



# ***General Assembly***

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COMUNE  
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# IMPROVING QUALITY IN ECEC THROUGH PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATION

**Enhancing Students' learning processes through  
the Peer-to-Peer Education,  
starting from the children's natural interests**

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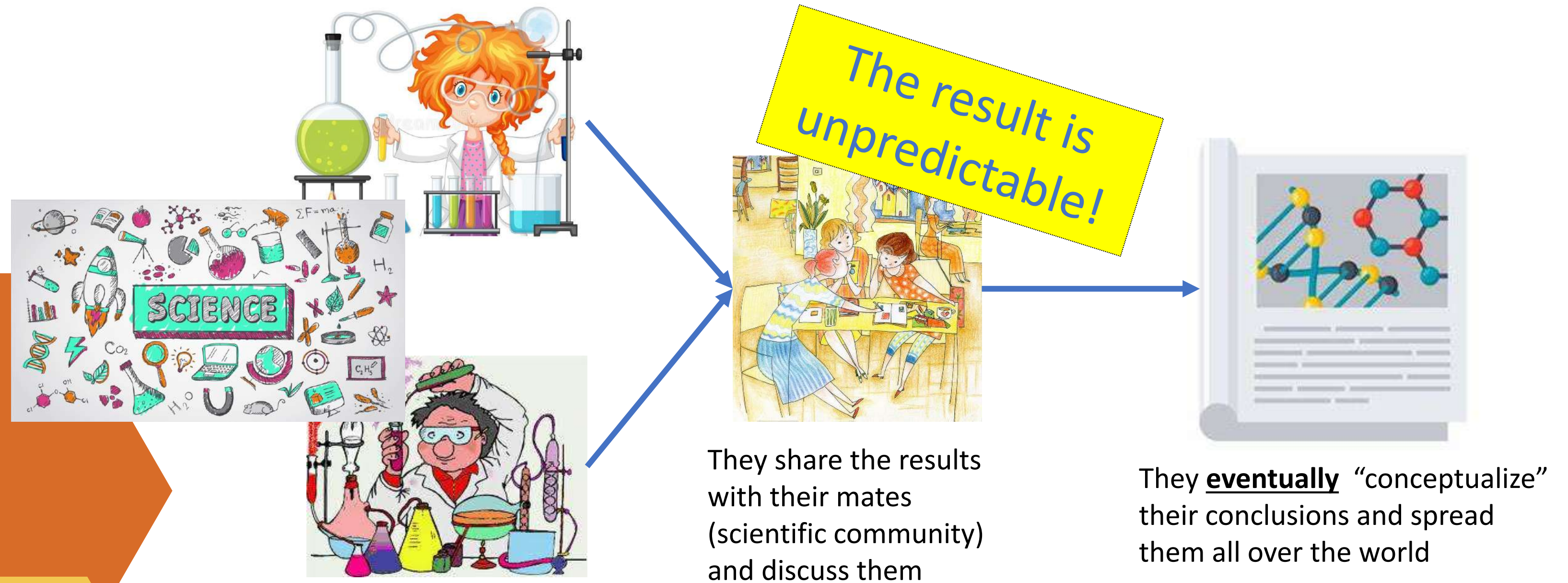
## What keeps together the projects we are going to present this morning?

1. NARRATE - Implementing the Narrative Approach in Early Education
2. PLAYING - The role of the teachers in play activities
3. PLANE - Storytelling and digital learning for language development
4. ORE - The pedagogy of outdoor education

Children learn using the same approach  
a scientist adopts (M. Montessori)

## What does it mean?

## Scientists at work...



Starting from their interests, **first** each of them collects “narrations” about observations and experiments’ outputs

They share the results  
with their mates  
(scientific community)  
and discuss them

They **eventually** “conceptualize”  
their conclusions and spread  
them all over the world


Is it true only for STE(A)M subjects?

