

ENHANCING DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP AWARENESS THROUGH PARTICIPATORY MOBILIZATION OF MARGINAL COMMUNITIES IN SOUTH SALENTO

ACCREScere LA CONSAPEVOLEZZA DI CITTADINANZA DIGITALE ATTRAVERSO LA MOBILITAZIONE PARTECIPATIVA DELLE COMUNITA' MARGINALI DEL SUD SALENTO



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ABSTRACT

Marginalized communities are affected by macroeconomic imbalances, with negative consequences in terms of access to education and democratic exercise of constitutional rights. This paper aims to highlight how these effects can be mitigated by fostering a new aware digital citizenship able to support its own territory in fighting inequalities through enhancing relational assets and promoting participatory planning in tackling educational poverties.

Le comunità marginali risentono degli squilibri macroeconomici, con conseguenze negative in termini di accesso all'istruzione ed esercizio democratico dei diritti costituzionali. Questa riflessione si propone di evidenziare come questi effetti possono essere mitigati rafforzando una nuova cittadinanza digitale consapevole capace di supportare il proprio territorio nella lotta alle disuguaglianze attraverso la valorizzazione dei beni relazionali e la promozione della progettazione partecipativa nel contrasto alle povertà educative.

KEYWORDS

Social inequalities, relational assets, digital citizenship, participatory planning, marginal communities.

Diseguaglianze sociali, beni relazionali, cittadinanza digitale, progettazione partecipativa, comunità marginali

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Introduction

Marginalized communities are intensely affected by current macroeconomic imbalances, with negative consequences in terms of access to education and democratic exercise of constitutional rights. This phenomenon specifically involves areas at depopulation risk in Italy's South Salento, implying social, economic and cultural desertification.

Acting on lifelong learning levers by re-programming digital citizenship awareness starting from people's real life needs, could drive current innovation processes to mitigating these effects, rather than exacerbating it: the pedagogical methods chosen to intervene throughout the course of one people's life can therefore be crucial, particularly in this era of such technological transformations.

In order to build an intervention strategy in this direction, the pedagogical action must be focused at territorial level to involve local stakeholders through action research and participatory planning approaches, favouring the repositioning of resources and project implementation from top-down to a bottom-up perspective.

This could benefit children in educational poverty as long as adults in returning illiteracy conditions, enhancing the self-regenerating capability of marginal communities and actualizing the relevant achievement of putting universities' Third Mission into practice. It would also foster the active involvement of local authorities, schools, and associations through the tool of the Community Educational Pact, which serves as a strategy to build a network and co-design educational actions aimed at stimulating the agency of each community member and promoting the development of skills needed to address social needs.

Anthropological and cultural dynamics, deeply rooted in marginal communities, specifically in South Salento region, are still the most critical challenge to face when trying to starting-up social innovation processes, mostly because of the atavic reticence to collaborate and keep working together. The only way to try and unlock these slowing mechanisms seems to be promoting a sort of new pilgriming digitally aware citizenship, open to listening to people's needs and rebuilding human relations by reactivating collective intelligence and identities.

The objective of this paper is therefore outlining new models of social and relational interactions shaped and empowered by tools and practices that blended together can positively make a difference along the long-lasting and challenging path of inverting the inexorable decline of social and economic inequalities.

1. Empowering education's role in facing global challenges and promoting participation among marginal communities

1.1 Territorial Cohesion strategies in tackling social inequalities through education

In a colonial world, cultural decolonization is still possible at community level through mobilizing counter-extractive leverages of participatory co-design on initiatives that promote lifelong learning and the appreciation of relational assets throughout life. Implementing democracy becomes a realistic experience when based on the full awareness and ability of citizens to exercise their rights and fulfil their duties in relation to others and to their closest territory. All actors who are constitutionally called to do so, must be able to contribute to this challenge of equality and freedom (Russo, 2025a).

In order for this to happen, it is first necessary to enable individuals to participate in community life by promoting their empowerment and putting them in a position to recognize and develop their potential. The greatest challenge lies in building trusting relationships, especially with those living in conditions of social, economic, and cultural disadvantage, who 'clearly have less empowerment, and for them, gaining it means improving their existential conditions' (Colazzo, 2024a). These individuals often show disinterest and distrust toward community-related issues, as they lack the cultural tools needed to understand reality, engage in dialogue, and feel fully integrated into the social fabric. And yet, they are precisely the ones who need the most listening and support to face the complexities of everyday life. It is essential to foster the creation of spaces where people can feel recognized, give shape and voice to their needs, and acquire the skills necessary to exercise their rights and responsibilities.

