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Professional Learning Communities

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INTRODUCTION

Aurelio Castro Varela, University of Barcelona

In this report, we present the work carried out as part of Project Result 4 (PR4) of the Critical Arts Education for Sustainable Societies (CARE/SS) project. The lead partner of PR4 was the University of Barcelona (UB), but all the project partners have contributed to Part II of this publication. PR4 aims to explore how professional learning communities in the field of arts education can develop and become an important component of sustainable improvement. To this end, we have evaluated the forms of collaboration, support among peers and team building used during the CARE/SS training programs, thereby thinking of them as conducive to the creation of professional learning communities.

Part I of the report includes a state-of-the-art about the concept of professional/teachers learning communities. In Chapter 1, Fernando Hernández traces its genealogy and provides several definitions and features associated with this notion. In Chapter 2, Paula Estalayo brings together some case studies to see how specific professional learning communities have been grasped and researched thus far.

Part II compiles the reports conducted by Frederick University, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the University of Malta, Adam Mickiewicz University and the University of Barcelona. Each report details the outcomes of the PR4 study within each country, focusing on the participants' experiences in CARE/SS training programs, including relations with peers, collaborative learning activities and the potential for expanding partnerships in the future. The research was grounded in the participants' feedback gathered through an open-ended intermediate questionnaire (Appendix A), a Likert scale final questionnaire (Appendix B) and a semi-structured interview (Appendix C). The numbers far exceeded the initial PR4 objective of 30 interviews and 100 questionnaires, finally achieving 50 interviewees, 209 in-service teachers or students who answered the intermediate questionnaire, and 191 participants who completed the final questionnaire.

Part III consists of a final chapter that collects and relates data from the preceding reports. It especially highlights the similarities and differences observed across the five countries (Cyprus, Greece, Malta, Poland and Spain) in their approach to learning communities. In so doing, it also incorporates concluding remarks regarding the CARE/SS collaborative learning experiences and their connection to professional learning communities.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE REPORT

CARE/SS	Critical ARts Education for Sustainable Societies
DL	Distance Learning
PLCs	Professional Learning Communities
TLCs	Teachers Learning Communities
CoPs	Communities of Practice
FU	Frederick University
AUTH	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
UM	University of Malta
AMU	Adam Mickiewicz University
UB	University of Barcelona

Part I

CHAPTER 1. *Genealogy of teachers learning communities*

Fernando Hernández, University of Barcelona

Teacher development has a history that is neither linear nor homogeneous. Although it is possible to observe trends that intersect between countries, some proposals respond to local situations. We point out this issue because in situating the teachers' development perspective based on learning communities (TLCs), we have asked ourselves about the context of its emergence. Although there is a coincidence, as we will see below, that before the 1980s, there is no record of publications that account for this approach, our question is what makes this shift take place, and what are the conjunctures that make it possible at this time? In asking these questions, we are mindful of the earlier shift in teacher thinking, which emerged after the failure of *teacher-proofing* innovations and training during the 1970s.

An example of this was the reform of science teaching, which was proposed in response to the panic generated by the launch of Sputnik (1957). All the means (funds, researchers, resources, etc.) were made available to design materials and training by co-optation. However, when their application was evaluated, it became clear that the idiosyncrasies of the teachers meant that the proposals passed through their biographical and practical filters. This led to a change in training that began considering the teacher's conceptions as the starting point for introducing any educational change. The influence of constructivism is evident in this change. Nevertheless, what is the juncture that makes the shift towards TLC possible? DuFlour and Eaker (1998) proposed that this shift is rooted in organisation theories and specifically focused on professional learning in education contexts. This approach, taken up by Damjanovic and Blank (2021), opens the door to three hypotheses that converge and can explain the shift towards TLC and Communities of Practice (CoPs):

1. TLCs are frequently linked to other well-established approaches to professional development framed as *teacher inquiry* (Wells, 2014). Teacher inquiry highlights the collective nature of meaning-making, situating teacher learning as an ongoing, guided, collaborative inquiry process (Henderson et al., 2012). In contrast to a top-down approach, teacher inquiry approaches seek to foster adaptability over compliance to strengthen teachers' abilities to interpret children's learning and make and justify instructional decisions.
2. They question whether we can and should identify a definitive set of learning outcomes for children and whether there is a 'best way' to teach and assess children in attaining these outcomes (Stremmel et al., 2015, p. 157 paraphrased). This view is problematised for its tendency to oversimplify the complexity of teaching and to imply that teaching is comprised of delivering given techniques with fidelity. This not only narrows the range of ways of knowing valued in students but also 'strips teaching of any moral purpose or intellectual engagement or creative action' (Stremmel et al., 2015, p. 157).
3. Another way of theorising community is rooted in situated and social learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This perspective rejects the assumption that learning is a distinctly individual cognitive process and argues instead that learning is fundamentally a social phenomenon that occurs in the context of our experiences.

There are other endogenous reasons, but these three can be a starting point which helps to situate the emergence of TLCs. We now turn to explore some of their definitions, characteristics, and contributions.

Searching for a characterisation of a field, a teacher development

According to Brodie (2019), during the past two decades, teachers or professional learning communities (as some authors call to TLCs) have drawn the attention of educationists interested in teacher professional development. As a first definition, TLCs are groups of teachers who come together to engage in regular, systematic, and sustained cycles of inquiry-based learning to develop their individual and collective capacity for teaching to improve student outcomes.

As Brodie (2019) and Cochran-Smith & Lytle (2002) point out, although this notion was rarely mentioned in the educational literature or educators' organisations before the early 1980s, it has become commonplace to refer to specific projects, programmes, and networks and collaborations of prospective or experienced teachers as teachers learning communities. This term combines two concepts – teacher learning and community – that are part of the discourse in teacher education, professional development, school reform, and educational policy in the early twenty-first century. TLC is a term that combines many of the meanings of the two concepts above to refer to projects, programs, cooperatives, and collaboratives of prospective or experienced teachers – often in partnership with university-based educators – that support the ongoing education of participants.

Differently, Grossman et al. (2001) consider that a TLC is like a community of practice (CoP) that is formed to investigate and learn collaboratively. A TLC needs to have a shared perspective and a focus on professional growth (Little, 2002). These two characteristics are like those embedded in a CoP. Wenger et al. (2009) propose that a community of practice has three fundamental dimensions: (1) the domain of inquiry, in which a central focus on a particular topic is shared in the community; (2) The practice. Communities engage in activities that develop a shared practice; and (3) The community dimension, in which the members participate together in meaningful learning and the elements of trust, mutual engagement and a sharing of roles occur. The first two dimensions are like those identified by Little (2002), but the third element identifies a valuable aspect of the CoP: the community aspect with its relational elements.

TLCs can create spaces for ongoing, sustained professional development, unlike the often-fragmented professional development programmes that many teachers are exposed to. As it was mentioned above, TLCs can be seen as a particular case of communities of practice, where members engage in professional learning, which entails becoming competent in and confident with the knowledge base of the profession, using the knowledge base to make and justify decisions; and developing professional agency and identities (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999).

The intention is for TLCs to deliberately position teachers as professional agents in their professional development through their making professional decisions as to what they need to learn based on their understanding of their learners' needs, as well as the knowledge base (Jackson & Temperley, 2008). However, the enactment of teachers' agency in PLCs has not been explicitly examined nor problematised. While much of the work on TLCs argues for the

agency as a critical driver of TLCs, it has not yet considered how teachers as agents might reject TLCs. As a summary of this first part, we can say with Cochran-Smith & Lytle (2002) that TLCs are:

- Social groupings of new and experienced educators who come together over time to gain new information.
- Reconsidering previous knowledge and beliefs.
- Building on their and others' ideas and experiences to work on a specific agenda to improve practice and enhance students' learning in schools and other educational settings.

Conceptually, a teacher-learning community refers to an intellectual space as much as it designates a particular group of people and, sometimes, a physical location. In this sense, communities are those intellectual, social, and organisational configurations that support teachers' ongoing professional growth by providing opportunities for teachers to think, talk, read, and write about their daily work, including its larger social, cultural, and political contexts in planned and intentional ways.

Communities Characteristics, functions, and challenges of TLCs

The characteristics of many TLCs are similar, and in general, all TLCs aim at teachers to know more and teach better. A review of the literature on TLCs, including two systematic literature reviews, converges on five critical characteristics of successful TLCs: focus, long-term inquiry, collaboration, leadership support and trust (Vescio et al., 2008; Stoll & Louis, 2008; Katz et al., 2009; Vangrieken et al., 2017). How these characteristics play out in TLCs is central to their sustainability as spaces for professional development. These characteristics can be complemented by those pointed out by Cochran-Smith & Lytle (2002), who consider that although PLCs vary considerably, they have several key characteristics: ways of spending and organising time, planned and intentional patterns of structuring talk and written texts in their work together, and a shared purpose or understanding about the central tasks of teaching. Wenger (1998/2006), from his side, identifies three dimensions of community: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. According to Wenger, *mutual engagement* requires a means to interact (e.g. meeting times) and to be included in what matters in the community. Therefore, the work of *community maintenance* is ongoing. Wenger also points out that mutual engagement is made possible in part by the diversity of the community. *Joint enterprise* is the result of a collective process of negotiation, defined by the participants in the process of their work, and goes beyond stated goals to create mutual accountability among participants that is integral to their practice. The *shared repertoire* dimension relates to bonds reflecting on the arrangement of settings, the role of particular objects linking to belonging or status, and the relationship of particular artefacts to good practices. According to Wenger (1998/2006), these three dimensions of community explain ways of negotiating meaning in practice.

Furthermore, TLCs need a clear and shared focus, which should challenge members to go beyond what they know, should be broad enough to leverage change and yet not too broad that the collaboration becomes diffuse (Katz et al., 2009). There should be broad agreement

in the community that the focus is helpful for teacher learning. Still, sufficient disagreement on critical aspects of the focus should make for exciting and challenging discussions. Who chooses the focus and how it is interpreted has implications for the kinds of communities that develop and for teacher agency. Engaging with a community includes developing or embracing a shared focus or suggesting modifications to the current focus. Distaining from or rejecting a community might happen when the focus is not seen as relevant or valuable for teachers' work.

Finally, it is crucial to point out that although TLCs aim to enhance students' learning and improve the quality of schooling, all communities have different ideas about the ultimate purposes of teachers' work and educational change. Some TLCs are overtly committed to working for social change and social justice by altering the fundamental arrangements of schooling and society. Others are more focused on keeping with the primary goals of the current educational system. Some TLCs fit comfortably with a university's or a school district's stated commitment to teacher leadership, site-based management, or curricular revision. At other times, members of TLCs challenge fundamental school practices such as tracking, promotion and retention policies, testing and assessment practices, and school-community-family relationships, as well as what counts as teaching and learning in classrooms.

To the extent that TLCs fit comfortably with a university or school district's institutional agenda for reflective practice, increased professionalism, and teacher accountability, they can be compatible with ongoing efforts toward teacher education and professional development. But sometimes TLCs critique and seek to alter cultures of collegiality, ways that school or program structures promote or undermine collaboration, ratios of teacher autonomy to teacher responsibility, norms of teacher evaluation, relationships among student teachers, teachers, and their university colleagues, and the ways power is exercised in teacher-to-teacher, mentor-to-teacher, and school-university partnerships. This suggests that there is a whole range of TLCs – some more readily integrated into the existing social and institutional arrangements of schools, school systems, and universities than others.

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CHAPTER 2. *Case studies*

Paula Estalayo, University of Barcelona

As mentioned in the previous chapter, professional learning communities (PLCs) represent a transformative approach to education by emphasising collaborative and reflective practice among educators to improve both student learning and professional growth. Therefore, PLCs have the potential to foster a culture of continuous improvement by encouraging teachers to share ideas and pedagogical strategies. In this section, we present some questions on how the concept of professional learning communities has been explored through a number of case studies.

Research on PLCs uses a rich variety of methodological approaches to capture the depth and breadth of the impact of PLCs in educational settings. Below, we highlight several research examples to illustrate how case studies in TLC or PLC have been conducted, aiming to ground these methodological approaches, outline the key findings, as well as discuss their limitations and challenges.

Antinluoma et al. (2021) executed a multiple-case study focusing on four schools, with each institution serving as a distinct case. These schools were chosen based on findings from their earlier quantitative research (Antinluoma et al., 2021), which involved 13 schools and 212 participants. The selection was guided by a PLC readiness survey comprising 62 Likert-scale questions. The four schools were identified as prepared to function as PLCs based on the high levels of internal consistency in the following areas: leadership, culture, capacity building, and professional development. In their subsequent qualitative investigation of these four schools, the researchers conducted 12 thematic interviews with key informants to delve deeper into and comprehend the unique practices and dynamics characteristic of PLCs within these educational environments.

In the study conducted by Nancy A. Mundschenk and Wendy W. Fusch (2016), the research team from Southern Illinois University had been collaboratively working with Response to Intervention (RtI) Leadership Teams for an extended period. Aimed at fostering the sustainability of these teams, they recognized the potential of PLCs as a catalyst for ongoing professional development. To this end, they initiated a structured approach, organizing three PLCs meetings throughout the academic year. Each meeting focused on pivotal aspects of leadership teams, including collaborative culture, differentiated instruction, and data-driven decision-making. During these sessions, participants engaged in discussions on articles relevant to these themes and presented key insights. This approach facilitated a dynamic exchange of ideas, observations, and challenges among group members. At the conclusion of each meeting, feedback was summarized, and actionable steps for implementation in their respective schools were identified. Notes from these meetings were digitized and shared with participants, who were also encouraged to maintain electronic communication, thereby extending the dialogue beyond the meetings. These gatherings underscored the efficacy of the PLC model for RtI leadership teams, equipping participants with a deeper comprehension of the discussed topics and actionable strategies for their educational contexts. Essentially, this model served as a practical example of implementing the RtI framework with a focus on enhancing student outcomes and instructional practices through a PLC lens. Subsequently, in Mundschenk and Fusch's study they distributed a Likert-

scale survey to 84 participants to gauge their perception and engagement with the PLC framework.

In the study by Bolam et al. (2005), the researchers surveyed 393 schools across the UK to pinpoint 16 diverse case studies. These schools were selected because they were in some phase of a PLC development (starter, developer or mature), and for their diversity, ranging from size and demographics to governance, location, student economic status, and ethnicity. The goal of these case studies was multifaceted: to assess whether the PLC characteristics identified in existing literature were observable in the schools, to understand the intentions and efforts of management teams and staff towards evolving as PLCs, and to document the progression and developmental stages of their PLC initiatives. To achieve a thorough exploration, Bolam et al. (2005) employed a blend of data collection techniques. This included conducting semi-structured interviews with individuals and groups, analysing pertinent documents like brochures or school development plans, and carrying out non-participant observations. In total, the study comprised 301 interviews and 22 observations, offering a rich and detailed perspective on the PLC phenomenon within these schools.

These three distinct examples illustrate the methodological diversity present in PLC case studies. They showcase the use of qualitative methods to delve into the dynamics and practices of PLCs, quantitative approaches for assessing impacts on student achievement and teacher development, and mixed methods to encapsulate a comprehensive view of PLC effectiveness.

Key findings

PLCs are credited with improving the educational experience of all students (Mundschenk & Fuchs, 2016). Teachers and staff in PLCs learn both individually and collectively, and what they learn is directly related to promoting student learning or creating conditions that promote student learning (Bolam et al., 2005).

Principals play a key leadership role and create organisational structures based on collaboration with staff. In general, PLCs are vulnerable when key leaders leave (Hargreaves, 2007). However, the study by Antinluoma et al. showed that leadership change had a positive impact on their case studies because leaders had been able to create purpose and commitment to common goals. In addition, their study also showed how shared educational leadership increases teachers' commitment and motivation, sense of ownership and accountability (Antinluoma et al., 2021).

Furthermore, PLCs help teachers to feel like active participants in a learning community and to feel empowered to translate concepts from educational research into practical improvements in their own context (Mundschenk & Fuchs, 2016). In the same vein, one of the most important aspects is whether or not teachers and staff feel part of the group, with staff self-perceptions of their contribution to educational activities varying (Bolam et al., 2005). Indeed, the case study showed that there could be more than one PLC in a school, with small sub-PLC groups.

PLCs are about having a shared set of values and a shared vision, which includes educational values as well as leadership and management values (Bolam et al., 2005). However, research by Antinluoma et al. (2021) also reported that clarity of values was more vague than vision statements. Although participants were unclear about the values of their

schools and the values articulated in the curriculum, the researchers considered the three case study schools to be functioning as PLCs.

Bolam et al. (2005) identified factors that could facilitate or hinder the process of forming a PLC or TLC. These factors could be: 1) external factors such as national policy frameworks or support networks and partnerships; 2) school factors such as leadership or staff professional culture; 3) group factors such as perceptions of belonging or not belonging to the group; 4) and individual factors such as personal professional interest, experience of stress, trust in colleagues or attitudes to change. Factors facilitating the creation of a PLC included: strong leadership from the headteacher; support, availability and advice from the headteacher to the teaching staff; mutual support among staff; operational budget; facilities that help to create the space and time for collaborative work; and personal dialogue and enthusiasm. Inhibiting factors for PLCs are the consequences of central government policies, such as budgetary constraints, the consequences of ambiguity or changes in such policies leading to anxiety, the demographics of the school's location, such as the isolation felt by staff in some of the rural schools.

Finally, another interesting aspect of the findings from these case studies is that the characteristics and processes associated with PLCs could occur without anyone necessarily being aware of the idea of PLCs or consciously setting out to achieve one.

Challenges and constraints

The case studies presented on PLCs highlight several common challenges and constraints. First, resistance to change is a major obstacle, as educators accustomed to traditional pedagogies may be sceptical of new collaborative approaches. As Cranston (2009) points out, resistance to change often stems from entrenched practices in schools and requires a leadership approach that encourages openness and flexibility. This scepticism often stems from a lack of understanding of the benefits of PLCs or a fear of increased workload.

Secondly, a lack of resources, both in terms of time and financial support, hinders the effective implementation and maintenance of PLC initiatives. The lack of resources identified by Servage (2008) points to the need for strategic allocation of time and money to support PLCs activities. Teachers often find it difficult to devote time to regular PLC meetings in their busy schedules, and schools may lack the necessary funding for professional development and materials.

Third, maintaining sustained commitment is a challenge (Mundschenk & Fuchs, 2016). Initial enthusiasm for PLCs may wane over time without immediate and visible improvements in student outcomes, leading to waning commitment. These barriers not only affect the effectiveness of PLCs, but also focus research attention on developing strategies to overcome them and improve PLC practice, highlighting the importance of supportive leadership, clear goals and establishing a culture of continuous learning.

PLCs meanings

Finally, and in relation to the previous chapter, we look at how the term or concept of PLC was used in different case studies.

Antinluoma, Ilomäki and Toom's study (2021) conceptualises PLCs as environments that foster mutual collaboration, emotional support and personal growth among educators. PLCs are seen as a means of enhancing teachers' professional development, improving classroom practice and, ultimately, student learning outcomes. In the study developed by Mundschenk and Fuchs (2016), PLCs are defined as groups of educators who work together to respond to student needs with timely, intervention-focused interventions rather than remediation. These PLCs prioritise the implementation of high-quality, evidence-based practices that foster an environment in which teachers learn from each other, focusing on collective student outcomes and engaging in reflective practice and data analysis to improve instruction and student learning.

The term is defined in Bolam et al.'s study (2005) as a collective capacity-building effort aimed at sustained improvement and enhanced student learning. Effective PLCs share key characteristics such as shared values and vision, collective responsibility for student learning, learning-focused collaboration, individual and collective professional learning, reflective professional inquiry, openness, networks and partnerships, inclusive membership, and mutual trust, respect and support.

Therefore, most of these case studies highlight that PLCs are instrumental in promoting school and system-wide capacity, thereby building for sustainable improvement and pupil learning. They also emphasise the importance of a school-wide culture of collaboration and continuous professional development. As such, PLCs are crucial in fostering a culture of professionalism, learning and community within schools (Cranston, 2009), with the potential to engage in critical reflection and transformative practices from collaborative learning, critical pedagogy and transformative learning theory (Servage, 2008).

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Part II

CHAPTER 3. *Frederick University report*

Victoria Pavlou and Georgina Athanasiu

Frederick University implemented three training courses:

1. An undergraduate blended course with weekly face-to-face meetings in Music Education titled “Teaching of music in primary education” was offered in the context of the bachelor’s degree in Primary Education.
2. A postgraduate distance learning course in Art Education titled “Curriculum Development and Evaluation in Visual Arts Education” was offered in the context of the MEd in Educational Studies: Curriculum & Instruction.
3. An in-service distance learning training course in Arts Education titled “The Contribution of the Arts in Promoting Sustainable Societies: Fostering Active Citizens” was addressed to primary school teachers as a continuous professional training opportunity.

Forty students/teachers participated in these training courses. Of them, 31 completed the intermediate questionnaire, 27 completed the final questionnaire, and 11 were interviewed. Next, each training course is separately presented.