# NOT AT ALL!



## Historians at work...



Written History Sources	
<u>Primary Sources</u>	<u>Secondary Sources</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• first hand or eyewitness accounts of an event</li> <li>• experienced the event</li> <li>• subject to different interpretations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• second-hand records of what happened</li> <li>• did not experience the event</li> </ul>
	

They share the results with their mates (scientific community) and discuss them

They **eventually** “conceptualize” their conclusions and spread them all over the world

Starting from their interests, **first** each of them collects “narrations” about archaeological discoveries and other history sources

**And what do the children freely do?**



**The children's natural approach  
to physical and social world**



*The result is  
unpredictable!*



They **eventually** “conceptualize” their conclusions and spread them with others children and with adults (teachers and parents)

They share the results with their mates (a sort of scientific community) and discuss them

**But what does the  
traditional school often do?**

Starting from their interests, **first** each of them collects “narrations” about experimentations, observations and explorations





The BLAH, BLAH, BLAH SCHOOL .....

**We define a trigger** in general as every event that happens even without planning by a teacher, and that can change the course of an active narrative experience carried out by the children or, apparently, even to start a new one. It could be:

1. An object/book/toy brought to school by a child, or found out in the schoolyard, or somewhere in the neighborhood;
2. A story narrated by a child, for example, about something that happened at home or on holiday;
3. A new unpredictable event occurring out of the school, for example, a new building site;
4. A sudden and new interest of a group of children for an angle inside the school, or some play material before neglected, no matter knowing why;
5. **Something a teacher is doing that captures the attention of the children, even beyond the teacher's intention and awareness;**
6. New attending children or a mate who move to another living place and says goodbye;
7. Other things/events...

## What's the teachers' role in a school based on Peer-to-Peer Education? **Providing triggers!**

### Teachers can/must:

1. Paying much attention to (and respect) the natural interests of the children and to any kind of ongoing spontaneous narration among them;
2. Providing new material/toys/books without telling why; Adopting heuristic and natural (recycled) materials;
3. Changing space organization, adopting a more neutral organization and more neutral play structures;
4. Emphasizing some important passages in some children's narrative/explorative activities;
5. Bringing children in some unknown place, especially outdoor, since outdoor spaces are much more unpredictable than the indoor ones. Not only natural spaces, but also "anthropologic" spaces.



Someone could think this approach should be confined to preschool period, when they say children only play (don't study). **Nothing could be more wrong than that.**

**Where does Peer-to-Peer education end up after the preschool period?**



Basically, whenever students carry out workshops as part of their training process in some subject, they are involved with exploring episodes that could be narrated (if the workshop is properly organized, of course)



Although not so spread in Italian schools, there are learning methodologies, applying to whatever subject, based on the same idea of Narrative Approach. For example:

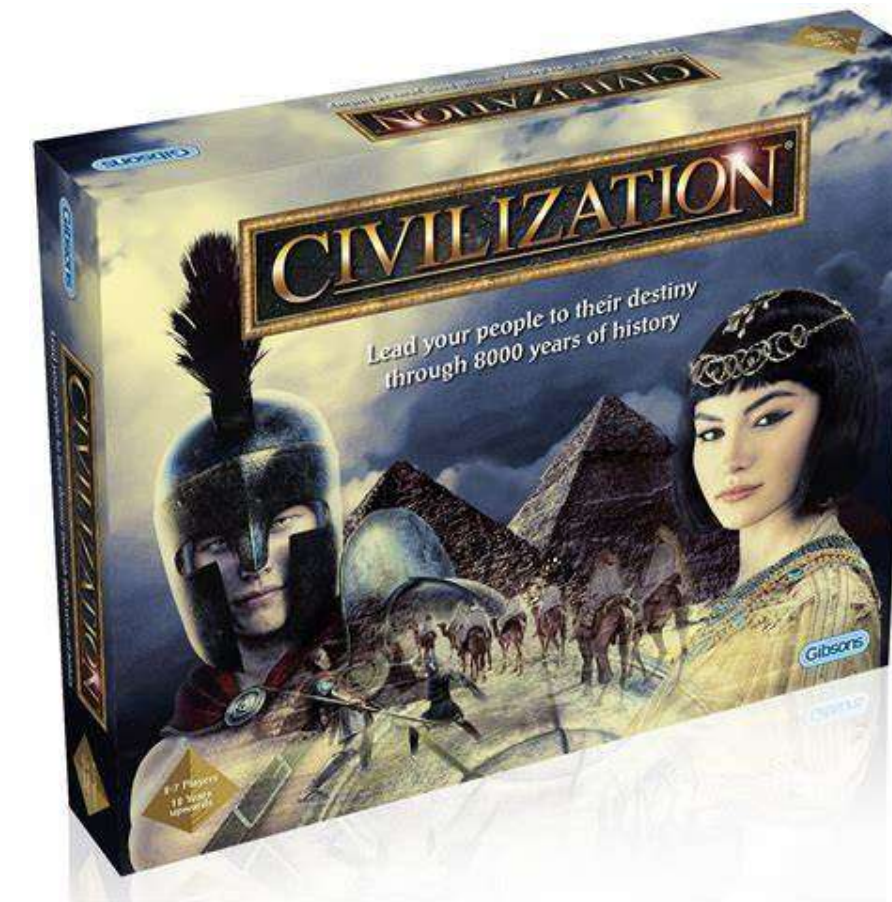
**The Cooperative Learning**

### Definition and Background

- Cooperative learning is defined as students working together to “attain group goals that cannot be obtained by working alone or competitively” (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1986).
- The main purpose of cooperative learning is to actively involve students in the learning process; a level of student empowerment which is not possible in a lecture format. The underlying premise is founded in constructivist epistemology.
- It is a process which requires **knowledge to be discovered by students** and transformed into concepts to which the students can relate. The knowledge is then reconstructed and expanded through new learning, practical experiences that can be narrated to others.
- Learning takes place through dialog among students in a social setting.

C.L. foresees that students cope with a topic as a group of researchers, starting from basic information (pieces of evidence, experiences), building new meanings and scenarios step by step, for new learning processes.

The teacher's role is to provide new information and to stimulate reflections, only through questions, avoiding statements.



A particular way to teach History in a Narrative context:

**Using board games**



## **NARRATE project:**

### **Building a Narrative approach fostering collaboration between preschools and libraries**

Project number: 2020-1-SE01-KA201-077990

#### **What is the Narrative Approach in short?**

**Definition.** The Narrative Approach in Early Education means adopting a teaching style based on children's interests and activeness, the respect of their learning time and, overall, supporting children's natural tendency to be "story-makers", and not only "story-listeners". Children naturally begin building knowledge starting from stories of their experiences that they store in their memory and share with other children and adults. This is especially observable when the children acquire some basic linguistic skills (starting around 24 months), but we can recognize its precursors in many children's free activities at the previous age, and in interactions with their caregivers.

Many researchers show that respecting these children's native attitudes could improve learning processes, socialization and well-being, especially in schooling.

Despite this evidence, not only a comprehensive methodological tool for Early Education based on it has not been produced yet, but schooling and teaching are still mainly based on the central role and interests of teachers (true planners of the activities), conceptualisation and passive use of storytelling with the children.

**The partners of this Erasmus+ project and some tips about the referring preschool system in the involved Countries.**

The partnership having carried out this project is made up of:

**A) Four preschool administrations** (as we will mention even later, they belong to very different European Areas: North, South, East and West, and we think this is an added value):

1. Preschools managed by the Municipality of Piteå (North of Sweden), coordinator.
2. Nurseries and Preschools managed by the Municipality of Imola (North of Italy).
3. Preschools managed by the Municipality of Tallinn (Estonia).
4. Nurseries managed by Elmer School Association in Brussels (Belgium).

**B) Two specialized partners:**

1. University of Bologna (Italy), Course in Community and School Psychology.
2. SERN – Sweden Emilia-Romagna Network, a subject expert in European projecting and networking.



## Three Intellectual outputs

### OUTPUT 1 - THE HANDBOOK

#### REALISATION OF A HANDBOOK ABOUT IMPLEMENTATION OF A NARRATIVE TEACHING APPROACH IN EARLY EDUCATION.

Main content will be on the methodological tool to organise the preschool learning setting and the related daily activities based on the narrative approach with the final objective to engage children and teachers in the development of a fruitful learning/teaching process and in a true dialogue.



