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**Children Hybrid Integration: Learning Dialogue
as a way of Upgrading Policies of Participation**

Evaluative Final Report and Final Report on Evaluative Research

Synthesis of Deliverable 6.2 and Milestone 17

Responsible partner: University of Modena and Reggio Emilia

Executive summary

General overview

This report includes the results of WP6 research, focusing on school activities which aim to enhance and support hybrid integration through dialogic interactions and children's agency, with a specific focus on the participation of children with a migrant background (CMB). The research was based on mixed methods, including:

- Audio and video recordings of classroom activities
- Pre-test questionnaires collected from children to investigate some classroom relations before the activities
- Post-test questionnaires collected from children to understand changes and evaluation of the activities
- Focus groups and interviews with children to understand better their views of the activities in which they participate.

The report includes 11 chapters, as listed below.

Chapter 1: Description of the theoretical background of the field research, including the concepts of hybrid integration, agency, facilitation, narratives, language mediation, and description of the research methodology, based on questionnaires, interviews and focus groups addressed to children, and above all video and audio recordings of activities.

Chapter 2: Descriptions of the collected data and the data selected for inclusion in the report; analysis of general data on participants from pre-test and post-test questionnaires; description of the impact of the pandemic, description of the local contexts of field research in the seven participating countries.

Chapter 3: analysis of transcriptions of sequences of interaction in ISCED 0 classes/groups (nursery schools, children aged 5-6).

Chapter 4: analysis of transcriptions of sequences of interaction in ISCED 1 classes/groups (primary schools, children aged 9-10).

Chapter 5: analysis of transcriptions of sequences of interaction in ISCED 2 classes/groups includes data on ISCED 2 classes/groups (lower secondary schools, children aged 11-13).

Chapter 6: analysis of transcriptions of sequences of interaction in ISCED 3 classes/groups (higher secondary schools, adolescents aged 15-16).

Chapter 7: analysis of transcriptions of sequences of interactions during second language teaching/facilitation, prevalently in ISCED 2 groups, some in ISCED 1 and ISCED 3 groups. **Chapter 8:** analysis of narratives about the pandemic (collected in Italy and the UK).

Chapter 9: analysis of children's observations and evaluations of the classroom activities, based on results of post-tests and interviews/focus groups.

Chapter 10: analysis of transcriptions of sequences of interpreting/mediation of parent-teacher interactions, sometimes with children's participation.

Chapter 11: summary of the most important results of the research and preliminary suggestions for training and policies, which will be expanded and refined through the outcomes of WP7 and in the final report.

The impact of pandemic

The pandemic had a very relevant impact on the collection of data. The collection was planned in late winter and spring 2020, but it was prolonged to June 2021 for six partners and it was only completed in October 2021 for the seventh. It was not possible to complete the collection of data as foreseen in the original project. Nevertheless, the big effort of the seven consortium partners has allowed a very important result in terms of quantity and quality of collected data. The field research involved 103 classes/groups of children, in which 235 activities were recorded, 3141 questionnaires were collected, 83 focus groups were realised. The data from the questionnaires show that CMB are around 49% of the participants in the activities. This result is perfectly in line with the objective of the project: studying hybrid integration in the education system.

Classroom interactions

Analysis of classroom activities (chapters 3-7) is based on the transcription of 93 extracts from recorded interactions, which have been considered relevant to provide indications and suggestions about best practices and, to less extent, also problems of enhancing dialogue and children's agency in order to reach hybrid integration. Almost all these extracts include sequences in which CMB actively participate.

This analysis shows that best practices can include different forms of interaction, listed below.

1. **Forms of facilitation.** These forms are based on a mix of: (a) questions which enhance participation showing a genuine interest in children's points of view; (b) formulations which interpreter (summarise, explicates or develop) the meaning of the gist of children's narratives or contributions; (c) minimal feedback which show listening and attention and favour the fluidity of conversations. Two sub-forms (or different phases) of facilitation are: (1.1) a form combining questions and formulations, supporting children's agency; (1.2) a form based on minimal responses allowing children to take the floor continuously.

2. **Mixed forms of facilitation.** These forms add adults' guidance to facilitation. They are based on adults' expanded turns of talk which provide comments or explanations about relevant and positive meanings produced by children.

3. **Directive forms of facilitation.** These forms include adults' more frequent, or systematic, comments and explanations, combined with normative recommendations. These forms decrease the potential for

upgrading children's epistemic authority. In these interactions, teachers/facilitators provide relevant knowledge for children, establishing adult authority in the classroom.

