synthesis of research questions and tools

Year	Research questions	Research tools	Dimension observed
2020-21 (SD)	What are the characteristics of the educational experience at the museum?	Observational grid (732 – 5 minute unites)	The main actions of educators and students; settings; students' grouping; changes in location; materials used.
	What are the gains for students in terms of learning?	Questionnaire (478)	The idea of a museum; the most memorable experience; changes in attitudes toward school.
	What are the potential gains for teachers in terms of changes in beliefs and practices?	Focus groups (Fg1,Fg2,Fg3_2020-21) with teachers	10 questions and 2 mentimiter.
2021-22 (WE)	How can the gains both for teachers and students be enhanced by the co-designing of the whole week as a coherent learning unit?	Observational grid, questionnaire and focus group (Fg1_2021-22)	(see above)

2022-23 (WE)	How can we support teachers implementing teaching methodologies from informal settings into their classrooms?	Focus groups with teachers from the same school (Fg1, Fg2_2022-23)	Teachers participated for a week in the museum and after reflecting on the experience and training on instructional design to enhance the competencies
2023-24 (SD)	What are the characteristics of the learning ecosystem that are needed to support WE practices?	2 focus groups with expert teachers (Fg1, Fg2_2023-24)	Cultural, social and material characteristics of the learning ecosystem and the way they support leadership
	What are the changes in teaching methodologies, evaluation and relationships observed during SD? At what condition can they be maintained once back in the classroom?	2 focus groups with expert teachers (Fg3, Fg4_2023-24)	Changes in school relationships observed in SD; different teaching methodologies and evaluation practices observed and how could they be applied in the classroom

Observations during the school year 2020-21 at the museum offered qualitative data about the development of the educational experiences. In order to trace this evidence, 4 different researchers observed 120 hours of museum activities carried out by primary and secondary school classes. These observations were combined with the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of 3 focus groups (see Table 3 for coding) to explore the quality of the experience that the teachers had, focusing on whether they had gained a new understanding of their students, and on possible changes in their teaching methodologies that could be transferred from the museum to their classrooms (Bertolini et al., 2023).

The same research tools were applied for the 2021-22 year, to a smaller sample. Two primary school classes were involved in a longer co-design process, along with the museum educators. The week was planned around one central theme, transformation, which was investigated in different settings and disciplinary fields (history of the town, vision, art) with devices to grant continuity and interdisciplinarity. Moreover, students, divided into groups, were responsible for documenting the week, each group being in charge of documenting one day. Each day became part of a common PowerPoint presentation, with one of the groups designing the common parts such as the introduction and conclusions (Landi, 2022).

Table 3.
Focus Group coding

Code	**Descriptor**	Example
General	Inclusion for every student	*I have never had an experience like this, everyone was involved (Fg2_2020_21)*
Talents	Inclusion as students display and recognize new and unexpected skills, abilities, talents	*Some creative dispositions of certain students have emerged (Fg4_2023-24)*

Engage	Students are included in learning processes as they experience stronger engagement, motivation, and desire to learn	*It is as if the usual differences that we see in class, were not there. This experience at the museum has created homogeneity because they were all equally motivated. (Fg2_2020-21)*
Transversal	WE supports inclusion in and out of school by developing lifelong and life-wide skills	*It fosters an attitude toward metacognitive reflections that you can bring back to the classrooms (Fg1_2023-24)*
Real	It includes children in the real life of their town and of the adults	*It is moving from sightseeing to real life: the museum experienced as a living and explorable place (Fg3_2023-24)*
Motivators	Teachers recognize different intrinsic motivation boosters such as: aesthetically pleasant environments, active learning, real-life settings	*It offers students […] new strategies and tools, that in class are not at their disposal that have helped them in their learning path while also sparking their enthusiasm, the desire to do, to take risks, to learn, to discover (Fg1_2021-22)*
Success	Students experience success in learning because they can all contribute and the evaluation is formative and not summative	*When students do their research, everyone can contribute freely and thus more easily experience success (Fg4_2023-24)*
Observation	As students become more active teachers can stay on the side-line, observe, and trigger new reasoning through interaction.	*Change in perspective by the teachers. During this week we were forced to create a new role for ourselves, more as observers and facilitators (Fg1_2021-22)*
Cooperation	The learning ecosystem is cooperative	*Students have worked autonomously, they have created together with the computer, and they have shared and discussed together. For me it has been a very creative experience and 3 words are not enough to describe it. (Fg1_2021-22)*
Engaging methods	Techniques, tools and settings used prove effective in engaging everyone	*In WE time stretches out. You have more time to reformulate and reconsider together what students say, to reframe and elaborate open questions on someone's opinion based on the argumentation of another student (Fg3_2023-24*

