MEDIA EDUCATION
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The art of inclusion: methods to approach interculturality in the Italian National Plan of Arts[1]

L'arte di includere: metodi per approcciare l'interculturalità nel programma nazionale italiano "Il Piano delle Arti"

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Abstract. Several scholars have analyzed how the creative processes involve the ability to multi-perspective visions and provide room for intercultural and social comparison, self-awareness, reflection and the ability to bridge across differences. Through the analysis of data coming from a two year research on schools participating in the National Plan of Arts, the paper highlights some of the approaches and methods adopted by teachers to foster inclusion and broaden intercultural exchange at school through art. Multifaceted artistic approaches are outlined: from the prioritizing of the choral dimension, to the connection with handicraft, up to the use of specific collaborative methods. Beyond the different methods and projects, two main general approaches seem to cross the different experiences: a centripetal and a centrifugal approach to the intercultural issues. The paper intends therefore to provide insights about such different approaches and claim for a deeper intertwining between them.

Keywords: art education, creativity, inclusion, interculturality, National Plan of Arts.

Riassunto. Diversi studi hanno analizzato come i processi creativi abbiano importanti ripercussioni sulla capacità di visione multiprospettica e diano spazio al confronto interculturale e sociale, alla consapevolezza di sé, alla riflessione e alla capacità di superare le differenze. Attraverso l'analisi dei dati inerenti le progettazioni biennali realizzate dalle scuole che hanno aderito al Piano Nazionale delle Arti, il presente articolo intende evidenziare alcuni degli approcci e dei metodi adottati dagli insegnanti per favorire l'inclusione e ampliare lo scambio interculturale a scuola attraverso l'arte. Nell'intento di perseguire tale finalità sono stati delineati approcci artistici variegati: dalla priorità della dimensione corale, al collegamento con l'artigianato, fino all'uso di metodi collaborativi specifici. Le diverse metodologie possono essere aggregate all'in-

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terno di due macro-approcci alle questioni interculturali: un approccio centripeto e uno centrifugo. L'articolo intende quindi fornire spunti di riflessione su questi diversi approcci prospettando la necessità di un più profondo intreccio tra di essi.

Parole chiave: educazione artistica, creatività, inclusione, intercultura, Piano Nazionale delle Arti.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The value of art in everyone's life is universally recognised, today we are also witnessing a progressive consideration of the social and cultural utility of artistic development, also concerning processes of inclusion (Lähdesmäki & Koistinen, 2019; Gonçalves & Majhanovich, 2016). The term inclusion is broad and covers different meanings. This article is focused on the concept of social inclusion considered about art education, with specific attention on migrant students because migrant and minority groups represent a considerable number of young citizens and young learners in the education system (OECD, 2015a).

More generally, inclusion refers to the promotion of conditions which allow the recognition and the empowerment of everyone as the right to be oneself (OECD, 2015b). Social inclusion is therefore defined as the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for disadvantaged people, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights. Inclusion is a core aspiration of the 2030 Agenda (Dugarova et al., 2017). Schools are central in fostering inclusion also as parts of a big community composed of parents and local realities. The relationship between art and intercultural inclusion is an issue of research gathering increasing interest (McGregor & Ragab, 2016; European Commission, 2015; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Stern & Seifert, 2010). In the document "Seoul Agenda: Goals for the Development of Arts Education" (UNESCO, 2010), produced within the framework of the World Conference on Arts Education, among the main objectives for the artistic development there is the application of the principles and practices of arts education, to contribute to resolving the social and cultural challenges facing today's world. Of course, «ensure that arts education is accessible as a fundamental and sustainable component of a high-quality renewal of education" and "assure that arts education activities and programs are of a high quality» (UNESCO, 2010, p.3) are basic prerequisites. As Ken Robinson and Lou Aronica (2015) state, the arts are about the qualities of human experience. Through music, dance, visual arts, theater and the rest we shape what surrounds us. Learning about the arts and making them one's own is essential for intellectual development. The arts highlight the diversity of intelligence and provide concrete ways to promote it. They are one of the most intense expressions of human culture. To understand the experiences of other cultures, we need to come into contact with their music, their visual and performing arts, their literature and poetry. Music, images, poems and dramas are manifestations of some of our deepest talents and passions. Getting in touch with other people's arts is the most powerful way to see and perceive the world as they see and perceive it. In line with this premise, artistic education has been the subject of attention in recent years by various international organizations and research (Eurydice, 2019; Del Gobbo & Galeotti 2018). UNESCO, in the "Road map for Arts Education", defines arts and cultural aspects as essential components of a comprehensive education leading to the full development of the individual. This same document emphasizes that «The arts can be taught as individual study subjects, through the teaching of the various arts disciplines, thereby developing students' artistic skills, sensitivity, and appreciation of the arts, and seen as a method of teaching and learning in which artistic and cultural dimensions are included in all curriculum subjects» (UNESCO, 2006, p.8). The role that teaching arts and supporting the development of personal creativity can play in inclusion processes stems from the very concept of creativity in which a personal and a social level can be identified (Kaufman & Stemberg,2010). At the individual level, creativity is related to a situation in which a person finds diverse or alternative solutions to solve problems in a work context or in everyday life (Seuring & Muller, 2008; Runco, 2007). Artistic expression can be an important tool in paths of personal and social growth since it promotes self-esteem, facilitates the expression of emotions as well as the processing of personal experiences (Rousseau et al., 2005). With this in mind the concepts of ideational fluidity, flexibility and originality are central (Guilford, 1975; Elliot & Nakata, 2013; Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009). While, at the societal level, creativity can lead to new scientific discoveries, artistic movements, inventions and social programs (Sternberg & Lubart, 1999).

