



## The PERMIT Teachers' training approach: *Learning from experience, experiencing to learn*

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abstract

This article aims to introduce the envisioned strategy in the teachers' training programme implemented within PERMIT project. Since the beginning, the project considered teachers' education as the crucial component of an educational dispositive (as understood by U. Margiotta in the sense of a social mechanism allowing a group of people to do, think and implement something according to a precise strategy) able to bring about innovations on the project topic (intercultural education for dialogue in the civil society). A concrete goal of such training was to develop intercultural competences to manage complex learning processes in the scenario of three different realities interacting within the PERMIT project (Italy, Slovenia, Turkey). At the same time, such a teacher training dispositive was hypothesized to enhance a reflection that takes to develop teachers' professional identity for the new hybrid and fluid learning space. In fact, in the authors vision, formal training has too structured activities, which need to be revisited in the light of a new strategy for teachers' professional development in intercultural learning environments.

In fact, the strategy focused on: supporting contact with peers in the locally and across frontiers; the use of online learning tools; coaching to further experimentation in class; and the creative process of learning activities design undertaken by teachers in sistematizing the many resources and ideas coming out from their work in class ("Pedagogy of learning unit"). In the end, the recognition of non-formal and informal learning would lead to the accreditation of learning by the University Ca' Foscari of Venice

Questo articolo mira ad introdurre la strategia incorporata al programma di formazione degli insegnanti implementato attraverso il progetto PERMIT. Il progetto considerava sin dall'inizio la formazione degli insegnanti come componente cruciale di un dispositivo formativo (nel senso della concezione di U. Margiotta -1997-, come meccanismo che consente un gruppo umano di fare, pensare e attuare seguendo una certa direzione strategica) mirato a generare innovazione con relazione al topic del progetto (educazione interculturale per aprire al dialogo della società civile) e nello scenario di tre culture interagenti (Italia, Slovenia, Turchia). Nel contempo, tale dispositivo per la formazione degli insegnanti ha generato un percorso riflessivo da parte dei formatori sul processo di sviluppo dell'identità professionale dell'insegnante immerso nel processo di creazione e di condivisione di esperienze e risorse educative con insegnanti da altre realtà culturali. Nella visione degli autori, l'attività formale di formazione degli insegnanti doveva essere rivista, poiché troppo strutturata, puntando a creare una nuova strategia di formazione per lo sviluppo professionale dell'insegnante in ambienti di apprendimento interculturali. In effetti, la strategia formativa si basava sul supporto dato agli insegnanti per il contatto con pari di altre realtà internazionali; l'uso di ambienti virtuali di apprendimento; il coaching nel processo di implementazione in classe delle unità di apprendimento elaborate sperimentalmente dagli insegnanti; il percorso riflessivo per la sistematizzazione della propria pratica professionale (Pedagogia dell'Unità di Apprendimento). Infine, il modello includeva il riconoscimento di apprendimenti informali e non formali per l'accREDITAMENTO universitario presso l'ente proponente, Ca' Foscari.

**Key Words:** Teachers Professional Development, Intercultural Education, Enlarged Cultural Contexts of Learning, Activity Theory.

## 1. Cutting-edge teachers' professionalism: *shaping a Professional Identity for the Lifelong Learning Society*

We are living in a defining moment, when the world in which teachers do their work is changing profoundly. The future learning agenda is fraught with uncertainty: broad societal questions determine its setting, while new knowledge paradigms emerge.

On the one hand, the monolithic knowledge of the national curriculum – brought into the class by teachers – has been questioned by the introduction of communication technologies and the dynamics of the multicultural society. Teachers have been traditionally considered transmitters, technicians, operators of such “encapsulated” knowledge (Engrestrom, 1991a, 1991b).

On the other hand, the need of shaping *key competences for lifelong learning society* (European Commission, 2006), is clearly emphasized by policy priorities of relevant transnational bodies. These claim for new pedagogical practices in order to prepare citizens and workers for a complex new society, in a context of crisis and change.

Teaching for the Lifelong Learning Society means to prepare young people for a world of insecurity (Hargreaves, 2003), but also, to give them the possibility to express their learning traditions (learning cultures) within the negotiated action of teaching and learning in school systems. Cultures that break the wall of classroom, that ask for an enlarged vision of the school “frontiers”. This in time means: teaching across frontiers, bringing together boundaries to promote the several minds and intelligences, as potential that a new society need to work.

School needs a transformation process to become a caring and creative place where learning communities – both constituted by students and teachers – can work in a joint venture. The “clockwork orange” age has come to an end, and with it the school that prepared people to enter that old world (Carneiro 2007): mainly because these schools have undermined creativity, innovation, and the potential of peoples to express their own – millenary – culture and knowledge, imposing standardized version and divisiveness (Freire, 1970; Bourdieu, 1970).

It seems that innovation, mobility, e-skills, the modernization of the labour market and social inclusion, all challenges that the EU has chosen to face within a unified strategy (see Europe 2020 flagship Initiative), recognise the crucial role played by educational systems and the professionals operating within them (European Commission, 2010).

Therefore, teachers' professionalism is at the center of the debate on educational shif (UNESCO, 2006; European Commission, 2007; OECD, 2005, 2009, 2010).

In fact, teachers cannot keep on teaching from an ethnocentric, static, acritical vision of pedagogical practice, as they also have to integrate communicative, linguistic, technological and managerial competences to become the facilitators of a dynamic and participatory learning processes. Their classes need to be opened to different cultures, local dynamics, new technologies and social networks.

Quality teachers are considered one of the most relevant elements within the ET 2020 strategy. In fact, European directives focus on common principles for European teachers' competences and qualifications (European Commission, 2005), as well as on improving teacher training (European Commission, 2007).

The 2005 document indicates three broad competence areas for well-qualified, mobile teachers as lifelong learners: (i) working with knowledge, technology and

information; (ii) working with fellow human beings; (iii) working with and in society. This recalls the focus on general, transversal competences such as learning to learn, citizenship and digital competences contained in the European document on the eight key competences for lifelong learning (European Commission, op.cit).

This complex scenery creates the conditions for a big impact on professional identity: is the teacher a craftsman of change, an innovator, a technician, a communicator, a projectist?

While society claims for the intervention of teachers, at the same time it does not recognize their right to intervene. (Margiotta, 1997; 2005, 2007). In fact, the teaching profession has been defined “paradoxical” (Hargreaves, op.cit) because it is at the center of a triangle of competing interests: to catalyze the opportunities of Knowledge Society; to develop and realize educational expectations, to protect against menaces of exclusion, security and public life. All this, with the better efficacy and minor costs.

Teachers suffer the pressures of old fashioned school systems, hierarchies, and public bureaucracy in everyday working activities, whereas they are also requested to work with innovation and flexibility. Teaching could be declared a “paradoxical profession” (Hargreaves, op.cit) and many teachers are in the middle of a deep professional crisis (lack of esteem about their role in society).

In fact, the EC 2007 report highlights the lack of consistency and coordination between different aspects of teacher education, low budgets for professional development, and few incentives to promote teacher motivation and retention. There is urgent need to provide legal recognition of professional qualifications to reinforce European teachers’ mobility, as well as quality standards for the attractiveness of European teaching and teacher training systems. In spite of these repeated European recommendations, reform processes at national level, have been slow, contradictory and at varying speeds, since the Open Method of Coordination and the principle of subsidiarity have so far tended to safeguard national agencies over ET policies.

Which kind of in-service training experiences could tackle the above mentioned paradoxes? To which extent is it possible to find time and space for reflection on practice and a critical positioning of teachers with regard to the complexities of their everyday professional activities? Being aware that the specific question of teacher education is closely interconnected social, innovation, research and enterprise policies as well as with the strategies on multilingualism promoted by national and supranational bodies (European Commission, op.cit), how to take advantage of policy development priorities where teaching is supposed to play a key role?

There is full agreement at international level that professionalism can be achieved through Higher education degree (the so called *universitisation* process in teachers’ training – Zgaga, 2006a); but there’s a raising concern about valorization of practices and professional identity of teachers, considering them as reflective practitioners (Darling-Hammond et. al. 2005; Altet, 2009; Caena, Margiotta, 2010) researchers (Whitehead, 1989; Whitehead, McNiff, 2006) and experts whose potential could be developed through active participation to teachers’ communities (Mitchell, Sackney, 2000; Toole, Louis, 2002; Stoll et al., 2006; Midoro,

2005); as it has been emphasized these activities could lead to professional affiliation, motivation and thus, excellence.

The point that every experience of educational innovation needs to afford is, in fact, the organization of an efficient training system that, being embedded on the teachers' professional life, helps them to reflect on practice and achieve expertise and self-confidence, taking advantage of innovation to become key actors in educational shifting.