In the year 2022-23, the aim became to support changes in the teaching methodologies, based on the lessons learned from experiences in the museum. The research team suggested a diary format and an observation grid to be applied by teachers to foster their reflection. After the week at the museum, most of the teachers participated in two focus groups and a training unit on instructional design aimed at fostering students' life skills development. Teachers then designed the activities based on what they had learned through the project, which involved each group in developing an interactive tool to visit the museum with families.

During the current year (2023-24), as SD experiences have continued, CERIID researchers, together with *Officina Educativa*, collected data on the learning ecosystem and the changes in the teaching and evaluation methodologies being employed, as well as on the relationships within the framework of an Erasmus+ project, the "Widespread School" project. The thematic analysis of the data has been aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the systemic elements of resilience, on the one hand, and of the possibility of bringing elements of informal education into formal settings on the other hand. Each new focus group or interview did not aim to gain representativeness of the issues, but rather a deeper understanding through *saturation* (Small, 2009).

In addition, pre- and post- questionnaires were delivered to the students, as a first partial attempt to analyze students' gains from the WE experience in terms of memorability, changes in ideas and/or learning strategies, and deeper understanding of the museum. In this paper, we analyze the question: "*If a friend were to ask you: What is a museum and why is it a special place, what would you respond?*" to visualize whether this experience was meaningful to most students and thus get a sense of inclusion in learning processes. We based the analysis on some categories identified from the literature (Zuccoli, 2014), namely:

1. On the function children attributed to the museum, i.e. a "container" of "things" to "see" (exhibition function); a place of discovery (exploratory function); a place to learn, to know, to understand, a place that "tells" (cognitive function);
2. On the value of the museums: emotional/aesthetic dimension (place for enjoyment, beauty, enthusiasm, happiness); interconnective dimension (place of unexpected connections between disciplines, between present and past, with the outside); civic dimension (an important place for the city, for heritage protection and enhancement).

In this paper, in order to address our two research questions, we focus on the results of inclusion based on the SD and WE experiences examined. In that regard, we divided the results into three subsections: (a) is WE inclusive? (b) the reasons for its inclusiveness, (c) and the impact on teaching methodologies.

Results

Is Widespread Education Inclusive?

To provide a preliminary answer to the first research question (*What are the characteristics of Widespread Education that make it an inclusive experience?*) we have analyzed the focus groups done with teachers throughout the years. First, we looked for the way inclusion is characterized in a WE setting. We found that students and teachers feel included both at a cognitive and emotional level.

Since the beginning, teachers were surprised by the engagement of all students in the WE experience. "*All students were involved, even those with disabilities, no one was excluded, during the activities everyone participated*" (Fg1_2020-21). This idea of general participation has not changed throughout the years. Students, even those who struggle in regular classroom activities, not only actively participate, but display levels of competencies that teachers have never seen before in them. "*It* [WE] *is a way to identify talents and attitudes, predispositions that stay latent in the regular school environment*" (Fg2_2023-24).

Teachers are able to see their students—particularly those who are normally more passive—not only getting excited and activated but also displaying attention, competence, and responsiveness to "school" tasks such as the construction of texts. Through their

participation, they have had the opportunity to gather evidence on the persistence of certain learnings and have observed how a challenging task can be done by all students according to their own abilities, with obvious personal enrichments. As one teacher puts it, "*Especially during the documentation phase and the construction of the PowerPoint presentations, activities managed by the students, I noticed how many of them had skills that I had never noticed before, and that they could enact autonomously*" (Fg1 2021-22).

Even if they are freer to wander around and asked to work independently, students stay on task and display high-quality learning: "*Everyone has adopted and put into practice the ability of interconnecting elements at a different level than they display in school: the whole group has stepped up greatly*" (Fg2_2020-21). Special educational needs students stay on task and exhibit functional participation that is otherwise challenging for them. These students' engagement in the educational activities and their ability to show their skills autonomously stood out for educators.