### OUTPUT 2 - EVALUATION TOOLBOX

#### CREATION OF AN EVALUATION TOOLBOX: SELF-ASSESSMENT, MONITORING, IMPACT ASSESSMENT (SAMIA).

Every change in the school setting needs a systematic checking-action about the introduction of a narrative approach. This process can be produced enhancing self-education process in the school staff and promoting a tested toolbox, called SAMIA, with instruments for the impact assessment.



### OUTPUT 3 - ORIGINAL CHILDHOOD LITERATURE

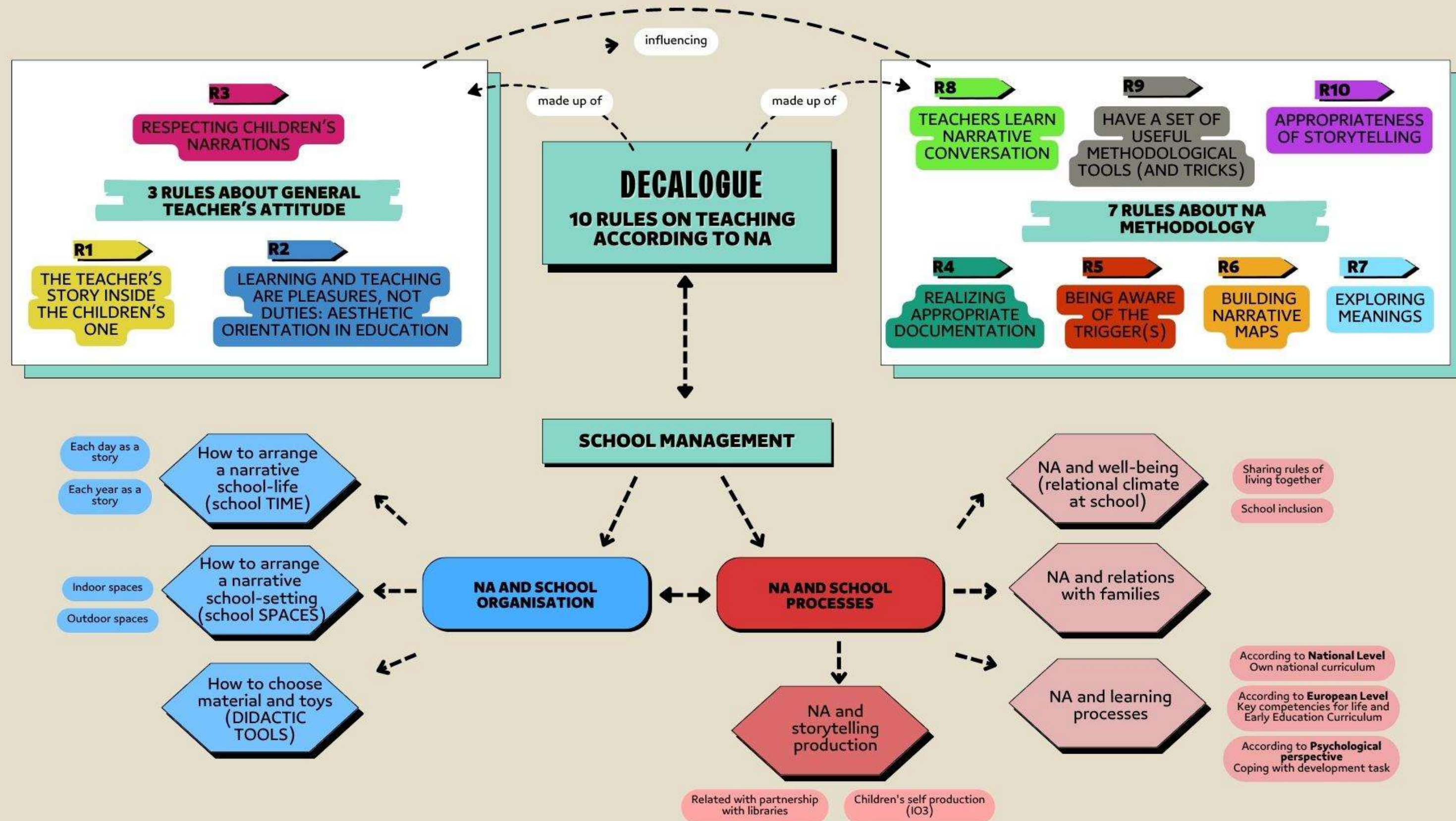
#### REALIZATION OF ORIGINAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE PRODUCTS STARTING FROM THEIR SELF PRODUCTION NARRATIVE AND STORY TELLING.