## 2. The specific context of the PERMIT project

The PERMIT project (*"Promote Education and Reciprocal Understanding through Multicultural Integrated Teaching"*) aimed at contributing to fulfil the objective of promoting the Civil Society Dialogue between the European Union and Turkey with specific focus on ensuring a better knowledge and understanding of Turkey within the European Union.

As the project assumed from the beginning, quality secondary-level education... *is to be considered a key to fostering the development of a vibrant civil society. Secondary education is an extremely effective way to diffuse knowledge about different cultures and the different approaches and mentalities needed to face the challenges of integration between Turkey and EU* (Original project, CIRDFFA, 2007:9)

On the basis of this consideration, the project worked on the idea that teachers could be an important instrument to foster cultural understanding, reciprocal knowledge, active citizenship, awareness of issues concerning gender equality, environment protection and human rights, personal responsibility etc. Also, students who benefited from an increased quality in education could become more active members of the civil society.

Research activity undertaken at the first stages of the project, done by intercultural groups of researchers, experienced teachers and NGO exponents from partner countries, explored and compared teaching methods and their underlining values (see *"Cultural Values influencing Schooling System Report"*, CIRDFFA, 2009).

These are some of the leading questions: *How much do educational approaches influence changes in society and how can they be coherent with existing values and cultures? How could different teaching methods encourage the valorisation of diverse skills and minds in students, thus favouring more inclusion and lower rates of early school leave at secondary school level?*

From this initial activity, that counted on both desk-research and a questionnaire with the participation of more than 500 teachers and students from Slovenia, Italy and Turkey, it emerged clearly that secondary education institutions in both Turkey and the EU often face serious challenges with few methodological tools and little didactic support available for the teaching personnel. Innovative material and support through a community of practitioners is what teachers often asked for during previous seminars involving teachers from partner countries. At the same time, partner countries offered examples of schools and universities which have developed theories and practices on intercultural education. Some of these schools and universities in fact have at their disposal researchers and experienced teachers whose joint work on innovative programmes and teaching

methods would produce extraordinary results. However these experiences are often isolated and come from private secondary schools.

As found in the literature and official documentation, both Turkey and European Union partner countries are facing the challenge of a rapidly changing and increasingly heterogeneous society. For this reason the capacity to have an effective communication, aware of cultural differences, is becoming a key element for the civil society dialogue.

Teachers are often expected to adapt their teaching methods and programmes to changing needs; tensions and changes within societies often have an amplified echo in classes to which teachers are not prepared to deal with. Curricula and teaching strategies in partner countries are not keeping pace with the growing need to be fully aware of the distinctive features of ones' own culture and to have the critical capacity to engage in understanding different cultures and systems of values.

It is worth reporting here some of the conclusions of a recent World Bank report on Turkey<sup>1</sup> which pointed out that

...The significant progress in education made by Turkey in recent years, noting that such progress manifested itself with the improving quality of educational opportunities, students winning international awards, and serious support given to education by the private sector. However the proportion of EU citizens between the ages of 20 and 24 with a high school diploma was 80 percent, while the same rate was 55 percent in Ankara, and 35 percent in the province of Kars (a city near the Russian border). It noted that Turkey needs to have a higher proportion of high school graduates in order to compete with Europe and the rest of the world, noting that the EU's aim was to have 85 percent of its population age 22 and over be high school graduates by 2015.

According to the same report quality of teachers is an issue, with educators facing a serious shortage of educational materials. The same report noted that schools are not made to answer for their students' underperformance and have no autonomy. Recommendations included improving quality of teaching, giving more focus to the education of teachers at national level.

Further important aspects of attention in secondary education were selected by partner universities during the preliminar research phase. These are:

- hierarchy, which if too strict does not favour participation, inclusion and freedom of expression;
- assessment based only on certain skills and knowledge, thus having high rates of exclusion;
- truth and knowledge: in order to develop intercultural and respectful minds a reflection on "how do we know what we know" could be added to existing programs;
- different approaches to History, with the usage of diverse sources. Moreover,

1 World Bank Report No. 32450-TU , *Turkey - Education Sector Study - Sustainable Pathways to an Effective, Equitable, and Efficient Education System for Preschool through Secondary School Education*, 31/12/2005, Washington. The document was presented during a Conference with the same title that took place in Ankara in March 2006.

information on EU history, functioning and policies can be improved through education.

In Italy and Slovenia there is a clear need for education models able to cope with an ever more multicultural and fast-changing society. Students need intellectual tools enabling them to get to know and read the cultural phenomena surrounding them. In times of dramatic changes, it is understanding, analysis and adaptation skills (critical thinking, autonomy) what really matters, rather than the mere transfer of notions. Curiosity, capacity to engage in dialogue, respectful attitudes have to be enhanced to favour dialogue as opposed to ignorant fear for what is different.

On the basis of this first picture, the project would intervene within education spaces, enabling teachers – and consequently pupils – to better understand historical and cultural interactions between Europe and Turkey and cultural values that could be considered as being at the basis of communication.

Within this perspective, teachers needed to be supported in a process of development of teaching materials that could allow intercultural dialogue. To this regard, a teacher community set up by the project would work on themes and methodologies, developing learning units on the European Union and on themes such as gender equality, human rights, freedom of expression and ethical behaviour thus favouring a deeper understanding of EU *acquis* in these subjects among pupils. Moreover, by favouring the diffusion of new educational approaches, the project would tacitly favour students' empowerment and participation as active citizens in an intercultural dialogue among the countries involved.

The initial exploration of these themes through research was going to be connected to piloting in class and learning about otherness. In fact, this bottom-up approach was supposed to support participation and empowerment at every activity stage, being teachers and NGO exponents involved in developing innovation and students directly involved in the experimentation of innovation, thus supporting the development of a vibrant and lively civil society.

Finally, the project attempted to focus on the valorisation of those human resources (the teaching staff) who are responsible for the education of the youth and therefore influence the future of each territory. This elements were going to delineate an innovative in-service training approach.

### **3. Steps to the creation of an innovative in-service training approach**

The preliminary research goals were not only the construction of a logical framework for the project activities – by means of conceptual and theoretical elements – but also the collection of empirical data through fieldwork and dialogue among researchers. This research activity allowed also to think teachers' training from inside, within a process of construction of learning activities and rethinking the matter, the concepts, the ideas leading to an intercultural experience.

According to Margiotta's assumption, this approach was going to lead to an *educational dispositive*, i.e. a space for reflection on actions shaping actors' intentions in order to change the reality we live in [our translation] (Margiotta, 2006).

The idea of having teachers of different nationalities interacting in order to raise topics and choose teaching methods within the creation and experimentation of learning units was based on the hypothesis that such “learning space” could lead teachers to reflect on their own cultural representations on subjects and teaching methods. This would help them to reshape practice with an impact on their professional identities. In fact, this has been an in-service teachers’ training approach experimented in other international projects by the author. (Raffaghelli, 2008; 2009).

Finally, the training approach analysis took into account two other important theoretical inputs: the Zone of Proximal Development proposed by Lev Vygotskij (Vygotskij, 1934, in Daniels, Cole, Wertsch, 2007) and the following Activity Theory (Leont’ev, 1978, in Engestrom, 1987), considering particularly the Scandinavian approach to the AT, that studies “Learning by Expanding” (Engestrom, 1987), by reformulating Leont’ev Activity triangles towards a community perspective (Engestrom, op.cit)

The Activity Theory is a psychological meta-theory, paradigm or framework, with its roots in Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky’s cultural-historical psychology. It was founded by were Alexei N. Leont’ev (1903-1979) and Sergei Rubinshtein (1889-1960) who sought to understand human activities as complex, socially situated phenomena and go beyond psychoanalytic and behaviourist paradigms.. It became one of the major psychological approaches in the former USSR, being widely used in both theoretical and applied psychology, in areas such as education, training, ergonomics and work psychology (Bedny & Meister, 1997). According to the activity theory, tools are produced when individuals engage in and interact with their environment. These tools are “exteriorized” forms of mental processes, and as these mental processes are manifested in tools, they become more readily accessible and communicable to other people, therefore becoming useful for social interaction. (Fjeld et al. 2002). According to E.’s model, the key elements of the AT are: Individuals (the people involved in an activity system) Object (the reason why the whole activity system was created); Tools (that mediates the relation among object of activity and individuals’ psychology, and introduces the cultural variables of previous socio-cultural activity systems); Division of Labour (Roles within the activity system); Rules (Ethical norms and values regulating interactions among individuals, tools and object of activity); Community (the organized human group interacting to achieve a certain result of their activity, which is also identified with the process of creation and at the same times shapes new group and individual identities)

Using the theoretical framework proposed by the Activity Theory, Raffaghelli (2010a) explored the concept of learning within international communities of learning and practice. According to Raffaghelli’s scheme (op. cit.) the PERMIT learning activities could create an “intercultural zone of proximal development”. This could promote expansive learning with regard to cultural identity, taking part in the construction of new “third” cultural spaces which “enlarge” the original cultural context of reference: *enlarged cultural contexts to learn* (Raffaghelli, op.cit).