This new energy and passion for learning is not confined to students but spreads to all actors involved:

> "*For me, the main strength of the experience has been inclusiveness, the fact of providing opportunities for children with difficulties, tools, new strategies that in a normal classroom are not available and that facilitated them in their learning journey. Tools and strategies that also triggered renewed enthusiasm, a new desire to do, to challenge themselves, to discover, to investigate in both pupils and teachers*" (Fg1_2021-22).

Even teachers feel more included and involved in the learning process.

Students' participation deepens at different levels: in designing and building products, but also in actively participating in discussions with personal ideas and contributions. More students discuss and they often bypass adult mediation and start discussing topics with each other. This direct interaction is seldom seen in the classroom (Pontecorvo et al. 2004).

"*The class you introduce at the beginning of the project changes. Students who struggle in school behind a desk, although they might face difficulties during the experience, have the opportunities to show their talents, competencies, which are harder […] to see in the school.*" (Fg1_2023-24). Both teachers and fellow classmates change their opinions of others. The playing field levels itself since sometimes the most accomplished students have a harder time expressing their ideas and showing their proficiency in the unstructured environment. New relationships can be forged on these new perceptions. Teachers also report higher levels of "*fair play and respect*" (Fg4_2023-24) among students with lower levels of conflict.

There is also a different level of inclusion that goes beyond the classrooms. "*It is key that students realize that the WE sites belong to them. They can use, visit, be part of these spaces. They contribute to the way these spaces work and to the possibilities that they can offer*" (Fg1_2023-24). This new sense of identity is connected to a different vision of citizenship.

One of the clues, the marks of an inclusive learning environment is that engagement and learning are observed in all students. Teachers confirmed observing engagement and learning in all students throughout the fg, even those displaying emotional (being shy, self-centred, oppositional, unmotivated) and learning difficulties. This engagement and learning in terms of deeper understanding and precise use of written language is displayed in students' answers to the question: "*If a friend were to ask you: What is a museum and why is it a special place? What would you answer?*".

Students' descriptions become richer from pre- and post- test: from 83 to 134 coded segments. The type of coding also changes, with an increase in those aspects less related to a traditional view of the museum. References to the "civic dimension" increase from 1 to 6 coded segments, those related to the "interconnective dimension", from 5 to 13, and those expressing an "emotional/aesthetic dimension", from 5 to 29. Segments coded under the "cognitive function" also increase from 13 to 28 and "exploratory" from 6 to 15. In contrast, references to the "exhibition function", which were prevalent before the week, decreased from 34 to 29. The increased complexity of the narratives and linguistic richness are a sign of learning.

Moreover, the presentation produced by the students presents all the key points that educators conveyed in the focus groups, thus providing triangulation material. Students recognized and presented the interdisciplinary connections, and the coherence in the week's activities, and searched for further material to deepen their understanding of the lessons learned, for example comparing the Roman exhibit with modern facilities to clarify its function. In the introduction and conclusion, they reflected on the common learning carried out, on the meanings and new approaches to learning they had discovered. Teachers were stunned by the quality of the presentations and the level of cooperation within and between the groups.

The reasons for its inclusiveness

Investigating the reasons for the inclusiveness that the empirical evidence presented above suggests, 2 macro areas emerge that may help explain it:

1. Elements that foster intrinsic motivation;
2. Organizational devices to create a cooperative and supportive learning environment.

We will first analyze the characteristics that support intrinsic motivation in students. No matter where WE experiences take place, teachers report that "*the ability of this learning situation to include is great!*" (Fg1_2020-21). Since the spaces that host these experiences include cultural institutions or workplaces situated in authentic contexts, they tend to be ideal to tackle and look for solutions to real-life problems. Experiences in these contexts tend to spark students' interest because of the connections with real life that not only make the questions meaningful but also offer possibilities for all different talents and abilities to find expression. It is active learning that, because of the more flexible institutional boundaries, can more easily be based on students' interests. The educators' role becomes facilitating the exploration process, supporting the generation of hypotheses and the design of ways to test them and find alternatives.

Students also experiment with the aesthetic aspects of learning, more so than is made possible in regular classrooms: "*Beautiful places, very engaging, with many possibilities […] you walk into another world, and this is a first step to change the children's mindset*" (Fg3_2023-24). "*It is a type of learning that we could call active, creative, cooperative […] The good thing is that students feel totally as protagonists and responsible for their learning*" (Fg4_2023-24). Since the environment does not offer straightforward indications for students on how to carry out activities, they have to be open and allow for multiple possible solutions and ways of expressing them. This openness not only favours participation but also allows for students to more easily experiment success since there are no preconceived right or wrong answers; solutions are discovered through group investigations.