3.1 Course 1: *Teaching of Music in Primary Education*

3.1.1 Demographics of the participants in the intermediate and final questionnaires

Eight student-teachers attended this undergraduate course titled “Teaching of Music in Primary Education”, but only five students responded to the intermediate and final questionnaires and participated in interviews. Demographic information was collected at the beginning of the course. Three were under 25 years old, one between 26-30 years old, and one participant was over 36 years old (see Figure 1). Only one of them was male (see Figure 2). According to their responses, their English language level is generally considered adequate, as all answers given lie between Intermediate and Mastery levels (see Figure 3). Regarding their ability to use computers and new technologies, three of them characterised their digital skills as high, and two participants characterised their digital skills as low and average, respectively (see Figure 4).

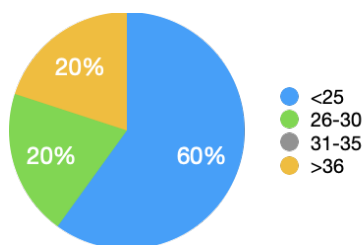


Figure 1. Age.

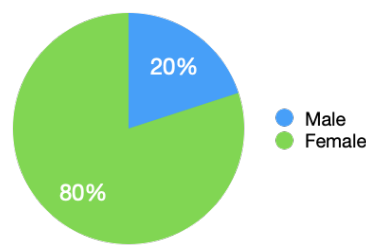


Figure 2. Gender.

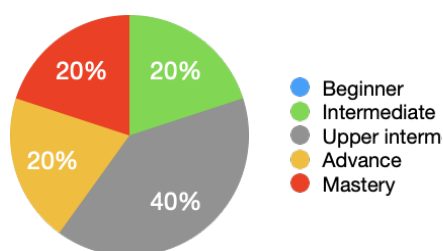


Figure 3. English Language Level.

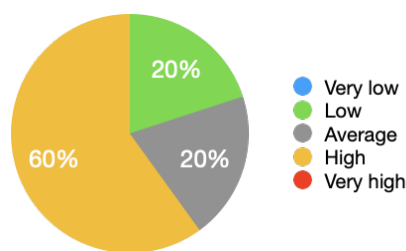


Figure 4. Digital Skills.

3.1.2 Description of the results of the intermediate and final questionnaires

Intermediate questionnaire

Mid-training, the student-teachers were asked to respond to five open-ended questions of the intermediate questionnaire. Next, there is a summary of their responses.

Overall, the course successfully promoted engagement by encouraging involvement and cultivating collaboration among students. All participants strongly expressed engagement with the arts through the course methods. Key reasons included that group activities took place in class, the practical nature of the subject and their participation in a group sound project. Here are some quotes from their responses:

The subject is experiential. We also had to produce sounds for a project related to sustainability.

The subject is practical, and the methods used were remarkably interesting.

It is a subject that is carried out as teamwork.

The contribution of each one of us was significant and valuable.

The participants indicated a positive transformation in their understanding of socially engaged arts projects due to practical examples/demonstrations in class and virtual stimuli. They emphasised better understanding of how the arts connect with society and sustainability, and this transformed their way of thinking, fostered their knowledge and cultivated their creativity.

Through the arts, there are many examples of approaching sustainability and building a positive attitude towards it. I was not expecting that much activity towards sustainability through the arts.

During the course, I experienced my art works and I gained different points of view on issues regarding socially engaged arts.

There are many interesting things to do that I haven't thought of before that can be utilised in a creative way.

I have learnt how to perceive some issues and I feel more confident to state my case in public.

The participants were very positive towards digital presentations and applications due to the ability of these tools to visualise information, increase students' interest and engagement, keep them busy and concentrated, and make the learning process easier and more pleasant. One participant pointed out that being engaged with digital tools and activities was a totally new experience. One participant additionally mentioned that digital tools opened more opportunities for creativity, while another participant stressed that these helped her change the way she perceives the world. For example, they noted:

I believe that digital tools help us learn more easily than just receive information aurally (...) they draw your attention, they get you in the process of thinking (...) They make the lesson more pleasant.

I think they draw both educator's and student's attention and interest.

I believe that we can do more things with digital tools. And digital activities keep us alert.

I gained much knowledge through the activities as I believe I have learnt to perceive the world around me from another point of view.

All the participants agreed that during the first sessions, they discovered new collaboration methods. According to some responses, this was achieved due to the nature of the subject, as music is offered for group and collaborative activities to a great extent. Also, the process of completing the group sound production project was a significant opportunity for collaboration, mentioning the "voting part", and using Mentimeter for making democratic decisions about the project. One participant also referred to the respect among students even in cases where they had to work individually.

(...) collaboration is achieved through group work, but also when we work individually there is respect among us. And when we vote for the sounds that will be used in the project (Mentimeter), the results are fair and acceptable to everyone.

New ways of collaboration are developed through group activities related to music, as the subject of music mainly involves collaboration and teamwork for producing an orchestrated work.

Each participant referred to unique ways of integrating the content of the course into their teaching practices. They particularly highlighted the following features of the course as components/techniques they would bring to their teaching: implementation of a student-centred learning approach, implementation of collaborative activities, utilisation of tools and

technology, carrying out the content of the lesson in an attractive and interesting way for the children, considering the music lesson as a more practical than theoretical subject.

It connects through the student-centred learning approach.

Through the various tools and technology, I connect this subject with my teaching through the ways in which the educator can make the lesson more attractive and interesting for the children.

Emphasis must be given to the practical part of the lesson.

Final Questionnaire

At the end of the training, 5 students responded to the call to complete a final evaluation. Their responses are presented in the following tables.

Analysis of the responses, as shown in Table 1, suggests that participants perceived the tutor/teacher's role positively in stimulating collaboration, keeping participants engaged, and reinforcing a sense of community. The high mean scores and the absence of negative responses indicate a strong consensus among the participants regarding the effectiveness of the tutor/teacher in these aspects.

Table 1. Role of the teachers

Role of the teachers	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD
a) The tutor/teacher stimulated collaboration	-	-	2 40%	3 60%	3.6	0.54
b) The tutor/teacher helped to keep course participants engaged and participating in productive dialogue	-	-	2 40%	3 60%	3.6	0.54
c) The tutor/teacher actions reinforced the development of a sense of community among course participants	-	-	2 40%	3 60%	3.6	0.54

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree, SD=Standard Deviation

According to Table 2, participants generally perceived a strong sense of collaboration and belonging in the course. The high mean scores suggest a positive and consistent evaluation of the collaborative aspects assessed in the table. This positive perception can contribute to a more engaging and supportive learning environment, as indicated by participants feeling part of a learning community and experiencing a sense of belonging.

Table 2. Perceived collaboration.

Perceived collaboration	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD
a) I felt part of a learning community in my group	-	-	2 40%	3 60%	3.6	0.54
b) Getting to know other course participants gave me a sense of belonging in the course	-	-	2 40%	3 60%	3.6	0.54

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree, SD=Standard Deviation

The following table (3) indicates a positive perception of peer relations among participants. The high percentage of Totally Agree responses and the overall high mean scores suggest a strong sense of collaboration, comfort, and trust within the group. The consistency in responses across items further reinforces the positive environment participants experienced in their interactions with peers.

Table 3. Relation with peers.

Relation with peers	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD
a) I actively exchanged my ideas with group members	-	1 20%	-	4 80%	3.6	0.89
b) I was able to develop new skills and knowledge from other members in my group	-	-	2 40%	3 60%	3.6	0.54
c) I was able to develop problem solving skills through peer collaboration	-	-	2 40%	3 60%	3.6	0.54
d) I felt comfortable participating in the course discussions	-	-	1 20%	4 80%	3.8	0.44
e) I felt comfortable interacting with other course participants	-	-	1 20%	4 80%	3.8	0.44
f) I felt comfortable disagreeing with other course participants while still maintaining a sense of trust	-	-	2 40%	3 60%	3.6	0.54
g) I felt that my point of view was acknowledged by other course participants	-	-	3 60%	2 40%	3.4	0.54

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree, SD=Standard Deviation

Table 4 reveals a generally positive perception of collaborative learning among participants. The majority expressed satisfaction with the effectiveness of collaborative learning and their overall experience. However, there is some divergence in opinions regarding the time-consuming nature of collaborative learning and the potential continuation of collaboration in the future. The relatively low standard deviation values suggest a degree of consensus among participants.

Table 4. Evaluation of collaborative learning.

Evaluation of collaborative learning	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD
a) I felt that collaborative learning in my group was effective	-	-	2 40%	3 60%	3.6	0.54
b) I felt that collaborative learning in my group was time-consuming	1 20%	1 20%	1 20%	2 40%	2.8	1.30
c) I felt that the collaboration developed in the group will continue in the future	-	1 20%	2 40%	2 40%	3.2	0.83
d) Overall, I am satisfied with my collaborative learning experience in this course	-	-	2 40%	3 60%	3.6	0.54

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree, SD=Standard Deviation

Changes and continuities between both questionnaires

Due to the small number of participants (five), it was impossible to address any notable relationships, trends or patterns between the responses and demographic data.

Comparing participants' midterm and final statements, there were not any distinctive changes concerning their perception of digital tools for learning-teaching purposes, collaborative learning and integrating the content of the course into their teaching.

All participants were very positive towards using digital tools during the course, explaining that they created opportunities for creativity and also increased students' interest and engagement. This attitude remained up to the end of the course. As reported in Ioannidou (2024) and according to their final responses (PR3), they believed that digital media makes the learning process more engaging and promotes creativity based on communal work.

As far as the content of the course is concerned, at the end of the course students were very satisfied with it as their responses showed high overall positive feelings and they were likely to integrate it into their future educational work (Ioannidou, 2024). This was obvious from earlier stages of the course. According to intermediate questionnaire data, participants highlighted various components of the course that they would utilise in their teaching practices.

Data collected from both the intermediate and final questionnaire indicates an overall positive attitude from the participants' perspective. According to the intermediate questionnaire, participants agreed that from the first sessions of the course they discovered new ways of collaboration through group activities that were taking place in class, while mutual respect was derived as the key for a successful collaborative experience. This was confirmed by the final questionnaire, where participants evaluated both their involvement in the group and relation with their peers. Even though one participant was negative about future collaboration with the same group members, this was the result of pre-existing personal differences with some peers. Despite this, all participants felt part of a learning community, and this gave them a sense of belonging in the course. Additionally, they noted positive attitudes towards their relationship with the other group members, as far as exchanging ideas, developing new skills, problem-solving, discussion and interaction are concerned. Overall, they all felt that collaborative learning was effective, and they were satisfied with their collaborative experience during this course.

Students' feedback on digital tools used during this course was very positive, stressing the possibilities that these tools open up for creativity, virtual experiences and enhancing students' engagement. They also recognised the positive effects that digital tools have, such as Mentimeter, on taking democratic decisions within a group.

In addition, their responses in both intermediate and final questionnaires indicate their positive attitude towards their learning experiences during the course in terms of collaboration and the sense of being part of a learning community.

Overall, their experiences with blended learning through this course, face-to-face meetings combined with the utilisation of digital tools and activities, were viewed positively, with an emphasis on the effectiveness of the course in fostering collaboration, engagement, creativity, and a sense of community.

3.1.3 Demographics of the interviewees

Three student-teachers were interviewed individually (one male and two females). All three of them were under 25 years old.

3.1.4 Analysis of the interviews

Notions of collaborative learning

In analysing the perspectives of the three interviewees regarding collaborative learning, it becomes evident that they all highlighted students' respectful interaction and their opportunity to get to know each other and bring the students closer. One of them explained that in collaborative learning no one should be excluded and be assured that there is no discrimination between students. Each group member's contribution is considered essential and useful, and they should support each other.

For me collaborative learning is when children/students can collaborate, they are all considered as equal, and if someone faces difficulties in coping with the task, other children/students should help him/her to offer his/her best (...) (CY1)

(...) when there is mutual respect, harmony... when there is interaction. (CY3)

One participant concentrated on the process of collaboration and the benefits out of this process, which is the development of students' self-esteem, dignity, and social skills, while two participants stressed the importance of successful achievement of a common goal. Also, two interviewees mentioned that collaborative learning not only involves the students but also the educator. Firstly, it is a good opportunity for the educator to collaborate with his/her students and secondly, the way in which the educator divides the class into groups.

(...) children develop their self-esteem and dignity through collaboration and they socialise. (CY1)

I consider collaborative learning when a group of children aim to achieve a common goal. Of course, the outcome must be successful. (CY1)

Collaborative learning is happening when students collaborate with the educator to achieve something good. (CY2)

Students come closer to the educator because the educator also collaborates with them and supports them. (CY3)

I would not divide my students into "strong" and "weak" students, but each group must consist of both strong and weak students, so that let's say the "strong" ones will support the "weak" ones. (CY1)

The above perspectives exemplified that collaborative learning is a complicated concept involving active participation, mutual respect, working on a common goal, with positive effects on personal and social skills and values.

Characteristics of un/successful collaborative learning experiences

Overall, the student-teachers perceived their collaborative learning experiences during the course as successful. They stressed the group project according to which they had to produce and record sounds, working either individually at home after class or as a group during sessions. Even in cases when they had to work individually, they still had a common goal, as they had to present their recordings in class and make group decisions (through voting) of which sounds are the most successful to be used in the project. Thus, respect and honesty during their voting was necessary for the best results.

Additionally, one participant emphasised the significant role of the educator during the entire process, explaining that successful collaborative learning depends to a great extent on the positive energy in class caused by the educator, as well as the educator and student positive interaction.

When the participants were asked to comment on any issues that required modification, one of the three interviewees pointed out that she would not change anything from the course. The other two participants expressed their disappointment with the fact that the group that attended the course was small (only eight students), and some students were frequently absent from class, and this had negative effects on the success of the course. One of them explained that more group activities would be possible to implement if all students were present in every lesson. The other participant emphasised the significance of having all students in class, so that the educator could identify whether a student had any weaknesses and needed more support.

I believe that we could engage in more activities if students were present in class. (CY3)

If it were up to me (...), I would have all the students in class (...). It is necessary to have all students in class for an effective course. For the educator to understand where they are, if they conceive the content, if they have any weaknesses (...) (CY1)

The interviewees highlighted various key characteristics that contribute to a successful collaborative experience. These are mutual respect among students, a common goal, inclusion, active participation and effective communication between educator and students.

Expectations and ideas about future collaborations

The students were asked to discuss future contingent collaborations. Two participants mentioned that collaboration started among these 8 students during this course and could continue in the future for other projects. One of them explained that since they got to know each other better, collaboration among them would be possible not only in other courses during their studies but also for projects outside the university.

Another participant stressed that she could engage in a collaborative activity at a primary school, implementing methods used during this course to assess the effectiveness of these methods and to evaluate children's attitudes and responses during the process. However, she emphasised that she would collaborate only with people who have innovative ideas and are willing to cooperate. Therefore, she would choose with whom she would collaborate.

The content of this course did not allow any collaboration with any institutions outside the university. Therefore, the interviewees were not asked to comment on the role of other institutions in future collaborations, as this question was irrelevant to this course.

Even though sustainability was approached largely during this course, through self-making musical instruments made from recycled materials, the sound production project, that was based on environmental pollution and through planning musical activities approaching goals of sustainable development, none of the participants referred to this area during the interview.

One participant gave some examples of connecting the subject of music with other disciplines, and particularly mathematics, language, and movement. In addition, she emphasised that apart from the disciplines she pointed out, music can relate to all the subjects of the school curriculum.

Modes of adapting collaborative activities to different learning styles

Although the responses of all three interviewees indicate that collaborative activities were adapted to different learning styles or abilities, each student gave his/her own interpretation. One pointed out that all students, without exception, could participate in all activities implemented during the course because of the simplicity of these activities. Another student stressed that their musical skills were non-existent, but they all had the opportunity to develop their musical skills during the course due to intense effort by the educator. In addition, when students were asked to prepare music lesson plans, they all adapted their lesson plans to their own personalities, preferences, skills, and thoughts. The third participant referred to the group multi-stimulus activities applied during the course, which combined aural with visual stimuli and body movement. She explained that these kinds of activities include all students with or without learning difficulties.

I believe that all activities were simple, so everyone could participate with no exception. (CY3)

(...) each one of us had the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills, and create activities, prepare lesson plans and everyone has prepared something based on his/her personality, abilities, thoughts, preferences (...) (CY2)

(...) there were group activities that combined sound, picture, and body movement. I believe that these include all students regardless of any difficulty they might have, let's say learning difficulties. (CY1)

Collectively, these perspectives indicate that the key features for adapting collaborative activities to different learning styles and abilities are simplicity, with multiple stimuli, freedom of creativity based on individuals' personality, skills, and preferences.

3.1.5 Conclusions on professional learning communities

The training promoted and related to professional learning communities through various strategies. The participants, student-teachers with low or no musical knowledge and skills,

were engaged in a variety of musical activities (group activities in class and using digital tools) to improve their musical abilities required for delivering the content of the music curriculum of primary education. Also, the course utilised the following digital platforms: E-learning platform (providing access to digital sources), Mentimeter, Padlet and Canva. All these enhanced engagement, collaboration, diversity and understanding, while also approaching the goals of sustainable development. In addition, the utilisation of Zoom, online quizzes through the e-learning platform, video and sound recording devices/applications, and Padlet made it possible for students who were physically absent from class, to remotely participate in activities that took place during face-to-face sessions, either in real-time or asynchronously.

Generally, the course successfully integrated technology to facilitate learning, with student-teachers revealing positive attitudes towards digital tools. Overall, this undergraduate course was designed to encourage active participation, critical thinking, and collaboration, which are crucial elements contributing to the establishment of a learning community among students.

The main features of and expectations around such learning communities in the context of this course include expanded perspectives on socially engaged arts, positive attitude towards digital tools, collaboration, and integration into teaching practices.

The course positively reshaped participants' comprehension of socially engaged arts. This was achieved through students' engagement in group activities, preparing a sound production project and micro-teaching, which related to the goals of sustainability.

Also, the students exhibited a positive attitude towards digital presentations and applications. Digital media and blended musical activities were seen as valuable tools for facilitating learning, participation and collaboration.

As far as collaboration is concerned, students expressed a positive attitude towards discovering new collaboration methods. Collaborative activities provided avenues for engaging with diverse perspectives and skills, fostering creative thinking. In addition, participants' responses underscored the sense of a learning community and active engagement and interaction among them. The role of tutors in fostering collaboration and reinforcing a sense of community received high praise. Participants felt connected within a learning community, exchanged ideas, and cultivated problem-solving skills through collaborative endeavours. Moreover, they expressed contentment with their collaborative learning experience during the course, while most of them anticipated the continuation of collaboration within the group in the future.

Regarding integration into teaching practices, students were satisfied with the course content, and positive towards applying it to their future teaching practices, stressing that the course provided them with practical ideas, tools, and techniques.

The findings suggest that overall, this undergraduate music course, even though it was attended by a very small number of students (eight), achieved its objectives in utilising digital tools in music education, promoting collaborative learning and creativity, and integrating music for sustainable and socially engaged education.

3.2 Course 2: Curriculum Development and Evaluation in Visual Arts Education

3.2.1 Demographics of the participants in the intermediate and final questionnaires

Eight postgraduate students, all women, participated in the course “Curriculum Development and Evaluation in Visual Arts Education”. This was an elective course offered in the context of the MA in Curriculum and Instruction. The whole cohort of the students was 30, and eight of them chose this course. Of them, five completed the mid-course questionnaire, six the final evaluation questionnaire and three participated in interviews. Some demographic information about them, gathered in the final questionnaire, is shown in the following figures; half were 46-55 years old (figure 5), half were primary school teachers (figure 8), the majority had a good knowledge of the English language (figure 6), and rated their digital skills are medium (figure 7).

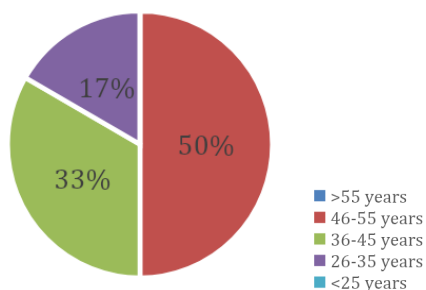


Figure 5. Age

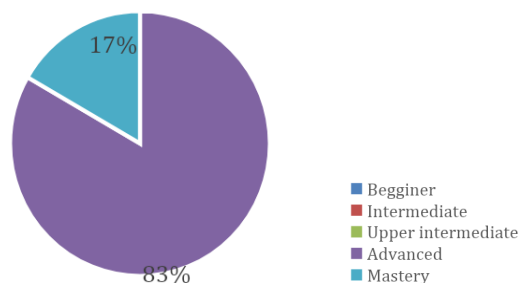


Figure 6. English language level

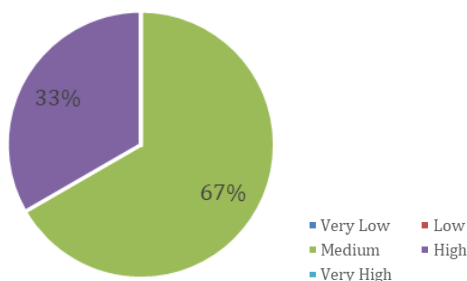


Figure 7. Digital skills

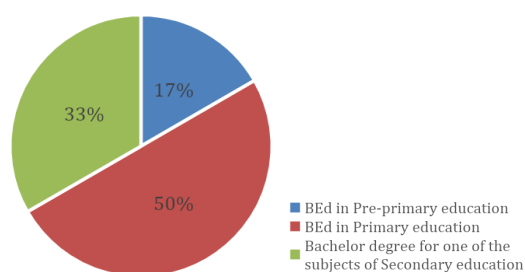


Figure 8. Bachelor degrees

3.2.2 Description of the results of the intermediate and final questionnaires

Intermediate questionnaire

During the seventh week of the semester (13 weeks semester), the students were asked to respond to five open-ended questions. Next, there is a summary of their responses.