Studies have proved that countries investing more heavily in education tend to develop more rapidly (McClelland, 1996). Even if it is sometimes said that democracy is a luxury that poor, divided societies cannot afford, some perspectives suggest, to the contrary, that democracy is of economic value precisely in societies where ethnic, linguistic, geographical, and other cleavages would otherwise result in excessive amounts of socially unproductive opportunistic behaviour, which is good news for the increasing number of developing countries that are moving in the direction of participatory governance (Rodrik, 2000). This means that even

marginal communities belonging to less developed areas, if strongly committed to education and participation, can tackle social inequalities.

In marginal areas, the school represents a fundamental cultural stronghold for the development of children. It can become a central hub for the entire community if, together with the local territory, it commits to sharing a common project, integrating their respective actions and recognizing each other as interconnected and complementary parts of a unified system.

The need to open up to the local context in order to expand the educational offer is clearly stated in Law 107/2015, which emphasizes that dialogue and joint action among the involved stakeholders are key 'to counteracting socio-cultural and territorial inequalities, [...] to building an open school, as a permanent laboratory of research, experimentation and educational innovation, participation, and education in active citizenship' (Art. 1).

Redesigning the school as a research hub—open and engaged with its territory—means shaping the school environment as one that communicates with the community and becomes a place where everyone can see themselves reflected and feel motivated to participate. This vision encourages the school to reimagine itself as an educational agency more closely aligned with the needs of its local area (Colazzo, 2024b) and as a promoter of public engagement, aiming to share distributed knowledge and collaborate with social actors in defining practical strategies that address the needs of the community, with particular attention to the younger generations.

At the same time, the territory is reinterpreted and experienced through an educational lens, conceived as a classroom (McLuhan, 1980) and a space for continuous learning that unfolds through social exchanges among community members in various contexts. In weaving this dialogue between inside and outside, the community is called upon to take responsibility, as learning and human development are deeply embedded in the social fabric, which becomes a space in which new forms of civic coexistence can be cultivated.

A strong relationship exists between nations' development, economic growth, stability, and the education system, such that, particularly in time of economic crisis, it is counterproductive to cut national education budgets, since these kinds of measures have negative long-term implications for nations' future growth and development (Winn Byrd, 2011).

Positioning education as a key factor in economic and social development, the increasing role of skilled labour increases the requirements for the level of education. Besides this, accelerating the aging process and depreciating qualification, promote self-education and expand the scope of additional vocational training. In a rapidly developing knowledge economy, the role of intellectual labour reduces the importance of physical labour and although change of occupation requires time, educated people spend less time searching for a new job (Astakhova et al., 2016).

Although education is and will remain a fundamental enabler of opportunities for individuals and innovation and growth for economies, an educated population is needed now more than ever to protect and further gender equity, combat climate crises, and build a world that is safer and more prosperous for future generations (Runde, Bandura, McLean, 2023).

Climate and environmental systems, physical geography, socioeconomic systems, governance systems, and human health systems are effectively linked together. Given also that climate, health, and instability affect each other in a variety of ways, strengthening the capacity of actors in countries at all levels of development to address relationships linking these three sectors, will result in improved human and environmental welfare outcomes (Sellers, et al. 2019). It has also been proved that communities adequately informed and made fully aware, can be supported by Environmental Participatory Governance models, in becoming protagonists in the change towards a just ecological transition (Loperte, 2024).