Let us consider first the *dispositive* envisaged within the PERMIT project to later conceptualize it as an Activity system that might produce expansive learning with impact in the reformulation of representations, images, concepts linked to the intercultural competence, towards the generation of new, enlarged, cultural contexts of learning.

Specifically, the educational *dispositive* of the Permit project resulted from the conjunction of the following dimensions:

- the needs of the teachers involved to undertake significant actions within their specific school contexts (organizational dimensions, institutional history)
- teachers' intercultural representations as people and professionals within their schools;
- intercultural representations within the class, among students and their families

In fact, once the several playing dimensions at stake were disclosed and understood, the research team introduced the teachers with some educational goals important to achieve intercultural dialogue. Then, the teachers analysed these goals and formulated training hypotheses that could lead to the development of the skills needed within the framework of intercultural competence.

The coherence between teachers' learning activities and experimentation in class as part of a process of learning design were originated by the following decisions:

- Coherently with the preliminar research within the training context, that has highlighted the expectations of project beneficiaries of changing hegemonic paradigms within the school, against a social model and an identity model of "national" citizenships. This model conceives the subjectification (according to the concept of Deleuze and Guattari, introduced by Minello<sup>2</sup>) of the self as opposed to that of culture, linked to the language, the history and traditions. Instead of that, the intercultural paradigm introduced by the PERMIT project was going to propose the "re-subjectification" of the self as a process of self-analysis to deconstruct and reconstruct conceptions, ideas, beliefs of the personal and group spheres, through the direct confrontation with otherness, in a "zone of proximal development" (adopting the Vygotskian concept), created by the project.
- Considering this evidence, the Scientific Committee and the research team facilitated teachers' learning introducing "stimuli" (materials based on research evidence about intercultural communication and pedagogy; instructional design resources; teachers' portfolio) to generate the "intercultural zone of proximal development", towards an intercultural training model intrinsic to the learning process enacted within the process of activity aimed to generate new "hybrid" production (the learning units and the experimentation in class). This was called a model of "form-action" (form-azione), shaping actions through training activities (the Latin word "formazione" refers to training, but entails a

2 Subjectification (French: subjectivation) is a philosophical concept coined by Michel Foucault and elaborated by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. It refers to the construction of the individual. The concept has been often used in critical theory, sometimes along with Louis Althusser's concept of interpellation. In Gilbert Simondon's theory of individuation, subjectification precedes the subject in the same way as the process of individuation precedes the creation of the individual. While the classical notion of subject considers it as a term, Foucault considered the process of subjectification to have an ontological pre-eminence on the subject as a term.



deep discussion about “shaping” skills and competences, which is different from “education”). This implicit model motivated the choice of Permit team of allowing participations in the process of construction of the same practices without imposing prior instructions. The idea was link activity, problem solving and learning to the process of creation of innovation in class, as part of a teachers’ education process.

- The establishment of such a framework characterized the several phases of reflection and activity, as “milestones” that allowed teachers’ groups to progress in their activities of creation. The process would allow peer-learning (from open, international communities of practice) and teachers’ self-learning. This method was to be extended to students in class, who would critically assess the creation/experimentation regarding activities in class. Thus, the “travel” throughout the inconsistencies and problems posed by the relation with otherness, or by crossing the boundaries of the well-known substance of own cultural representations (travelling through the double-bind, in Engenstrom’s words) would enact intercultural reflection and impact on the construction of an intercultural competence.
- This was in fact the idea of using self-assessment tools at the end of the experimentation stage in the end of the process of experimentation, as proposed by Primorska University.

Therefore, we attempted to generate an international learning community, collaborating together to build effective metaphors of “*new learning places without frontiers*”.

Such places become meaningful, exposing “teacher students” to a different enlarged cultural environment. However, this also includes students’ original cultural context because they built it. In fact, giving sense to participation would provide opportunities to the action of participation, would generate opportunities to reflect on ethnocentric teaching practices, with impact on motivation teaching methodologies and then, to the perception of their own role as social actors.

The educational device of the Training Model could be represented by an Activity Triangle like in Figure 9.1.

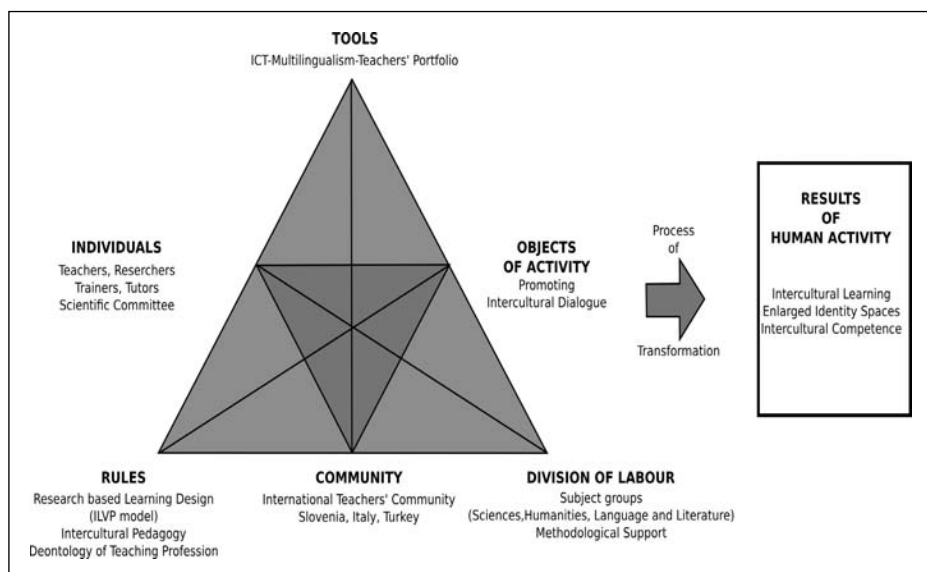


Figure 1. Representation of the Training Model as Activity System

The Training Model experimented by the universities involved through several training experiences within international cooperation projects, aims to interweave formal learning (seminars and eLearning) for enhancing expertise with teachers' practical knowledge (non-formal learning)

In synthesis, the distinguishing elements were:

- Initial inputs of research evidence to understand the fundamentals of intercultural dialogue and pedagogical practices;
  - Expert teachers as core of a growing Community<sup>3</sup>;
  - New incoming teachers sharing good practices across frontiers;
  - Piloting created materials and involving students as participants giving critical feedback in a "joint venture";
  - Online / FTF training model, based on ILVP model (Four Leaves Taxonomy, Margiotta, 2006);
  - Reseachers accompanying the whole process of creation, helping teachers' reflection on practices (Teachers' Thought / Practical Knowledge / Identity Process) → instruments like the portfolio (Koc, 2004) became crucial;
- 3 The concept of "Community" is taken from Engestrom (Community or externalization within a determined social context, i.e. all the actors involved in the activity system, that share an interest for a certain object of activity and agree on the basic rules and division of labour). Nevertheless, the concept of Wenger "Community of Practice" would perfectly apply to the growing group of teachers participating in the activities, sharing expert knowledge. It is worth saying that Wenger's concept was build in a context of discussion of Activity Theory within the US (precisely, the activities of the *Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition* of San Diego between the late 80s and all the 90's)

- Participatory Evaluation process (triangulation);
- Recognition of the learning process as certification.

Competences that the model aimed to promote (Teachers' Learning Profile) to implement teaching for intercultural dialogue:

- Understand the emergence of LLL of a multicultural and hyperconnected society and its incorporation into trans-national policies for education and teachers' professional development
- Analyze the theoretical and policy formulation implications of *interculturalism* in various learning contexts
- Identify the concepts of learning and development that inform current thinking about *interculturalism* in a range of areas of education and pedagogy
- Consider questions about *interculturalism* in relation to the needs of their own societal environment, as country, community, school and class
- Identify good and best practices in intercultural education both in national/local and international environment, becoming able of communicate or interact to learn about and in time replicate them.
- Design innovative teaching units where significant and contextualized intercultural issues are tackled: a) from the point of view of the subject taught; b) from the point of view of teaching methods; c) from the point of view of assessment of diverse learning styles; d) from the point of view of school organization and community networking
- Undertake action research in an area of intercultural education, which will help to develop teaching practices in their own community, country and trans nationally
- Undertake professional reflection on intercultural teaching and learning in order to develop new areas of one's own professional identity
- Promote peer collaboration across frontiers and within schools, in order to support cooperative development and assessment of intercultural education initiatives within school system and teaching/learning processes

### 3.1. From the learning design theory to the research and "form-action" model

At this point, the assumptions on intercultural training adopted in order to obtain the expected educational impact were integrated by an instructional design model. Such model helped to conceptualise the trainers' activities as well as the kernel of the educational *dispositive* throughout the various learning phases

The model chosen to address instructional design was the *Four Leaves (Quadrifoglio)*: the **ILEP framework** (*information, laboratory, evaluation, personalization*)<sup>4</sup>. The CIRDFG group has been testing this model in several adult

4 This model was developed in Italian in Margiotta's book *Pensare la formazione. Strutture esplicative, trame concettuali, modelli di organizzazione*. Yet, it is difficult to translate this concept as "*formazione*" cannot be directly translated as *training* (the activities that promote adult learning in working organizations), education (activities within specific institutions that promote formal learning and also non-formal learning guided by adults to younger people to be socialized), or, in general, "*learning*" (considering that the word "*formazione*" encloses a process of guidance, as construction of a space for learning while acting). The book attempts

training activities (particularly teachers' training) with successful results on the trainers' organization of learning environments and activities, and with impact on trainees' understandings about learning processes (deuterolearning, Bateson, 1972). Considering these achievements, CIRDFIA introduced this model, which was hence adopted by the international research group and by Scientific Committee.