The students expressed a high level of engagement in experiencing arts through the methods employed in the course. They highlight the combination of theoretical knowledge and experiential activities as a key factor in their active involvement. One student noted the informative theoretical framework, while others emphasized the practical application of concepts during Zoom meetings, creating a dynamic learning environment. According to one student, the course encouraged them to be "spectators, participants, and producers of art

with social content." This multifaceted engagement underscored the course's effectiveness in fostering a comprehensive understanding of art. Another student appreciated the course's structure, describing the methods as "experiential and properly targeted."

A significant aspect of their engagement lies in the freedom of expression and the creation of art without stress. One student emphasizes the importance of expressing feelings and how they manifest in the artwork, noting, "The joy of expressing myself without the stress of having a perfect final result helped me to approach art differently." This sentiment is echoed by another student who valued the opportunity to create "art" beyond conventional forms, stating, "Art can take many forms – beyond the conventional ones we learn in school – it is all around us."

The virtual interventions in the course significantly impacted the students' interpretations of socially engaged arts projects. The responses indicate a transformative shift in their understanding of the role of art in addressing societal issues. For example, one student noted a reinforcement of their perception that art must actively address critical societal issues and propose solutions. This suggests that virtual interventions had deepened their conviction in the socially transformative potential of art. Another student mentioned becoming more immersed in socially engaged art and differentiating it from social art. This distinction reflects a heightened awareness of the nuanced elements involved in engaging people and communities through art.

The students collectively expressed a growing awareness and ability to distinguish socially engaged art from other forms, specifically social art. This suggests that virtual sessions have played a role in refining their conceptual understanding of art with societal engagement at its core. Furthermore, the course fostered a more active and analytical engagement with art, encouraging students to interpret the deeper meanings and implications. For example, one student described a shift in perspective from that of a mere viewer to an interpreter and reflector of artworks. The responses emphasised the power of art to convey messages about global issues and sustainability. The virtual interventions have facilitated a process of reflection, encouraging students to delve beyond the obvious and explore connections to social issues. The students express a newfound ability to use art as a tool for creative dialogue, critical thinking, and values exploration with students.

The postgraduate students expressed a positive impact of digital media and artistic activities on their understanding of socially engaged arts. They emphasised the significance of technology in providing virtual experiences of street art, installations, and galleries, fostering a direct connection between their art activities and social issues. This integration allowed them to see themselves as active creators and agents of socially engaged arts, contemplating how to involve their future students in this dynamic and creative process. The digital realm served as a gateway for the students to explore, reflect, and contribute to the social discourse through artistic expression.

Moreover, the students acknowledged the transformative role of digital activities in prompting reflective thinking on social issues and envisioning ways to mobilise fellow citizens and students to take meaningful actions. Lecturer presentations and experiential activities further deepened their understanding of socially engaged art, providing a more profound comprehension through hands-on engagement. Exposure to alternative ways of highlighting and expressing artistic activities through digital platforms broadened their perspectives and enriched their artistic vocabulary. The digital interventions not only introduced them to the

concept of socially engaged art but also inspired a newfound appreciation for its potential impact in addressing real-life issues. Overall, the students viewed digital media as a crucial tool for learning, experiencing, and actively participating in the world of socially engaged arts.

The students unanimously recognized that the initial sessions of the course facilitated the discovery of new ways of collaborating. They attributed this newfound understanding to the course's emphasis on socially engaged art, which inherently promoted a co-creative and collaborative approach. Furthermore, they envisioned the application of collaborative practices not only within the educational context but also at the school and community levels, contingent upon the circumstances. Their responses indicated a broadened perspective on collaboration, suggesting an eagerness to extend collaborative efforts beyond the classroom and engage with broader communities. Additionally, the students cited specific digital tools like VoiceThread as instrumental in fostering collaboration. They highlighted the versatility of such tools, noting their potential for assigning interesting collaborative activities to their students. They recognized the social character of art as a unifying force, bringing individuals closer together, encouraging interaction, fostering a sense of belonging, and facilitating enjoyable co-creation within a group setting.

The students affirmed a strong connection between the course and their teaching practices (all were practising teachers), highlighting the incorporation of experiential, alternative, and differentiated teaching methods supported by technology and digital media. This approach was deemed inclusive, addressing diverse learning styles. They emphasized the integration of reflective, critical, and student-centred teaching, with a focus on experiential education and the reconstructive model for developing critical thinking and fostering social change. Interdisciplinary and intercultural elements were seamlessly woven into their teaching methods, ensuring alignment with the course's overarching goals. The course was viewed as adaptable to various teaching approaches, encompassing the creation and analysis of artworks, utilizing informal learning environments, fostering experiential and student-centred learning, and leveraging modern digital media and technology. Overall, the students perceived the course as a rich resource that enhanced their teaching toolkit, allowing them to integrate a “myriad” of methods that catered to diverse student needs while staying connected to societal concerns.

Final Questionnaire

Students' responses to the final questionnaire reveal positive experiences with the tutor's facilitation, perceived collaboration as a vital component of their learning community, actively engaged with their peers, and generally found the collaborative learning experience to be effective, albeit with some variations in opinions about the time commitment and the longevity of collaboration.

In particular, as shown in the table below, participants strongly agreed that the tutor played a significant role in stimulating collaboration, keeping them engaged in productive dialogue, and reinforcing a sense of community. Their positive responses indicate that the tutor effectively facilitated a collaborative and supportive learning environment.

Table 5. Role of the teachers.

Role of the teachers	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD
a) The tutor/teacher stimulated collaboration	-	-	-	6 100%	4.00	0.00
b) The tutor/teacher helped to keep course participants engaged and participating in productive dialogue	-	-	-	6 100%	4.00	0.00
c) The tutor/teacher actions reinforced the development of a sense of community among course participants	-	-	1 16.67%	5 83.33%	3.83	0.40

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree, SD=Standard Deviation

Further, participants felt a strong sense of belonging to a learning community within their groups (see table below). They emphasized that getting to know other course participants contributed to their sense of belonging in the course. These responses reflect a positive perception of collaborative dynamics and a supportive community atmosphere.

Table 6. Perceived collaboration.

Perceived collaboration	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD
a) I felt part of a learning community in my group	-	-	1 16.67%	5 83.33%	3.83	0.40
b) Getting to know other course participants gave me a sense of belonging in the course	-	-	1 16.67%	5 83.33%	3.83	0.40

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree, SD=Standard Deviation

The following table describes the students' relations among themselves. They actively exchanged ideas with group members, developed new skills and knowledge through peer collaboration, and felt comfortable participating in course discussions and interacting with others. The comfort in disagreeing while maintaining trust suggests a healthy and open exchange of perspectives among participants.

Table 7. Relation with peers.

Relation with peers	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD
a) I actively exchanged my ideas with group members	-	-	1 16.67%	5 83.33%	3.83	0.40
b) I was able to develop new skills and knowledge from other members in my group	-	-	1 16.67%	5 83.33%	3.83	0.40
c) I was able to develop problem solving skills through peer collaboration	-	-	1 16.67%	5 83.33%	3.83	0.40

d) I felt comfortable participating in the course discussions	-	-	-	6 100%	4.00	0.00
e) I felt comfortable interacting with other course participants	-	-	1 16.67%	5 83.33%	3.83	0.40
f) I felt comfortable disagreeing with other course participants while still maintaining a sense of trust	-	-	2 33.33%	4 66.67%	3.66	0.51
g) I felt that my point of view was acknowledged by other course participants	-	-	1 16.67%	5 83.33%	3.83	0.40

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree, SD=Standard Deviation

While participants generally felt that collaborative learning in their groups was effective, there were mixed responses regarding the time-consuming nature of collaboration (see statement 4b in the table below). Additionally, opinions varied on whether the collaboration developed in the group would continue in the future (see statement 4c in the table below). Overall, participants expressed satisfaction with their collaborative learning experience.

Table 8. Evaluation of collaborative learning.

Evaluation of collaborative learning	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD
a) I felt that collaborative learning in my group was effective	-	-	1 16.67%	5 83.33%	3.83	0.40
b) I felt that collaborative learning in my group was time-consuming	2 33.33%	1 16.67%	-	3 50%	2.66	1.50
c) I felt that the collaboration developed in the group will continue in the future	-	-	2 33.33%	4 66.67%	3.33	1.03
d) Overall, I am satisfied with my collaborative learning experience in this course	-	-	1 16.67%	5 83.33%	3.83	0.40

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree, SD=Standard Deviation

Changes and continuities between both questionnaires

There was a very small number of students in this postgraduate course, just eight, and only six of them replied to the final questionnaire. This made it difficult to identify relationships, trends, or patterns between the responses and the demographic data.

The final questionnaire provided more specific statements for participants to respond to, allowing for a more structured evaluation of different aspects of the course. While the open-ended questions captured broader sentiments, the final questionnaire offered a focused assessment of specific elements related to collaboration, teaching roles, and perceived learning outcomes.

The positive themes regarding engagement, the impact of virtual interventions, and the value of digital activities persisted from the intermediate to the final assessment. Participants consistently highlighted the effectiveness of the course in fostering collaboration, critical thinking, and a sense of community.

In the final questionnaire, students strongly agreed with statements related to the role of the tutor, perceived collaboration, and evaluation of collaborative learning. They expressed a sense of belonging, active exchange of ideas, and the development of problem-solving skills through peer collaboration. These positive responses align with their earlier open-ended feedback, where they emphasized the dynamic and interactive nature of the course. The students saw themselves as active creators and agents of socially engaged arts, highlighting the effectiveness of experiential and properly targeted methods, as well as the positive impact of digital media on their understanding of socially engaged arts.

The students acknowledged the transformative impact of virtual interventions on their interpretation of socially engaged arts projects. This aligns with their positive feedback on digital activities, where they emphasized the significance of technology in providing virtual experiences and fostering engagement. The students recognized the value of digital tools like VoiceThread and appreciated the adaptability of the course to various teaching approaches, including the utilization of modern digital media and technology. Overall, their experiences with online and blended learning were viewed positively, with an emphasis on the course's effectiveness in fostering collaboration, critical thinking, and a sense of community.

In summary, there is a consistent positive theme running through the students' responses, indicating a strong alignment between their experiences in the course and their perceptions of collaborative learning, digital engagement, and the functioning of online and blended teaching-learning. The students demonstrated a clear appreciation for the course's effectiveness in fostering a dynamic and inclusive learning environment, integrating digital tools, and connecting theory with practical, experiential activities.

3.2.3 Demographics of the interviewees

Three students, all women, participated in the interviews. The youngest one (28 years old) was a kindergarten teacher. The other teacher was 44 years old and was a primary school teacher. The oldest teacher was 47 years old and worked in a school for children with special needs.

3.2.4 Analysis of the interviews

Notions of collaborative learning

The students' responses revealed varied perspectives on collaborative learning, emphasizing interaction, team bonding, and effective communication. One student highlighted the challenges of collaborative learning, noting its difficulty and the importance of team bonding. The second student, considering the context of distance learning, emphasized the creation of a supportive community where members felt comfortable exchanging views and complementing each other's ideas. The third student focused on successful collaboration, stressing the significance of good communication, a willingness to engage, and equitable participation. They underscored the importance of teamwork, with each member contributing to different aspects of a project and engaging in discussions to ensure consensus.

Generally, the students collectively emphasized the essential elements of collaborative learning, including team dynamics, open communication, and shared responsibility, highlighting the need for an inclusive and interactive learning environment.

Characteristics of un/successful collaborative learning experiences

The students shared diverse perspectives on the success factors of their collaborative learning experience in an art education course. One student expressed the challenges of forming partnerships with unfamiliar peers but acknowledged that certain collaborations were fruitful, particularly when working on the assignment of developing a learning scenario and voice threat projects. She highlighted the value of direct communication through spoken interactions, emphasizing its intensity compared to written communication. Another student identified the key characteristics of success as the comfort of contributing to discussions, a more intimate and familiar atmosphere facilitated by the tutor's approachability, and the breaking of the ice through activities like sharing public art near one's neighbourhood. She appreciated the inclusive nature of discussions, even if opinions seemed unconventional. Another student emphasized the positive impact of workshops, highlighting the demystification of expressing opinions and the sense of community fostered by small teams.

Overall, the students valued interpersonal relationships, interactive lessons, and the creation of a supportive learning environment, pointing to specific activities and approaches that contributed to their positive collaborative learning experience.

Expectations and ideas about future collaborations

The students' responses regarding the continuity of collaboration that started in the art education course reflected a mix of uncertainty and optimism. One student expressed scepticism about ongoing collaboration due to the constraints of daily commitments and a busy schedule. Despite choosing to work individually on the learning scenario assignment, she observed successful collaboration among her peers. Another student saw the course as a starting point, describing it as a seed for potential future collaborations. She highlighted the development of relationships and information exchange with fellow students, indicating the possibility of these connections evolving into professional collaborations beyond the personal realm. Another student, drawing from past experiences, acknowledged the potential for collaboration outside the classroom and mentioned maintaining friendships and contacts from a previous postgraduate degree.

Based on students' comments, it's evident that the students perceived collaborations between different knowledge areas in the art education course. One student emphasised the versatility of art by mentioning the use of photos, pictures, and artworks in different lessons at school. She expressed a belief that art can be connected to various subjects, highlighting the achievement of this goal in the course. Another student underscored the value of shared experiences, citing an example where a drama practitioner shared a project, illustrating how different specialisations could contribute to art. Another student mentioned the connection between the digital and visual parts of the course and highlighted the broader perspectives gained through constructivism and inspiration. Overall, these responses provide concrete examples of collaborations between art and other knowledge areas.

In conclusion, the students' responses suggested a nuanced outlook on the continuation of collaboration, with factors such as personal commitments, emerging professional connections, and past experiences influencing their perspectives on the likelihood of ongoing collaborative efforts.

Modes of adapting collaborative activities to different learning styles

The students' responses regarding adapted cooperative learning activities in the art education course suggest a generally positive perception. One student acknowledged the challenge of catering to everyone's preferences but recognised the inherent diversity in learning styles in the art activities of the course. Another student expressed satisfaction with the adaptability of the activities, emphasising the presence of various media to accommodate different preferences, including recording and writing. Another student affirmed the existence of adapted activities, citing the platform's multimodal nature, which effectively addressed her own learning style and abilities as well as those of her classmates.

Overall, the students appreciate the diversity and flexibility in the learning activities, suggesting that the course successfully accommodated participants with different learning styles and abilities through a variety of approaches and modalities.

3.2.5 Conclusions on professional learning communities

The training has played a significant role in promoting PLCs among the participants. The course "Curriculum Development and Evaluation in Visual Arts Education" provided a platform for collaborative learning, fostering a sense of community among the postgraduate students. The participants consistently highlighted the effectiveness of the tutor in stimulating collaboration, keeping them engaged in productive dialogue, and reinforcing a sense of community. The positive responses from both the intermediate and final questionnaires, as well as the interviews, indicate that the training created an environment where participants actively exchanged ideas, developed new skills through peer collaboration, and felt comfortable participating in course discussions. The emphasis on collaborative activities, digital engagement, and the application of learning in real-world teaching contexts contributed to the formation of a strong professional learning community among the participants.

The main features of the professional learning community established through the training include active engagement, collaboration, and a sense of belonging. Participants expressed a strong sense of community within their group, emphasising that getting to know other course participants contributed to their sense of belonging. The collaborative nature of the course, with activities such as digital interventions, discussions, and shared learning experiences, fostered an environment where participants actively exchanged ideas, developed problem-solving skills through collaboration, and felt comfortable disagreeing while maintaining trust. The expectations around such communities include a continued sense of collaboration and a positive learning environment. Participants acknowledged the transformative impact of virtual interventions on their interpretation of socially engaged arts projects and valued the adaptability of the course to various teaching approaches, aligning with the expectations of an inclusive and dynamic professional learning community.

The positive responses from the participants highlight the success of the training in achieving its goals of promoting collaborative learning and establishing a professional learning community. The participants' experiences demonstrate that the course effectively integrated theoretical knowledge with practical applications, creating a dynamic and inclusive learning environment. The use of digital tools, experiential activities, and real-world applications contributed to a multifaceted engagement with the subject matter. The participants not only recognized the value of collaborative learning within the course but also expressed a willingness to extend collaborative practices beyond the educational context. The challenges identified, such as the time-consuming nature of collaboration and uncertainties about its continuity, offer valuable insights for refining future iterations of the training. Overall, the training successfully cultivated a professional learning community that valued collaboration, critical thinking, and the application of learning in real-world contexts.

3.3. Course 3: The Contribution of the Arts in Promoting Sustainable Societies: Fostering Active Citizens

3.3.1. Demographics of the participants in the intermediate and final questionnaires

Twenty-four in-service teachers completed this continuous professional development training (mean age 45.62 years old, Standard Deviation 5.67 years). Demographic information was collected upon registration to the course.

The majority of the teachers were well experienced (see Figure 9); thirteen of them had more than 26 years of teaching experience, five had 21-25 years of teaching experience, and three had 16-20 years of teaching experience. Two of them had several years of experience (one 11-15 years and one 6-10 years), and one of them was considered a novice teacher (1-5 years of teaching experience).

Ten of the teachers taught exclusively or mostly art, whereas the rest were class teachers teaching different subjects (see Figure 10). Thirteen teachers noted that they specialised in art teaching (see Figure 11), a specialisation that resulted either because of their special interest or of participating in short professional development courses or of the years of teaching the subject or of additional degrees such as a master course in art education (five of them). Those who taught mostly or exclusively art taught in all grades (1st graders to 6th graders), whereas those who were class teachers mostly taught to the upper level of primary school (4th graders to 6th graders).

Although all initially agreed to fill in any questionnaires (during the application procedure) and possibly participate in interviews, twenty-one responded to the open-ended questions of the mid-training evaluation, sixteen completed the questionnaire at the end of the training, and five participated in interviews.

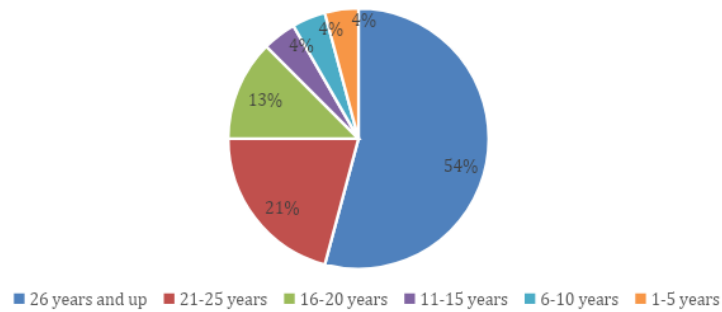


Figure 9. Years of teaching experience.

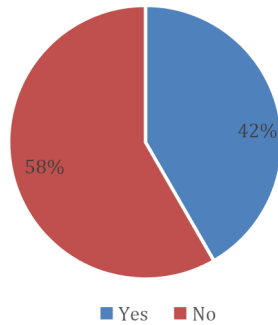


Figure 10. Teaching exclusively or mostly art.

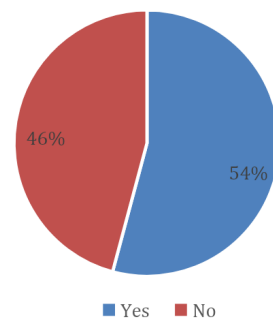


Figure 11. Specialization in art teaching.

3.3.2. Description of the results of the intermediate and final questionnaires

Intermediate questionnaire

Mid-training, the teachers were asked to respond to five open-ended questions. Next, there is a summary of their responses; 21 teachers responded.

All teachers overwhelmingly expressed engagement with the arts through the course methods. Key reasons included hands-on activities, active participation opportunities, and interactive sessions. Participants appreciated the blend of theoretical frameworks with practical, experiential exercises, which allowed for emotional expression and creativity. They highlighted the variety of topics and techniques covered, as well as the emphasis on interaction, creativity, and reflection. Several teachers noted the value of interdisciplinary thinking, exposure to various art forms, and the introduction to renowned artists. Overall, the course successfully fostered engagement by encouraging involvement, promoting empathy, and offering new ideas for integrating arts into education. Here are some quotes from their responses:

I feel directly involved through the open cameras and live rooms. There are opportunities to express emotions.

(...) all the activities are very interactive and creative, so they encourage me to engage and, at the same time, reflect on everything.

We were given the opportunity through the meetings to get actively involved by knowing about art, music, theatre even online to discuss and get active as we split into chat rooms (*Zoom breakout rooms*) and get to know works and artists who have made a mark on culture.