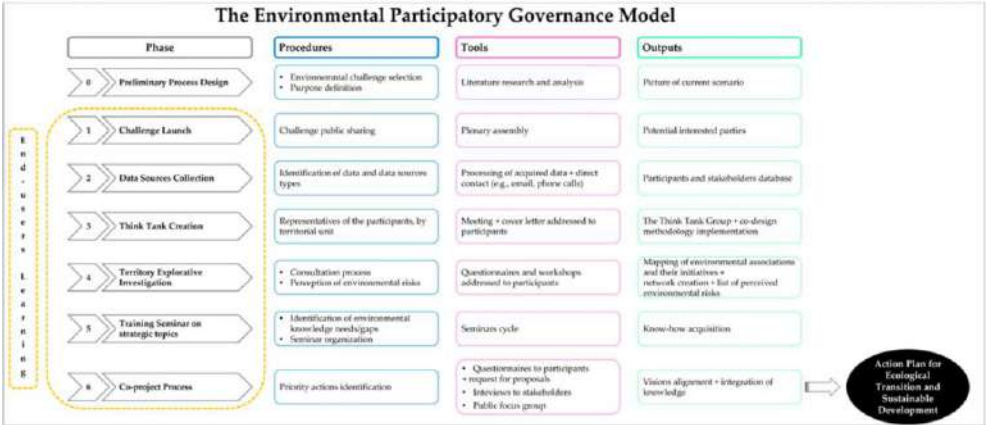


Table 1. The EPG Model for Basilicata Region (Loperte, 2023)

While uncoordinated school systems lead to excessive polarization and hence less than optimal growth, working to build common norms facilitates interaction between members of a society who differ in their cultural or religious backgrounds and in this process, education plays the dual role of building human capital and determining social orientation. On the other hand, same analysis shows that while centralized schooling holds out the potential for a Pareto improvement of welfare, such an improvement is not assured and depends on political circumstances: indeed, coercive centralization of schooling results in overly rapid homogenization, and may yield less welfare than decentralized education. On a normative plane, the design and assessment of school reforms should take into account their impact on the socializing role of education, in addition to their effect on scholastic achievement. In this perspective, education vouchers can be a case in point, indeed, even if popular support for vouchers is most often based on their offering better access to high-quality education (especially to children of disadvantaged families), their impact on social cohesion may be no less important: prospective gains from improved scholastic performance must be weighed against potential losses from increased social fragmentation (Gradstein, 2002). This is why, according to who is writing, it is crucial activating an ecosystemic strategy for territorial cohesion that fosters bottom-up stakeholders' mobilization resistant to being carried away by conjunctural crisis and capable of counter-extracting from a glocal approach the decertifying effects of neoelitarist macroeconomic dynamics on local communities.

The ecosystemic strategy fits within a vision of participatory governance in education, which in recent years has been embraced by many schools and implemented through the formal structuring of educational alliances with local communities. In particular, during the pandemic period, the Ministry of Education introduced the *Community Educational Pact* as part of the 2020–2021 School Plan, with the aim of establishing a network between schools and social actors operating at various levels to counter educational poverty and ensure the continuity of school services by activating additional educational sites such as libraries, museums, and parks.

The Pact is a specific agreement signed by local authorities, institutions, schools, and third sector organizations within a given area, designed to 'encourage the provision of alternative spaces and facilities for the conduct of teaching activities and for the development of supplementary or alternative educational experiences' (M.D. 39/2020). It is based on the principle of subsidiarity (Art. 118), which

recognizes the possibility for social actors—both individual citizens and intermediary bodies—to cooperate with institutions in addressing social issues. Moreover, it relies on the exercise of school autonomy (R.P.D. 275/1999), which allows for flexible approaches in organizing time, space, and curriculum in order to guarantee everyone the right to education and to design an educational offer that reflects the needs of the local context.

The signing of a Pact has organizational implications for the educational offer, requiring a rethinking of both external spaces—as extensions of educational activities—and internal school spaces, all of which must be adapted to 'accommodate the plurality of interactions, learning styles, and outcomes to be achieved' (Mangione et al., 2020). It also requires a reorganization of time that goes beyond the rigid structure of the school calendar, recalibrating the distribution of hours per subject and ensuring that schools remain open beyond traditional hours. This reconceptualization of space and time redefines the curriculum in terms of alignment with the local context and active dialogue with it, through observation, listening, direct engagement, and the creation of meaningful synergies.

The initiation and development of a Pact require the active participation of all stakeholders through the exercise of shared leadership, which implies a shift in the status of the actors—who become jointly responsible—and in social relationships—which become cooperative. These relationships serve as a 'vehicle for empowerment' (De Rossi, 2018, p. 423) for community members, enabling them to identify opportunities for action within their local context, while remaining aware of broader global social dynamics. From this perspective, the Community Educational Pact becomes a tool for territorial governance, aimed at co-designing context-specific actions for the well-being and development of children, youth, and the wider community by fostering dialogue between educational and public policies.

Although these Pacts initially emerged in response to an emergency scenario, they have the potential to become a standard method for creating the formal and institutional conditions necessary for implementing innovative teaching and supporting collaborative practices carried out by social actors. Educational Pacts can be seen as the most effective strategy for building an 'ecosystem' capable of promoting human capital, integrating existing local initiatives, facilitating access to them, and reducing inequalities (Mangione et al., 2021).