Especially nowadays, this exception considers the creative process as a collective and confrontational one (great discoveries are rarely solitary). In this prospective students' collaborative work to achieve a common

goal within their art group, allow learning while they share their thoughts and emotions, and understanding the feelings of others. These processes in art education experiences do not change when students face learning or language difficulties because, as different research has shown, art and culture promote non-verbal communication and support language acquisition (Angelides & Michaelidou, 2009). Collaborative art-making helps students not to simplify human emotions and behavior, but to see their peers as human beings and, as a result, to begin trusting them (Felleman Fattal, 2014). Cooper and Sjostrom, argue that with collaborative art-making «students who normally sit on the sidelines find themselves on equal footing with their peers» (Cooper & Sjostrom, 2006, p.4). Creativity is useful in finding new or appropriate responses to a specific situation (Runco, 2004). Creativity also includes proactive devising (Kaufmann, 2003) and therefore the possibility of glimpsing long-term solutions and projects and the integration of different knowledge areas (Sharp, 2004). It is precisely the multi-perspective view inherent in the creative process that provides effective space for intercultural and social exchange (Dziedziewicz et al., 2014). In addition, different current researches evidence that the spheres of creative thinking and social relations are closely connected: developing creative thinking can simultaneously reduce stereotypes and prejudices, allowing the construction of a more equal society (Goclowska & Crisp, 2012; Goclowska et al., 2013). In this regard cultural and artistic productions develop ways of expressing the challenges of young people and raise the voice against discrimination, contributing to community cohesion, structural integration, and social change (Delhaye, 2008; Martiniello & Lafleur, 2008). Another interesting aspect is the fact that art can enable the cultivation of heritage, traditions, customs, and culture of the origin country (Netto, 2008) and at the same time allows people to get to know their destination country. Maintaining a cultural identity of the country of origin can have very positive effects on integration if it is combined with identification with the destination country (Le et al., 2015; Phinney et al., 2001). The main aspects underpinning a system of reciprocity between arts education and inclusion processes have been described. Different educational programs can stimulate creativity as well as build positive social relationships, respect for diversity and intercultural sensitivity (Taddeo, 2021). These educational proposals enable people not only to meet and appreciate cultural diversity but also to exploit the opportunities arising from the merger of different cultures. The main elements of educational paths, focused on the relationship between creativity and social comparison (Sawyer, 2006), are the pos-

sibility of sharing ideas with different cultures by overcoming normally used patterns of thought and action, openness to new experiences, cognitive curiosity, motivation and independence of thought.

