

Research project

PROGETTO H2020 NEW ABC (GA: 101004640):

“Sustainability of the NEW ABC Science Shop and of pilot action activities for the NEW ABC project”

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1. Introduction

The recent wave of large-scale immigrant influxes in many European Member States has increased the challenges posed by the integration of immigrants in the host countries (European Commission, 2016).

In 2015, around 244 million people were international migrants¹ (IOM, 2016), 31 million were children below the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2016). According to data by UNICEF (2016), 5.4 million child migrants, approximately one in six of the world's child migrants, lives in Europe.

Despite persisting disparities between immigrants and natives in educational (and labour market) outcomes in European countries which are a source of inequality and social exclusion (see Flisi, Meroni, and Vera-Toscano, 2016; Rodrigues, 2018), education is a key element for successful integration in all spheres and dimensions of immigrants' lives (OECD, 2015). In most countries, and in all EU member states, formal education is compulsory, and from an early age children will inevitably meet other children from diverse backgrounds by attending school on a daily basis for several hours per day. In this setting they will also meet and interact with a variety of stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, but also other staff, principals, local, regional and state school governing boards, etc.) who play different roles in the transmission of cultural and societal values with different power asymmetries, perceptions and opinions with regard to if, how and who should transmit such values. The role played by education has been overtly emphasized by both academic and non-academic literature and as such represents both a challenging and ideal arena for the children's integration, as well as their families' and communities', into mainstream society. In the context of a rise in populism and increasing anti-immigrant sentiment in some narratives across EU nations, schools can both amplify or counteract, wider societal cultural values. Being microcosms or reflections to wider society, schools face a constant battle to enable children to feel integrated and cared for, often with scarce resources and staff that are not trained to deal with (immigrant) children's real needs. For children, the boundaries between school and out-of-school contexts are blurred since with regard to the emotional, social and cultural aspects of their lives, what happens across contexts affects other spheres of experience. For immigrant and refugee children, given the rise of anti-immigrant sentiment, this represents a problematic issue.

Narratives from the past fifty years suggest Europe has become a “continent of integration” (Scholten et al. 2015: 1), but recent socio-political upheavals at the national level suggest that there are

significant challenges and conflicts surrounding the integration of immigrants. Children with a refugee or immigrant background are particularly susceptible to such conflicts because their less powerful status opens them up to significant inequalities, discrimination and integrational barriers. Formal, informal and non-formal learning settings play a big role in either enhancing or mitigating against integration challenges and power inequalities. However, top-down policies and the poor incorporation of children and young people's voices and capacities for agency have meant that immigrant children and young people have been largely absent at worst or included in tokenistic ways, at best.

The NEW ABC project will carry out nine innovation actions in eight countries and focussing on a range of dimensions and contexts aimed at enhancing the integration of immigrant children and young people in education through collaborative partnerships that foreground young person-led innovation activities. The project focuses on three main questions related to finding effective solutions to the integration of refugee and migrant children into host societies through education:

1. What is the most effective way to make the voice of local stakeholders in education heard, particularly children and people with a migrant background?
2. How can effective synergies amongst local target groups and stakeholders and policymakers be built?
3. How can successful bottom-up practices be trickled-up to inform policy-making in education?

The NEW-ABC project builds on the idea that in order to respond to these questions and to actively involve different stakeholders and promote networking and integration, three main theoretical and methodological approaches are needed:

1. The whole child and whole school/whole community approach (Blair and Razza, 2007; Hamilton, 2013; Krachman, LaRocca and Gabrieli, 2018; Lewallen et al. 2015) that does not focus exclusively on migrant students' academic but also on their social and emotional needs and which is therefore critical in helping them integrate into school life (Eurydice 2019).
2. The participatory action research approach (Jull et al. 2017; Kindon et al. 2007; Lawson et al. 2015) that can enable the development of collaborative partnerships and will allow all the involved stakeholders, particularly the children, to have their voice heard. Through the participation and involvement of different combinations of stakeholders, NEW ABC will promote socially innovative practices and by implementing them in different contexts will make efficient practices of integration visible to all stakeholders.
3. The bottom-up approach (Sinatti and Alvarez Tinajero 2011; EU 2016) to the co-creation (see Galvagno & Dalli 2014; Greenhalgh et al. 2016; Janamain et al 2014; Oertzen et al. 2014; Voorberg et al. 2014) and implementation of new good practices but also the adoption of already existing good practices that have been proven to work in a specific country.