Proving that education directly affects income inequality and growth, other studies have also focused on how the link from education to income inequality and growth operates. Specifically, they show how effects of more education on income inequality cannot be unambiguously ascertained when inequality is assessed by the Lorenz dominance criterion, while on the other hand, increases in education first increase and then decrease growth as well as income inequality, when measured by the Gini coefficient, concluding there is no clear functional relationship between growth and measured income inequality. Indeed, if one conditions on inequality and human capital in growth regressions, effect of inequality on growth may be spurious, but it may still provide important information on the nonlinear relationship between growth and education. However, this relationship depends on the level of human capital as well as structural parameters for the education and production technology: the determination of these may be crucial when analysing the inequality-growth nexus. Moreover, differences in educational level in time or across countries may be due to many things, such as policy, history, labour market conditions, physical and human capital equipment used in schooling, laws, school financing (fees), etc. Furthermore, differences may also reflect different demand conditions. This said, untangling the precise demand-supply relationships between human capital, production and education technologies, and institutions in the explanation of growth or inequality, it has been pointed as interesting future research (Rheme, 2007).

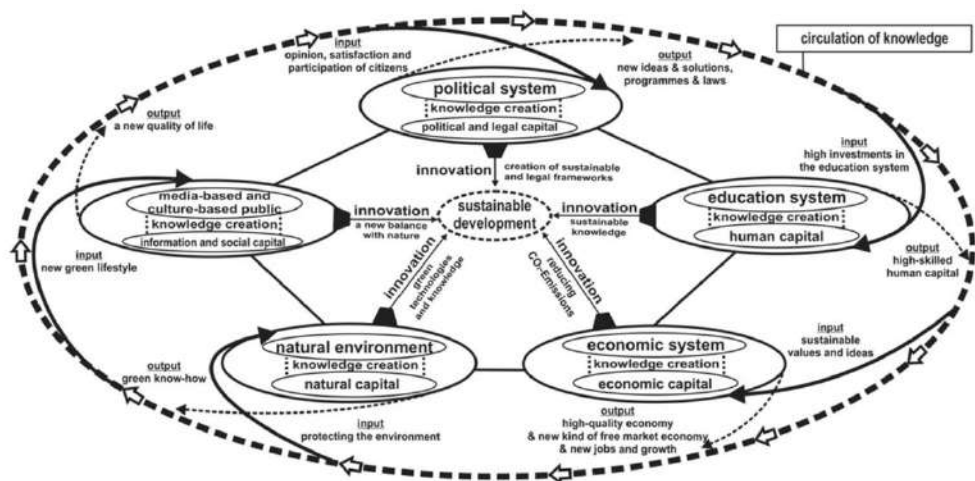


Table 2. Effects of Investment in Education Sustainability in Quintuple Helix (Carayannis et al., 2012)

According to the present author, this research can be faced and untied only setting up a territorial observatory able to make the “five elics” strategically and harmoniously turn, centring the pivot not just generally on sustainable development but on a fair and sustainable needs truly listened among a communitarian contest. Pedagogy and politics can therefore mutually interact to seek and build regeneration opportunities in marginal communities. In conclusion, it is the task of political-pedagogical action research to empower territorial actors and enable them to listen to each other and collaborate effectively, in order to jointly build a better present and future for all and this task becomes even more critical nowadays, within the challenge of digital revolution (Russo, 2025b).

1.2 The importance of listening in fostering children’s participatory potential

The importance of listening to minors in the research activity of the UniBa Doctorate fits into a broader scenario of social interactions in which stakeholders in a territory have the duty to facilitate continuous and constant listening among themselves. This dynamic, according to the author, is possible within an ecosystemically cohesive territorial context (Russo, 2025a), with the awareness that it is necessary to build bottom-up collaborative working methods and tools, starting from the mapping of needs (Russo, 2025b).

Since April 9, 2024, Italy has established a National Day for Listening to Minors. Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantees the right of minors to be heard among the four fundamental principles, which also include non-discrimination, respect for the best interests of the child, and their right to life, survival, and proper development.