4. **Participated teaching.** This form of interaction is based on teacher's superior epistemic authority, shown by their questions which aim to guide children's answers and to scaffold these answers. Children generally align with teachers' orientations, but when children do not align, participated teaching tends to avoid negative sanctions.

All these forms can shape effective practices, to some extent and according to different objectives, but the impact on dialogue and agency decreases from form 1 to form 4. Moreover, these forms are distributed in different ways in different types of schools (or ISCED) and different research areas.

- Forms of facilitation were more frequent in higher secondary schools (ISCED 3), above all in Italy where facilitators were external to schools.
- Forms of facilitation were more frequent in primary schools (ISCED 1) than in lower secondary schools (ISCED 2) and nursery schools (SCED 0).
- Participated teaching was more frequent in lower secondary schools (ISCED 2), where also second language teaching was very frequent.
- Mixed and directive forms of facilitation were relevant in nursery schools (ISCED 0) children in which children are more frequently seen in need of guidance for their less fluent participation in conversation and ability in dialoguing.

Fluency in the use of language was a problem for several CMB. When CMB were not fluent, it was more difficult for teachers/facilitators to upgrade their epistemic authority and to involve them in dialogue. However, fluency was not the only important factor in second language teaching. We observed three modes of teaching a second language, respectively based on materials, improvement of skills and classroom conversation (classroom context mode). Effective facilitation of dialogue and agency is more probable in the classroom context mode, which encourages the production of children's extended narratives. Classroom context mode may be also useful to discuss cultural and intercultural issues in particular when children are fluent enough. However, enhancement of children's agency also depends on conversations on themes which are relevant for children and on teachers' renounce to explain, and thus to upgrade their own epistemic authority.

Autonomous interactions between children were not rare, it was but difficult to record them. This report includes two recordings, one in Germany and one in Sweden. While complete autonomy in managing interactions is probably not possible in educational contexts, since autonomous work group is based on tasks assigned by teachers/facilitators, these two cases are interesting since they have different outcomes, based on different assigned tasks. Clearly, teachers/facilitators' assignments can enhance different forms of children's autonomous work group, enhancing or underestimating the realisation of agency and dialogue.

The use of materials during the recorded activities was rather common. They were prevalently written texts, drawings and images. Materials can be important either in assigning tasks or in supporting and mediating the promotion of agency and dialogue in schools. Their impact depends on the form of teaching/facilitation.

Production of narratives

Many narratives were produced during the recorded classroom activities. The interactional production of narratives presents three general characteristics, as listed below.

1. Frequency and variety of narratives, in particular narratives on personal experiences, views and emotion, depended on children's exercise agency in choosing to tell and what to tell. This was more frequent in ISCED 3 and ISCED 1 classes/groups.

2. Children contributed to narrative production in different ways, i.e. as tellers, elicitors, co-tellers or listeners, and in different situations. Upgrading of children's epistemic authority corresponded to the involvement of children as tellers. The combination of facilitative forms and children's interest in telling stories enhanced spontaneous narratives.

3. Transitions and interlacement between narratives were more frequent and fluid when children's agency was enhanced and supported by facilitators/teachers.

Several narratives focused on migration (experiences, memories, reflections on diversity and integration). CMB could contribute to these narratives telling personal stories, above all in Italy, more occasionally in Finland, Sweden, Poland and the UK. During second language teaching, narratives of migration were not frequent since the focus was mainly on language proficiency. Some interesting narratives focused on the effects of the pandemic, in Italy and UK, in ISCED 1 and ISCED 2 classes. These narratives showed very ambivalent ways of considering the pandemic, which included both its negative and positive aspects.

Interpreting as language mediation

The analysis of interpreting between teachers and parents, sometimes with the participation of children, regarded primary schools (ISECD 1) and nursery schools (ISCED 0) in Italy. The analysis is based on 25 extracts from 18 mediated interactions. It shows some recurrent contributions, which are summarised below.

Teachers' contributions

1. In primary schools (ISCED 1), teachers' assessments come in the form of long monologues: teachers do not ask parents to comment or explain their children's behaviours, nor do they propose any form of collaboration. Teachers' assessments are mostly negative focusing on: (a) the poor Italian language competence of the children and (b) the lack of parental support.

2. In nursery schools, the teachers involve the parents by asking them questions or giving them instructions about what to do for and with their children.

Mediators' contributions

1. In primary schools, mediators (a) try to include the parents in the interaction by summarising the teachers' assessments and by providing support and suggestions to the parents, (b) mitigate teachers' assessments both by highlighting positive aspects in their renditions and by talking with parents in their language to explain how the system functions and what they can do with it.