During WE experiences, participants are trying to understand and research together, and the evaluative elements become less central in the process. Students are interested in the

experience and no one is posing questions that they (teachers, students) already know the answer to. This means that there is less fear of giving the wrong answers and students are braver about posing questions. As has been reported previously in similar open-ended experiences (Tasquier & Jornet, 2023), everybody shifts the traditional roles: students are in control and teachers observe and co-experience. This implies that students do not feel the negative burden of assessment, they lose the fear of making mistakes and being judged. "*It is a great flywheel of motivation for them, the fact that they know they are being watched but with an eye that tries value and enhance their actions*" (Fg4_2023-24). Teachers are aware that in regular classrooms students pose fewer questions and engage less in discussion because they are afraid of making mistakes and being judged. They are also aware of how the change in the learning environment triggers a virtuous cycle that enhances intrinsic motivation and lowers fears of evaluation.

The organizational elements that support inclusion are manifold. The use of tablets to document the experience enhances the learning environment and provides support for students with special educational needs. "*Tablets, cameras, special apps are intriguing, especially for those students with stronger practical and technological attitudes*" (Fg2_2023-24). "*There was a newcomer in our class who knew very little Italian, but thanks to the AI automatic translating systems he could interact and take full advantage of the experience. We use the same tools in class now*" (Fg3_2023-24). Technologies also allow the emergence of skills not usually visible in class and thus trigger wider attention and participation of all students. Speaking about a student, who displayed problematic behaviour in the classroom and often needed to be contained, his teachers had to admit that during the WE experience there was never a need for a teachers' intervention. "*He was our reporter, he was shooting videos with the iPad, that was his role. He fitted very easily in this educational proposal. We never had to contain or rebuke him or prevent a conflict situation, as we would have done in class*" (Fg3_2023-24).

Yet, even traditional tools become elements of inclusion, because they are reinterpreted to allow for personal elements to emerge. A case in point is the personal notebook ("taccuino") that every student puts together before the experience and which they can use during the week to write personal notes and ideas, draw pictures or diagrams, and keep track of group reflection. All students use it in very personal ways and ask to continue this personal documentation even after the WE experience.

Another aspect that supports inclusion is the wider possibilities of changes in activities and settings. "*The setting makes the difference, the possibility of moving through different environments and changing body posture: sitting alone and in a group, on the ground or around the table, standing or walking… all of it helps focusing and personal activation*" (Fg3_2020-21) Students work in small groups that often carry out different activities. The small size of the groups and the direct interaction with adults who are researching and exploring the same topics help direct engagement and inclusion of all. Meanwhile, the need to report the discovery made to the wider group is also an inclusive mechanism because it brings everybody back on the same page.

Impact on teaching methodologies

Having identified the characteristics of inclusion in WE settings, we now focus on the third research question: *How can these experiences of Widespread Education have an impact on teaching methodologies making them more inclusive for all?* We will present teachers' ideas collected through focus groups and the insight gained by researchers during a professional development course carried out during the school year 2022-23.

Teachers recognize the differences between school and WE learning environments. They also clearly state the different teaching methodologies experienced. Non-teacher educators more naturally view learning as an interconnected, interdisciplinary process, that can be displayed using multiple languages. During co-designing and co-teaching, the educators promote this vision and support new understandings in teachers. The relationship with the educators and experts, one of the pillars of WE, is valued by teachers. "*We have brought back into our profession some of the modalities and methodologies we have experienced with educators […]. If the teacher has similar sensitivity and is prone to accept certain suggestions, these contacts can help him/her grow professionally, can give further ideas*" (Fg2_2023-24).

Teachers recognize that they can learn how to use multiple languages and modalities even in their everyday work: "*It is training for us as well*" (Fg1_2023-24). Teachers and educators wish they had more opportunities to have joint professional development meetings to learn from each other's. Yet, while educators would like reflective meetings where all participants reflect and exchange on the same questions, teachers would prefer more traditional training where educators could share their knowledge on learning environments, documentation and other areas where teachers feel less expert.