The ability of the family and school environment to listen to minors is an important indicator of health-related behaviors among school-aged children. According to an international survey conducted in 2022 by the World Health Organization (Istituto Superiore di Sanità, 2022), it emerged that as children grow older, it becomes more difficult for them to communicate with their parents. This is indicative of the capacity of the closest adults to listen to and potentially support them in different life moments. The same study revealed that the percentage of students who feel accepted by their teachers is quite high at age 11 (85.7%), drops by 10 points at age 13 (75%), and falls to 61.8% at age 15.

In school, in terms of listening, students' trust in teachers' interest in them appears significantly lower. 61.7% of 11-year-olds perceive interest from their teachers; the number drops to 50.4% at age 13 and to 35.4% at age 15.

Among peers, it is interesting to observe how positive relationships with classmates decline around age 13, then recover afterward. Adolescents who consider their peers "kind and helpful" — a prerequisite for building trust-based and listening relationships — are nearly 70% at age 11 (69.7%). This drops by nearly 20 points at age 13 (51.7%) and rises again to 58% at age 15.

A study published in April 2025 by Openpolis (Openpolis, 2025) emphasizes that talking about the right to be heard is not just a generic reference to the need to listen to children and adolescents, but rather a call to take their perspective seriously when shaping public policies, especially those that directly concern them.

A 2024 survey by the European Parliament (EP Youth Survey, 2024), released in February 2025, found that 21% of young Italians reported having promoted or signed a petition (on paper or online), compared to an EU average of 26%. Meanwhile, the share of Italian youth who took part in youth organizations exceeds the European average (14% compared to 11% in the EU). The percentage of Italian youths who said they contacted a politician about an issue is low (7%) but roughly in line with the EU average (8%). The reason, both in Italy and in the EU, lies in the perception of having little impact or not being listened to. 31% said they never contacted a decision-maker because they didn't think it would make a difference (EU average: 30%). A quarter (25%) said they didn't do it because "they don't believe decision-makers listen to people like them" (EU average: 23%).

These trends prompt reflection on the expectations that young people — and minors in particular — have about being acknowledged by adults at various levels: family, school, institutions. Not only individually, but also generationally, especially considering that this demographic group is significantly smaller than in the past: according to an analysis by Openpolis – Con i Bambini based on ISTAT data, from 2019 to 2024, the population of minors decreased in 98% of Italian cities.

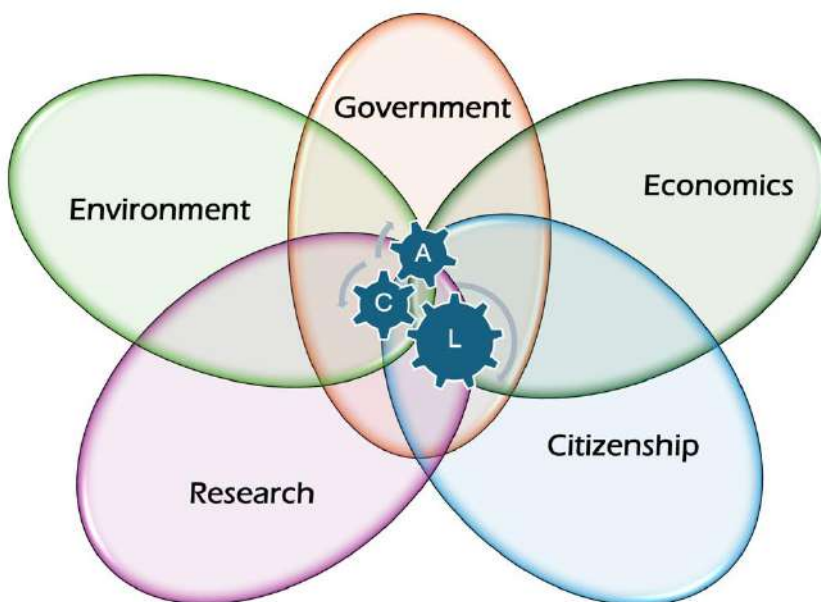


Table 3. The ACL based on MdB as driving force of the 5 Elics

When it comes to influencing participatory and decision-making processes, young people's trust in institutions' ability to listen to them plays a key role. From this perspective, Eurobarometer surveys provide insights into the attitudes of European and Italian youth toward institutions at different levels.

In the most recent edition of the survey on socio-demographic trends in public opinion (EP Euro Barometer, 2024), it emerged that, on average, young people trust both European and national institutions more than the general population. 61% of those aged 15–24 express trust in the European Parliament (compared to a 56% population average), and 42% in the national parliament (population average: 37%).