The teachers indicated a positive transformation in their understanding of socially engaged arts projects due to the virtual interventions in the course. They emphasised enhanced perspectives, especially in linking projects with sustainability. Engaging in discussions enabled them to grasp different viewpoints, enriching their knowledge and creativity. Participants appreciated the practicality and efficiency of the virtual mode, facilitating broader dissemination of ideas. Many highlighted newfound abilities to interpret and communicate about contemporary artworks, fostering deeper connections. The course encouraged empathy, action, and innovative thinking. Several teachers felt empowered to integrate these insights into their teaching practices, emphasising the arts' potential to promote social justice and sustainability.

The discussions around these projects raised various concerns and opinions that enriched my own knowledge and ideas.

I will more confidently guide and encourage discussions of children's concerns arising from their involvement with the arts.

It has opened up new horizons for me, both in my way of thinking about sustainability and in the ways of approaching it through the arts. I have started to apply some of these ideas in my teaching.

I could see the influence of the arts for a better world with social justice!

The teachers indicated a positive disposition towards digital presentations and applications due to their ability to actively participate in the activities of the course. Many highlighted that they learned new software and applications that they had already integrated into their teaching practice. These teachers appeared to be more open to new experiences and eager to experiment and try new things. Further, teachers who lived far from the capital, where training opportunities were not easily available, stressed the importance of distance learning and using digital activities as it was the only way for them to participate in training that interested them. A few teachers noted that initially, they were concerned about the distance learning mode of the training and whether they would be able to participate in technology-enhanced activities. However, their concerns were put aside when they realised there was a clear structure and instructions on participating digitally.

It wasn't a simple training where you just listened to someone talking. There were practical applications in every session, and technology helped a lot with this.

In the beginning, I was scared of technology ... then though, it was okay; there was guidance. After all, it was easy to participate because I just had to follow the instructions.

When you are doing it from a distance, that is, it's online training; if you don't have something to do at that time, to click, to open, to see ... then there wouldn't be any interaction and no interest. (...) For example, I enjoyed the activity with Voice Thread.

Further, teachers largely agreed that digital media and artistic online/blended activities effectively facilitated learning about socially engaged arts in the course. They appreciated hands-on activities, innovative tools like Jamboard and Slido, and the blend of theoretical and

practical knowledge. Many highlighted the capacity of digital platforms to foster collaboration, diversity understanding, and broader engagement with contemporary artworks addressing societal issues such as environmental protection and social justice. Participants emphasized the value of discussions, active participation, and the applicability of learned techniques in educational settings. A few suggested further in-depth analysis, but overall, the consensus was that the digital mediums significantly enriched their learning experience, providing tools and insights they could integrate into their teaching practices.

The responses from teachers varied regarding the impact of initial sessions on discovering new collaboration methods. A majority expressed affirmative sentiments, noting they learned new techniques and methods for collaboration, both creatively and practically. Several highlighted the benefits of online interactions, including the opportunity to engage with diverse perspectives and unfamiliar colleagues. Some teachers specifically mentioned implementing these newfound collaboration strategies with their students. However, a few participants had reservations, with one indicating a preference for face-to-face teaching and collaborating. Overall, while most teachers acknowledged positive shifts in their collaborative approaches, a minority felt less influenced by the initial sessions. Here are some quotes:

At first, I felt technologically illiterate. Now I say, "Yes, I did it, I can do it too!"

Absolutely. Collaboration to set up an installation. Theatrical presentation with music.

They certainly lead us to a new way of thinking. When perception matures and the right conditions are created, we may be led to discover new ways of working together.

Definitely new ways are discovered and because of the online mode of the meetings, but also because of working with unknown people who see things from a different perspective, a friendly discussion with an exchange of arguments and opinions takes place.

The teachers provided various insights on integrating the training/seminar content into their teaching practices. Many indicated that the seminar enriched their teaching methods by offering new ideas, tools, and techniques they plan to incorporate immediately or in the future. Several highlighted the versatility it brought to their teaching, enabling them to approach topics in diverse ways and utilise digital tools effectively. Specific mentions included integrating theatre, technology, and sustainability themes into lessons, using practical activities like installations and drawing assignments, and fostering creativity and improvisation. Some teachers mentioned they have already started implementing certain training activities and tools in their classrooms. Overall, educators felt empowered with fresh perspectives and strategies applicable across subjects, emphasising the training's broad relevance and practicality.

I feel more cognitively prepared to integrate the arts into my teaching and lessons to transfer skills for education for sustainable development to children.

Although I do not teach art, the training was useful for teaching all subjects in school!

The workshop added ideas to my toolbox in terms of how to approach various topics as well as digital tools that I either didn't know at all or wasn't aware of their full potential.

Final Questionnaire

At the end of the training, sixteen teachers responded to the call to complete a final evaluation. Their responses are presented in the tables that follow.

As shown in Table 9, teachers unanimously commended the tutors for their pivotal role in stimulating collaboration, with all 16 teachers either agreeing or strongly agreeing. Additionally, the teachers acknowledged the effectiveness of the tutors in maintaining engagement and fostering productive dialogue, with only two teachers agreeing and the majority (14) strongly agreeing. Furthermore, there was a unanimous agreement that the tutor's actions significantly contributed to the development of a strong sense of community among course participants.

Table 9. Role of the teachers.

Role of the teachers	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD
a) The tutor/teacher stimulated collaboration	-	-	1 6.25%	15 93.75%	3.93	0.34
b) The tutor/teacher helped to keep course participants engaged and participating in productive dialogue	-	-	2 12.5%	14 87.50%	3.87	0.34
c) The tutor/teacher's actions reinforced the development of a sense of community among course participants	-	-	2 12.5%	14 87.50%	3.87	0.34

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree, SD=Standard Deviation

In terms of perceived collaboration (see Table 10), all teachers felt part of a learning community in their groups, showcasing a strong sense of unity. Similarly, when it came to getting to know other course participants, the overwhelming majority, with 10 teachers strongly agreeing and 6 agreeing, expressed that this contributed to a profound sense of belonging in the course.

Table 10. Perceived collaboration.

Perceived collaboration	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD
a) I felt part of a learning community in my group	-	-	5 31.25%	11 68.75%	3.68	0.47
b) Getting to know other course participants gave me a sense of belonging in the course	-	-	6 37.50%	10 62.50%	3.62	0.50

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree, SD=Standard Deviation

The teachers actively embraced their roles as collaborators, with unanimous agreement that they actively exchanged ideas with group members (see Table 11). The majority of them also found comfort in disagreeing while still maintaining trust, showcasing a healthy and open

exchange of perspectives. Additionally, there was widespread agreement that interactions with other course participants were comfortable, promoting a positive atmosphere.

Table 11. Relation with peers.

Relation with peers	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD
a) I actively exchanged my ideas with group members	-	-	6 37.50%	10 62.50%	3.62	0.50
b) I was able to develop new skills and knowledge from other members in my group	-	1 6.25%	6 37.50%	9 56.25%	3.50	0.63
c) I was able to develop problem solving skills through peer collaboration	-	-	9 56.25%	7 43.75%	3.43	0.51
d) I felt comfortable participating in the course discussions	-	-	5 31.25%	11 68.75%	3.68	0.47
e) I felt comfortable interacting with other course participants	-	-	7 43.75%	9 56.25%	3.56	0.51
f) I felt comfortable disagreeing with other course participants while still maintaining a sense of trust	-	-	9 56.25%	7 43.75%	3.43	0.51
g) I felt that my point of view was acknowledged by other course participants	-	-	9 56.25%	7 43.75%	3.43	0.51

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree, SD=Standard Deviation

Teachers overwhelmingly viewed collaborative learning in their groups as effective (see responses on 4a in Table 12). However, opinions diverged on the time-consuming nature of collaboration, as the majority found it to be a significant investment, while others saw it as worthwhile (4b). Regarding the future continuity of collaboration, a clear majority of teachers expressed optimism. Finally, in terms of overall satisfaction with their collaborative learning experience in the course, the vast majority conveyed high levels of satisfaction.

Table 12. Evaluation of collaborative learning.

Evaluation of collaborative learning	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD
a) I felt that collaborative learning in my group was effective	-	-	5 31.25%	11 68.75%	3.68	0.47
b) I felt that collaborative learning in my group was time-consuming	5 31.25%	6 37.50%	1 6.25%	4 25%	2.25	1.18
c) I felt that the collaboration developed in the group will continue in the future	-	4 25%	9 56.25%	3 18.75%	2.93	0.68
d) Overall, I am satisfied with my collaborative learning experience in this course	-	-	4 25%	12 75%	3.75	0.44

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree, SD=Standard Deviation

Changes and continuities between both questionnaires

In Training 3, the majority of participants were experienced teachers, with 13 having more than 26 years of teaching experience. A significant portion specialised in art teaching, and 10 of them taught exclusively or mostly art. Throughout the course, the responses indicated a positive engagement with the arts, irrespective of teaching experience or subject specialisation. While the level of specialisation in art seemed to influence the participants' openness to digital tools, the majority adapted well to distance learning. Overall, the findings suggest that teachers, regardless of their experience or subject, found value in the course's content and methods.

Comparing the intermediate and final questionnaires, a consistent theme emerged regarding the positive impact of the course. Both assessments revealed a strong sense of collaboration, learning community, and engagement among participants. The initial responses from the mid-training evaluation were sustained and even strengthened in the final questionnaire. Teachers consistently appreciated the tutors' role in stimulating collaboration and fostering a sense of community. Additionally, the continuity in responses regarding the perceived collaboration, relations with peers, and evaluation of collaborative learning suggests a sustained positive experience throughout the course.

Throughout both the intermediate and final questionnaires, participants consistently expressed a high level of engagement and collaboration in the course. The use of digital methods, such as Zoom breakout rooms and interactive sessions, was praised for fostering active participation and providing opportunities for creative expression. The blend of theoretical frameworks with practical, experiential exercises contributed to a dynamic and engaging learning environment. Teachers highlighted the significance of interdisciplinary thinking, exposure to various art forms, and the practical application of concepts in Zoom meetings. The course effectively encouraged collaborative learning, emphasizing involvement, creativity, and reflection.

Participants, initially hesitant about distance learning, adapted positively to the online format, commending the course's clear structure and guidance for digital participation. The use of various digital tools, including VoiceThread, Jamboard, and Slido, was well-received, with teachers acknowledging the importance of technology-enhanced activities. The training's distance learning mode was particularly beneficial for teachers residing in areas with limited training opportunities. Overall, digital media and artistic online/blended activities were perceived as valuable tools for learning about socially engaged arts. Teachers found them effective in fostering collaboration, enhancing diversity understanding, and engaging with contemporary artworks addressing societal issues. The consensus was that digital mediums significantly enriched the learning experience, providing practical tools and insights applicable to their teaching practices.

3.3.3 Demographics of the interviewees

Five teachers, all female, all primary school teachers, participated in the interviews. They were experienced teachers aged 42-49 years old. Three of them were interviewed individually and two together. Four were class teachers teaching many different subjects, while one taught exclusively art. Three worked in schools in the periphery (villages), and two in schools in cities.

3.3.4 Analysis of the interviews

Notions of collaborative learning

How “collaborative learning” is defined by interviewees? Do they share similar understandings, or are there any differences? What do they mean by *collaborative*?

In analysing the perspectives of the five teachers regarding collaborative learning, it becomes evident that while there are shared understandings, each educator offered a slightly different view shaped by their experiences and observations. One teacher underscored the pivotal role of integrating cooperative learning activities into her teaching practices, albeit expressing frustration with institutional barriers, particularly those that children face in secondary school environments (after graduating from primary schools). This sentiment aligned with another teacher's emphasis on the essentiality of mutual respect and active listening in fostering collaborative learning environments. Furthermore, the satisfaction derived from team results emerges as a recurring theme, with one teacher highlighting the importance of accommodating diverse voices and talents, especially evident in arts-based activities.

In contrast, another teacher delineated collaborative learning as an interactive endeavour characterised by active participation from all team members, thereby emphasising collective achievement over hierarchical leadership structures. This sentiment resonated with the fourth teacher's pragmatic approach, focusing on the tangible benefits of collaborative learning, such as fostering productive teamwork and facilitating the exchange of diverse viewpoints.

Conversely, the fifth teacher adopted a more holistic perspective, viewing collaborative learning as transcending academic outcomes to nurture essential interpersonal skills and values. This viewpoint aligned with the notion that collaborative learning deviated from individual authority, fostering a culture of tolerance, mutual respect, and selflessness among participants. Collectively, these perspectives elucidated that collaborative learning is a multifaceted concept encompassing active participation, mutual respect, and teamwork, while also serving as a conduit for nurturing interpersonal skills and values within diverse learning environments.

Characteristics of un/successful collaborative learning experiences

The teachers generally perceived their collaborative learning experiences as successful, emphasising the establishment of common goals and the opportunity to engage with diverse perspectives. They appreciated the ability to work together despite geographical distances, facilitated by technology. Notably, they highlighted the benefits of working with individuals from various educational backgrounds and levels, fostering creativity and broadening horizons. However, some expressed reservations regarding the limited time to familiarize themselves with team members and suggested the formation of more stable teams for enhanced collaboration.

Despite the overall success, three teachers identified areas for improvement in the collaborative learning experience. Challenges such as time constraints, disparate schedules, and varying subject expertise emerged as practical concerns hindering optimal collaboration. Additionally, the reliance on technology, while beneficial in connecting individuals, posed

challenges related to effective communication and coordination, particularly when participants were in diverse settings, contributing to distractions and logistical issues.

The teachers highlighted several key characteristics contributing to a successful collaborative learning experience. These included the establishment of common goals and mutual respect among participants, fostering an environment conducive to sharing diverse perspectives and ideas. The use of technology emerged as a pivotal facilitator, enabling seamless communication and collaboration among individuals from different locations and educational backgrounds. Additionally, the emphasis on working with unfamiliar peers was perceived positively, as it encouraged individuals to step out of their comfort zones, fostered creativity, and promoted effective collaboration devoid of personal biases or preconceived notions.

In essence, while the teachers acknowledged the inherent challenges associated with collaborative learning, they predominantly viewed the experience as beneficial, emphasizing the importance of fostering mutual respect, leveraging technology effectively, and promoting diversity and inclusivity to enhance collaborative outcomes.

Expectations and ideas about future collaborations

The responses from the interviewed teachers indicated a mixed outlook on the continuity of collaboration initiated during the training course. One teacher acknowledged challenges in sustaining collaboration due to geographical distances among participants. However, she expressed the potential for joint activities with individuals from neighbouring schools who shared similar project involvement. Another teacher proposed transforming their existing Viber group into a more formal institution, suggesting activities like city walks and discussions to maintain a dynamic, evolving connection. A third teacher expressed willingness to continue collaborating, provided it aligns with her areas of expertise. The fourth teacher emphasised the positive impact of diverse activities on various learning styles but did not explicitly commit to continued collaboration. In contrast, the fifth teacher highlighted limited interaction during the course, making it uncertain whether connections would persist. While not ruling out the possibility, she suggested that a follow-up seminar might enhance intimacy and contact among participants.

Overall, these responses reflected a spectrum of perspectives influenced by factors such as proximity, shared interests, and the nature of interactions during the course.

When considering collaborations between different knowledge areas, the interviewed teachers offered diverse perspectives. One teacher highlighted the convergence of various arts in theatrical events, emphasizing the integration of music and literature to enrich the overall experience. Another teacher acknowledged the benefit of hearing different voices and ideas during the training but noted that time constraints limited in-depth discussions. Nevertheless, she expressed the desire to continue the synergy developed during the course, incorporating lessons into her plans for interdependence and cooperation. A third teacher described the interconnectedness of language, theatre, and art in her lessons, illustrating a dynamic relationship that started with one element and evolved into another based on students' requests. The fourth teacher found a unique blend of writing and sound in a theatre education activity, offering a distinctive and enriching experience. The fifth teacher appreciated the drama session, too, where groups were tasked with presenting a theatrical

intervention, fostering a sense of bonding and readiness for self-expression. Despite technical challenges in the music session, the teacher highlighted the positive impact on their willingness to share and engage.

These responses underscored the multidimensional nature of collaborative efforts, revealing intersections between various knowledge domains and the teachers' creative approaches to integrating them into their practices.

Modes of adapting collaborative activities to different learning styles

When asked about the presence of adapted cooperative learning activities for participants with different learning styles or abilities, the teachers provided nuanced perspectives. One teacher expressed confidence that such activities were incorporated, acknowledging the diversity in preferences and noting the opportunity to explore various tools provided during the training. Another teacher affirmed that technology offered opportunities but highlighted its limitations in fostering personal contact. Despite this, they acknowledged the effectiveness of the intentions behind the activities. A third teacher appreciated that the activities were aligned with the participants' capacity to engage, emphasizing the importance of manageable challenges. The fourth teacher emphasized the significance of diverse activities, such as creating 3D projects, making videos, and engaging in improvisation with sound objects, as catering to different learning styles. The activities were seen as activating various senses and contributing to a varied learning experience. The fifth teacher recognized the customization of activities, appreciating the balance between comfortable tasks and challenges. They drew parallels between these adaptations and the varied needs of students in a classroom setting, emphasizing the importance of accommodating diverse approaches to learning.

These responses collectively highlighted the thoughtful consideration given to participants' diverse learning styles and abilities through a range of engaging and customized activities.

3.3.5. Conclusions on professional learning communities

The training promoted and related to professional learning communities through various strategies. The participants, primarily in-service teachers with diverse levels of experience, were engaged through a combination of theoretical frameworks and practical, experiential exercises. The courses utilized digital platforms like Zoom, Voice Thread, Jamboard, and Slido, fostering collaboration, diversity, understanding, and engagement with contemporary artworks addressing societal issues. The arts were employed as a medium for learning and discussion, promoting interdisciplinary thinking. The training also addressed concerns related to distance learning, emphasizing clear structures and instructions for effective digital participation. The courses successfully integrated technology to facilitate learning, with teachers expressing positive dispositions toward digital tools. Overall, the training courses were designed to encourage active participation, reflection, and collaboration, contributing to the formation of a learning community among the participants.

The main features and expectations around PLCs in the context of the training include:

- I. Engagement through the Arts: Participants overwhelmingly expressed engagement with the arts, appreciating hands-on activities, active participation opportunities, and interactive sessions. The courses successfully blended theoretical frameworks with practical exercises, fostering emotional expression and creativity.
- II. Enhanced Perspectives on Socially Engaged Arts: The courses positively transformed participants' understanding of socially engaged arts projects through virtual interventions. Engaging in discussions enriched their knowledge and creativity, encouraging them to interpret and communicate about contemporary artworks in the context of sustainability and social justice.
- III. Positive Disposition Towards Digital Activities: Teachers displayed a positive disposition towards digital presentations and applications. They learned new software and applications, overcoming initial apprehensions about distance learning. Digital media and artistic online/blended activities were perceived as valuable tools for learning about socially engaged arts, facilitating collaboration, and understanding diverse issues.
- IV. Discovery of New Collaboration Methods: While responses varied, the majority of teachers expressed affirmative sentiments about discovering new collaboration methods. Online interactions provided opportunities to engage with diverse perspectives, fostering innovative thinking and problem-solving skills. Some teachers implemented newfound collaboration strategies in their classrooms.
- V. Integration into Teaching Practices: Teachers integrated the training content into their teaching practices, indicating that the training enriched their methods and provided practical ideas, tools, and techniques. The versatility of the training contributed to diverse approaches to teaching various subjects.
- VI. Sense of Community and Collaboration: The final questionnaire responses highlighted a strong sense of collaboration, learning community, and engagement among participants. The tutors' role in stimulating collaboration and reinforcing a sense of community was highly appreciated. Participants felt part of a learning community, exchanged ideas, and developed problem-solving skills through peer collaboration.
- VII. Satisfaction with Collaborative Learning Experience: Participants expressed satisfaction with their collaborative learning experience, highlighting the effectiveness of collaborative learning in their groups. The majority agreed that collaborative learning was not time-consuming and anticipated that the collaboration developed in the group would continue in the future.
- VIII. Expectations for Future Collaborations: Expectations for future collaborations varied, with some teachers expressing enthusiasm for continued collaboration, while others acknowledged challenges such as geographical distances. The role of different areas of knowledge in future collaborations was emphasized, indicating an interest in interdisciplinary collaboration.

The findings suggest that the training successfully fostered professional learning communities among in-service teachers, leveraging the arts and digital platforms. The positive engagement, transformation of perspectives, and integration of learning into teaching practices reflect the effectiveness of the courses. Ongoing challenges, such as the need for stable teams and addressing logistical issues, were identified but did not overshadow the

overall positive impact. The multidimensional nature of collaborative efforts, spanning diverse knowledge areas and learning styles, underscores the inclusive and adaptive approach adopted in the training courses. Teachers' willingness to continue collaboration despite challenges indicates the potential for sustained professional learning communities beyond the training sessions.

Generally, the training achieved its objectives in promoting collaborative learning, creative expression, and the integration of arts for sustainable and socially engaged education.