2. In primary schools, mediation requires an exceptional effort in (1) choosing how to render the negative evaluations and (2) suggesting something the parents may plausibly do to help.

3. When teachers provide positive assessments of children and their parents' support, mediation is easier (ISCED 0).

Parents' contributions

1. Parents give minimal feedback when reported about teachers' negative assessments about their children's performance.

2. Parents react defensively when accused of giving little support to their children.

Children's contributions (when the children participate in mediated interactions)

1. The teachers mainly address the parents by talking about the children indirectly.

2. On those rare occasions when they are addressed directly by teachers or through mediators' initiatives, children do not respond or only provide minimal feedback.

3. Mediators' attempts to involve the children are weak since they are harnessed in the teacher-parent - or parent-child - interaction and are compelled to follow it rather than support children's autonomous initiatives.

This analysis raises reflections on interpreting as a way of mediating (language mediation), based on agency, and enhancing (or not enhancing) other participants' agency. Mediators, in particular took actions in order to support dialogue between migrants and institutional representatives, acting as facilitators. Mediators' mitigation and suggestions partially helped to avoid judgemental discourse and the consequent risk of direct rejection of teachers' monologues on the part of the parents. With children, however, mediators' agency did not work likewise, showing that the condition of children in the education system cannot be easily changed through mediation.

Children's evaluation

Post-test questionnaires showed that a large majority of children appreciated the activities. The most positive result regards ISCED 1 children. However, ISCED 3 adolescents also showed interest and enjoinment. Although with more ambivalences, ISCED 2 children also took advantage of the activities. Positive results also concern ISCED 0 children, above all in Italy, where children responded more frequently and CMB were much more numerous than in Germany.

CMB considered these activities enjoyable and effective. However, a few other aspects showed that CMB's view is different from that of native children. This is not a problem, since the core of the CHILD-UP project was investigating the ways of enhancing hybrid integration, which means the ways of mixing experiences, views and emotions, rather than the ways of showing differences.

Focus groups and interviews confirmed the importance of dialogue, dialogic teaching and support of personal expression from the children's point of view. Dialogue and sharing expressions, both with teachers/facilitators and classmates, were the basic aspects of successful activities. The dialogue was not always realised and not for all children, but the activities can be considered frequently successful.

The importance of local contexts in different countries has been evidenced by both post-test questionnaires and focus groups/interviews. Questionnaires showed positive results for almost all countries. In the Italian and Belgian local contexts, focus groups also clarified the reasons for different evaluations of activities, based on more hierarchical (and negative) or more facilitative (and positive) ways of acting. In the UK and Swedish local contexts, children recognised teachers' superior epistemic authority, but they appreciated the way in which teachers enhanced and supported children's participation. Results were less positive in the Finnish and German local contexts. In Finnish local context, very few children were involved. The focus groups revealed that these children already knew each other and used to work together, so that probably innovation and change were not seen as relevant during the activities. Explanation of negative outcomes in the German local context is probably more complicated. Many children observed rather negatively what the recordings show as participated teaching, in which teachers upgraded their own epistemic authority. Thus, while children did not have particular problems during the activities, they also observed few opportunities to enjoy them and to construct positive relations.

Gender

The relevance of gender rarely emerged from the analysis. With very few exceptions, during the activities, participants neither oriented explicitly to gender meanings, differences and identities, nor they produced categorisations, stereotypes, or narratives on gender. The quantitative data about children's evaluation do not show relevant differences between responses from boys and girls, which are very frequently similar, although boys declared more frequently of mocking classmates and getting bored during the activities.

Lessons from the report

WP6 has provided relevant research-based results, which will be developed in WP7, through a training programme and guidelines for best practices, and in the final policy recommendations. Preliminarily, it can be said that results of WP6 make possible:

- To use transcriptions of activities as a primary resource in training sessions and production of guidelines for best practices.

- To stress the importance of knowledge of real and daily life, local activities to support school practices and educational policies.

- To improve teachers' and policy-makers awareness of the ways of enhancing and supporting hybrid integration, dialogue and children's (and parents') agency.

- To enhance teachers' contributions to improve communication with migrant children (and parents).

- To highlight the importance of collaboration between teachers and external facilitators, mediators and parents.

- To suggest the importance of bottom-up interactional processes, involving schools and stakeholders, in constructing knowledge, enhancing good practices and proposing policies.

- To stress the importance of real-life materials in the construction of specialised and interactive digital archives which can support knowledge and practices.