In this scenario, the main question is related to how interculturalism in pedagogical art practices is conceived. As outlined in the literature (Burnard et al., 2017), in fact, in many cases host societies require minority groups to adapt and learn their aesthetic and cultural norms, so universalism conceals ethnocentric norms, values and interests. At the same time, starting from emblematic experiences such as the theater of the oppressed (Boal, 2020), many projects and methodologies have been developed to reach, though the arts, an effective merging and integration of points of view, instead of a mere 'assimilation' (Tsai, 2012; Prentice, 2000; Jankowska et al. 2015; NACCCE, 1999). Therefore, it's also interesting to explore how nowadays art pedagogy is conceived as a form of integration, sharing and mutual benefit of differing approaches, or instead as a way for assimilation and adaptation by minority groups. The consideration of art and, more generally, of educational activities supporting pupils' creative development as didactic mediators functional to inclusion processes is widespread among teachers.

Cultural and artistic productions develop ways of expressing the challenges of young people and raise the voice against discrimination, contributing to community cohesion, structural integration, and social change (Tang, 2019). The present work, therefore, starting from an empirical recognition of the Italian schools, intends to explore how the combination of art and inclusion is interpreted in educational proposals.

2. THE CONTEXT: THE NATIONAL PLAN OF ARTS

The research, developed over two years, analyzed projects and reflections of the teachers who participated in the National Plan of Arts[2].

The Triennial National Plan of Arts, created through the legislative decree of 13 April 2017, n. 60, is a recent tool through which the Italian Ministry of Education intended to guarantee access to Italian culture and artistic heritage to all school pupils of all levels. Through the support of cultural centers for artists (theaters, museums, etc.) and companies (small artisans or large companies), a network of relations has been created to support the schools.

The Plan includes 9 measures aimed to implement both theoretical and practical activities on 4 artistic

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[2] https://miur.gov.it/web/guest/il-piano-delle-arti

fields: visual arts, literature, music, theater and performative arts.

In the first year of the Plan, 2018-2019, two measures were financed:

- measure E, related to the promotion of the participation of pupils in the cultural and environmental heritage of Italy and made in Italy artcraft.
- measure F, aimed at the enhancement of practical and historical-critical students skills, relating to music, arts, cultural heritage, cinema, media.

In the first edition, the Plan involved 590 schools.

The second year of the Plan, for the years 2019-2020, was dedicated to two further measures:

- measure C, for the development of teaching practices aimed at encouraging the learning of all pupils, enhancing the different attitudes and talents of each one.
- measure D, for the promotion of school networks aimed at sharing laboratories, instrumental and professional resources.

At the second call of the Plan 308 schools responded.

In support to the Plan, a specific monitoring and evaluation action was defined by the Ministry, for which INDIRE was responsible, and which produced each year an updated overview of the project's outcomes through a report (Chellini et al., 2020) and a website repository[3].

The INDIRE portal aims to disseminate the results of the monitoring of the actions implemented with the Plan, playing the important role of documentation and networking. Through the portal the processes of dissemination of good practices are supported, not only in an educational but also, and above all, from a cultural perspective. For this reason, the projects are deeply related to the territories, their traditions, and their possibilities for development. At the same time, the digital portal seeks to encourage connection and comparison between teachers. This is not just a showcase of experiences, but an attempt to support schools towards a broader openness and confrontation, renouncing those attitudes of institutional closure that are antithetical to the principles of inclusion.

3. METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

The research was developed by INDIRE through a multi-method approach.

In the first year of the Plan (2018-2019), schools that received funding were asked to respond to two surveys:

- one addressed to the school, concerning overall information on the project;

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[3] https://www.indire.it/progetto/monitoraggio-nazionale-del-piano-delle-arti/

- one addressed to the teachers participating in the project concerning teaching.

The data from the surveys were collected between September 2019 and February 2020.

The first survey collected a number of 318 responding schools, with a response rate of 87% with respect to the participants.

A total of 1,244 teachers responded to the second questionnaire, representing 73% of the teachers involved.

For the second year of the Plan, due to the emergency restrictions caused by the SARS-COVID 19 pandemic, in accordance with the Ministry, the INDIRE monitoring of the activities was promoted as not mandatory and designed more as a qualitative moment of reflection than as a performance analysis.

A synthetic online survey, aimed at gathering a general overview about the projects, was addressed to all the participants at the beginning of 2021: 84 schools answered to this first quantitative survey; 67% of the respondents adhered to measure C and 28% to measure D.

Starting from this auto-selected sampling, in addition to the quantitative data coming from the survey, 5 focus groups were set up in order to create a more dialogic and depth analysis.