CHAPTER 4. *Aristotle University of Thessaloniki report*

Martha Ioannidou and Michalis Christodoulou

The School of Primary Education at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki developed and executed three training courses within the CARE/SS Programme framework: “Arts, Museums and New Technologies” (course 1) and “Art and Society: Critical Approaches” (course 2 & 3). All courses were primarily conducted through face-to-face sessions, with the online interactive platform providing hybrid functions, enabling individual or group participation in special lectures, exercises, and activities.

The intermediate and final questionnaires were conducted with 96 participants, out of whom 61 were female and 35 were male students. The sample size comprised 88 pre-service student teachers and eight in-service teachers.

4.1. Demographics of the participants in the intermediate and final questionnaires

Course 1, “Arts, Museums and New Technologies”, was a part of the existing postgraduate programme aimed primarily at in-service primary school teachers. Admission to the graduate programme required foreign language proficiency and a certified computer literacy level I. Eight participants attended the course and successfully completed all the requirements. A gender imbalance was observed in the group, with seven women and one man. The age range was broad, with six individuals, five women and one man, ranging from 22 to 28 years old, and two women in the 30-45 years old age bracket (figures 3 & 4). Among the participants, six were generalist teachers in primary public education, one in special education, and two worked in the private sector (figure 1). Seven individuals had 3-5 years of teaching experience, and one had almost 14 years of teaching experience (figure 2). None had specialisation in arts education. However, during their BA studies and professional careers, they employed arts and cultural assets in their teaching to some extent, visited museums with their students, and employed new technologies in teaching and learning. They also had experience participating in educational activities with social content in communities outside of formal education.

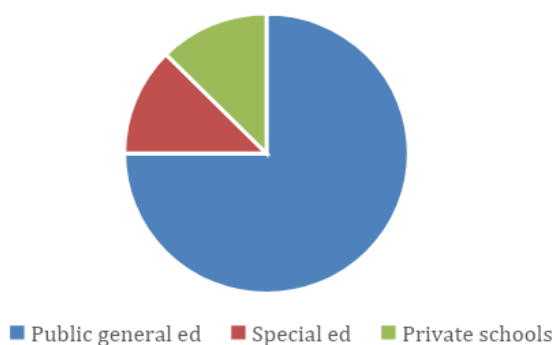


Figure 1. Participants' work place.

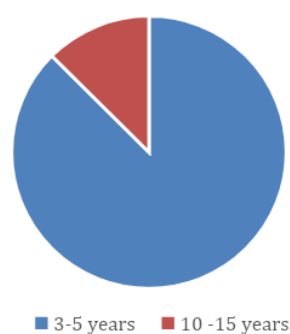


Figure 2. Teaching experience.

Course 2, “Art and Society: Critical Approaches”, was added to the undergraduate curriculum and automatically enrolled 252 pre-service primary school teachers in their final

year of study. Of the total number of students admitted, 79 completed the questionnaires. 63 participants were women and 16 men (figure 3). Most of them belonged to the 20-26 age bracket. Yet, three women were aged between 30 and 45 (figure 4). Except for two female students from the Department of Music Studies, the remaining 77 were pre-service teachers in primary education with no professional teaching experience beyond the major internships in which they are compulsorily involved during their studies. Also, these undergraduates will not graduate with a specialisation in arts education except for the two musicians. However, they successfully followed at least 4 to 7 arts courses (visual arts, music, and drama education) during their studies.

The majority (76%) know at least one foreign language (usually English) at the C1 level, while 24% declare knowledge at the B1 and B2 levels. All have attended introductory workshops on New Technologies and know how to use basic educational applications. Nevertheless, they should learn more about utilising technologies specialising in the arts and presenting artistic content through digital tools. For this reason, specific workshops were also held. The face-to-face meetings were based on physical presence. At the same time, a hybrid format was followed on special occasions in the course with online extra lectures on particular subjects of interest, exercises, and individual-group activities.

Although most of the participants are of Greek origin and quite a few Greek students from the Muslim minority of Thrace, there is a notable percentage of students from Cyprus, Albania, and a small percentage from Russia and Georgia.

Course 3 was organised under the same title as course 2 but was offered in English, exclusively for incoming international students of the Erasmus+ programme, with countries of origin France, Germany, Spain, Cyprus, Poland, Cyprus, and the Czech Republic. Nine pre-service student teachers participated, eight females and one male, aged between 19 and 26. They all had the essential ICT skills, spoke English well (B2 and C1 level) and had no prior specialisation in the arts or notable acquaintance with art education and courses about arts. They did not have professional teaching experience, but they completed all the internships at their home universities and local schools. Four had also participated in community activities related to sustainable living and inclusive education.

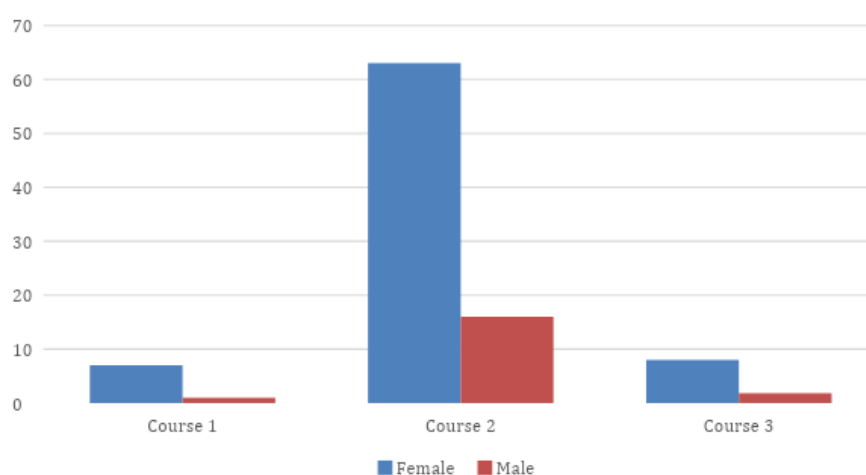


Figure 3. Gender of participants in the three courses.

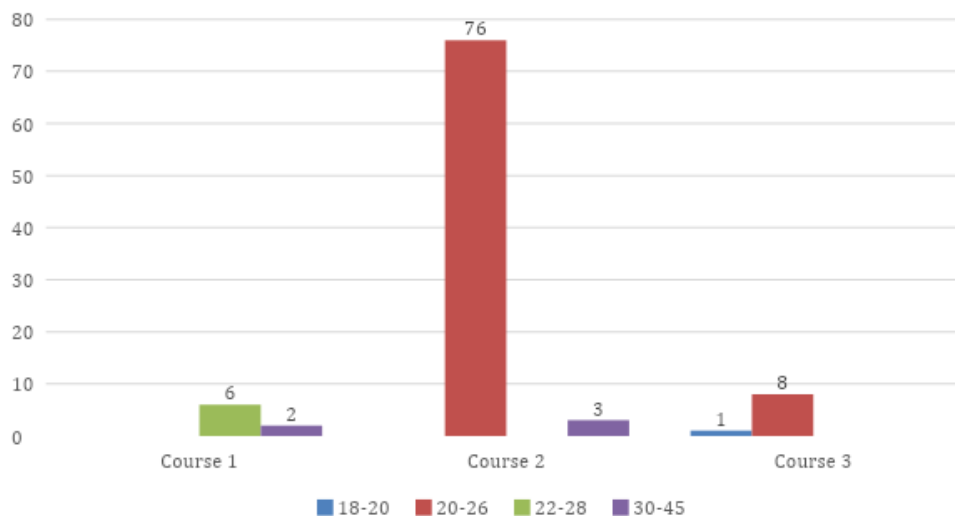


Figure 4. Age of participants in the three courses.

4.2 Description of the results of the intermediate and final questionnaires

Intermediate interviews and the final questionnaire were crucial in our training courses. They provided valuable insights into the participants' learning and development according to their points of view. Further, they enabled all of us involved (trainees/ trainers) to assess the impact of the particular subject concerning the socially engaged arts in education, monitor the newly established informal professional community's progress, and identify training needs. Overall, as trainers/instructors, we were assisted in making informed decisions and adjustments to optimise training outcomes as far as circumstances and the pressing timetable allowed.

Intermediate questionnaire

Pre-service student teachers in the two undergraduate programmes were asked to respond in groups to the five open-ended questions. Participants in Course 1 (postgraduate) participated informally in this process last year before the protocols for deliverable four were completed. However, they, too, have, in the middle of the Course, discussed similar issues that were subsequently included in the other commentaries. Below is a summary of the thoughts expressed during these fascinating trainer-trainee dialogues.

Despite the vast numbers of participants, which do not easily allow everyone to attend and engage, the courses successfully proposed a new teaching approach of "co-teaching", where divided into groups, the trainers constantly invited participants to creative dialogues, on-the-spot interactions on the issues being addressed at any given time, as well as artistic exercises sometimes online and sometimes in class.

For this reason, two special seminars on interactive social engagement with interdisciplinary content through various art forms (visual arts, performing arts, creative writing, and music) were also organised. Emphasis was placed on sustainability in its multiple aspects arranged in five Big Ideas within the framework of Socially Engaged Arts (Vella, 2024). These seminars were open and interactive for all participants in training courses 2 & 3. Still, in-service teachers from Course 1 were also invited to participate and share experiences and thoughts with pre-service student teachers. The primary objective of this proposal was to

extend the group and fortify the bonds of the recently formed PLC. With the inclusion of in-service teachers (Course 1), the younger and less experienced teachers (Courses 2 & 3) could draw upon their knowledge and expertise, which bolstered their confidence in experimenting with innovative educational approaches in the school environment. This collaboration encouraged outcomes, further reinforcing the group's commitment to exploring new and innovative teaching methods.

Participation consistently exceeded 100 people in all in-person sessions, and the seminars on the two Saturdays reached 60-65 people at a time. The results of the activities were captured in photos and videos, in comments on the platform's blog, but mainly through artistic interventions in the public space (Faculty and surrounding area). (Ioannidou, 2024)

This experiential approach and the artistic character of freeing their expression and formulating their views touched the young people and contributed to their activation. Below are some extracts from their responses:

I liked the course because it combines theory and practice well. We discussed various topics and had practical and creative activities during Saturday meetings. This helped us understand how to apply our knowledge in the classroom with children, which was nice. (GR1)

It was a different experience because usually, in German schools, theory is mainly discussed, and participation is limited to discussions only. However, in this course, we could put the theory into practice, which made it more engaging. (GR2)

I enjoyed the implementation part of the course because it made me feel like a teacher. From the beginning, the instructor emphasised that there is no one way to approach art and that there are many correct answers. As long as we can present our ideas in a context and be inclusive of others, we can have a prosperous journey in art education. (GR3)

The interactive way of teaching was constructive for me. I appreciated that we were given creative tasks in each lesson, making it easier to follow the class and retain the information. The course had a good mix of theory, activities, new technologies, and various arts, which made it dynamic and engaging. (GR4)

Participants responded very positively to the presentation of the character and contribution of Socially Engaged Arts through international artistic examples in coordination with the Big Ideas. Additionally, the organised interactive exercises on strategic cards stimulated their creative thinking and enabled them to achieve interdisciplinary combinations that dynamically respond to critical sustainability issues.

An asset for me in the course was seeing and discussing examples from various countries with artists instead of just discussing the theory of the big ideas. Also, the pedagogical suggestions combined with the given examples were constructive. (GR5)

I had an amazing experience in the creative class. The integral classes were the best part of the course, and the presentations were outstanding. They were crystal clear and included photos and videos to enhance the learning experience. It was so refreshing to understand the essential points without reading lengthy theories. (GR6)

Although participants were already familiar with using digital applications in their lessons, they were intrigued by practically engaging with digital activities and tools related to the arts. This activation allowed them to broaden their artistic presentation of views and proposals. Despite technical difficulties and time constraints, the majority showed interest, actively participated, and continued uploading their thoughts and works even after the exercises ended.

I needed more training with digital applications since I scarcely use some in my home university, and I find it challenging to prepare complex projects using multiple applications. (GR7)

I thought it was pretty hard, but it also gave us more freedom to be creative, which is very good. Nevertheless, I think, yeah, I was also just not used to it. Maybe professors (trainers) should also find a way to balance the workload and allow more time for evaluation between exercises. (GR8)

Course 1 used various collaboration means, such as relay games, digital applications, group exhibitions, and critical feedback. Collaboration was effortless, and the participants enjoyed it. As GR9 pointed out: "It was an amazing opportunity to apply our theoretical knowledge and witness first-hand how the arts can effectively communicate a social message. We held discussions on cooperation, both before and after the activities. Collaborating with students was a topic that we actively talked about. During the projects, we had the chance to work alongside other participants and engage in fruitful dialogues. These conversations allowed us to explore various aspects and viewpoints, and it was a fantastic learning experience".

In Course 3, a relatively small group of international students collaborated and created joint projects by sharing their experiences from their countries. This collaboration extended to the more extensive Course 2 group and the local university Erasmus+ students' group. Building a community and collaboration was easy and successful. According to GR10, "(...) joining classes with Greek students was a unique and valuable experience. It made me feel more included in the community."

During Course 2, collaboration was challenging because of the large number of participants, which required a lot of flexibility and patience. The group was divided into 29 subgroups, each consisting of 8 to 10 people. Despite the difficulties and concerns, the students recognised the significance of collaboration and the value of having an internal "critical friend." They also learned that having numerous creative proposals and people can lead to many possibilities in the arts. "Having too many people in a group can sometimes result in disagreements, but it also allows a broader range of views to be exchanged and more collaboration. A smaller group size would lead to a more harmonious collaboration," stated one student (GR11).

Participants welcomed the student-centred and interdisciplinary approach to teaching. They found it exciting and adopted interdisciplinary activities reinforcing social engagement through the arts. Most of the groups used new technologies in creation and teaching, and they showed interest in introducing joint teaching methods, shaping a meaningful curriculum, and promoting active, experiential learning.

Final Questionnaire

Table 1. Role of the teachers.

Role of the teachers	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD / SEM
a) The tutor/teacher stimulated collaboration	1 1%	1 1%	39 42%	54 56%	3.54	0.58/ 0.06
b) The tutor/teacher helped to keep course participants engaged and participating in productive dialogue	-	2 2.1%	44 45.8%	50 52.1%	3.5	0.54/ 0.05
c) The tutor/teacher actions reinforced the development of a sense of community among course participants	-	6 6.3%	40 41.7%	50 52.1%	3.6	0.61/ 0.06

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree,
SD=Standard Deviation, SEM=Standard Error of the Mean

Table 2. Perceived collaboration.

Perceived collaboration	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD / SEM
a) I felt part of a learning community in my group	2 2.1%	10 10.4%	41 42.7%	43 44.8%	3.3	0.74/ 0.07
b) Getting to know other course participants gave me a sense of belonging in the course	1 1%	12 12.5%	39 40.6%	44 45.8%	3.3	0.73/ 0.07

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree
SD=Standard Deviation, SEM=Standard Error of the Mean

Students primarily recognise the contribution of their tutors in promoting collaboration, keeping them involved in productive discussions, and reinforcing their sense of community. Similarly, most students felt they were part of a learning community and experienced a sense of belonging through the course. However, a small percentage of students (approximately 13%) disagreed with these statements.

Table 3. Relation with peers.

Relation with peers	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD / SEM
a) I actively exchanged my ideas with group members	1 1%	3 3%	44 45.8%	48 50%	3.4	0.61/ 0.06
b) I was able to develop new skills and knowledge from other members in my group	1 1%	6 6.3%	55 57.3%	34 35.4%	3.2	0.61/ 0.06
c) I was able to develop problem-solving skills through peer collaboration	-	9 9.4%	50 52.1%	37 38.5%	3.2	0.63/ 0.06
d) I felt comfortable participating in the course discussions	1 1%	8 8.3%	59 61.5%	28 29.2%	3.1	0.62/ 0.06

e) I felt comfortable interacting with other course participants	-	6 6.3%	49 51%	41 42.7%	3.3	0.60/ 0.06
f) I felt comfortable disagreeing with other course participants while still maintaining a sense of trust	2 2.1%	18 18.8%	49 51%	27 28.1%	3	0.74/ 0.07
g) I felt that my point of view was acknowledged by other course participants	-	13 13.5%	40 41.7%	43 44.8%	3.3	0.70/ 0.07

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree

SD=Standard Deviation, SEM=Standard Error of the Mean

According to their answers, participants generally acknowledge the positive outcomes of peer relationships, such as developing skills, exchanging ideas, and experiencing positive emotions. However, the study also revealed that approximately 15% of students disagreed with statements concerning the potential of group work to foster trust and credibility of others' viewpoints. This fact suggests that some students may be wary of the collaborative nature of group work and may require additional support to engage fully and benefit from such activities.

Table 4. Evaluation of collaborative learning.

Evaluation of collaborative learning	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD / SEM
a) I felt that collaborative learning in my group was effective	1 1.1%	8 8.4%	42 44.2%	44 46.3%	3.3	0.68/ 0.07
b) I felt that collaborative learning in my group was time-consuming	14 14.7%	31 32.6%	27 28.4%	23 24.2%	2.6	1.01/ 0.10
c) I felt that the collaboration developed in the group will continue in the future	1 1%	34 35.4%	55 57.3%	6 6.3%	3.2	0.61/ 0.06
d) Overall, I am satisfied with my collaborative learning experience in this course	-	6 6.3%	40 41.7%	50 52.1%	3.6	0.61/ 0.06

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree

SD=Standard Deviation, SEM=Standard Error of the Mean

Finally, regarding the evaluation of collaborative learning, almost half of students feel that collaborative learning in their group was a time-consuming activity. However, except for a small percentage (9%), most of them acknowledge the effectiveness of collaborative learning. Further, it is essential and challenging to consider for future training and teaching procedures the fact that collaborations at the end enhanced the learning experience and left a satisfying feeling to participants.

Changes and continuities between both questionnaires

Although there was no meaningful space for participants to reflect due to the compressed time in which all the processes were conducted, one could observe similarities in the difficulties in allowing pre-service student teachers to express themselves creatively without patterns and constraints. In contrast, in-service teachers were allowed to change teaching

tactics by adopting in practice and not only theoretically the student-centred approach and experiential teaching. Erasmus students also showed great ease in collaborating and giving feedback to each other and the other groups.

No changes were observed in the perception of cooperative learning, experiential approach, and using learning resources and techniques in the teaching proposal and their future teaching when comparing mid-term and final statements. However, there was a differentiation and partly evolution in their attitudes/views regarding collaboration and the more liberal-creative teaching approach. Despite the difficulties, the students felt they finally became a team and belonged to a community.

From the beginning, the participants were positive towards using digital tools during the course. However, they stressed the need for better training and more time for familiarisation and creative expression in practice. This view remained until the end of the course. In the final questionnaire, students agreed that teaching arts through technologies/digital media is useful. This usefulness concerns the learning process, children's emotional development, communal work and interdisciplinarity.

Participants agreed that they would integrate socially engaged arts in their critical approach to art education as the benefits of such an approach in the classroom became clear in praxis. As for the context, they concluded that socially engaged arts are a source of inspiration for educators and pupils alike, a framework for collaborative learning, and a way to improve students' critical ability on sustainability issues.

The collected data from both the intermediate and final questionnaires showed that participants had a generally positive attitude towards the courses Aristotle University of Thessaloniki offered. In courses 1 and 3, participants found the collaborative processes helpful and enjoyable. They expressed their satisfaction with the value of the group. They even expressed a desire to open up the community to all students of the Faculty or school communities with which there was collaboration. Despite facing difficulties during the final presentations and evaluations, most participants agreed that the conditions helped them practice respect and retreat, test their strengths, and develop a positive attitude towards their relationship with other group members.

Course 2 had a significantly large and unwieldy group; in such circumstances, participants preferred small partnerships to get to know each other and work together more effectively.

A smaller percentage did not believe in the possibilities of future cooperation with team members. At the same time, most, especially in-service and pre-service Erasmus teacher students, said that they felt part of a learning community and that this gave them the feeling that they could leave a significant social footprint. Furthermore, they noted a positive attitude towards their relationship with other group members regarding sharing ideas, developing new skills, problem-solving, discussion and interaction.

All Aristotle University of Thessaloniki courses are delivered face-to-face; digital functions are complementary and not *mandatory*. The approach of these courses, which combined face-to-face training with asynchronous online activities and a few synchronous additional teaching/lectures, was well received regarding student feedback. They reaped that digital tools expand creativity and accessibility in the arts, strengthening the message of socially engaged arts. They also recognised the difficulties and the need to practice and optimise the ways of using them in artistic expression. After their experiences with blended learning, especially in the large audience of Course 2, they found that equal opportunities were offered

to all participants and that the traditional teaching and assessment methods were partially renewed.

The feedback from the in-service teachers who participated in Course 1 and had more experience with new technologies was notably more positive and enthusiastic. They emphasised the positive impact that the training had on enhancing their understanding of Socially Engaged Arts and making experiential learning more meaningful.

Overall, the courses were met with positive feedback from participants who expressed a vital sense of community and the ability to make a significant social impact. The courses fostered a sense of empowerment, prompting participants to leave a positive and lasting imprint on society.