These products can be used by libraries and made available to their customers and can promote in preschools the practice of own production in the field of children's literature. On this point the collaboration with libraries is essential to promote children autonomous and original literature.





## FRAMEWORK: How *Narrative Approach (NA)* in early education could work





Documentation puts on a narrative dress, like a novel or a storytelling

Sidenotes connect each passage of the narration to the decalogue rules and changes in school management

### Best Practice n.1: Where are we going?

A narrative project about games, vehicles, picnics, and adventures in everyday life

Best practice from Bergsviken Preschool located in the neighbourhood of Bergsviken in Piteå (Sweden). At the preschool, we are two classes with children 3-5 years in total 43 children. We divide the children by age into different groups. Our project involves a group of three-year-old children, 12 children as a whole.

#### 1. Searching for awareness

We are tempted to join the narrative project because we want to try to take an approach where we start from the children's interests and issues and we want to establish a conscious way of working to support the children's narratives. In the past, we have worked to strengthen children's language but with a more semantic approach.

R1: the teacher's story inside the children's one

The concept of narrative storytelling is new to us, but it feels meaningful and fun to take on this challenge. Our environment inside the preschool certainly does not meet the requirements for a rich aesthetic environment, but we have a studio that is shared by the two classes. In the long term, our goal is that the entire preschool will work with a narrative approach, all parts of the framework for narrative teaching and attitude to development are strongly consistent with our Swedish curriculum for preschool.

R3: respecting children's narrations

The curriculum expresses that preschool works for good care, a learning that is diverse and based on a democratic foundation that all people have equal value. We will also have good cooperation with the children's parents, and they should feel involved in the children's education.

According to National Level. Own National Curriculum

*"Everyone who works in preschool shall promote respect for the inviolability of human life, the freedom and integrity of the individual, the equal value of all people, equality between men, girls, and boys, as well as solidarity between people."* Swedish curriculum

We are two teachers, Caroline and Mari who are responsible for a group of three-year-old children. There are 12 three-year-olds in the group. During September, we start observing the children to see what they like to do and see what interests them when they are playing. We listen to their conversations and take notes.

When we analyse our observations, we notice that several children play with cars, and they talk about their experiences when they have driven a car, bus, boat, and other vehicles.

R3: respecting children's narrations

We ask the children how they get to preschool in the morning: most of them come by car, and someone rides a bike. A child tells us: "we usually go by car to our cabin, then we have to drive along a dirt road!"

R8: teachers learn narrative conversation

All families in the group have one or more cars in the household.

R7: exploring meanings

How should we proceed with children's interest in play and movement together with vehicles?

We think that triggers in children's games and interactions are the desire to imagine going somewhere, making things up at the moment and that they like to pack things in bags. They also like to build and construct with different materials; therefore, we intend to offer a relaunch in the form of setting up cardboard boxes in the room, we find a large cardboard box where several children can fit to play in it.

R5: being aware of the trigger(s)

## A new approach to documentation

### 2. Let's go ride the bus

"We're going to watch a movie and at the same time play as if we're going somewhere," says the teacher. The children and a teacher sit in the box; in front of us, a film is shown with a bus driving around a city. "We're going to Finland," says Leah. Vic sits at the front of the box and pretends to drive; Vic makes movements with his arms as if holding a steering wheel and steering.

R6: building narrative maps



Several children move their arms and sometimes they make engine noises with their voices. The children do not talk much, but they act with the body and by making an engine noise.