The focus groups involved 49 teachers, and were organized, online, in May-June 2021 grouping participants in relation to their previous survey responses:

- 1 focus group was dedicated to participants that declared to work on improving specifically artistic skills in the primary school;
- 1 focus group addressed participants that declared to work on improving artistic skills in the secondary school;
- 1 focus group was dedicated to participants that declared to work on improving soft skills on primary school;
- 1 focus was dedicated to participants that declared to work on improving soft skills on secondary school;
- The last focus was dedicated to participants that worked on inclusion both in primary and secondary schools.

Based on such data gathering, several aspects related to the practices and cultural interpretation of art in the school have been collected. Among them, the main research questions that the paper addresses are:

- How can civic and intercultural skills be conveyed through creative processes and in the teaching of the arts?
- What are the cultural approaches through which teachers interpret intercultural work?

4. FINDINGS: THE METHODS FOR INTERCULTURALITY

Data collected both from the open answers and from the focus groups were gathered and analyzed using the qualitative analysis tool NVIVO for teams.

The analysis followed a bottom-up categorization approach, typical of the Grounded Theory. The interpretation followed an iterative approach that refined the categories as the work continued with the identification, comparison and selection of key issues (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The analysis initially made use of some general categories (pedagogical methods, intercultural methods, stakeholders involvement, artists involvement, difficulties, evaluation systems), and then vertically deepened each category by exploring the different interpretations and creating subcategories. Using the Nvivo for teams version, it was possible for the researchers to work at distance to the same document, analyzing, producing categories and comparing them in a collaborative way.

From such interpretative work, we could highlight different approaches to the art education for intercultural purposes and three main categories of interpretation:

- the prioritizing of the choral dimensions of arts, respect to individual ones, to create involvement, participation and physical (not only cognitive) exchange among students.
- the use of specific methods, such as cooperative learning and role-playing, to favor the creation and the growing of intercultural groups among students and to stimulate an open minded and collaborative approach.
- the use of artcraft, grounded with traditional works, as means to connect art (also) to professional visions and possible work perspectives for students.

Specific examples of such approaches are presented in the further paragraphs.

4.1 Chorality

In the analysis of school projects in which inclusion was considered among the primary objectives and interculturality was mentioned, a predominance of 'collective' arts over individual ones emerges. Artistic disciplines such as theater, choral music, marching bands, musicals and performances are privileged, compared to artistic forms focused on individual performance (painting, writing and poetry, musical soloist). In fact, as declared by a teacher involved in the Plan:

The practice as a whole, understood as a collective activity of making music and theater, is undoubtedly a fundamental methodology to favor the formative process of the pupil. Through the practice of the ensemble, it is possible to stimulate in children the search for very important expressive elements at a musical and theatrical level, such as intonation, rhythmic sense, dynamics and expressiveness, aspects of artistic language that would not be fully developed through an individual path".

It's also the case of the Liceo Properzio, in Assisi, that created a "multi-ethnic orchestra". Its project was described as follow by the teacher:

the project we propose provides for the possibility of creating the foundations for an orchestra, or choir or vocal and instrumental ensemble, capable of collecting the previous 'ingredients', starting from the history of each individual protagonist (culture, origin, music from their own traditions), with the intention of merging the own cultural heritage with that of the other members.

In the above mentioned projects, the collective and collaborative dimension of making art is, at the same time, an artistic issue but also a means to develop soft skills. Performing together is, in fact, a way to create different strategies for dialogue, based not only on cognitive and academic performances typical of the traditional school but, moreover, on an 'embodiment of the collective' that pushes toward integration and coordination of bodies before that of minds, thus on universal channels of communication.

4.2 Arts and crafts to get to know the territory and its traditions

Handcrafts represent a possible working context for students in the artistic field. The different educational projects proposed aim to know the neighboring territory, local traditions and the "indigenous" background. Such knowledge can stimulate empathy and a sense of belonging but also show how art can find different contexts of development in the workplace. Indigenous students can get to know and appreciate better the territory they belong to, sometimes undervalued or misunderstood, and non-indigenous students can better understand the local culture Several teachers emphasized that craftwork is also functional for the recalibration of slow times by students who are often used to the speed of technology. Fashion, craftsmanship and technology were the cornerstones of the activity carried out by the students at the "V. Bonifazi" Institute in Civitanova Marche. Tigamaro is a company from Le Marche, in which the manufacturing processes have been partly digitized to improve the daily life of craftsmen and their overall productivity. A "smart training" concept is firmly applied in Tigamaro which believes that the dictates of