2. Research Objectives

The research project is embedded in the NEW ABC project and will contribute to the development and sustainability of two pilot actions in the final phase of the project:

1. *Teacher training and family involvement in pluralistic approaches to language education*, which aims to create conditions and activities so that multilingual skills are valued as a resource and an opportunity in the school curriculum.
2. *My ideal school*, which aims to help children/families/communities find their voice and bring their real needs in education to other stakeholders as well as policymakers at the local, regional and

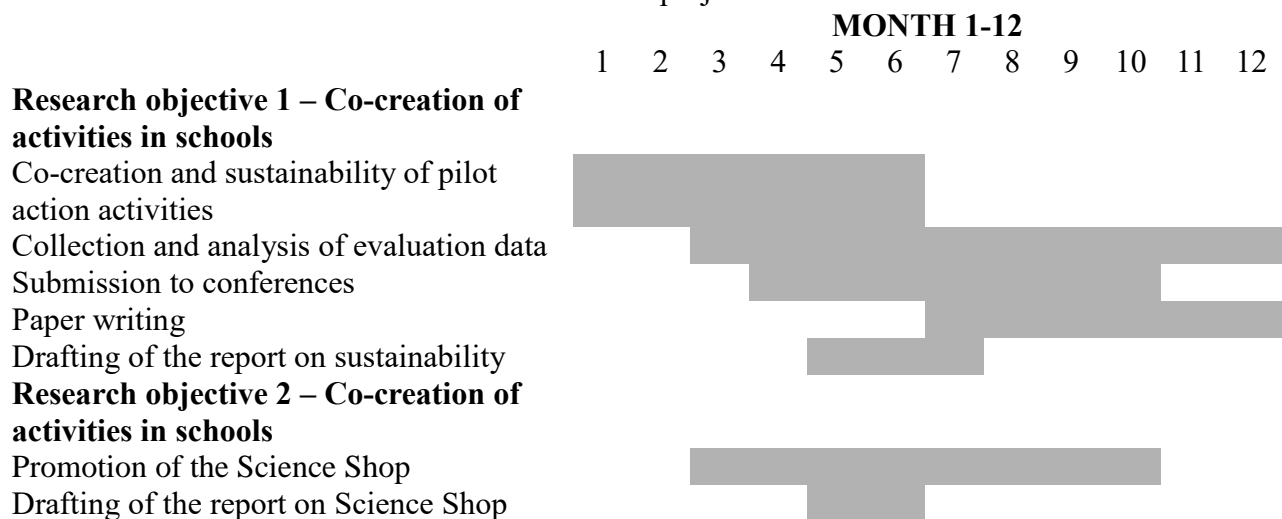
national levels. The activities of this pilot integrates the learning dimension with the cultural, social, and emotional sphere thus contributing to promote and enhance inclusion..

By relying on whole-child, Participatory Action Research (PAR) and bottom-up approaches, and in order to attain an effective and sustainable process of co-participated creation and implementation of new good practices for the integration in education of children with a migrant background the post-doc research project has the following objectives:

1. Develop co-participated research with stakeholders (teachers, pupils, families, head masters, educational associations, etc.) aimed at understanding and identifying real needs and desiderata by approaching children’s integration experience as a complex and not unidimensional issue/phenomenon by taking the whole child approach.
2. Contribute to the promotion and management of the NEW ABC SCIENCE SHOP that will ensure that those groups and stakeholders who participate in the project can have a direct line with the researchers involved for the whole duration of the project and beyond.

3. Research plan

In this section we indicate a tentative timeline of the project:



The research fellow will develop the project’s activities with the tutor and the NEW ABC team of the University of Bologna. These activities will include: keeping engaged local actors and stakeholders; retesting of the pilot action activities with the specific aim of ensuring their adaptability, scalability, long-term sustainability and take-up of the results by the identified users; implementation of new co-created activities; increasing the active involvement of parents with migrant backgrounds in teaching and community activities; promoting the NEW ABC Science Shop; drafting of the report on Science Shop.

The research fellow will be directly involved in interactions with teachers, educators, volunteers, families and pupils attending schools and afterschool support organizations of the Forlì and Cesena municipalities. The research fellow will engage and keep engaged local actors and stakeholders by creating horizontal synergies that enhance integration at the local level and the sustainability and uptake of the two pilot actions. This involvement will have an important impact on the sustainability of the Science Shop and NEW ABC pilots and results after the project both in terms of uptake and Third Mission for universities.

4. Expected Scientific Outputs

At the end of the 12 months of the project, the research fellow should provide:

- 1 paper presented in a primary conference
- 2 papers in international peer-reviewed journals
- A final report on the Science Shop process and results.

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