The ILEP is an instrumental framework that defines a teaching progressively oriented to promote different steps in the dynamic, cognitive and metacognitive growth of students. The points of reference of this framework are psychological and educational researcher in a constructivist perspective. Moreover ILEP framework aims to discover emotional dimensions of learning and attempts to progressively improve learning environments.

The ILEP framework contains and formalizes the following hypothetical phases of teaching action:

- **INFORMATION:** This process communicates the knowledge, focusing on the activation and the organisation on epistemic and experience schemes. In this phase, the teacher stimulates students to acquire new information, new reasoning patterns and promotes the student to the induction of new information and analogical understanding.
- **LABORATORY:** This stands for all the activities through which students learn to prove, falsify, corroborate what they learn. The laboratory is the experimental environment in which students apply what they have learnt to solve problematic situations.
- **EVALUATION:** It includes recursive steps of analysis, interpretation and justification of learning results with a particular focus on their generalization. This step is regarded as a continuous participatory analysis of learning processes carried out by students.
- **PERSONALIZATION:** It is a recursive action that promotes students' ability to explore and identify rules, experiences and patterns. This is an inventive phase: students learn to master knowledge and experiences in order to acquire and balance attitudes, to understand world-wide differences, to speak multiple languages (as modes of communication) and to become responsible citizens.
- **ILEP is not a fixed sequence of steps but a recursive reticular process that accompanies learning in different situations. The ILEP framework has been useful to teachers as it allowed them to express the formative potential of educational action.**

In fact, a learning process was envisaged as result of the implementation of the ILEP framework, considering the levels of interaction with content and with other users in the several phases of activity within the project.

to understand educational practices in society and their value in constituting socio-cultural spaces, being the concept of "*formazione*" (translation of the German concept of "*Bildung*" a definition of intelligent and purposeful human learning activities (and at the same time facilitating learning) that shape new socio-cultural spaces.

Therefore, we hypothesized learning to be enacted as phases of one general process, that reaches its highest point with content construction, i.e. the production of learning units by the teacher. Indeed, in the first stages, learning outcomes are only knowledge about content and metalearning about strategies to direct searching of contents; whereas in the phases that require interaction with peers and the creation of content as part of learners' activity, learning outcomes could be described rather as competence, which is to say, not only *knowing*, but mainly *knowing to do and knowing to be*.

The learning process can be described as follows:

- **UNDERSTANDING.** The user jumps into the learning experience, starting by understanding their own learning goals, setting activities for better learning, achieving crucial information about contents, considering and ordering contents as base of a learning path; eventually -according to the level of interaction/deepening on contents, the student will use this phase to get to know the trainer and other peers of learning experience (a potential community)
- **EXPLORING/DIALOGUING.** Users explore contents and reflect on topics. They might take specific angles (low interaction level), discuss, analyze, criticize within a growing learning community (high interaction level) in order to reinforce their learning space. This, in turn, can become a space for dialogue with diversity strengthening their identity throughout time.
- **GET FEED-BACK/METALEARNING.** Users enter this phase when it's time to evaluate together knowledge, skills and feelings learnt during their learning experience are to be assessed with trainers. At low interaction levels, they will fill in questionnaires and quizzes, whereas at high interaction levels users will reflect through narratives and discussion with peers. Anyway, an attempt will be made to understand own learning strategies, to participate in a general evaluation of the quality of the learning experience in order to work out new activities within a lifelong learning perspective.
- **ACHIEVE/TRANSFER/CREATE.** Users consider which experiences they can generate by using what they learnt from contents and interactions, and see themselves as creators of knowledge within their field of study.

### 3.2. The process of recognition

There are different methodologies for assessing informal learning – i.e. acquisition of not only knowledge on a topic but also skills and competences – and granting transfer credit. However, the summative evaluation approach along with tool triangulation and the use of sources of information about learning outcomes is the most widespread (Margiotta, 2007b). Methods of learning recognition currently used vary from a) gathering evidence through classical tests on professional/social activities b) candidates' narrative reports about their own skills and competences obtained through formal education as well as on informal/non-formal learning acquired through formal/vocational education; c) Evaluators' observations about candidates' training/working activities, both through simulation and through real

everyday working situations. However, combining methods is crucial in order to ensure a complete assessment of performances; documentation of activities and practices are the kernel of recognition, a procedure that might involve not only trainers' descriptions and learning outputs through the use of specific tools; but also, the self documentation and narrative about the learning experience, enclosed in learning outcomes -products. (Colardyn & Bjornavold, 2004)

Let us consider the case of the PERMIT project: the recognition framework to be applied, lies on trainees activities in flexible contexts aimed to create learning units emerging from teachers' dialogue, exploration of content, and experimentation (resources). In fact, every level of interaction with resources (and with a learning community) was supposed to produce several evidences of learning that were collected in order to recognize learning. All this can be better understood through Table 9. 2. below:

**Evaluation Grid for ECTS recognition  
Project PERMIT**

<b>STUDENT WORKLOAD</b>	<b>Assisted Training</b>	<b>Workload Factor: Fieldwork</b>	<b>Workload Factor: individual learning</b>	<b>Total in Hs</b>	<b>TOTAL ECTS</b>
<b>ACTIVITIES (*)</b>					
<b>Specific topics of the training course</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>75 HS</b>	<b>3 ECTS</b>
1 Seminars	8		24		
Readings and Material					
2 Organization			15		
3 Group Activities	8				
4 Key Note Speakers	8		12		
<b>Experimentation Topic (Action Research)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100 HS</b>	<b>4 ECTS</b>
Development/ experimentation of					
1 Unit	8	24	8		
Uploading Project and online coaching	4	4	16		
Re-elaboration of ideas and final project					
3 presentation	8	4	24		
<b>Critical / Comparative Analysis of Practices</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>25 HS</b>	<b>1 ECTS</b>
1 International Forum	4		2		
Cooperative Working online	3		6		
3 ICT on Didactics	2	4	4		
<b>Assessment / Evaluation</b>	<b>15</b>		<b>35</b>	<b>50 HS</b>	<b>2 ECTS</b>
Reflexive Analysis through questionnaires	5		25		
Participatory evaluation with students/social actors	10		10		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>10</b>

(\*) The results of activities were collected in a Portfolio along with other documents

**Table 2. Scheme of Recognition of Teachers' Professional Learning Activities**

### 3.3. Specific training activities within the “research/form-action” plan

The present section aims to depict the teachers’ training within the project and the corresponding activities, goals, main perspectives and actions undertaken; along with the resources used, the related acknowledgement and granting of (formal and non-formal) learning results.

Through the analysis of the process development, it was possible to see how the above depicted activity was to shape the project’s outcomes.

#### **Training Strategy**

- Build a network of secondary school teachers that create and experiment learning units with impact on competences related to intercultural dialogue.
- Involving Teachers in “making up” innovative educational material and piloting it in class.
- Promote reflection on teaching strategies and approaches and their effects on students’ development as active citizens.
- Creating an on-line community for teachers’ mutual exchange and support.

#### **Specific training activities**

- Participation in Residential Seminars seminars on the project’s thematic areas and related teaching strategies for teachers of partner countries .
- Participation in the on-line platform to support communities of researchers, teachers and students.
- Development of educational material on the project thematic areas and of concrete examples of teaching strategies that can be applied to reach the expected objectives.
- Pilot experimentation in secondary schools of the exemplar teaching material produced by teacher trainees together with experienced ones.
- Review of the material to participate in a publication.
- Participation in the dissemination through events involving teachers, students and representatives of civil society institutions.
- Participation in the Final event and launch of further cooperation through joint programmes and ongoing on-line communities.