4.3 Demographics of the interviewees

Twenty-two participants were interviewed to gain insight into their experiences and perspectives. The sample consisted of seventeen female and five male trainees randomly chosen from all courses. Fourteen pre-service student teachers and eight in-service teachers were included. Pre-service teachers had no working experience apart from their internships. In comparison, the seven in-service teachers had experience from 3-5 years in public primary schools (six generalists and one in special education). Only one in-service teacher had an experience that exceeded 12 years.

In addition, other students' opinions, whether written or presented during the seminars on the same issues, were also considered. These opinions provided valuable insights into the particular topics.

4.4 Analysis of the interviews

Notions of collaborative learning

From the outset, it would be appropriate to point out that the concept of collaboration, especially in pre-service student-teacher teams, is not clearly defined. According to the respondents' perspectives, they initially considered collaboration to be exclusively about tasks and of a more practical nature, hence the concerns about large groups and the resulting coordination difficulties that emerged in their responses. However, as they subsequently stated, it was understood that collaboration was the denominator of the whole project: from the design and implementation of the seminars that constantly invited them to collaborative teaching and joint activities to the final creation of the teaching plan and the realisation of their joint artistic project within the framework of Socially Engaged Arts.

The team members cooperated effectively despite occasional disagreements due to their diverse cognitive and experiential backgrounds. We worked together respectfully to find a common direction. The lack of strict individual responsibilities was both an advantage and a challenge, as it allowed us to combine our inspiration and creativity to achieve a positive outcome. (GR12)

From the comments, especially from the in-service teachers, it is evident that their interaction was positively valued and that they were given the opportunity to demonstrate the concepts of respect and solidarity in practice,

The instructor's reinforcement of the group and our demonstration of mutual respect for each group member's views and cultural background led to the formation of an inclusive culture. A sense of belonging was quickly established due to the shared purpose of accepting diversity and creating a school that welcomes all children. (GR8)

Most of them, especially the Erasmus+ students, stressed the opportunity given to them to get to know each other, get in touch, and cooperate with the other groups from Course 2.

This course was the first time I was part of an art project with people I did not know. We come from various communities and cultures, but we are united in our goal to deliver a message to the broader community. Seeing how we have come together to launch a joint campaign in public spaces to promote our ideas and proposals for the world is thrilling. (GR5)

Characteristics of un/successful collaborative learning experiences

The respondents who participated in the training courses found defining the concept of success challenging as it involves several subjective criteria. However, based on their responses and descriptions, completing the teaching model and creating a collaborative project and its presentation are vital indicators of success. Additionally, the participants found common ground despite disagreements, indicating a high level of respect and understanding of each other's opinions.

One of the most significant advantages of the courses was that trainers allowed the participants to differentiate their roles and record what each one created. This aspect of the training freed them from the typical collegial disputes that often arise during evaluations.

The collaborative workshops conducted during the program stimulated confidence in the team concept. The workshops offered diverse stimuli from the Big Ideas for actions that the participants communicated to the broader university community. The participants received positive feedback from the community, further reinforcing their confidence in the training courses.

Of the 36 groups that participated in the three training courses, only three failed to formulate a functional *modus operandi* from the beginning, resulting in a creative output. While some participants asked to be evaluated individually, the trainers accepted this with restrictions. The condition was that they must produce at least one action in collaboration with a classroom, which helped them understand the importance of working together towards a common goal.

The participant feedback highlighted a few areas that would require attention in the event of unsuccessful collaborative learning experiences. Firstly, reducing the number of team members from 8-10 to 3-5 would be beneficial. This change would allow for more efficient communication and enable team members to understand each other's strengths and weaknesses better.

In addition, it was recommended that the guidelines for the joint artistic output and the training scenario be more specific. Many pre-service student teachers expressed they needed

clarification about effectively using their newfound creative freedom and blending the different moods and opinions. Providing more explicit guidelines would help mitigate this issue and ensure that team members were on the same page.

Successful collaborative learning experiences should include collaborative teaching, an experiential approach, transforming theory and discussions into joint actions, and focusing on the value of respect and inclusion. These key features were evident in the practice throughout the plenary sessions, and they played a significant role in ensuring that the collaborative learning experience was successful. By incorporating these elements, teams can work together more effectively and achieve their goals more efficiently and productively.

Expectations and ideas about future collaborations

The trainers and trainees had the idea of partnering with local institutions and schools where the trainees completed their internship or in-service work. Although three groups attempted brief collaborations, time pressures and the challenge of consolidating and assimilating all the new knowledge and experiences made it difficult to form more extensive and regular partnerships.

Participants proposed several interdisciplinary connections, an action familiar to them as a didactic tactic. For example, they suggested that the teacher should focus on texts addressing social issues during literature courses. As an outcome, students can create online social journals to share stories from the local community and proceed in storytelling using the Big Ideas framework.

Partnerships that worked as a rallying point emerged during the theatre seminar. The research team invited pre-service student teachers to participate in performances and artistic presentations of their opinions on several social issues to be discussed at the dissemination event of the CARE/SS project. In the spring semester, those who wish to do so can implement their didactic scenarios and artistic action proposals within and outside the formal learning context in collaboration with school classes.

Due to the limited time for the training courses, there was not enough opportunity for further collaboration with schools and other cultural/educational institutions. However, the organisers compiled a list of requests from these institutions who expressed their willingness to collaborate in the future. The intention is to facilitate socially engaged artistic activities and intergenerational educational programs in the upcoming academic year with the assistance of the trainees.

In their submitted didactic scenarios, most teams tried to establish connections between Big Ideas and other knowledge domains in an interdisciplinary manner, focusing on sustainable development. They also discussed the need for collaboration with the broader community to realise complex projects in the public space. Furthermore, they proposed artistic activities that encouraged intergenerational participatory learning. For instance, they reimagined playgrounds to be more inclusive for all children, created artistic installations promoting recycling to foster practical changes in the neighbourhood's habits, and suggested community integration through theatre and handmade multicultural masks.

Modes of adapting collaborative activities to different learning styles

Participants suggested, both during the interviews as well as in their proposed didactic scenarios, various artistic collaborative activities adjusted to various learning styles and abilities.

For example, they proposed for the young pupils in 2nd grade to engage in an interdisciplinary collaborative activity, creating and performing short plays inspired by intercultural narratives. One student teacher (GR3) explains, "Through this, they can improve their language proficiency and deepen cultural understanding through creative writing and painting. This initiative cultivates global citizenship, cultural literacy, and social-emotional learning while promoting essential skills like collaboration, critical thinking, and communication. It instils in students the acceptance of diversity, shaping well-rounded individuals prepared for an interconnected global society."

As a suggestion for another activity, the 6th-grade students can collaborate with members of the theatre ensemble En Dynamei (<http://www.endynamei.com/>) to challenge the stereotypical assumptions in classic children's fairy tales. This collaboration aims to create a new version of fairy tales that promotes inclusivity and diversity. In doing so, the students can act out the fairy tales in their new version.

The student teacher (GR12) who proposed this collaboration believes that it is essential to reject the dominant norms that only allow disabled people to appear when they talk about their disability. By working with theatre group members, the students can create a performance that showcases the talents and abilities of all individuals, regardless of their differences.

Most students acknowledged collaboration as a crucial and enjoyable element of the course, one of its significant assets. Via dialogue and collaborative activities in almost every lesson, together with group work, students became highly engaged and felt strongly inclusive as active learning community members. In particular, many students pointed out that the tutors stimulated collaboration via productive discussion experiences. Thus, they had opportunities to express their opinions freely, respect others' opinions, and acknowledge different points of view. As a student teacher (GR3) highlighted, "Even having a dialogue is considered for me now, a socially engaged art, having a fruitful dialogue, exchanging opinions and ideas is a main part of the arts". Also, the smooth collaboration and dynamic and enjoyable dialogue between tutors motivated students themselves to participate in a more "co-formative learning process." Most students emphasised the remarkable impact of workshops where all had the opportunity to participate and work together for the first time while sharing powerful feelings, knowledge, and experiences. One of the Erasmus students (GR2) stated, "We come from diverse cultures but stand united to support a cause that benefits the larger community. We aim to convey a message to them that is vital. During the course, especially the lively workshops, we learned that our collaborative efforts are the most compelling proof of respect, acceptance, and inclusiveness." In general, most students consider group work a successful collaborative experience. Some believe fewer group members could help avoid conflicts and collaborate more harmoniously. However, most students believe that they built good collaboration with the members of their group. "We managed to overcome conflicts, so even at this point, the positive thing was that we were able to exchange opinions and get in touch with a wider range of people, and therefore also

perceptions.” (GR1). For the future, many students admit that practical, socially engaged art lessons need strong collaboration networks with a shared vision and targeting within schools and between schools and community/ies.

Overall, the feedback emphasised the importance of interactive and cooperative learning activities that can be adjusted to match the age and cognitive abilities of the participants. Moreover, digital tools were also deemed helpful for both teaching and self-study. Nevertheless, it is essential to assess their implementation carefully, considering the participants' diverse learning styles and abilities and the fair availability of resources.

4.5 Conclusions on professional learning communities

The training courses were meticulously designed to foster professional learning communities by implementing diverse processes. Instructors proposed a novel approach to collaborative teaching and learning, wherein trainees were actively encouraged to participate in critical discussions, experiential activities, and online exercises. Incorporating digital platforms facilitated the acquisition of specific subject matter experience in Socially Engaged Arts while allowing for a personalised pace and individualised learning to cater to the trainees' unique abilities. The courses focused on artistic collaborations and seminars, as well as the sharing of knowledge and experience, thereby emphasising the arts as a powerful tool and an engaging path for participants to meet and collaborate, promoting mutual respect at all levels.

The training courses also addressed concerns about the need for effective methods of becoming artistically creative through digital application and/or participation. The courses aimed to foster a learning community among the participants by encouraging active participation, reflection, and collaboration.

The newly built professional learning communities through these arts education training courses played a vital role in promoting collaborative, reflective, and transformative practices among trainees, ultimately enhancing the quality of arts education and student learning outcomes, in particular socially engaged arts and inclusiveness in the arts by employing digital tools and e-learning strategies.

Certain features and expectations characterise these communities, primarily enhancing participants' understanding of socially engaged arts, engaging them with practical exercises and encouraging emotional expression and creativity. Aiming to broad inclusiveness of all participants' abilities, the training courses' content focused on teaching practices, providing practical examples, digital tools, and pedagogical strategies, contributing to diverse teaching approaches.

These professional learning communities emphasised collaborative and reflective art practices among pre- and in-service teachers to enhance teaching quality and participant outcomes. Attempting through seminars, extra activities, and digital tools collaboration to extend beyond traditional classroom settings, we managed to provide opportunities to engage all of us (trainers and trainees) in applying knowledge in practice, in co-working in interdisciplinary teams and an international context (Erasmus + students), in designing and performing social practice artistic projects, within the context of our educational role.

Although there has not been enough time for deep reflection since the training courses have just been completed, a first assessment of professional outcomes highlights increased engagement with the arts, with an emphasis on their critical societal role, changes in

pedagogical attitudes towards knowledge gaining and communal experience sharing, and demonstration of social and ethical commitment and sensitivity to diversity and sustainability issues. Furthermore, in-service teachers' PLC successfully offered the potential to foster transformative learning, leading to observable shifts in (art) teaching practices. Trainees within these communities developed a constructively critical attitude towards art education, reflecting on their former limited teaching practices. At the same time, they were reinforced (Knowledge gaining and strategic learning) to become socially engaged by considering crucial everyday issues to achieve their (future) students' holistic education. The dynamic and interactive nature of the PLCs between the university and the community promoted informal interactions and exchanges, influencing participants' learning and their future or existing professional status.

Despite challenges, dysfunctions and practical difficulties, participants valued collaborative interactive learning. They expressed their satisfaction in various ways, stating that they intend to continue such practices and collaborations.

The efficacy of the training courses was demonstrated by their ability to foster professional learning communities amongst participants, combining the arts with their social role and character and digital applications. The courses effectively promoted active engagement, shifted perspectives, and facilitated the application of knowledge to teaching practices. Although some challenges were identified (such as shortage of time, team building and organisation in dealing with large numbers), they did not significantly detract from the courses' overall positive impact. Their success can be attributed to their experiential, collaborative approach, encompassing a broad range of knowledge areas and learning styles, promoting inclusiveness and respect in the best way. Participants expressed interest in future collaborations or new training courses concerning the benefits of intergenerational and interdisciplinary learning through socially engaged arts (e.g. sustainability pillars).

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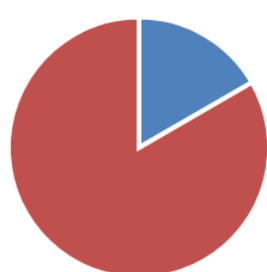
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CHAPTER 5. *University of Malta report*

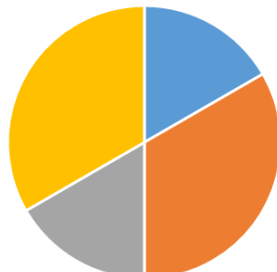
Raphael Vella, Maria Cutajar, Milosh Raykov and Charmaine Zammit

5.1 Demographics of the participants of the intermediate and final questionnaires

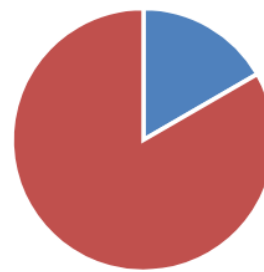
The two courses developed by the University of Malta were attended by relatively small groups of teachers, particularly the first one. The University of Malta team introduced a first hybrid course titled “Contemporary Social Issues and Socially Engaged Arts in Education”, initially targeting Social Studies and Personal, Social, and Career Development educators. Following a sparse number of applications through an open invitation, the university expanded its audience to incorporate arts educators from both primary and secondary levels. This slight adjustment led to a somewhat improved turnout, culminating in the acceptance of seven candidates, six of whom successfully completed the programme. There was a notable gender disparity with five women and one man in this group (figure 1), spanning a broad age range (one in the 26-35 bracket, two in the 36-45 range, one between 46-55, and two over 55; see figure 2). Among the participants, one (MT1) was a versatile primary school educator with a background in Youth and Community Studies, Access to Education in Inclusive Communities, and an 11-year teaching track record. The other five, predominantly with expertise in secondary art education, brought to the table a wealth of experience, with their teaching tenures ranging from 14 to nearly 30 years (figure 3).



■ Male ■ Female



■ 26-35 ■ 36-45 ■ 46-55 ■ >55



■ Primary ■ Secondary

Figure 1. Gender distribution.

Figure 2. Ages of participants.

Figure 3. Educational level.

A second course titled “Critical Arts Education for Sustainable Societies” was hosted by the Malta Visual and Performing Arts (MVPA) secondary school located in Hamrun and saw the participation of twelve in-service educators, balanced gender-wise with six males and six females (figure 4). These educators represented an equal distribution across four artistic disciplines, namely Dance, Visual Art, Drama, and Music, with three instructors specializing in each field (figure 5). The educational qualifications among the participants varied, including eight holding Master’s degrees, three with Bachelor’s degrees, and one with a doctoral degree. Age diversity among the teachers ranged widely, with two under 25 years old, three between 26 and 35, four from 36 to 45, two between 46 and 55, and one over 55 years of age (figure 6). Their teaching experience spanned a broad spectrum, from as little as two years to as much as 25 years in the educational field.



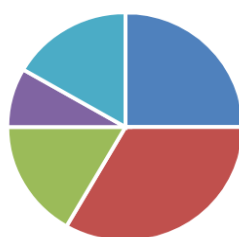
■ Male ■ Female

Figure 4. Gender distribution.



■ Art ■ Drama ■ Dance ■ Music

Figure 5. Arts subjects taught by participants.



■ 26-35 ■ 36-45 ■ 46-55 ■ >55 ■ <25

Figure 6. Ages of participants.

5.2 Description of the results of the intermediate and final questionnaires

The intermediate questionnaire helped the University of Malta team to get some feedback from participants midway through the courses. The questionnaire offered some insights into the ongoing processes and helped the research team monitor progress and make minor real-time adjustments. Data collected during the intermediate questionnaire was also valuable because it could be compared to the final questionnaire.

Thirteen of the total number of participants participated in the intermediate questionnaire. The intermediate questionnaire conducted in Malta worked better in Course 1 than in Course 2, because the latter course was extended over three days, so the response that participants could give halfway through in this case was limited. Nevertheless, responses to the first question (“Do you feel engaged in experiencing arts through the methods of this course? Why?”) were very positive, with not a single respondent giving a negative reply. While some responses (around 20%) simply replied “yes”, others referred specifically to the interactive, hands-on and/or collaborative dimensions of the course. One of the participants liked the fact that they were “using different applications like Canva” while some agreed that the pedagogies used in the courses helped them to develop new teaching strategies.

The second question in the intermediate questionnaire was “How has your interpretation of socially engaged arts projects been affected by the virtual interventions throughout the sessions?”. Feedback given by participants focused either on social issues or integrated approaches to teaching the arts. One of the respondents, an in-service teacher who attended Course 1, wrote:

From a personal point of view, the virtual interventions of these sessions have generated an urgent need for more collaborative school arts projects. Such creative projects will serve to educate children from an early age and raise awareness of the importance of basic human rights.

Installations composed of excessive waste material, large-scale street art on Diversity and Integration on school walls and the assembling of regular school exhibitions highlighting environmental issues and degradation are three such examples. These socially engaged arts projects could further heighten the impact of some of today's social challenges that have become a global phenomenon.

Another in-service teacher said that the course contributed to expanding "ideas, reaching a bigger audience and using an open space". Yet another teacher said:

I discovered that there are different ways and methods how to engage in art projects. Virtually we can collaborate in creating a variety of social art projects that can also be linked to other subjects. For example: this can also be used in a school or a collage-based project amongst different subject teachers.

The third question was: "Do you think that the employed digital activities have been useful to present and work with socially engaged arts? Why?". Responses were largely positive; however, one teacher wrote: "Not much because the message of social engagement would have still come across in different ways". Others found the digital activities useful, innovative and exposed them "to new techniques" that were up-to-date. One in-service teacher wrote:

The employed digital activities have contributed to presenting and working with socially engaged arts because they promote the importance of teamwork and collaboration in schools and communities by means of pedagogic processes. Such processes require the nature of joint artworks, posters and collages that are visually stimulating, videos and demos that bring communities together, photography and installations that educate and raise awareness of problem-solving issues.

The fourth question focused on the collaborative aspect of the courses: "Are these initial sessions leading you to find out new ways of collaborating?". Once again, responses were entirely positive, with one-third of the participants replying simply "Yes". One teacher wrote: "New possibilities are being explored, hopefully there will be more opportunities to collaborate on an artistic level." Others referred to collaborative or interdisciplinary dimensions. One teacher replied: "Yes, I feel that I have learnt a great deal from these initial sessions despite the challenges. They have instilled the importance of collaborating with other teachers and mentors in schools and other communities, (particularly those who teach Environmental Studies, and Science)".

The final question in the intermediate questionnaire was: "How are you connecting the course with your teaching?". Feedback to this question revolved mainly around developing new ideas and themes for use in class. However, one of the participants felt that the impact of the course transcended the classroom: the course showed how art education "can be exploited as a dynamic and incisive tool to reach out to school children and society in general". One of the respondents wrote that the course helped teachers to "investigate different issues like, for example, migration, citizenship, climate change and ethnicity" and inspired them "to produce various lesson plans and group work". Another referred to issues of "gentrification, demographic growth, urbanisation and sustainability".

At the end of the courses, the two groups of teachers were given the final questionnaire. Fourteen participants in the 2 courses participated in this final questionnaire. Here is the table 1 related to the responses of the first group. Five participants participated in this questionnaire.

Table 1. Final Questionnaire, Course 1 (N=5).

Role of the teachers	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD
a) The tutor/teacher stimulated collaboration.	-	-	-	5 100%	4.00	0.000
b) The tutor/teacher helped to keep course participants engaged and participating in productive dialogue.	-	-	-	5 100%	4.00	0.000
c) The tutor/teacher actions reinforced the development of a sense of community among course participants.	-	-	-	5 100%	4.00	0.000
Perceived collaboration						
a) I felt part of a learning community in my group.	-	-	1 20%	4 80%	3.80	0.447
b) Getting to know other course participants gave me a sense of belonging in the course.	-	-	2 40%	3 60%	3.60	0.548
Relation with peers						
a) I actively exchanged my ideas with group members.	-	-	-	5 100%	4.00	0.000
b) I was able to develop new skills and knowledge from other members in my group.	-	-	-	5 100%	4.00	0.000
c) I was able to develop problem solving skills through peer collaboration.	-	-	2 40%	3 60%	3.60	0.548
d) I felt comfortable participating in the course discussions.	-	-	1 20%	4 80%	3.80	0.447
e) I felt comfortable interacting with other course participants.	-	-	1 20%	4 80%	3.80	0.447
f) I felt comfortable disagreeing with other course participants while still maintaining a sense of trust.	-	-	2 40%	3 60%	3.60	0.548
g) I felt that my point of view was acknowledged by other course participants.	-	-	1 20%	4 80%	3.80	0.447
Evaluation of collaborative learning						
a) I felt that collaborative learning in my group was effective.	-	-	2 40%	3 60%	3.60	0.548
b) I felt that collaborative learning in my group was time-consuming.	4 40%	-	-	1 20%	1.60	1.342
c) I felt that the collaboration developed in the group will continue in the future.	-	1 20%	3 60%	1 20%	3.00	0.707
d) Overall, I am satisfied with my collaborative learning experience in this course.	-	-	2 40%	3 60%	3.60	0.548

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree

SD=Standard Deviation, SEM=Standard Error of the Mean

In the second (MVPA) group, there were nine respondents in the final questionnaire, as follows (table 2):

Table 2. Final questionnaire, Course 2 (N=9).