R9: have a set of useful methodological tools (and tricks)

"Where are we going?" the teacher asked. "We go swimming," says Alice. We get off the bus and start swimming and splashing on the floor. After a while, someone wants to go back to preschool, so everyone gets back on the bus.

R6: building narrative maps

When we were "swimming", a child saw the soft animals lying in a basket. Alice picks up an animal, then the other children also pick up each animal. The animals were allowed to accompany us on the bus. After a while, the children stop playing and are about to walk away from the room. The teacher asks the children:



"Do you want to draw when we took the bus?". Several children draw a square shape (as the bus has). The child draws how the bus goes in round turns; on the other side, he draws a steering wheel.

R8: teachers learn narrative conversation

"You steer with the steering wheel," says Luisa.

Teacher relaunches activity

"I also draw a bus," says Leah, and on the smaller paper, she draws herself and the teacher.

R9: have a set of useful methodological tools (and tricks)

Another girl looks at Leah's drawing and gets inspiration to draw. She draws a bus, then draws two other small drawings that she glues to the larger paper.

### How my professional story has improved so far

It was fun to play with the kids; we were two teachers who participated. We chose to

R1: the teacher's story inside the children's one



## **A new approach to storytelling and collaboration with the local libraries**

***“Appropriateness of storytelling.** In the Narrative Approach perspective, storytelling is not an activity in itself like it is in traditional schooling, but an essential tool to help children in their spontaneous narrative explorations. We should pay great attention to the importance of making available to children books that are coherent with the narrative experiences they are carrying out and preferably located in the spaces where they are carrying them out”.*



1. This does not mean that the Narrative Approach perspective bans children's literature, not at all; it means that using children's books should be coherent with the children's narrative interests, not in general, but related to each specific group of children, following changes and development of this interests.
2. This perspective can promote both how to choose what books to provide children and where to store them inside the classroom.
3. About how to choose children's books and, generally speaking, how to improve storytelling skills both for children and teachers, a stable relationship between nurseries/preschools and local (specialized) libraries is crucial.



## Two Learning Teaching Training Activities (LTTAs)

The LTTAs were addressed to learn more about some scientific and methodological topics arisen during the realization of Best Practices.

For these reasons, both LTTAs foresaw a part about reflection of the state of the art of the implementation of IOs. Actually, this review was carried out in two steps:

- 1. Before each LTTA session**, thought an exchange of opinions between the organizers of the LTTA and the other partners (the exchange was realized through both emails and online informal meetings), in order to plan the activity.
- 2. During each LTTA**, where, after each training session (lectures, workshops, study visits, and so on), the participants were involved in a focus group around the following questions: How could what we have just listen to/make/experiment change/improve the implementation of our IOs? What could we need to deepen more in order to achieve some more appropriate results?
- 3. After each LTTA**, the participants kept in touch (usually with FB closed group) to continue exchanging opinions, practices, ideas, and so on.

### LTTA in Brussels organized by Elmer School vzw – April 2022.

#### **Experts/subjects involved:**

- Art Basic for Children (ABC);
- Campus Nieuwland and C.E.G.O. (agency promoting pedagogical innovation);
- Huis van der Kind Noord;
- Lovanio University.

#### **Topics treated:**

- Creating a pedagogical environment.
- Observing children through the glasses of Well-being and Involvement in daily school life;
- Creative workshop on narrative (poetic) and visual display of children's stories
- Mosaic Approach linked to Narrative Approach.
- Open the door to Early reading

### LTTA in Imola organized by Imola Municipality – October 2022.

#### **Experts/subjects involved:**

- “Senza Zaino” Association
- “Casa Piani” Child Library
- “Il Mosaico” Publishing House, specialized in Child Literature production
- Family NGOs.
- San Domenico Museum and Arte.Na Association

#### **Topics treated:**

- How “Senza Zaino” model can help implement the Narrative Approach.
- How to involve children in building illustrated books (Agnese Baruzzi workshop).
- Involving parents and local community to improve storytelling with their children.
- Workshop “Painting on walls”.
- Workshop “Clay stories”.

**Thanks for listening**

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