Therefore, this is why the mobilizing power of the MdB (Mappatura dei Bisogni – Needs Mapping) among the ACL (Action Community Learning), working among the ETC strategy, can be simply found in focusing on people's needs at communitarian level. On the other hand, it is clear that in a society like southern Italy and particularly in Salento Region, where OECD states a critical gap in facing daily complex issues and applying problem solving (OECD, 2024), the only way to make the 5 elics properly work is starting from tackling educational poverty both towards minors and adults.

2. A new digitally aware citizenship for the regeneration of South Salento region

2.1 Digital citizenship awareness in the ETC strategy

In order to effectively work, the ETC philosophy implies a co-planning method specifically applicable to concrete problems and challenges related to defined. In this direction, the ETC approach has been implemented among a research program of University of Bari “Aldo Moro” with the PhD project of “Reinforcing Public Administration by involving the territory for the benefit of vulnerable population”, in a research-training-intervention path dedicated to school teachers in South Salento region, focusing on tackling educational poverties.

The performing path of facing socio-economic inequalities by tackling education poverty in the South Salento region promoted by the PhD project of the University of Bari “Aldo Moro”, has been simply started by common citizens initially gathered in local *Nonprofit Organizations* holding the role of “activators”, then networked in a network association, “Galassia Salento”, following the recent indications of the “Third Sector Code” introduced in Italy’s legislation (d.lgs 3 luglio 2017 n. 117).

The local civil society represented by *Galassia Salento*, has then been pursuing the promotion of a cooperative wider network of territorial stakeholders directly involved on education, coordinating together schools, municipalities, universities and innovating start-ups in participatory processes while at the same time tailoring shared projects aligned to social capital improvements (Russo, 2024). This powerful bottom-up civic force has been able to make the 5 elics harmoniously moved as one, while taking into consideration the limits and risks of today’s digital mining neoelitarism and the opportunity of a subsidiarity relation between pedagogy and politics (Russo, 2025b).

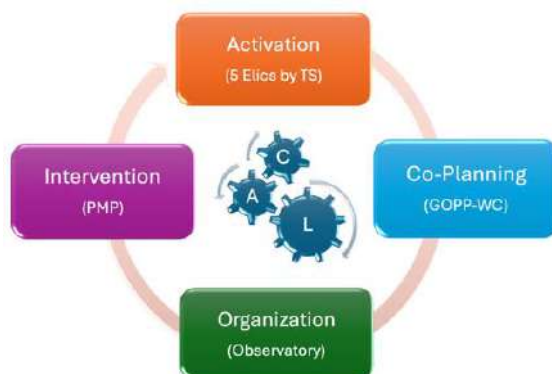


Table 4. The Ecosystem of Territorial Cohesion at work

The collaborative processes activated concerned the creation of a common method on building *Community Pacts* oriented to fight together against educational deprivation. The participatory methods used in this phase have been G.O.P.P. and World Café (Russo, 2025c). Applying these methods, a second step in this direction has been the foundation of a territorial *Observatory* focused on educational poverty, capable of listening to all local stakeholders needs (included kids and families, besides teachers, researchers, educators and social workers), as well as coordinating *needs' mapping* initiatives (Manfreda, 2024) according to the *Action Community Learning strategy* (Manfreda, 2021), constantly monitoring the phenomena at microscopic level, co-programming and co-planning tailored interventions by using the PMP principles (PMI, 2021), following-up by re-activating the 5 elics and so on.

2.2 Case Study: A research-training-intervention path on digital skills and collaborative citizenship for the teachers of South Salento region

Investments made in the field of education can make substantial contributions towards the advancement of technology, enhancing the knowledge and skills of individuals and cultivating a culture of innovation. By implementing educational initiatives that foster technology knowledge and proficiency, we may actively facilitate technological advancement in many industries, therefore making significant contributions to both social and economic development (Wang, R., Qamruzzaman, Md., Karim, S., 2024).

In this direction, the ETC approach implemented among the research program of University of Bari “Aldo Moro” has been tested on a large group of teachers of mandatory schooling in South Salento region. The training of school personnel for the digital transition in state schools, as established by Ministerial Decree No. 66/2023, has been provided to three schools of South Salento, with three different projects: TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED DIGITAL DIDACTICS – Competencies and tools for the school of the future, dedicated to the n. 36 teachers of the Istituto Comprensivo “Italo Calvino” of the municipalities of Alliste-Felline-Melissano, fully delivered online; BUILDING A LEARNING COMMUNITY, dedicated to the n. 28 teachers of the Istituto Comprensivo of the municipalities of Supersano-Botrugno-Nociglia-San Cassiano, fully delivered through laboratories on the field; DIGITAL INNOVATION FOR THE SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE, dedicated to the n. 6 teachers of the Istituto Comprensivo of the municipalities of Salve-MorcianoDiLeuca-Patù, fully delivered through laboratories on the field.