Role of the teachers	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD
a) The tutor/teacher stimulated collaboration.	-	-	3 33,3%	6 66,7%	3.67	0.500
b) The tutor/teacher helped to keep course participants engaged and participating in productive dialogue.	-	-	4 44,4%	5 55,6%	3.56	0.527
c) The tutor/teacher actions reinforced the development of a sense of community among course participants.	-	-	5 55,5%	4 44,5%	3.44	0.527
Perceived collaboration						
a) I felt part of a learning community in my group.	-	-	3 33,3%	6 66,7%	3.67	0.500
b) Getting to know other course participants gave me a sense of belonging in the course.	-	-	2 22,2%	7 77,8%	3.78	0.441
Relation with peers						
c) I actively exchanged my ideas with group members.	-	-	2 2,22%	7 77,8%	3.78	0.441
d) I was able to develop new skills and knowledge from other members in my group.	-	-	3 33,3%	6 66,7%	3.67	0.500
e) I was able to develop problem solving skills through peer collaboration.	-	-	3 33,3%	6 66,7%	3.67	0.500
f) I felt comfortable participating in the course discussions.	-	-	2 2,22%	7 77,8%	3.78	0.441
g) I felt comfortable interacting with other course participants.	-	-	3 33,3%	6 66,7%	3.67	0.500
h) I felt comfortable disagreeing with other course participants while still maintaining a sense of trust.	-	-	4 44,4%	5 55,6%	3.56	0.527
i) I felt that my point of view was acknowledged by other course participants.	-	-	3 33,3%	6 66,7%	3.67	0.500
Evaluation of collaborative learning						
a) I felt that collaborative learning in my group was effective.	-	-	3 33,3%	6 66,7%	3.67	0.500
b) I felt that collaborative learning in my group was time-consuming.	-	3 33,3%	6 66,7%	-	2.67	0.500
c) I felt that the collaboration developed in the group will continue in the future.	-	-	6 66,6%	3 33,3%	3.33	0.500
d) Overall, I am satisfied with my collaborative learning experience in this course.	-	-	3 33,3%	6 66,7%	3.67	0.500

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree

SD=Standard Deviation, SEM=Standard Error of the Mean

More or less, the same total number of teachers participated in the intermediate and final questionnaires (13 in the intermediate and 14 in the final questionnaire). A comparison of the intermediate and final questionnaires shows that there was a slight change in the teachers' attitudes towards collaboration. While responses to various questions showed that the participants were still generally positive about the courses' outcomes, a number of participants particularly in the second course felt that collaborative learning in their group was time-consuming (6 out of 9 "agreed" in the second group). In comparison, only one out of 5 participants in the first group "totally agreed" that the collaborative activities were time-consuming (the remaining 4 "totally disagreed"). This could be related to the fact that the

second group followed a shorter but more intensive course, while more than half of the first course was conducted online. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the term “time-consuming” does not necessarily reflect a negative assessment, because some teachers actually said at other times in this project that they would have appreciated having more time to collaborate and learn new things.

Only one participant in the first group felt that the collaboration developed in the group will not continue in the future. All the participants in the second group felt that the collaboration developed in the group would continue in the future. This is understandable, given that the teachers in the second group teach in the same secondary school.

Responses related to the role of the tutors were positive in both groups in the final questionnaire. This corresponds with results from the intermediate questionnaire, which positively evaluated the teaching methods adopted in the two courses.

All participants in both groups enjoyed working with their peers during the course. They liked the exchange of ideas and felt that their point of view was acknowledged by other course participants. Again, this is similar to feedback given in the intermediate questionnaire, when teachers said that they enjoyed collaborating with their peers and learning from the sharing of ideas.

An overall assessment of both questionnaires indicates that the teachers were optimistic about the course outcomes and the effects of the course on their own teaching methods. However, it should be noted that only one participant in both courses was a non-arts teacher. This could mean that the majority of the participants were somewhat predisposed to be favourable towards innovative pedagogies in the arts. Having said that, the teachers also felt that the courses exposed them to new ideas and new possibilities for collaboration.

5.3 Demographics of interviewees

Six of the courses’ participants were interviewed at the end of their course. Two of these interviewees were from the first course while four of them belonged to the second, larger group. In terms of gender, there were two male teachers and four female teachers. Five of the interviewees were teachers in secondary schools, while one of them is a generalist teacher in the primary sector. Different ages were deliberately targeted. Two of the interviewees were in the 25-35 age bracket; three of them were in the 36-45 age bracket; one of them was over 55 years of age.

5.4 Analysis of the interviews

The six interviewees were largely positive about the collaborative learning strategies and practices they experienced in the courses. A 31-year-old Music teacher (MT3) stated that it is important that people share ideas and co-create a final result, “hopefully learning from each other” during the process. She also felt that collaborative learning exposed her to “different perspectives of how people see the same team or the same project”. The dialogic activities pursued during the course were seen as a means of information exchange: “ways of how we could have accessed the information” through the sharing of “opinions and thoughts and information”. For this participant, collaborative learning was seen as embodying “the idea of inclusion. The idea of diversity, accepting, respect definitely ... that you learn to accept and

respect and realise that there are different opinions to your own". The participant highlighted that for collaborative learning to be successful, there needs to be a kind of social bonding – knowing each other and feeling comfortable with each other. The participant also noted that through the collaborative learning attitude she got to know her colleagues better, particularly their creative skills – "really interesting to see how quick some people can create". According to this participant, for collaborative learning to be successful, one needs to approach it with an open mind to be able to "take from what was said and done". As regards cross-subject collaboration, the participant described the example of music and language: the student is taught to learn playing a music piece by a German composer which they subsequently play during the German language lesson. The collaboration described leaves the teaching and learning attitudes intact and subject teaching in separation.

When asked about collaborative learning implementations accommodating students' learning styles and abilities, the participant referred to her 1-on-1 teaching and small group teaching that makes it possible for her as a teacher to adapt to the student's learning needs.

A Dance teacher in her mid-20s (MT4) said that collaborative learning can be interpreted as "working and learning at the same time". The participant interpreted collaborative learning firstly with a focus on the learning process and teacher-student relationships, and secondly with a focus on the teaching process and teacher-teacher relationships. For the former, collaborative learning is conveyed as bringing students as participants in content creation and development (such as choreography in the case of dance) so "not just the teacher speaks, and the students listen". For the latter, the participant interprets collaborative learning as teachers coming together to "see how we can do things together" such as "music teachers ... they do the music and I choreograph on it".

For MT4, the success of collaborative learning is tantamount to the degree of excellence of the resulting product/creation. The success of collaborative learning is also the extent to which there is agreement among the participants, hence the notion that collaborative learning ties to group learning (this is comparable to the Music teacher described earlier). According to this participant, arguments and disagreements are "bound to happen" so the learning outcomes are always a "compromise and it is part of the journey". She concluded that collaborative learning can never be fully successful. It is more like a "give and take situation" wherein "everyone is excited and committed and motivated".

MT4 liked the fact that the course participants were given opportunities "to try to mix" with other teachers, working with others specialising in other art forms and with whom they had not worked with much in the past. She appreciated the fact that they had the opportunity "to get to know each other". She also made references to collaborative activities in day-to-day lessons in Dance and beyond the confines of the school: for example, the school's collaboration with outside entities integrating the arts and sciences.

Another interviewee, an art teacher in his mid-40s (MT2), said that collaborative learning is all about "having a group of people who come together to share their knowledge, basically as we did in our groups." This teacher particularly liked the fact that teachers in his course could give feedback to each other about their responses to individual tasks they had been given by tutors, or videos they had watched in relation to specific topics in the course. This feedback meant that the teachers "learned a lot from each other" by sharing their approaches to teaching their subject. According to this teacher, this collaborative approach would expand

considerably and become more productive if arts teachers were to work with non-arts teachers in schools.

When asked to explain how he thought he and colleagues could obtain success in collaborative activities, MT2 referred to the “acquisition of expertise in a particular area” and then sharing one’s ideas with others. Knowledge-sharing relies on reciprocity. If a specific teacher excelled in a particular technique, that teacher could share that knowledge with colleagues. Beyond the content and techniques, however, the teacher also felt that feedback about teaching methods was equally important but sadly lacking in many schools: “We spend a lot of time teaching students and we hardly have someone explaining to us whether this particular lesson is working. I’m always the judge of my own lessons.” In fact, this art teacher particularly enjoyed the microteaching sessions, because he had the opportunity to teach his own peers and receive immediate feedback from them.

When asked whether he felt that collaborations with his peers were possible in the future, MT2 replied in the affirmative. He felt that they could collaborate on researching particular topics like immigration or land exploitation. Beyond the school setting, the teacher felt that collaborations with other entities like museums and local councils would also be beneficial. The art teacher also spoke highly of cross-curricular activities, linking art to subjects like science, geography, and social studies.

The remaining three interviewees tended to agree that collaborative learning is important for teachers, though not all felt that this is easy in practice. One of them, a generalist primary school teacher (MT1), defined a collaborative learning experience as “when a number of people work together on a common task and have an open mind to learn from each other”. Successful collaborative learning happens when this meeting of open minds helps to “stimulate growth”. Collaborations do not happen only at school or between teachers and other teachers: she referred to a collaborative, intergenerational project between her school and the Active Ageing agency. For MT1, the key characteristics of a successful collaborative learning experience are “willingness to learn, respect for each other, space, time and opportunities for each member to express himself or herself, time allocated to reflect on the experience individually and together”. Reflection about one’s own practice also reaps the best benefits out of collaborative learning experiences. Teachers can learn by opening their minds to others’ perspectives and putting into practice what one has learned. In order to do this, one needs to be “willing to change”. The primary school teacher concluded that she planned to “do more art projects... with my colleagues. I already have some ideas”.

One of the interviewees (MT5) was a 40-year-old female art teacher in a specialised arts secondary school. When asked about collaboration, she stated that “there has to be an organisation of the collaboration”, which means that collaborative work depends on good planning. She stated that possibilities of collaboration would increase if the teachers were offered follow-up courses, without which all the good ideas discussed and teamwork that developed throughout the course could be forgotten. She emphasised that the course served to “get to know each other and discuss our subjects, something which we rarely have done”.

She noted that collaboration was successful because every participant “had time to express themselves and with regards to their particular subject”. By “particular” she referred to the different arts subjects within the specialised school (Visual Art, Drama, Dance and Music). An example she mentioned concerned the experience they had when they collaborated to create a lesson plan, “where everybody gave every input they could” to ensure

that all the arts were represented. According to her, being sensitive to represent the integration of diverse arts disciplines in a lesson confirmed the result of an effective collaboration.

When asked whether the collaboration initiated during the course would continue, MT5 explained that in their school, a collaborative production involving all arts subjects occurs annually. They aim at the ongoing effort to integrate various arts disciplines. The collaborative project initiative began the previous year, with each subsequent year marked by improvements upon prior endeavours. Meanwhile, she admitted that the CARESS course served them to set the ball rolling as they “started discussions where and what we could have done better, how we could have collaborated better and such a course actually helps us realise how important... how this collaboration is in order for us to work together as a team”. This highlights that the CARE/SS course fostered a stronger sense of teamwork among the teacher-participants.

Anticipating future developments for further collaboration, MT5 acknowledged that the Art Education Officer already has teacher-training course plans for the following scholastic year. However, she pointed out that they planned to have “a timetable slot where we'll all be meeting together” aiming to extend collaboration beyond the one-time production throughout the scholastic year. She then explained that they carry out “a dedicated week on arts...all art forms at our school” and this prompts integration of art forms into lessons across non-artistic subject areas, fostering interdisciplinary connections. As an example, she mentioned that “if it's an English language teacher, they have to collaborate with a drama teacher...they connect with something related to literature”. She continued by suggesting topics of “Peace” and those related to society. She said that while they brainstormed they came up with ideas to collaborate with teachers whose subjects provide an immediate collaboration, such as “with a Social Studies teacher”. Then, MT5 added the topic of “environment” which could be done in collaboration with a Geography teacher and concluded that the arts subjects are ideal for collaboration with other subject teachers as they “lend themselves well to collaboration with various subjects. When asked about their collaboration with other institutions such as museums and cultural centres, she said that first they are finding ways to collaborate with each other (arts) and with non-arts teachers and next they would “move on to other institutions as well”.

Within the same specialised arts secondary school, a drama teacher in his late 30s (MT6), defined collaboration as “different teachers and different learners from different areas collaborating together aiming for the same goal”. It is interesting that his repetition of the word “different” was used to describe an ultimate common goal through collaboration. This achievement of a common goal was again emphasised in his reply when asked about his judgement of a successful collaboration. When asked to elaborate about the CARESS course's success or limitation in encouraging collaboration, MT6 said that “the course's collaboration was successful...the way we had quite a lot of time to do the work...as learners coming from different areas and the fact that we worked in groups, but we worked as different teachers from different areas”. As an example, he explained that they were provided the opportunity to team up in order to create activities together, despite the fact that they “came from different areas and having different thoughts about the visual and performing arts and having different ideas”. He admitted that although they collaborated on projects before the course, the CARE/SS course served as “the starting point for collaboration”. He emphasised that “after

the course I discovered that I believe that we can sort of have the guidelines to collaborate much better” than the way they collaborated for the Prize Day performance. He explained that for such a performance, “everyone did his work individually from each area” and during the final week they collaborated. He added that following the CARE/SS course, they became aware of their ability “to plan ahead to collaborate from the start”.

When asked about their collaboration with other institutions, MT6 suggested ideas for collaboration with higher education institutions such as post-secondary theatre students, as this would provide “a good experience for our students”. He also emphasised the importance of promoting the arts by collaborating with students at primary level. This would raise awareness about the specialised arts school to which they could apply later and “would help to give students a taste of what we do in our school”.

As for the question concerning their consideration for collaborations between different areas of knowledge, similar to the previous interviewee, MT6 mentioned ‘Social Studies’. According to him, teachers in Social Studies “can tackle those issues through the arts, same as we did during the course...by doing”. He suggested an example that stemmed from his experience of collaboration on an imaginary tour during the CARE/SS course, where he “would perform a short drama or play a piece of music...we were mentioning that we are going to use the ‘Boal’ technique for room theatre when you will have the audience switch with one of the characters”.

5.5 Conclusions on Professional Learning Communities

This conclusion brings together some final reflections about the promotion of PLCs in the two courses and expectations around such communities, based on the research team’s experiences and data collected. As has already been stated, the possibility of joining peers in online or face-to-face sessions was considered positive by the participants in both groups. The teachers believed that the courses offered them the opportunity to come together to share expertise, explore new pedagogical strategies, and learn new ideas about socially engaged art in arts education. In their view, the course tutors reinforced the development of a sense of community among course participants.

PLCs were understood as pivotal in fostering a collaborative, reflective, and dynamic approach to teaching and learning. The courses, particularly the microteaching sessions, provided a supportive environment where teachers could share ideas about socially engaged art or particular artworks and videos they had watched online. Teachers often work alone, so collaborative practices help foster a sense of community and mutual support, reducing the isolation that teachers may feel. One of the participants in the intermediate questionnaire highlighted the possibility of “creative collaboration between different art forms” inspired by the course. Others underlined different collaborations, such as collaborations between the arts and other school subjects.

The participants also felt that the courses encouraged them to keep up-to-date with developments in the field of arts education and inspired them to look for further collaborative possibilities beyond the school setting. However, a few teachers also mentioned that they already collaborate on some projects, such as Christmas events or other annual events in their school. Some of the participants also said that collaborative activities tend to be time-

consuming and require careful planning, which is not always easy to achieve in real school settings.

While there were hints especially in the interviews that learning is interpreted as a transaction of information, there were also several references to the processes by which information is shared and attitudes that are required to make authentic collaborations practicable. One teacher made reference to building a relationship of trust with colleagues and felt that the group work encouraged during the course she attended gave her and others the opportunity to communicate and hear each other's thoughts and ideas. The participants felt comfortable participating in the course discussions and tasks. They also agreed that they developed problem-solving skills through peer collaboration.

Other responses revolved around individual improvements, such as the ability to design different or innovative lesson plans. The teachers agreed that a teacher's unwillingness to try something new would likely result in failure. This was also linked to the success of collaborative learning, which was accompanied by positive human relationships. Some participants also linked collaborative learning with the online domain and digital tasks. The courses encouraged them to think about ways of using online platforms to share pedagogical ideas in online forums and generate collaborative arts activities with colleagues at school. Generally, the positive response to the two courses offered by the University of Malta acknowledged that PLCs foster a school culture that values continuous learning and improvement, not just for students but for educators as well. This can be considered to form part of a significant cultural shift, in which openness to change is encouraged in education.

CHAPTER 6. *Adam Mickiewicz University report*

Michalina Kasprzak, Mateusz Marciniak, Katarzyna Forecka-Waśko and Sylwia Jaskulska

Adam Mickiewicz University implemented two training courses:

1. An AMU-PIE offer: a course in Theatre and Drama Education, titled “Drama Method for Social Inclusion in Teaching Practices”, 30 hours.
2. An AMU-PIE offer: a course in Music and Fine Arts Education, titled “Creative Arts for Social Inclusion”, 30 hours.

Both courses were offered for international exchange students in the Faculty of Educational Studies at Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan, Poland. The participation limitations were connected with the main study program of participants (offer dedicated only to pre-service teachers on the level of preschool, elementary, primary and secondary education). The course was prepared according to CARE/SS project – the course goals highlighted strengthening competencies in using digital/online tools and sustainable development understanding in teaching.

Thirty-nine students (pre-service teachers) participated in these training courses. Of them, 36 completed the intermediate questionnaire, 37 completed the final questionnaire, and 9 were interviewed.

Next, each training course is separately presented in the 1st (demographics information) and 2nd part (Intermediate and Final Questionnaire). Then, both courses are presented collectively in the 3rd (Interviewees’ demographics), 4th (Analysis of the interviews) and 5th part (Conclusions on professional learning communities) of the report.

6.1 Course 1: *Drama Method for Social Inclusion in Teaching Practices*

6.1.1 Demographics of the participants of the intermediate and final questionnaires

“Drama Method for Social Inclusion in Teaching Practices” was an AMU-PIE offer course. The course was focused on broadening the ability to use the method of drama in teaching. During the course we carried out 4 thematic blocks: Integration and Introduction, Peer Exclusion, Cultural Diversity, and Method of Drama in Practice, which allowed for fluent transitions between classes. We used digital and online tools to work with students including MS Teams, MS Office, Youtube, Canva, Mentimeter and Padlet.

All course participants (18) were exchange students at AMU in Poznan, with the majority of females (15, figure 2), mostly younger than 22 years old (10, figure 1), with Turkish nationality (10, figure 3).

All students were enrolled into study programmes for pre-service teachers at their home Universities: vast majority on undergraduate (Bachelor) degrees (16), studying “English teaching” (8, figure 4), in their 3rd grade of programme (9). Half of them (9) had previous teaching experience of at least 1 month, usually taken at public schools (7). All other students

had micro-teaching experiences during courses. Their English level was mostly intermediate B2 level (9, figure 5).

All students at their home Universities participated in courses dedicated to the topics crucial for the CARE/SS project: Pedagogy (18), Art disciplines (12), Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) (3), and Arts Education (3). The majority had full access to free available software at home Universities (12, figure 6) and their ICT skills covered several tools, e.g.: average Canva (9) and MS Office software (6), basic programming (4) or Photoshop (4).

All students from the course filled in the intermediate questionnaire. The vast majority (16 out of 18) filled in the final course questionnaire as well (14 females, and 2 males, representing all four participants' countries).

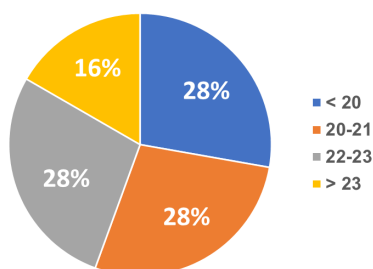


Figure 1. Age of the participants.

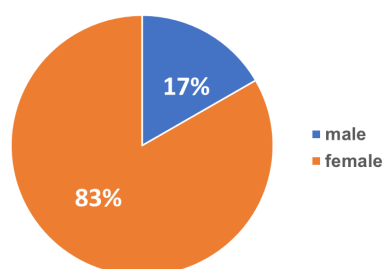


Figure 2. Gender of the participants.

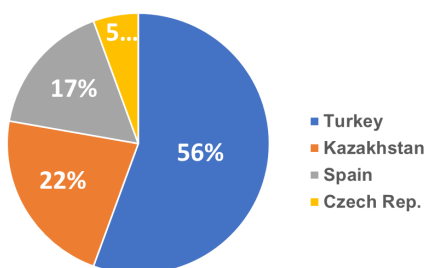


Figure 3. Participants' nationalities.