Industry 4.0 help to preserve the craftsmanship of Made in Italy. For this reason, a "Tigamaro Academy" has been realized: an internal training system that prepares the master craftsmen of the future, leading to a local production network. The company hosted the entire class group (enhancing the internal relational dynamics) that participated in the Academy as part of a project that led to the creation of clutch bags inspired by the 1930s. Making the area known through craftsmanship is also a way to give it a historical depth, capable of nourishing the identities of young people who do not have a family background in the area. As the teacher states: « [through the project] we wanted to introduce the children to the craftsmanship of the territory which is still our origins. The historical aspect precedes the executive part». These experiences allow a reappraisal of the relationship between the local and the global (small realities and large industries) and at the same time enable young people to become aware of the continuity between past, present and future in artistic contexts. The focus on handicrafts is not only limited to local products. A school in Valenza (a city famous for its goldsmith production) involved and studied Abruzzo's goldsmith production of traditional engagement rings. A real exchange of craftsmanship experiences between the two territories took place. As the school manager describes:

The experts, designers from Abruzzo jewelry, worked with our pupils, while a designer from Valenza worked with the children of a fifth grade of the Abruzzo primary school and collected the children's design ideas. From such two creative situations, a representation has emerged that merges the traditions of the two realities. But we didn't stop here! I put the jewel into production by producing 200 pieces (...) The jewels were put up for auction to raise funds to be donated to hospitals during the covid period.

These educational proposals are also a way of showing young people how these paths evolve through continuous cultural contaminations and mutual inclusions. Intercultural dialogue finds its highest expression in art.

4.3 The methods of collaborative work and identification

The objectives of inclusion were pursued through the use of different teaching methodologies. The methodologies most often mentioned are those linked to group work, peer education and immersion. Art in all the paths was conceived at every step, or only in some, as a necessary moment of encounter and comparison between the students. At the I.C. Ungaretti di Sesto Calende (VA) the peer education activities were carried out in the civic museum where the older students not only prepared visit routes for the younger ones but also designed and created special art workshops. A peer education system is able, according to teachers, to involve and put in interaction different generations, creating an 'artistic chain', as described below by a teacher from Fabrizio De André institute in San Frediano a Settimo Cascina (PI):

Starting from the drama of a serious fire in the hills near Pisa, the children from lower secondary school went to the place, in nature, to make studies and live drawings of nature, animals, flowers and so on. They then passed the drawings to the students from the art school, who transformed them into decorative motifs. These motifs then became objects of textile models, thanks to the work of the students of Modartec (a tertiary school) and finally such models were transformed into prototypes of clothes by students from University of Pontedera.

Art as a collective work and the co-design of the routes was a widely considered aspect, stimulating those processes of trust towards the other. The activity carried out at the Fabrizio De André institute in San Frediano a Settimo Cascina (PI) falls within this framework. Following a serious fire, the pre-adolescents carried out life drawing workshops related to vegetation, which were then reworked by the older children to become prints on fabrics and an art installation with videos and images. Among the educational projects analyzed, in many cases, interesting proposals were made for role-playing and immersion activities. Some activities also allowed the children to learn about the oldest processing techniques, which often unite geographically but not historically distant cultures. The project carried out at the Enrico Fermi School in Piave di Cadore is certainly original in this perspective. The project is characterized by great transversality, since it integrated chemistry and art. The pupils were involved in the production of mineral and vegetable pigments for restoration using ancient techniques. The students also carved raw pens, made ferrogallic ink, learned about medieval writing methods and understood what it means to make a medieval illuminated codex. These methodologies, aimed at empathy and involvement of the greatest number of students, were integrated with the methodologies specific to the arts disciplines.