#### **Resources to create innovative teaching materials**

As already mentioned, we decided to consolidate self-learning skills for teachers to be able to develop materials autonomously. Teachers would become protagonists through:

- Improving the teaching quality of curricula and own subjects, achieving an interdisciplinary perspective.
- Becoming aware of specific topics like the history of interactions between Turkey and Europe, freedom of expression, human rights, gender equality, ethical and ecological citizenship, as part of current educational programmes.
- On the basis of best practices, every teacher should elaborate an a proposal of a learning unit addressing changes in perspectives on intercultural values influencing learning and teaching towards the development of intercultural.

The units created with the support of the Permit research team were implemented in class by the same teachers who created them. Coaching in residential seminars, as well as tutorship in online learning spaces by researchers and also by expert teachers was implemented as part of a supportive environment where exploration and communication with peers was directed to generate innovation.

During the implementation, an important role was played by the online learning environment in which teachers, researchers and students participated as parts of a) training management – researchers’ activities – b) creation of materials -teachers’ training- c) piloting in class – students’ activities –, building *new cultural spaces* (as Raffaghelli further explains in another chapter in this book).

Coherently with this constructivist approach, where teachers’ activity was central, assessment was formative. To this purpose a specific tool encouraging reflection and self-assessment was used. The tool was the Portfolio, elaborated by the research group of Primorska (Slovenia). Connected to this last work, it was studied an assessment-grid to assess the impact on the development of an intercultural competence (that encompassed intercultural sensitivity and the change on cultural representations). This grid was used for teachers and students at the beginning and at the end of the training (teachers) and experimentation of learning units (students). Later on, these results were triangulated with a) an “after training questionnaire” implemented at the end of the training activities developed by the CIRDA group; b) focus group with students about the activities undertaken in class; c) other activities and documents developed within the portfolio. On the basis of these activities and their results a “teachers’ dossier” was elaborated in order to accomplish the procedures of validation and transfer credit procedures. Nevertheless, given the legislation in Turkey, certificates had to be distributed separately, since the Turkish university could not issue certifications for ECTS.

### **The residential Seminars: landmarks of a process**

The First Residential Seminar (12-15 February), held in Istanbul (Turkey), focused on themes that would help spread ideas about the learning units to be designed later on. Some of the topics introduced and discussed were:

- a) Intercultural Communication in Teaching Methods
- b) Teachers’ Portfolio: promoting teachers’ professional intercultural identity
- c) Teachers’ reflection on cultural values affecting their own practices
- d) Teachers’ innovative units planning: introducing an intercultural approach/perspective into teaching practices

The training approach was based on teachers’ cooperative work, presentations, and reflection on practices. Key speakers, hosted by participant University, were also included in this phase.

All the material produced was uploaded on the eLearning platform in order to promote visibility and a working process that does not end with the Seminar.

The Second Residential Seminar (9-12 April) held in Koper (Slovenia) focused on designing the development and quality of learning units. This seminar was completely dedicated to reflect on on the pilot process of teaching units. All



materials designed were analysed and shared among colleagues from several schools.

New keynote speakers entered the Seminars to show research and best practices in order to reflect on the connection between teachers' practices and outside world in integrating intercultural education.

At this point, the online platform was opened to make students enjoy an opportunity of exchange with students from the whole PERMIT network. Teachers were supported during this seminar and the implementation of this activity by CIRDAFA.

The Third Residential Seminar (4-7 June) held at Treviso (Italy), focused on the reflection and evaluation of piloted teaching units, and to the accomplishment of the same for an online publication. During this Seminar teachers showed learning outcomes in class through "My best Lesson", in which they considered a difficult moment of learning intercultural dimensions during the learning unit implemented.

This last seminar was also an important milestone with regard to the "reification" of achievements in order to proceed to a publication of teachers' works. In the months after this seminar, teachers worked on drafting an article and on their learning units. The former was to be published and distributed in the Dissemination Event, whereas the second element was placed into an online database, so that it could be available to other teachers and researchers interested.

The final presentation and Dissemination Event took place in Istanbul, on 21-23 October of the same year, while the project was scheduled to end by December.

feedback, which was important both for self-assessment purposes and for general training evaluation. This evaluation method allowed to progressively improve both FTF and online training activities. As we will see next, the residential seminars opened new activity phases in the attempt to solve the contradictions and break the deadlocks of the creative process.

### **Online spaces and the networked learning process: supporting the learning design process**

In table 3 you can find the plan for networked learning activities within online spaces. The Italian and the Turkish groups followed this plan, whereas the Slovenian group worked more intensely in FTF activities in the local contexts.

At the end of every unit, transversal, international activities were proposed to socialize reflections at international level.

Schedule	Learning goals	Resources/Activities
1 <sup>st</sup> Week (February – After the 1 <sup>st</sup> Residential Seminar)	<b>Information</b> Intercultural education in the complex society: pedagogical assumptions, teaching methods and the management of difference at school. <b>Laboratory-Evaluation-Personalization</b> Read and re-elaborate an exemplar Learning Unit for brainstorming on personal creation processes	<b>Information</b> 01_From didactics to socio-didactics <b>Laboratory</b> Examples of Intercultural Learning Units
2 <sup>nd</sup> Week (March)	<b>Information</b> Implementing Intercultural Learning Design <b>Laboratory-Evaluation-Personalization</b> Read and re-elaborate on an exemplar Learning Unit for brainstorming on personal creation processes	<b>Information</b> 02_Intercultural Learning Design <b>Laboratory</b> Discussion Forum on Examples of Intercultural Learning Units
3 <sup>rd</sup> Week (March)	<b>Information</b> The teacher reflective professional <b>Laboratory-Evaluation-Personalization</b> Teachers' reflective identity as learner and traveller (as foreigner) in order to think how to manage of diversity in class.	<b>Information</b> 03_Intercultural competence within teachers' professional identity <b>Laboratory-Evaluation-Personalization</b> Discussion forum about the own personal story as learner and foreigner
4 <sup>th</sup> Week (March)	<b>Information</b> Multi-identities, communication and the construction of socio-cultural spaces <b>Laboratory-Evaluation-Personalization</b> Understand how communication operates within teaching and learning. Explore and implement teaching methods to achieve effective communication in one's subject.	<b>Information</b> 04_Communication as instrument of construction of socio-cultural spaces <b>Laboratory-Evaluation-Personalization</b> Starting the Design of the learning unit. Exchanging opinions on critical aspects regarding planning and asking for support in the organization of materials.
5 <sup>th</sup> Week March	<b>Information</b> Reflecting on the intercultural impact of social representations and the construction of the self. Questions on Cultural Identity in class. <b>Laboratory-Evaluation-Personalization</b> The planning process goes on. How to construct positive representations of otherness within one's taught subject.	<b>Information</b> 05_Social representations and intercultural awareness, expression and dialogue <b>Laboratory-Evaluation-Personalization</b> The Learning Design process goes on.
6 <sup>th</sup> Week April	<b>Information</b> Reflecting on the potential of “ <i>diverse minds</i> ” acting together <b>Laboratory-Evaluation-Personalization</b> The planning process goes on. How to construct positive representations of otherness within one's taught subject. How to bring different intelligences into play in educational projects.	<b>Information</b> 06_Diversity as resource: the theory of several intelligences (Gardner, 1993 ) <b>Laboratory-Evaluation-Personalization</b> The Learning Design process comes to an end.
7 <sup>th</sup> Week April (after 2 <sup>nd</sup> Residential Seminar)	<b>Information</b> Evaluation, Assessment and self-assessment of intercultural competences: teachers and students as active participants. <b>Laboratory-Evaluation-Personalization</b> Analysis of self-assessment grids. Study of evaluation tools in class according to the units created.	<b>Information</b> Self-Assessment Grids elaborated by Primorska University <b>Laboratory-Evaluation-Personalization</b> Introducing the grid of Self-Assessment as part of the Learning Unit
8 <sup>th</sup> Week April	<b>Information</b> Learning in Enlarged Cultural Contexts: the virtual learning environment as space of meaning making <b>Laboratory-Evaluation-Personalization</b> Understanding and using technological tools to construct the virtual learning environment, considering the plan established within the Learning Unit	<b>Information</b> Presentation and tutorials (Virtual Learning Environment and Web 2.0 towards intercultural communication) <b>Laboratory-Evaluation-Personalization</b> Planning interactions among students with the use of the Virtual Learning Environment. Activities across frontiers among Turkey, Slovenia and Italy with the use of VLE.

