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of the journal *Scuola Democratica*

education and/or social justice

3-6 June 2024, Cagliari (Italy)

Education is a battleground of power, identity, and inequality. This volume unravels the tensions between exclusion and inclusion, privilege and marginalization, tracing how policies, epistemologies, and ideologies shape who belongs—and who is left behind.

PROCEEDINGS

01

Inequality, Inclusion, and Governance

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Vol. 1
**Inequality,
Inclusion,
and Governance**

Organizers and partners



Stream C

NEOLIBERALISM IN/AND EDUCATION

AN INCLUSIVE GLANCE ON LOCAL HERITAGE: FOSTERING ENGAGEMENT AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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More than ever, schools today are called upon to fulfill their essential roles in contemporary society, equipping every child and adolescent to become an active citizen. This requires a shift in educational paradigms to address the complexities of a dynamically changing society and its relationship with knowledge. To support this transformation, innovative educational tools and strategies are necessary to renew the educational landscape (Morin, 2001).

Educational pathways, whether in formal settings or informal contexts, like cultural heritage sites, play a vital role in fostering students' inquiry skills. These empower students to engage with cultural heritage and nurture active citizenship (Alvarez Ibis et al., 2023). Heritage education serves as a "privileged tool of education, enabling people to learn about their roots and identity while respecting those of others" (Branchesi, 2006). It not only frames cultural heritage as an object of study but also as a means to explore identity and establish diverse connections. The Faro Convention reinforces this perspective (Di Capua, 2021), highlighting cultural heritage as a dynamic source that promotes the exchange of knowledge and skills across different fields, applicable at all educational levels (Art. 13). Heritage education adds a cultural and historical dimension to citizenship, creating a reciprocal process that interrogates identity and links citizens through cultural heritage (Coopland, 2009).

Furthermore, Italian law connects the education regarding its territories' cultural legacy to the enrichment of cultural heritage, defined as "the exercise of functions and regulation of activities aimed at promoting knowledge of cultural heritage and ensuring optimal conditions for its public use and enjoyment, including by people with disabilities, to promote cultural development" (D.Lgs. n.42/2004).

Heritage education supports transformative processes, positioning schools as active interpreters of society. This approach engages students not only as learners but as citizens linked to their communities and local heritage. To achieve this framework, educational strategies must be inclusive and accessible to all; students themselves should understand the importance of inclusivity in all learning environments, fostering the application of inclusive practices within and beyond school.

This paper presents an experimental case study that allowed students to experience and live local heritage through an inclusive lens, engaging them in active participation and encouraging the exchange of knowledge and skills as they explored their own cultural heritage.

This perspective aligns with the research theme rooted in the democratization processes of the second half of the 20th century in Italy, where the school institution's openness to its surrounding territory emerged as a crucial element. Central to this approach is the relationship between the school, local heritage, and community, leveraging its resources "to benefit the school in the direction of an expanded educational system" (De Bartolomeis, 1983, p. 28).

Building on these premises, this case study investigates how PCTO (Pathways for Transversal Skills and Orientation) projects can offer a practical framework for fostering connections between schools and their surrounding territories. Introduced in 2019 as an evolution of School-Work Alternation, PCTO projects foster interdisciplinary collaboration and key competences for lifelong learning (European Council Recommendation, 2018).

In this context, we examine a PCTO project implemented during the 2020/21 (class 3[^]I) and 2021/22 (class 4[^]I) school years at the Liceo Scientifico Internazionale with a Chinese Language option at the Convitto Nazionale "Vittorio Emanuele II" in Cagliari. Conducted in collaboration with the "Confucius Classroom" at the University of Cagliari, the project sought to connect students with their local heritage through innovative and inclusive educational practices. Initially called Kaliyali 2.0 ("Cagliari 2.0"), its first year focused on enhancing students' linguistic, cultural, and digital skills. This was achieved through the creation of a website and social media profiles designed to promote a hypothetical holiday package to Cagliari for Chinese tourists.

In its second year, the initiative was renamed Sadingdao 2.0 ("Sardinia 2.0"), reflecting its expanded scope to promote the entire island of Sardinia as a tourist destination. This iteration broadened the range of skills to be developed and involved additional partners, including the Italian Association of Museum

Educators (AIEM). The program's output, in the context of skill development and interdisciplinarity, was the collaborative creation of customized cultural itineraries in Sardinia for specific target groups of Chinese tourists.

This educational experience, which was already integrating various areas such as local tourism, professional skills, proficiency in the Chinese language, and an understanding of the Chinese tourism market, aimed to broaden its scope and offer students a fresh perspective on the accessibility to their region through inclusion. To achieve this, both visible and hidden needs that potential tourists from China might encounter when exploring the Sardinia region were identified.

Thanks to the project, students actively co-designed inclusive tourist itineraries, addressing the diverse needs of their target audience, including accessibility for individuals with disabilities. These itineraries were promoted in Chinese, deepening the students' linguistic skills and their understanding of cultural diversity. This process involved expanding their vocabulary and applying it in practical contexts while exploring how cultural and geographic differences shape audience needs.

Over 36 hours of workshops, delivered both in-person and online, students worked with professionals and teachers to overcome the rigid disciplinary boundaries typical of Italian schools that have long characterized this school system (Calvani, 1986). This interdisciplinary collaboration broadened their competencies and opened pathways to future careers (Madera et al., 2023).

A workshop on inclusion introduced accessibility concepts and fostered empathy and collaboration. Although the idea stemmed from the presence of a student with a motor disability, its purpose extended to broader notions of inclusion. Drawing on heritage education's multisensory approach, this idea was emphasized by making cultural heritage accessible in both physical and digital contexts, stimulating reflection, and fostering the development of a new and deeper sensitivity.

This framework allowed students to develop practical skills, such as teamwork, organization, and management, while designing inclusive itineraries that promoted local heritage. It also strengthened their sense of regional identity, enriched by engagement with a culture as distant and different as the Chinese one, fostering the discovery of both new differences and unexpected affinities.

Participatory evaluation, using an assessment grid, assessed the linguistic accuracy, accessibility, and creativity of the itineraries. The students' presentations in Chinese, supported by photos and resources, generated significant interest among peers and colleagues, inspiring plans for similar

projects.

The experience enhanced students' maturity, group cohesion, and sensitivity to the needs of others. They recognized how simple, creative solutions can address invisible barriers and developed a broader perspective on inclusion, particularly in relation to their local heritage. This shift extended beyond the classroom, influencing their reflections on daily life and society. The project also inspired several students to pursue studies in Foreign Languages, International Studies, or Economics and Management for Art, Culture, and Communication.

In conclusion, students learned that individuals' needs—whether tourists or peers—are often not explicit but are essential. In today's fluid and diverse society (Bauman, 2000), education must address this complexity, equipping learners with the tools to foster a more inclusive and accessible world.

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CIRD (Centro Interuniversitario per la Ricerca Didattica) is the main research center in Sardinia on educational processes and policies of educational experimentation at school and university level, and in a multi- and interdisciplinary perspective. Its main objective is to foster school-university collaboration and to support the integration of the educational system as a whole.



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Established in 2012, the **Department of Political and Social Sciences of the University of Cagliari** is bearer of a tradition of studies and research characterized by interdisciplinarity. The Department of Political and Social Sciences promotes and coordinates research and teaching in social, communicative economic-statistical, legal, historical-political-international.