All the three of them were centered on DigiCompEDU 3.3, “Use digital technologies to promote and optimize collaboration among students. Enable students to use digital technologies both to carry out collaborative assignments and to improve their communication, collaboration, and shared knowledge creation”, taking into consideration that competences are evolving from general digital competences to subject-specific and role-specific (for example, competences for school administrators, instructional coaches) which are crucial in supporting the varied roles within the current educational landscape (Benali, M., Mak, J., 2023).

In line with the already cited MdB methodology, the main objective of this case study was to identify the critical issues faced by teachers in their everyday school life and to support them in defining curricular and extracurricular interventions necessary to address the problems that emerged. The study also observed how the training process influenced the transformation of teaching practices, particularly in relation to the teachers' ability to develop critical awareness and tools capable of promoting active digital citizenship. Throughout the training process, the teachers were engaged in a reflection on the changes in educational dynamics in relation to technological innovation, with particular attention to the development of collaborative digital citizenship.

The interventions were structured using the participatory planning methodology GOPP (Goal Oriented Project Planning) for identifying problems and transforming them into objectives. This approach was particularly followed in the

Comprehensive Institute based in Supersano, with orienteering activities aimed at strengthening teamwork skills, and a World Café to share the collective intelligence stimulated during the school experience. The GOPP process was carried out entirely through workshops, both remotely and in person, using the digital platforms Zoom and Mural, which the teachers learned to use effectively.

From a methodological perspective, this case study gave particular importance to focus groups, which revealed insights that would have otherwise remained hidden.

"In assessment rubrics, the descriptors are often written in a technical language that does not take into account the cultural background of parents or whether the content is accessible to them. In my opinion, we should use simpler, more practical and direct language that families can better understand." (Teacher 1)

"We need to improve our interaction with families, be more transparent, and share our methodological choices with them in order to build a relationship of trust and collaboration. We could increase meetings with parents to present the school's vision, discuss the operational strategies adopted, and allow them to express their point of view." (Teacher 2)

These issues highlighted the importance of an open and dialogical attitude between the school and the community, as well as the need to share a common language that can be truly understood by families, so that they are more inclined to cooperate.

The focus groups thus brought to light real issues, which participants committed to addressing in a concrete manner. At the same time, continuous participant observation was carried out throughout all practical training activities, and reflective questionnaires were administered both before and after the intervention. The analysis revealed two critical emergency issues: classroom management and teacher burnout. These are linked to complex and specific experiences involving students, families, school environments, and the local community.

After some initial reluctance, the teachers showed a strong interest in identifying for themselves the types of interventions needed to address the real problems they face on a daily basis—particularly in relation to the two most complex emergency issues. In contrast, they expressed the perceived uselessness of training courses in which they are passively subjected to superficial and sterile theoretical content. A strong level of engagement gradually emerged, with progressive empowerment

fostered precisely by a methodology open to active listening and mutual collaboration.

The most rewarding outcome observed during the process was the emergence of a paradigm shift among the teachers: from the initial expectation of simply learning how to use new digital tools, to the acquisition of concrete capacities for innovating their daily teaching practices. This shift opened up real possibilities for addressing the most pressing issues and, in turn, for actively promoting conscious digital citizenship among colleagues, students, families, and the wider community.

The digital dimension was therefore integrated into the Community Pacts not only as an educational goal aimed at developing digital skills, but also as a transversal axis designed to strengthen collaboration among the actors within the educational system. During the focus groups conducted with teachers, difficulties in managing smartphones in the classroom also emerged, highlighting how these devices, although offering opportunities for implementing innovative teaching methods, present significant educational challenges. Many students use social networks freely but often without parental supervision and with little awareness, sharing sensitive data online and accessing age-inappropriate content, which negatively affects both individual and group behaviours, leading to distraction, discomfort, or exposure to digital risks. This situation underscored the need for a systemic and shared approach to digital citizenship—one that goes beyond mere technical literacy and promotes critical use of technology, involving families in training paths aimed at spreading good practices and building a responsible digital culture.