From 9 <sup>th</sup> to 13 <sup>th</sup> Week April/June	<p><b>Information</b> Launching class experimentation.</p> <p><b>Laboratory-Evaluation-Personalization</b> Implementing the experimental units in class. Reporting to colleagues on the own work in class. Establishing common moments of reflection with the students on activities and achievements : exploring the dimensions of intercultural competence on the subject taught</p>	<p><b>Information</b> Information available on demand</p> <p><b>Laboratory-Evaluation-Personalization</b> Coaching for activities to be implemented in class: selection and analysis of critical incidents; understanding the dimensions interplaying in the “Best lesson”.</p>
From 15 <sup>th</sup> to 22 <sup>th</sup> Week June/July (After the Third Residential Seminar)	<p><b>Information</b> Sistemating the experience undertaken in class</p> <p><b>Laboratory-Evaluation-Personalization</b> Solving/Deepening issues on academic writing to produce an article tha narrates the process of creation and impact of the PERMIT experience Achieving the basics of metadata and generation of open educational resources in order to share the materials created.</p>	<p><b>Information</b> Tutorial: uploading the Learning Unit to the Virtual Learning Space Guidelines: Teachers' Article</p> <p><b>Laboratory-Evaluation-Personalization</b> Coaching for the sistematization of activities in class. Academic writing guidelines to produce the article, structure the Learning Unit using basic shared dimensions to allow sharing it as an open educational resource</p>

**Table 3 – Networked Learning Process within the PERMIT training approach**

As we can see, there were three important phases of the process of teachers’ training that led to the implementation of the PERMIT learning units, being the latter activity part of teachers’ learning through their reflection on action.

If the first weeks of work attempted to guide teachers to dig into the problem of intercultural dialogue in the contemporary educational scenery, the second and mainly third phase were characterized by a focus on coaching and support to the process of creation.

With regard to the experimentation, coaching was aimed to a) in dealing with the new point of view on the subject they teach; b) help teachers to analyse methods enacting processes of intercultural learning; c) offer feed-back on professional performance and skills with an impact on teachers’ professional identities.

With regard to the assessment and evaluation of experimentation in class, coaching was aimed to a) obtain commitment of teacher-experimenter in determining the progress of learning, considering the intercultural competence framework given. Moreover, it was important to understand to which extent own professional interventions corresponded to the goals envisaged by the original project proposal; b) stimulate the “experimenter teachers” to critically think about their own performance; c) ask teachers to provide information on diversity in their classes, to monitor the progress of activities and implement tools for the final evaluation.

**The implementation of the PERMIT learning unit: coaching and strategies in class defined through collaborative activities among teachers**

The activities of the Learning Units Development immediately started in Istanbul, although teachers were asked to progressively elaborate their concrete

plans and materials. The main elements of this creation and implementation process grew with time: from simple group discussion activities we passed to online forums, final coaching on how to use research inputs, use other teachers' ideas and finally share own tested materials. Those elements, in synthesis, were:

Subject-based "Innovation groups" initially set up during international residential workshops and then continued their work locally. Contacts with groups in partner countries were kept by the teachers' community through a virtual learning space (VLS: Moodle).

Teachers were guided by experienced teachers and researchers involved in the project.

On the basis of the analysis carried out, some themes were selected as focus to intercultural units.

All the materials produced were through VLS, inducing teachers to think their materials as meeting certain "quality" standards and features to be shared.

All the materials produced were shared with the international community of teachers involved in the seminars.

Common criteria for Units Development were shared with other similar experiences of educational cooperation for teachers' training (from PACE Experience<sup>5</sup>). The suggested criteria for the planning of learning units were the following:

- Promotion of knowledge on the history of relations between Turkey and Europe.
- Promotion of knowledge and understanding of other cultural values.
- Introduction within existing curricula to discussions, readings, activities on human rights, gender equality, ethical behaviour and environmental protection.
- Introduction within existing curricula to reflection about ways of learning, different sources of knowledge and epistemology.

Furthermore, PACE class-oriented strategies were discussed and adapted to the PERMIT experience. In fact, in the PACE project, the focus of actions should connect teaching methods to the whole educational dispositive. Therefore, teachers worked on adopting shared strategies as part of their local activities as follows:

- Empirical learning: practical experiences together with theory.
- Opportunities for learning inside and outside the classroom.
- Subject material with "real life applications" and connections to the world outside the classroom.
- Diversity of teaching methods, resources and aids.
- A participatory approach to class, with students taking responsibility for contributing.
- Students challenged to develop their intercultural self, with well-founded ideas to be expressed in their work.

5 The PACE project "Project Agency Cooperation Education", INTERREG-III-2006-08. For more information please visit the site [www.educooperation.eu](http://www.educooperation.eu)

- Collaborative work amongst students and between students and teacher.
- Enhancement of different mindsets and diverse skills.

### *Getting students involved*

Teachers were supposed to implement their learning units through a similar process of coaching their own students to participate in the virtual learning environment and meet peers from the partner countries.

Teachers' activities lead students to travel in the *zone of proximal development*, towards *otherness*. As teachers become ever more familiar with such otherness, they can introduce it to and discuss it with students in class. In this sense, teachers use a fading technique, i.e. they appear and disappear so that students can progressively become autonomous in dealing with otherness. In this way students become more responsible and, through a number of tasks, they become aware of the others' presence. The teacher also enacts small actions of individual support to guide students to deconstruct and reconstruct representations of otherness. Furthermore, discussions and joint work in class lead students' discourses from "far" to "close" otherness, which is to say, diversity in the same classes and communities within the territory and the school.

This phase can be concluded with the presentation of students' learning products, collected all along the experimentation process.

As already said, the online space was envisaged not only as a support, but it was also considered a "new" space where meaning making could take place (enacting the creation of "third cultural spaces").

With regard to the online experimentation, the coaching was implemented by the teacher according to the following strategies:

- Addressing the design of activities that could lead to intercultural dialogue through understanding of otherness and also through the expression of the own cultural characteristics.
- Establishing communication "windows" (asynchronous and synchronous) among students from different countries, beyond local curricula and subject-specific activities and contents.
- Supporting students in a critical use of technologies in order to communicate and learn about otherness in virtual learning spaces: understanding the dimensions of enlarged cultural learning contexts.

Activities that all teachers decided to implement as transversal dimensions of learning units, by using virtual learning environments were:

- a) Geolocalization: Building a map of cultural identities through the use of "placemarks" on "googlemaps", embedding students' presentations and activities so that they can be seen by other students;
- b) Opening three specific forum on interdisciplinary themes (sustainable development for sciences students; visible and invisible cities for the humanities group; a travel through culture and languages for the group of literature and languages);
- c) Presentation of videos and learning results within the virtual learning environment.

Other interesting activities were discussed, but the lack of time did not allow teachers to implement them. One of them these was the videorecording of speeches/conversations in English to be uploaded on Youtube and further visualized and commented by students from other countries. This project could not be accomplished (even when the first phase was completed).

### Teachers' satisfaction with the training experience

Training activities were closed with "customer care" questionnaires, evaluating teachers' satisfaction with every phase of their learning experience.

Nevertheless, other learning dimensions (and hence the impact of the whole experience) were also explored.

In fact, three **After-training Questionnaires** were implemented by the end of every training phase (including both residential and online activities). Every questionnaire evaluated the impact of the training programme right after its delivery; impact was weighed by assessing participants' reactions to the programme. The questionnaire aimed to understand to which extent the training process provided crucial contents about the kernel of PERMIT, Multicultural Integrated Teaching to promote intercultural dialogue.

The questionnaire gathered the following information:

- **Perceived learning achievements**
- **Transferring Learning:** Training Activities Efficacy, Motivation to transfer
- **Perceived quality of seminars**
- **General Considerations on the PERMIT teachers' training programme**

In general, results were very satisfactory, but it's still worth to consider some specific situations that delineates areas where improvement of the educational dispositive is required.

A synthesis of results (24 respondents) shows the following:

#### a) Learning

a.1. Have you acquired new knowledge important to improving your strategies of Multicultural Integrated Teaching?

Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Yes, definitely
Teachers' responses: N24 (100%)									
0	0	0	0	1	0	4	14	4	1
0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	4,17%	0,00%	16,67%	58,33%	16,67%	4,17%

**Table 4 – Teachers' achievements to implement PERMIT strategies in class**

The high percentage of responses ranging from 7 to 10 (95,83%) allows to assume that teachers' perceptions about their own learning were significant, and that this helped them to build a new representation of teaching towards intercultural strategies (denominated, within the project called "Multicultural Integrated Teaching")

## a.2. Which new knowledge and skills did you acquire?

	no	not particularly	more or less	quite	completely	total
<b>Defining Intercultural Issues</b>						
a) Heightened awareness of cultural variation in our societies	1	3	7	12	1	24
Percentages	4,17	12,50	29,17	50,00	4,17	100,00
b) Wider knowledge, understandings, cognition of the social reality in the three countries involved in this project	0	1	9	11	3	24
Percentages	0,00	4,17	37,50	45,83	12,50	100,00
c) Better understanding of how beliefs and values can be culturally induced	3	2	14	0	2	21
Percentages	12,50	8,33	58,33	0,00	8,33	87,50
d) Improving my acceptance of otherness, differences among cultures	0	0	5	10	7	22
Percentages	0,00	0,00	20,83	41,67	29,17	91,67
f) Improving my ability of decentre and view my own attitudes in terms of cultural relativity, suspending beliefs to promote smooth intercultural communication.	0	0	7	14	1	22
Percentages	0,00	0,00	29,17	58,33	4,17	91,67
Average	0,8	1,2	8,4	9,4	2,8	22,6
Percentages	3,33	5,00	35,00	39,17	11,67	94,17

**Table 5 – Defining Intercultural Issues**

With regard to item a.2, the data showed always a central tendency. Here, it is important to point out that the various working groups (sciences, humanities and literature and languages) experienced very different working and learning situations. In fact, Humanities group was very heterogeneous (two History teachers, one Religion teacher, one Philosophy, one History of arts, one Graphic design and one Economy teacher), and the decision making process towards a common framework, mainly devoted to allow contacts among students, was difficult and full of uncertainties. This group might have responded in a very different way than for example, the Languages group, which worked through a smooth process of agreement and sharing of resources (English teachers).

