STRIPES FOCUS GROUP REPORT – 25ᵗʰ of July, Bollate, Italy

Some of the objectives of the Erasmus + Step by Step project are:

- Enable organisations for greater awareness on the Green New Deal, providing educational staff with notions and tools for sharing with the educational community on sustainability issues, with reference to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with respect to environmental protection and inclusive and quality education;
- Create moments of sharing among educational personnel (educators, pedagogues, specialists, teachers, but also animators, volunteers, etc.) and reflection on educational hypotheses with respect to the themes of nature and digital.

For this, we convened a focus group consisting of actors active in the area on the topics of education, nature and the digital.

Wanting to investigate the educational hypothesis underlying experiences that connect nature and digital, for this focus group we invited professionals and organisations that often have the opportunity to design and organise outdoor and/or digital education activities.

- Location: LaBolla Theatre
- Number of participants: 13
- Duration: 2 hours.

<u>PRESENTATION TO THE GROUP AND OPENING OF THE THEMATIC DIMENSION</u>

Once we had welcomed the participants, we introduced them to the project and shared with them its aims.
In order to bring the natural and digital dimensions close to their own narrative, participants are given two post-it notes (a leaf and a green bubble) and asked to identify themselves with a natural or digital element, facilitating their own narrative, presentation of themselves and their metaphor to the rest of the group.
Once the group has been presented, the participants are asked to place the post it on a poster, previously placed behind them, depicting 3 circles connected, but not intersecting, with each other.
The first circle group bears the words 'Nature' above it, and the third 'Digital'.

<u>THINKING ABOUT THE NATURAL WORLD AND THE DIGITAL WORLD, WHAT IS THE FIRST LEARNING EXPERIENCE THAT COMES TO MIND?</u>

Once immersed in the natural and digital dimensions, the question above the third circle, the central one, is revealed.

Participants are then asked to tell us about their first (formal or informal) learning experience.

Here, participants are given two blue post-it notes (a leaf and a bubble) on which to narrate their experience.

SHARING IN SMALL GROUPS: RECOUNTING OUR EXPERIENCES

The focus group participants were invited to create groups of three in which to recount the natural and digital training experiences they had recalled.

Within the small groups, which allowed for a more intimate sharing, there were valuable moments that the participants decided to bring back in the following discussion with the full group.

Some of the interventions follow: Marco reports that, thanks to sharing with Sara, he recalled a memory identifiable as a formative outdoor experience much earlier than the one he had decided to write on the post-it note.

Valentina, too, reflects on the earliest nature-related educational experiences, linking them in particular to the dimension and caring role of grandparents who, thanks to their daily and stronger relationship with nature than that of their parents, assumed an educational role that left deep traces.

Sara, on the other hand, reflects on the narrative made by the other focus group participants on the topics of digital education, observing that in these experiences they have moved a long way from being users of the tool, but that the experiential and formative dimension is linked to having used the digital tool in the service of their own creativity.

DIGITAL ECO-DIMENSION

Having reconstructed the meaning dimension, working on the level of personal experience, we shifted the focus to the eco-digital dimension as a learning space.

Citing Pistoletto's theory of the Third Paradise (http://terzoparadiso.org/what-is), we ask if and how, working in the direction of a sustainable, rich and nourishing future, eco-digital education can enrich the educational experience of an audience of adults with different backgrounds, of different generations, and in turn have an educational impact on different target audiences (educators, pedagogues, volunteers, those active in the educational sector in activities with children, adults, the elderly, etc.).

Also starting from personal experiences, we ask the participants for some examples where the educational activity could have been enriched by the combination with the natural or digital dimension.

Serena, for example, exemplifies that a walk in the mountains could be enriched in terms of formative exploration of places thanks to AR, useful for recognising plants and elements encountered along the way.

Marta, who brought as her first learning experience the time spent in her grandparents' vegetable garden, reflects on the benefits of sharing what she has learnt thanks to illustration and presentation programmes such as Canva and the production of material to disseminate.

Angelo tells of a tried-and-tested eco-digital experience in which a group of engineers created a loudspeaker from wood collected from trees that had been felled by a storm. The loudspeaker instrument, thus the result of the recovery of reused material, was also included in a project to learn about the territory and its biodiversity, in a circular work of sustainability.

ECO-DIGITAL TRAINING

Finally, we asked the focus group participants what elements a training dedicated to the educating community should have on the topic of structuring activities that connect the educational elements of nature and digital.

We gave them time for reflection to write on a final post-it note to be placed below the central connecting world on the worksheet and opened a group discussion.

The main suggestions gathered are:

- Build a training that includes both theoretical elements as well as practical activities, offering activities in which the eco-digital dimension can be applied immediately;
- Anticipate workshops with moments of reflection on the combination of digital activities and elements of nature, to go beyond the perception of the digital as the opposite and enemy of the natural dimension;
- Propose an articulation structure for the training activities, repeatable and adaptable to the different eco-digital experiences that they will decide to propose to their students, family members, educational workshop participants of different ages, etc.
- Creation of guides/tutorials on the basic use of selected digital tools (from the use of instrumentation to an overview of useful platforms for the presentation-dissemination of results) that remain and can be consulted by participants.