At the end of the training course, the teachers themselves developed a personalized intervention plan to fully innovate both curricular and extracurricular activities for the 2025/2026 school year. They were able to rely on the support provided by the ETC strategy, which involves cohesion funds obtained by the local Third Sector in synergy with all territorial stakeholders—an aspect that enables schools to radically transform their bottom-up autonomy in implementing change.

Even from the short-term initiatives undertaken, all of this points toward increased student motivation, an improved collaborative climate among teachers, students, and families, enhanced capacity for interaction with the local community, and a clear evolution of the school into a participatory community. Ultimately, this process has led the teachers not only to acquire new digital collaborative tools—as outlined in the Ministry's minimum objectives—but also to reimagine themselves

as facilitators, promoters, and builders of active and critical citizenship, leveraging the potential of new technologies.

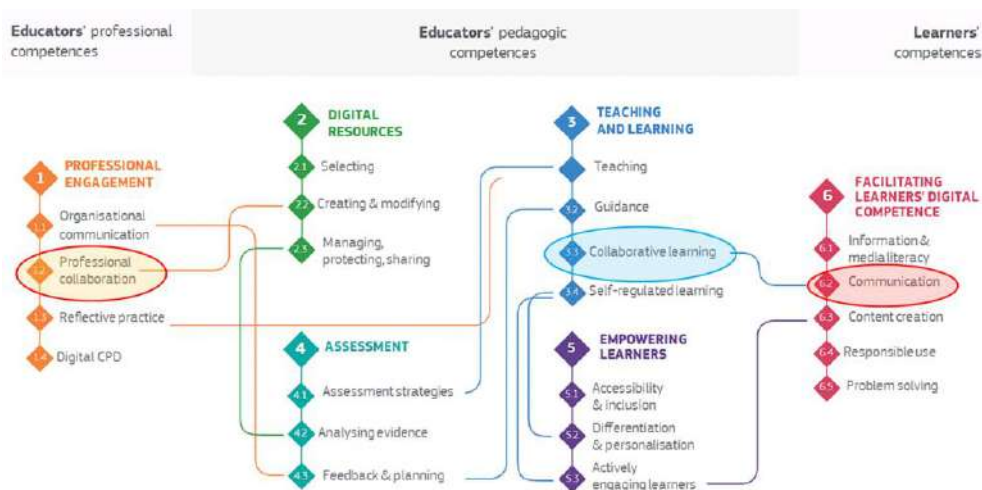


Table 5. DigiCompEdu focused on Collaborative Citizenship

Conclusions

Starting from analysing the impact of global challenges on local territories, this paper argues that only at territorial level it is still possible to recreate conditions of a just and sustainable listening approach to real people's needs.

In this direction, the concept of *Ecosystem of Territorial Cohesion* strategy opens to co-programming and co-planning organized initiatives involving all the stakeholders of a specific territory, leveraging the *MdB* methodology within the *ACL* strategy, particularly focusing on fostering a new digitally aware citizenship: this has been the case study of the research-training-intervention in some schools of South Salento region and through these schools to all their territory meaning families, municipalities, third sector and educational experts. This case study have proved how starting from rebuilding a human relationship based on listening to each other, while connected to all the powerful tools that an entire community can make available, interesting and positive changes can be possible in tackling social inequalities though directly acting against educational poverty.

The perspective of promoting this kind of approach is still open and challenging, due to cultural and anthropological legacies from the past and actual and future ones dictated by global issues. Another critical issue concerns the definition of what is or can be fair or sustainable: to this aspect it has been recently attempted to answer, even if it stays an interesting subject of further research.

Notwithstanding this, the message coming from this paper stays that listening means, first of all, to know that you have only one wing, to be aware that you cannot fly alone, and therefore to seek the other wing in another person, to embrace them and finally be able to fly. Because living is not dragging life along, it is not tearing it apart, it is not nibbling at it. Living is surrendering like a seagull to the intoxication of the wind; living is savoring the adventure of freedom" (Bello et al., 2015), together.

Author contributions

C.R. conceived the presented idea, developed the ETC theory, coordinated the research-training-intervention analysed in the case study, developed conclusions.

S.C. sharpened the research method, supervised the overall research strategy, contributed to conclusions.

M.R. co-carried out the research-training-intervention of the case study; contributed to introduction, paragraphs 1.1 and 2.2, conclusions.

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