Another important factor in this specific area (definitions of Intercultural Issues) was the nature of information and activities, mostly theoretical, with some research presentations rather technical and specific.

The data hence shows a central tendency with a bigger group suggesting that the new knowledge and skills acquired with regard to intercultural issues were partly achieved.

Item c) “Better understanding of how beliefs and values can be culturally induced” was in fact based on presentations by keynote speakers and on some texts discussed through online modules. The perception of a partial acquisition of knowledge/skills in this topic can be basically linked to the fact that some teachers (pedagogy, sociology, anthropology) . However, this might be considered in future interventions, providing teachers with more concrete examples so that they can better understand concepts.

On the contrary, item f) Improving my ability to decentre and view my own attitudes in terms of cultural relativity, suspending beliefs to promote smooth intercultural communication shows how teachers’ discussions on the topics introduced by researchers and keynote speakers were satisfactorily worked out, improving teachers’ positive representations of changing their own cultural representation. This result is very likely to be deeply connected to peers’ direct contact with different cultural backgrounds (different countries and communities).

	no	not particularly	more or less	quite	completely	total
<b>Intercultural Issues in Education</b>						
a) Better knowledge and understanding of other teaching practices	0	1	5	13	5	24
Percentages	0,00	4,17	20,83	<b>54,17</b>	20,83	100,00
b) Deepen on values that influence teaching practices in other cultural realities	0	4	7	11	0	22
Percentages	0,00	16,67	29,17	<b>45,83</b>	0,00	91,67
c) Deepen on other teaching practices that introduce intercultural issues in education process	0	3	4	9	7	23
Percentages	0,00	12,50	16,67	<b>37,50</b>	29,17	95,83
d) Better understanding of intercultural teaching strategies	0	0	3	10	8	21
Percentages	0,00	0,00	12,50	<b>41,67</b>	33,33	87,50
Average	0	2	4,75	10,75	5	22,5
Percentages	0,00	8,33	19,79	<b>44,79</b>	20,83	93,75

**Table 6 – Intercultural Issues in Education**

The data showed in this table emphasizes the dimension of intercultural issues within education. The conclusions drawn for the previous, more general dimension (table 5) are also valid for this dimension: data are concentrated between the “more or less” and “quite” fields. However, there is a slight preference for a positive view on learning . Teachers affirm, more than everything, they got a “*better knowledge and understanding of other teaching practices*”, which is surely the result of international working groups. Although 46% of teachers answered that they “quite” agree with the impact of training on “*deepen on values that influence teaching practice in other cultural realities*” it is interesting to see that grouping answers “quite” and “completely” regarding the item c) “*deepen on other teaching practices that introduce intercultural issues in education process*”; that 67% of teachers



thought that they acquired knowledge and skills connected to that issue. The same applies to the item d) where we reach a 75% of teachers considering that achieved “better understanding of intercultural teaching strategies”.

The best results in this dimension are probably related to the nature of the knowledge introduced by this dimension, which is tightly connected to the teachers’ expert knowledge and technical skills.

## b) Transferring Learning

b.1. Efficacy of Training Activities: Do you think that the activities carried out within the PERMIT Training Programme help you and other teachers to implement *intercultural teaching*?

**Table 7– Efficacy of Training activities (I): usefulness**

Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Yes, definitely
Teachers' responses: N22 (91,67%) 0	0	0	0	0	1	4	10	6	1
0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	4,17%	16,67%	<b>41,67%</b>	25,00%	4,17%

b.2. Motivation to Apply Learning: After the PERMIT Training Programme, are you motivated to continue experimenting intercultural teaching and to further support other teachers do so ?

**Table 8– Efficacy of Training activities (II): motivation to transfer**

Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Yes, definitely
Teachers' responses: N22 (91,67%) 0	0	0	0	0	0	3	5	9	5
0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	12,50%	20,83%	<b>37,50%</b>	20,83%

Item b.1. shows teachers’ perceptions on the usefulness of training activities and resources in supporting their activities in class with regard to the topics treated within the project. The data clearly point out the good level of attainment in this field: teachers found activities and resources effective in helping them imagining a new scenery of practice.

Item b.2. shows the motivation to transfer, , i.e. teachers’ willingness not only to acquire knowledge and participate in an interesting activity, but also to put real class activities into practice. This is probably connected to teachers’ representations of the changing scenery and the problem of managing diversity in class in order to keep being quality teachers. This emerged mainly from the preliminary research, and it is confirmed at the teachers’ representations level; nevertheless, motivation is

one of the dimensions that the project did not influence directly. In fact, teachers participating to this kind of international projects are well motivated to learn to become better professionals in their own field; they are eager to keep in contact with an international community of teachers as experts and best performers on their field. Therefore, there's self selection of better teachers. The project's approach to training could maintain this interest and stimulate it, as can be inferred from the data.

### c) The perceived quality of residential seminars

This part of the questionnaire simply highlights the satisfaction of teachers with regard to the organization and coherence of the educational dispositive.

It is worth noting that teachers considered trainers almost "completely" available (79%), showing the importance given to the activity of "coaching" as part of the exploration of the "*intercultural zone of proximal development*".

Assessment criteria were well understood and seen coherently with the general dispositive. This important because it demonstrates that the community achieved the rules to enact processes within the Activity System.

The lower percentages obtained with regard to the organizational dimensions could be connected with the different working styles of every university (organisation was mostly appreciated at the Slovenian Residential Seminar, while trainers' availability and resources got higher scores among Italians and Turks), with diversity in culture, subjects and experiences of the teachers' working groups. Languages were another critical point, since some teachers were not fluent in English (without distinctions of country, there were Italian, Slovenian and also Turkish teachers fluent in foreign languages other than English, namely, Italian and French). All these elements caused wastes of time, misunderstandings and somehow conflictual decision-making processes.

Anyway, considering our theoretical model of the Activity Theory, these difficulties were part of a "multivoiced" system of activity, and the necessity of solving contradictions to "travel through the zone of proximal development" as part of an expansive learning process.

	no	not particularly	more or less	quite	completely	total
The Seminars and relating online activity w						
a) Organized coherently with the theme we are treating (Intercultural Teaching and Learning)	0	0	4	14	4	22
Percentages	0,00	0,00	16,67	58,33	16,67	91,67
b) Activities where clear and interesting in general	0	0	6	11	5	22
Percentages	0,00	0,00	25,00	45,83	20,83	91,67
c)Activities where well managed among groups and spaces	1	3	7	9	2	22
Percentages	4,17	12,50	29,17	37,50	8,33	91,67
d) The agenda was carefully planned and time was respected	3	3	6	8	2	22
Percentages	12,50	12,50	25,00	33,33	8,33	91,67
f) The resources provided where interesting and useful in order to support the creation of my learning unit	0	0	2	16	4	22
Percentages	0,00	0,00	8,33	66,67	16,67	91,67
g) Trainers where available on request	0	0	0	3	19	22
Percentages	0,00	0,00	0,00	12,50	79,17	91,67
h) Organizers where available on request	1	0	1	3	10	15
Percentages	4,17	0,00	4,17	12,50	41,67	62,50
l) Assessment criteria and Final achievements of training course where clear	0	1	0	3	18	22
Percentages	0,00	4,17	0,00	12,50	75,00	91,67
Average	0,8	1,2	5	11,6	3,4	22
Percentages	3,33	5,00	20,83	48,33	14,17	91,67

Table 9 – Quality of Seminars

	N=	Yes		No	
General Impact	24	R	% (of R)	N	% (of R)
d.1. Do you consider that participating in teachers' international working groups is important to develop an intercultural professional identity?	24 (100,00%)	22	100,00	2	9,09
d.2. Did PERMIT international working groups give you the opportunity of developing areas of your intercultural professional identity?	23 (95,83%)	23	100,00	0	0,00
d.3. Do you consider that using the Virtual Learning Space is useful to develop an intercultural professional identity?	24 (100,00%)	22	91,67	2	8,33
d.4. Did PERMIT VLE give you the opportunity of developing areas of your intercultural professional identity?	20 (83,33%)	16	80,00	4	16,67
d.5. Do you consider that reflecting on teaching practices through tools like portfolio is important to develop an intercultural professional identity?	22 (91,67%)	17	77,27	5	20,83
d.6. Did PERMIT "Teachers' Portfolio" give you the opportunity of developing areas of your intercultural professional identity?	21 (87,50%)	14	66,67	7	29,17

**Table 10 – General Impact of Permit the Teachers' Training Programme**

Table 10 shows how the teachers' perceived the general impact of the training programme. These results mainly provide an idea of which tools for learning and acquiring the necessary instruments to become skilled professional are most appreciated by teachers. It's worth taking into account these data as part of a new training approach.