However, the key issue remains to what extent teachers really believe in being able to transfer the key aspects of WE into their classroom. There are 2 aspects to be considered. On the one hand, "*not every teacher is able to participate in WE, because not everyone has the flexibility in terms of designing and organizing, and the ability to imagine school in a different way*" (Fg1_2023-24). On the other hand, secondary school teachers interviewed in the focus groups consider WE and active learning in general unfeasible in everyday classrooms. "*it is right to increase this type of experiences, yet the other types […] the more transmissive one, should not be discharged, we have to integrate different approaches*" (Fg4_2023-24). While it is seen as a welcome change in the routine, some teachers do not perceive it as a key moment. "*I like this experience because it brings variety. If I could choose to do schooling always this way, I would say no because it is right for kids to experience different formats and comparing different activities. WE is a type of active, creative, collaborative learning, it is not the only form of learning that kids should experience*" (Fg4_2023-24)

After years of experience in co-designing WE activities, teachers seem to develop a greater sense of how to connect classwork with experiences in WE. This continuity enhances learning for students, but it also helps in reflecting and applying active methodologies in the classroom. "*WE supports students constructing their life projects […] it supports development of transversal skills, […] but back in school it is difficult to maintain cross-sectoral disciplinary work*" (Fg1_2023-24). A point of difference could be planning WE experiences as part of a year-long project displaying different key moments.

The CERIID research group carried out a training path with 10 primary school classes from the same school. After spending a week at the museum, teachers answered a questionnaire and participated in two focus groups discussing the museum experience in connection with students' competencies development. This process made it possible to draw explicit connections between the teaching methodologies experienced at the museum and the competencies developed. Teachers had a two-hour training session on teaching methodologies to help with development of competencies and two more hours of co-designing of a teaching unit. The outcome of the unit was the construction of an interactive guidebook of the museum designed for families. Students completed the task and the guidebook has been used by families visiting the museum. However, a follow-up conversation with teachers showed very little change in their perspective: some activities are just not possible in school and students do not participate in the same way as when they are at the museum. To prove her point, one of the teachers explained how when required to

carry out research at school, all students had chosen the internet and not books, while in the museum they had only used books. Answering a specific question, she admitted she had not provided any books, although she could have, and that students only had the internet at their disposal, while in the museum they had books. She did not see how structuring the learning environment without books could have changed students' responses.

Discussion and conclusions

This paper addressed two issues, namely: the characteristics of WE that make it an inclusive experience, and how these experiences of WE can have an impact on teaching methodologies making them more inclusive for all. Overall, the research question addressed is: What characteristics of WE facilitate inclusive practices?

Regarding the first issue, qualitative results show the benefits of cooperative learning, social support and connecting students' interest in real life as a meaningful practice that allows for the incorporation of the voices and agencies of students. According to one of the participating teachers, it fosters "active, creative, cooperative" education and learning. Indeed, literature identified cooperative learning as a strategy to foster inclusion in educational settings (Traver et al., 2023). Educating learners with children with special educational needs (i.e., a child that has a learning problem or disability that makes it more difficult to learn than most children their age), requires instructional approaches that promote collaboration, help and assistance from peers, and concrete real problems to address and to connect learning units (Culque et al., 2024). This can be considered a characteristic element of WE. WE settings promote the emergence of transversal competencies in academically weaker students. This levelling of the playing field helps common understanding and the establishment of new and positive relations.

Regarding the second issue, the support, assistance and collaboration between educators and experts appear as a key element in the design and implementation of teaching methodologies. Furthermore, both educators and teachers emphasize the need for common training on teaching methodologies as a place to establish common reflections. This however, requires time and strategies to connect learning with different curricular areas. The WE continuity approach enhances learning for students, but it also helps in reflecting and applying active methodologies in the classroom.

Given this lack of results with traditional training, a possible new approach could be research-based professional development (Asquini, 2018; Bergmark, 2023) with a question, that teachers themselves posed during the focus group, at its core: "*How can we make students feel responsible for their learning even outside WE experiences?*" (Fg4_2023-24). Another possibility that emerged from the focus group is coordinating more strongly WE experiences and learning in the classroom, by including the week-long experience in a wider and longer research/project-based learning structure, with non-teacher educators present in the classroom at key moments throughout the year. These strategies could help answer the core question, as WE experiences move forward: How can we enhance engagement for all in normal classroom settings involving social, and community spaces and agents?

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