CONCLUSIONS

As we have seen, different pedagogical approaches have been implemented in the schools, each one aimed at achieving inclusion and intercultural goals. Based on our findings, artistic and cultural practices for intercul-
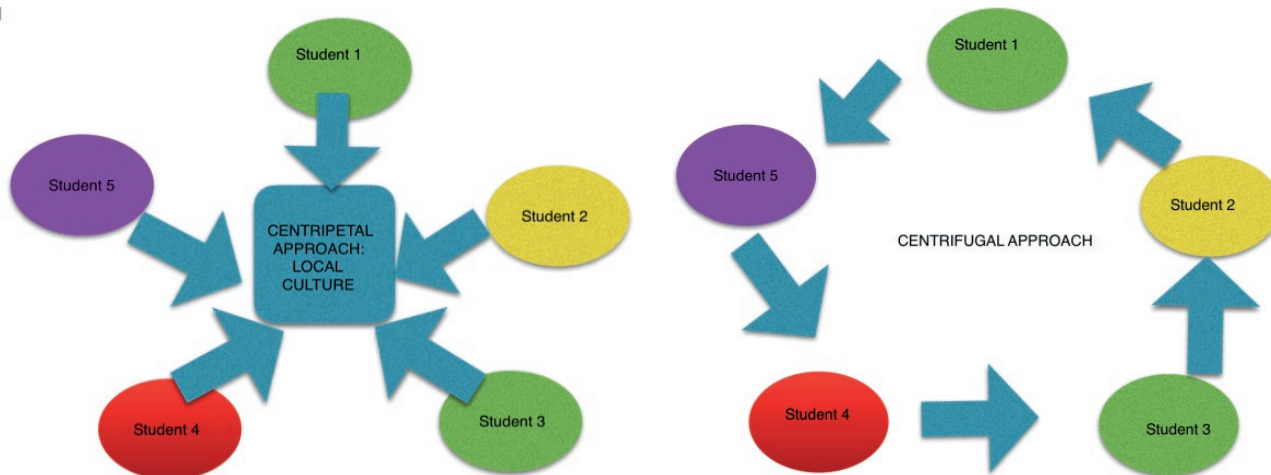
Figure 1. Schemes of the centripetal and centrifugal approaches to interculturality.

turality and inclusion reside, for teachers involved in the National Plan of Arts, both in a location -whether geographical, spatial or corporeal- and also in-between spaces, among individuals, social contexts, generations, geographical origins and backgrounds. We can, simplifying, define these two different approaches as a centripetal approach and a centrifugal one. According to the centripetal approach, interculture is intended as a convergent process of deepening a common culture and 'assimilation'. By improving knowledge and empathy for the territory, the local traditions, the 'indigenous' background, students from different backgrounds are stimulated to find a common aesthetic way to live and emphatically feel the beauty. Through the artistic practices, a deeper knowledge of the place, empathy and a sense of belonging are stimulated, also for non native students. This approach is particularly focused on valorizing local traditions, artistic background of the territory, historical knowledge, in order to empower the students by giving them tools for attachment to place, living and interpreting the beauty around them. The second approach intends interculture as a 'centrifugal' approach aimed to achieve for students' cosmopolitan vision and multiculturalism (Rizvi, 2009): artistic projects based on such approach found successful ways for youngsters to express their culture, highlight the differences and the peculiarities of different cultures and foster a better understanding between indigenous and not indigenous students.

For example, especially in the music field, the sharing of music tastes and experiences, often coming from the pop culture, is used as a means to create (or, in many cases, just underline) a 'global ground' among students and favor practices of integration, sharing, curiosity and dialogue, leading to an embrace of difference at the level of the whole word. These are examples of 'aesthetic cosmopolitanism' in the sense defined by Regev (2013) as a tool to shape world culture as an interconnected entity in which social groups, from many parts of the world, share musics' similarities, despite their different cultural backgrounds.

Throughout this contribution we have tried to highlight the creativity that emerges through both such centripetal and centrifugal approaches. However, having underlined the existence of two distinct intercultural approaches also highlights a certain inhomogeneity of visions with respect to intercultural pedagogy and the need to move toward a complementary approach, able to intertwine several means, goals and visions. Observing the types of projects implemented in the Plan of Arts, based on the testimonies of teachers, we can identify some lines of improvement aimed at integrating, for example, educational actions that enhance understanding and sense of belonging to the territory, with other actions aimed at valorizing the different cultures and crossings them in a specific place and context. Such integration between a "centripetal" and "centrifugal" approach can be also intended as the possibility to access to an artistic experience that preserves both the social and individual sphere of creativity, both a normative and an exploratory vision of art, thus giving the new generation the widest access to its meanings.

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