It is interesting to see how the international community of teachers discussing and creating learning units was entirely appreciated by respondents (100% of them); followed by online activities, which integrated the first dimension. In the teachers' opinion, the virtual learning environment was important although they thought it was difficult to manage (as demonstrated by their comments) because it required preliminary digital competences. Hence, some teachers found this channel of communication not immediately accessible.

The use of more personalized tools and teachers' reflections were the least appreciated tools in the training approach. the portfolio is time-consuming and teachers found it difficult to make direct connections between some reflection activities and the process of development of the learning unit (the result of activities).

Nevertheless teachers referred frequently in their activities in seminars and online discussions to their annotations within their diaries and portfolios. Probably, the very complex nature of the instrument provided by the Slovenian research

group was not properly implemented by other researchers and trainers, and teachers hence could not efficiently connect their achievements with the other “social” learning activities.

Apart from this, the PERMIT project was implemented within an academic year, which perhaps was not enough to understand the various tools and their mutual connections, as well as those with practice in depth.

#### **4. Conclusions: Achievements of the experimental in-service teachers’ training approach within and beyond the PERMIT project**

The aim of this article was to discuss the PERMIT training approach as a case study on teachers’ professional development. The analysis various development stages conducted both as trainers and researchers, brought to delve deeper into a specific context of practice. Quantitative and qualitative data were blended in order to bring new light to the focus of the case, namely, in service teachers’ training.

The PERMIT case would also make a specific contribution regarding the problem of intercultural education, considering an educational dispositive educators training who have to deal with diversity in their respective contexts of practice.

The conceptualisation effort made to design the dimensions and activities of the training approach, helped the PERMIT research/training team to understand some crucial dimensions of teachers’ education in the project development. Therefore, this pilot experience is still open as it will need further adjustments for a new in-service teachers’ education model. We have envisioned this pilot as a first step of for future teachers’ professional development strategies based on internationalisation and mobility, the use of technologies, multilingualism, and interdisciplinarity. An effective metaphor to define this new approach is that of the “teacher as traveller”, who crosses the boundaries of his/her practice, not only in terms of geographical mobility, but also in terms of discipline, culture, and teaching methods, making the unexpected enter to his/her own activity. In this sense, teachers can be said to teach in the “enlarged cultural context of learning”. But, to reach this professional profile, as we showed through this case study, the teacher needs to be exposed to cultural diversity, deconstructing their own representations of cultural values influencing teaching and learning.

The training model envisaging *innovation coaches of teachers* started out action-research process in class. This perspective was enriched by the engagement within an international community of teachers, who were put together to work, solve problems and innovate. This perspective tried not only provide the teachers involved with new competences, but also, in a spiral of learning by expansion through activity, to embed students’ cultural representations into the activity system, interacting with their teachers’ representations. Therefore, methodological transposition from expert knowledge to teachers’ practical and constructed new knowledge ended in a final transposition to pedagogical practices in an intercultural perspective. Teachers’ identity constellations interplayed within training activities (creation of learning units in international groups) were supposed to be the key element for the deconstruction and reconstruction of

cultural perspectives in class. This last statement will be corroborated in further works within this book, showing the efficacy of the whole educational dispositive, that we could represent through the following scheme:

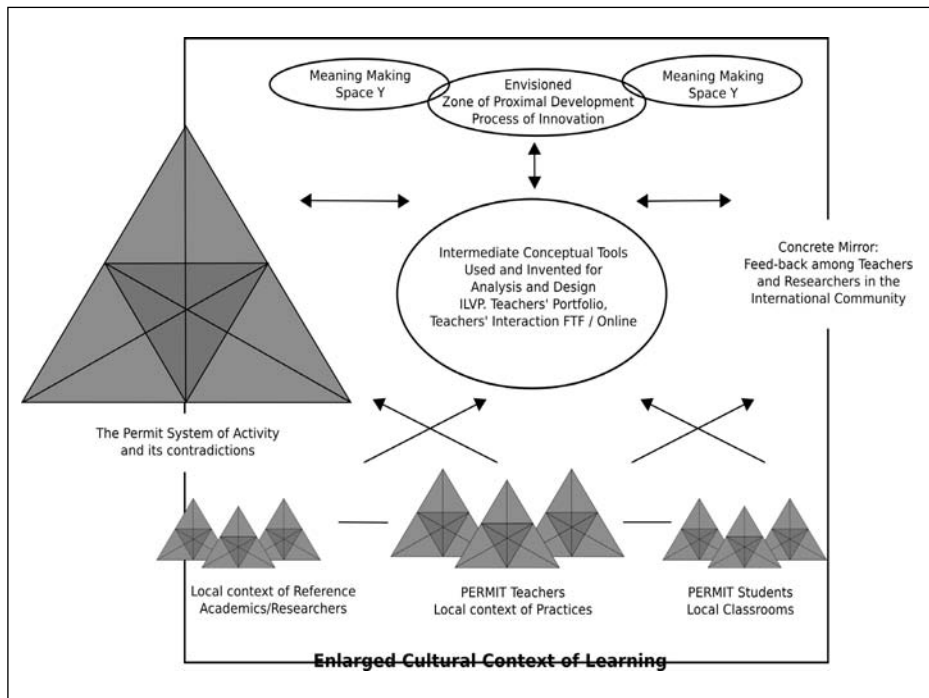


Figure 11 – The PERMIT educational dispositive according to the Activity Theory (3<sup>rd</sup> Generation)

### Final Reflections

A definition of Third-generation Activity Theory (Scandinavian Activity Theory) helps us to understand how expansive learning aims to cross the borders of current activity systems through the deconstruction of the own cultural and historical representations:

*An activity system is by definition a multi-voiced formation. An expansive cycle is a re-orchestration of those voices, of the different viewpoints and approaches of the various participants. Historicity in this perspective means identifying the past cycles of the activity system. The re-orchestration of the multiple voices is dramatically facilitated when the different voices are seen against their historical background, as layers in a pool of complementary competencies within the activity system.” (Engeström, 1991a, p. 14-15)*

This conception, based on an extensive groundwork, laid the foundations for a revolution of educational research and pedagogical paradigms; in our specific case, we consider it has pointed to the need of developing conceptual instruments to support the rethinking of pedagogical practices in enlarged learning contexts.

From the foundations provided by Vygotskij, Cultural-Historical constructivism

was initially applied to the individual development of higher psychological functions. Luria and Leont'ev's cross-cultural research following Vigotskij's early works, put the bases of Activity Theory (Engestrom, op.cit; Daniels et al, op.cit) but remained isolated, until Western psychologists as Bruner (1985) and Cole (1988) extensively commented on these concepts. Nevertheless, Y. Engestrom, a Scandinavian educational researcher, enormously helped this dialogue between Russian and Western research, creating what he called the "third generation" of Activity Theory. Even when the efforts of Bruner, and mainly Cole, were aimed to criticize the assumptions of "universalism" of human psychology and learning processes; and that Engestrom emphasized the importance of "multiple voices" within Activity Systems, as far as the recognition of memory and history as elements that create contradictions, this theory was never applied to the theoretical discussions about intercultural education. The attempt here is to laid the foundations for a new discussion on "intercultural" pedagogy, considering Cultural-Historical constructivism and Activity Theory as a powerful theoretical approach to discuss the generation of new learning "third cultures" where diversity is discovered, explored and negotiated.

These third spaces of culture are contexts of learning where diversity is present, where borders need continuously to be renegotiated through meaning making processes. This way, we anticipate a dialogic perspective, which emphasizes the tension among cultural differences whenever new meaning is created to solve the contradictions brought about by diversity.

The only way to understand this new perspective on pedagogical practices and in general on education is, in our view, to experience it. Further initial and in-service teachers' training dispositive should be designed following this conception, through practical experience of otherness that helps the teacher to reshape the own conceptions about cultural values influencing teaching and learning; taking hence to an authentic implementation of intercultural strategies within the own pedagogical practices.

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