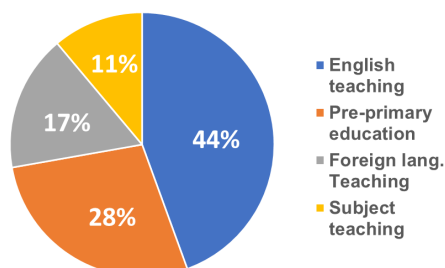


Figure 4. Participants' studies.

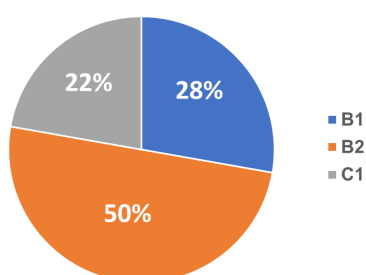


Figure 5. Participants' English level.

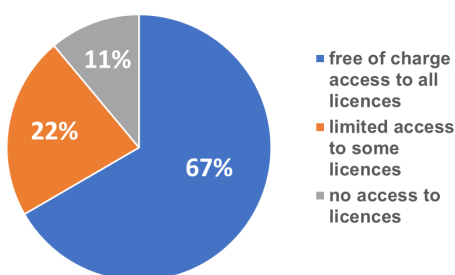


Figure 6. Participants' software access.

6.1.2 Description of the results of the intermediate and final questionnaires

The study involved 16 individuals. Their responses to open-ended questions allowed us to understand how they perceive the course during its duration, and also to modify future plans, taking into account the opinions of the students. Below, we analyse the responses by grouping them into important themes.

Intermediate questionnaire

Overall, student engagement can be described as high, which is also reflected in their responses to questions. The form of classes that truly engage the group, as well as interesting topics with real connections to the realities and needs of the contemporary world, positively contribute to this. Examples of student statements:

Yes, I found these exercises helpful to raise awareness about other students and witness their creative ideas, and learn from each other through collaboration.

Yes, I was really engaged in experiencing arts. I much enjoyed the course, the teachers, and the way of teaching. Cause it was simple but at the same time so powerful (...).

Yes, during all of the courses I always felt it was not boring with something to learn always.

Participants in the classes noticed that their understanding of what SEA is and its significance changed through experiencing drama classes. At times, students began the sessions with limited knowledge in this area, but they also declared that even if they had prior knowledge, it deepened and expanded through both collective and individual reflections. This was described, for example, in the following way:

It positively affected my interpretation of SEA projects. At first, I had no idea what it was, but later with interventions and explanations, I realised exactly what SEA represented. I think it is an important concept for both society and our own consciousness.

By using a variety of methods I got complete information about SEA. For example, when we wrote in Padlet about SEA in our country we learnt a lot about each other's country's SEA.

I used to have so short-sighted view of SEA (thinking in general and without considering minor details) but after the course, I started thinking widely and openly.

Participants had a variety of reflections on the tools used during the classes. They demonstrated in their responses a deepening process of understanding how digital tools can be utilised in the field of SEA work. It was noted not only that digital tools are appropriate but that they actually enhance the effectiveness of the work, for example:

Blended learning methods are the best ones for a class to work, because nowadays virtual tools are our day-to-day, everyone feels comfortable with them, and have lots of possibilities to do our work best, so my interpretation of SEA has been better with them.

Blended learning methods helped me analyse the things that we've learnt. For example in the lessons, we practised different techniques. In the SEA lesson, I could turn my attention to the theory and facts. And the presentation about SEA with links to movies, websites, the Padlet and Mentimeter helped me to consider the topic in detail.

Blended learning has helped to reach various details, deepen knowledge, but also to become more active and even have fun, for example:

It was nice to search for some art ideas that are engaged with society. I really like using virtual methods while doing these projects. I think it makes it easier and more fun.

Students have identified new paths of collaboration that this course has demonstrated and taught them. They considered this from several perspectives. The first of these is the relational perspective. The use of active methods, blended learning, as well as the topics covered in the classes, created conditions for integration, forming friendships, and even gaining deeper insights into the nature of human relationships. For example:

I started to feel closer to my international group mates.

Yes, I found these exercises helpful to raise awareness about other students and witness their creative ideas, and learn from each other through collaboration.

In response to the question regarding new forms of collaboration, students also spoke about collaboration in the context of jointly discovering working methods, e.g.:

Yes, because of this course, I am more able to search for other techniques.

The sessions of the course taught me to discover new ways. It made learning in new ways more fun and useful.

Participants recognized many opportunities to integrate new knowledge, skills, and competencies into their professional practice. Some of them have very specific career plans and placed course content within them, for example:

I will be a teacher of English. And my dream is to open an educational centre. And I want to teach children in an interesting way. I think the drama method is a good technique for teaching.

I have learned a lot with this course, because I wasn't very familiar with the arts and drama world, but in this course I realised that are so successful for education, and a lot of techniques and activities that I have seen in this course will help me in the future as a Primary teacher. I also learned a lot about my classmates.

Others made more general remarks or pointed out specific techniques they had learned:

There are many useful teaching techniques that I can teach to my future student group. Creating products together, there are socialist course contents that are far from individualism, and applying the courses with this philosophy will be very useful for me.

I am planning to use digital activities such as Padlet Canva in my lessons in the future. I think these activities will contribute to the children's learning, both visually and aurally.

Some even referred to the way the classes were conducted and the personalities of the instructors, finding them inspiring for their future:

I take the teachers' behaviour, mood and professionals as a model into myself and the ideas, creativities, games, techniques, and methods that I acquired from this course, I try to make full use of what I gained from this course.

Final questionnaire

The final questionnaire aimed to gather insights into how students perceived the course. The interview questions focused on the strengths and weaknesses of the course, the demands and benefits from participation and developing interest in Socially Engaged Arts.

The conducted research took into account the main objectives of the project and the course, with particular emphasis on the role of the teacher, perceived collaboration, and relations. Below, we present the survey results along with students' responses to the final questionnaire. The tables depict the percentage distribution of answers to the questions, where 1=Totally Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Totally Agree.

Table 1. Role of teachers, Course 1.

Role of the teachers	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD
a) The tutor/teacher stimulated collaboration	-	-	8 50%	8 50%	3.50	0.516
b) The tutor/teacher helped to keep course participants engaged and participating in productive dialogue	-	-	3 19%	13 81%	3.81	0.403
c) The tutor/teacher actions reinforced the development of a sense of community among course participants	-	-	6 38%	10 62%	3.63	0.500

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree, SD=Standard Deviation

Student assessment of the teacher's role during classes was very high. The highest rating was given to the statement about the tutor's help in keeping course participants engaged in productive dialogue. Regarding issues of stimulating collaboration and a sense of cooperation, the results were also very high. No one chose answers indicating disagreement with the presented statements. Since, in responding to open-ended questions in the intermediate survey, it was indicated that teachers were important in building a good atmosphere during the classes, it can be considered as an important aspect for students.

Table 2. Perceived collaboration, Course 1.

Perceived collaboration	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD
a) I felt part of a learning community in my group	-	-	6 38%	10 62%	3.63	0.500
b) Getting to know other course participants gave me a sense of belonging in the course	-	-	4 25%	12 75%	3.75	0.447

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree, SD=Standard Deviation

Definitely, it can also be said that students were satisfied with collaboration during the classes. Both the statement “I felt part of a learning community in my group” and “Getting to know other course participants gave me a sense of belonging in the course” received very high ratings. Drama, as well as the use of digital tools during the course, contributed, as indicated also in the intermediate questionnaire, to creating an atmosphere conducive to deep integration and collaboration, rather than superficial collaboration.

Table 3. Relation with peers, Course 1.

Relation with peers	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD
a) I actively exchanged my ideas with group members	-	-	5 31%	11 69%	3.69	0.478
b) I was able to develop new skills and knowledge from other members in my group	-	-	4 25%	12 75%	3.75	0.447
c) I was able to develop problem solving skills through peer collaboration	-	-	5 31%	11 69%	3.69	0.478
d) I felt comfortable participating in the course discussions	-	-	5 31%	11 69%	3.69	0.478
e) I felt comfortable interacting with other course participants	-	1 6%	3 19%	12 75%	3.69	0.602
f) I felt comfortable disagreeing with other course participants while still maintaining a sense of trust	-	1 6%	6 38%	9 56%	3.50	0.633
g) I felt that my point of view was acknowledged by other course participants	-	1 6%	6 38%	9 56%	3.50	0.633

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree, SD=Standard Deviation

The overall peer relations in the course seem positive, with participants generally reporting a high level of comfort, active engagement, and skill development. However, there's a slight indication that participants might be somewhat less comfortable disagreeing while maintaining trust and feel their point of view is slightly less acknowledged compared to other aspects. However, it is worth emphasizing that, in relation to some statements (e, f and g) the responses indicating partial disagreement rarely occurred.

Table 4. Evaluation of collaborative learning, Course 1.

Evaluation of collaborative learning	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD
a) I felt that collaborative learning in my group was effective	-	-	3 19%	13 81%	3.81	0.403
b) I felt that collaborative learning in my group was time-consuming	4 25%	1 6%	5 31%	6 38%	2.81	1.223
c) I felt that the collaboration developed in the group will continue in the future	-	-	8 50%	8 50%	3.50	0.516

d) Overall, I am satisfied with my collaborative learning experience in this course	-	-	4 25%	12 75%	3.75	0.447
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TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree, SD=Standard Deviation

The overall evaluation of collaborative learning in the course is positive. Participants overwhelmingly find it effective, and a majority express satisfaction with their collaborative learning experience. While there is a mixed response regarding the perception of collaboration continuing in the future, the overall sentiment is favourable. Additionally, a notable portion does not find collaborative learning to be excessively time-consuming, indicating a balanced perspective on the time investment required for collaboration.

Changes and continuities between both questionnaires

Statistical analysis is not possible with such a small number of participants, and it is difficult to speak about trends in the case of a small and highly diverse group in terms of sociometric characteristics.

Participants reported high engagement throughout the training courses, with a consistent positive trend from the intermediate to the final questionnaire. Understanding of Socially Engaged Arts (SEA) projects deepened, with digital interventions playing a crucial role in broadening perspectives. Digital activities were well-received, and participants recognized the effectiveness of blended learning methods. New ways of collaboration were identified, fostering relationships among participants. Participants saw clear connections between the course content and their future teaching practices.

The responses to the questions in the intermediate questionnaire were slightly more enthusiastic, but this may stem from the format of the inquiries. They were open-ended questions, allowing for the expression of emotions.

Collaborative learning, engagement with digital methods, and collaboration among participants were positively assessed in both intermediate and final questionnaires. Blended learning methods were perceived as effective, contributing to a deeper understanding of SEA and making learning more enjoyable.

Digital activities were considered valuable for learning, making classes more engaging and enjoyable. Participants recognized the importance of collaboration in building a sense of community and fostering relationships and pointed out that collaboration is possible and satisfying in online and/or blended teaching-learning formats.

In summary, both questionnaires – intermediate and final – reveal a consistent positive trend in participant engagement, understanding of SEA, and satisfaction with collaborative learning methods. The role of teachers and the sense of community were crucial aspects of the success of the courses. Integrating drama and digital tools proved effective in enhancing the learning experience and fostering collaboration among participants.

6.2 Course 2: Creative Arts for Social Inclusion

6.2.1. Demographics of the participants of the intermediate and final questionnaires

The “Creative Arts for Social Inclusion” training course was included in a particular university program titled AMU-PIE offers – courses dedicated to international exchange students at AMU (e.g. Erasmus+ and other international exchange programs). These are optional courses and AMU students can join them as well. The aim of the course was to show the impact of art in a broad social context, especially working with disadvantaged groups, social inclusion, and multicultural and intercultural education. During the classes, theoretical issues related to the use of art (especially music and fine arts forms) and Big Ideas to improve the quality of life of selected social groups were presented, but also look at this idea on the microscale of working at school and with your own class will be discussed.

The course combined face-to-face and blended learning. During the course, we used digital tools such as MS Teams, Canva, Pixton, Pomelody, Padlet, and Chrome Music Lab.

Students who attended this course (21) were varied due to age – majority 20-21 years old (11, figure 7) –, gender – majority women (18, figure 8), and nationality – the majority groups were from Spain (8) and Turkey (6), while “others” (figure 9) covered students from Czech Republic, Ukraine, Greece and China.

All students were enrolled into study programmes for pre-service teachers (21) at their home Universities, mostly with Bachelor's degrees (19). Their studies programmes were, in general, the Education area; for example, Pre-primary Education (8), English teaching (3), Subject teaching (3) and Social Education (3) (figure 10).

Students' language skills were majority B1 (11, figure 11) and they had different skills in using competencies and knowledge of art and new technologies, but most of them had free of charge and full access to the software at home Universities (14) or limited access to some licenses (7). In our class we didn't have any students who had no access to licenses at home University, it is connected with their current 3rd year of study (19) had a learning experience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Almost all students (20) from the course filled in the intermediate questionnaire. All students (21) filled in the final course questionnaire as well (18 females, and 3 males, representing all seven participants' countries).

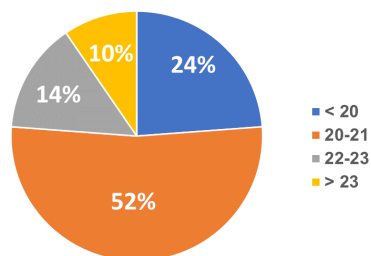


Figure 7. Age of the participants.

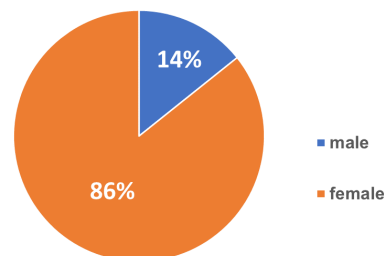


Figure 8. Gender of the participants.

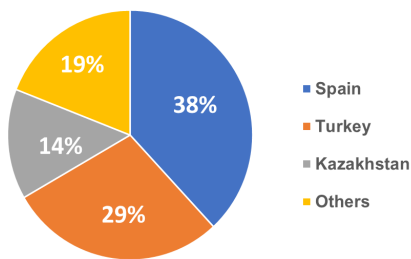


Figure 9. Participants' nationalities.

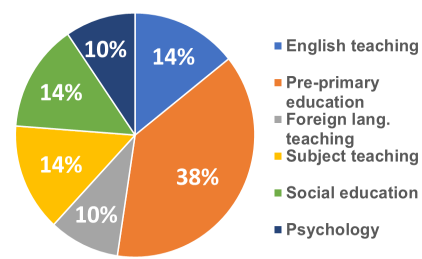


Figure 10. Participants' studies.

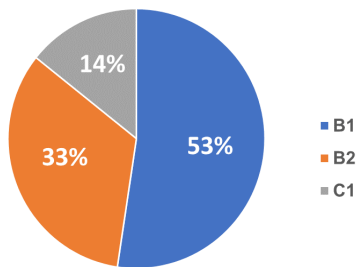


Figure 11. Participants' English level.

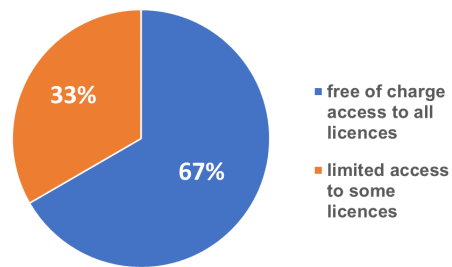


Figure 12. Participants' software access.

6.2.2 Description of the results of the intermediate and final questionnaires

The study involved 20 individuals. Their responses to open-ended questions allowed us to understand how they perceive the course during its duration, and also to modify future plans, taking into account the opinions of the students. Below, we analyse the responses by grouping them into important themes.

Intermediate questionnaire

During the activities, students showed very high engagement, which is also evident in the students' answers. The course was taught by two teachers in a face-to-face and blended learning format with the course divided into 7 thematic blocks (each week). Each thematic block (e.g. Socially Engaged Art and Big Ideas in Art) was started by one teacher and finished by the other. According to the students, this form of activity even enforced positive student engagement and a process of integration between the students. The topics were currently relevant and also engaged them during the homework that followed the classes. Examples of student statements:

Yes. Everyone was involved in practical tasks, which is connected with the arts.

Yes, because the lessons were very fascinating. I enjoyed every moment. The methods were very helpful.

Yes, because there is not only a theory, here is also a practice. A lot of practices are so interesting and engaging.

Participants noted that their understanding of what SEA is and their understanding of its importance increased as a result of attending the classes. Students started the classes with no

or limited knowledge in this area, but they also declared that even if they had prior knowledge, their theory in this area had deepened from the first classes. The practical classes expanded through both group and individual exercises. This was described, for example, as follows:

I think that virtual interventions are convenient to use in sessions. It has more functions, and more opportunities to create something special in art.

I have never thought before about working on social issues through technology, so it was been a great idea.

I have improved my spontaneity and creativity and the way I communicate with children.

We gain a new perspective on our teaching. I became a more productive and knowledgeable person with this course.

Participants had positive reflections on the tools used in the classes. Some students were not familiar with several apps (e.g. Pomelody – Music, Pixton – Fine Art), but their responses to using them in future SEA work were very positive, all showing an increase in knowledge and understanding in this area. Examples of student statements:

I think the employed digital activities have been useful for work with socially engaged arts. These activities will be helpful in the future.

I prefer activities face-to-face, but digital activities are a perfect idea for doing and practising art if it isn't possible to do them face-to-face.

We used different kinds of apps. For example, Pixton, Pomelody and Canva. It was helpful for us, as students. With them easy to work, and easy to create new things by using their functions.

They recognised that digital tools are nowadays desirable for this kind of work, but also that they actually increase the efficiency of the work, for example:

Yes, because it is digital time, the world is changing. It is important to keep people attracted to presentations. We can do it through digital programmes.

Above all, the students saw that through socially engaged art they themselves, working in an international group, deepened their relationships. They also saw this reflected in future work with pupils e.g. to integrate diverse groups, to work through current difficulties with peers, and to establish relationships, and friendships between pupils. In response to the question regarding new forms of collaboration, students recognised them. It resounded in their statements that most of the methods used were previously unknown to them. Examples of student statements:

Yes, they help a lot. They have good points of you, and also help the intercultural connection.

Yes, I am learning a lot of new things about collaborating.

Yes, as a future teacher, now, I know how to engage the class, and how to use melody in class, if all of the students don't have musical talent.

Yes, it leads. Because all of the sessions, we work together with our group mates, and it leads to effective communication related to Big Ideas.

All participants saw many opportunities to combine new knowledge, skills and competencies into their future professional practice as teachers. They noticed the innovation of the course because they declared that most of the methods and work techniques proposed by Creative Arts for Social Inclusion teachers were unknown to them before. Students declared they would use these ideas in their future work or during upcoming professional internships. For example:

Thanks to these classes/activities it will be easier for me to work with children and connect with them.

I will present new methods when I teach my lesson. I consider that each method should be appropriate for my students.

I can use these methods when teaching children, which opens up a new world for me.

I have learned so many techniques and games to play with the children and also with teachers.

Students indicated that the classes also expanded their knowledge of where and how to look for applications (even paid ones) to use art in a teacher's work in a digitalized way, for example:

I will find an interesting app with music, pictures, drawings, etc. I will write to the founder to say how to improve it if teachers want to use this app in the lesson.

Students also emphasized the commitment of teachers teaching the Creative Arts for Social Inclusion subject. Some indicated that the way of conducting classes, the personality of the instructors and the techniques used inspired them. For example:

In the future, I will try to use what I have learned in this course with my students because I find them attractive and interesting activities.

Both teachers are such good people, and they love their job. They inspire me.

Final questionnaire

At the end of the course "Creative Arts for Social Inclusion" students responded to the final evaluation. A cohort of 21 students attended the course offered to Erasmus students at the Faculty of Educational Studies. All of the participants, according to the TPP (Teacher Training Programme), are pre-service teachers, and they study in their country (depending on university and country): Arts Education, Childhood Education, Primary Education, Pre-primary Education, Social Education, Teaching English, and Maths teaching. Twenty-one students filled

in the final questionnaire (18 females, 3 males), representing 7 countries: China (1), Czech Republic (1), Greece (1), Kazakhstan (3), Spain (8), Turkey (6), and Ukraine (1). Four students from this group were interviewed (part 3 of the report).

The final questionnaire checked the views of participants about: the role of the teacher in the collaboration process (Table B1); collaboration in terms of learning in the group and being part of a community of participants (Table B2); relation with peers (Table B3); and evaluation of collaborative learning (Table B4). The meaning of the answers presented in the table is as follows:

Table 5. Role of the teachers, Course 2.

Role of the teachers	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD
a) The tutor/teacher stimulated collaboration	-	-	12 57.1%	9 42.9%	3.43	0.507
b) The tutor/teacher helped to keep course participants engaged and participating in productive dialogue	-	-	12 57.1%	9 42.9%	3.43	0.507
c) The tutor/teacher actions reinforced the development of a sense of community among course participants	-	1 4.8%	12 57.1%	8 38.1%	3.33	0.577

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree, SD=Standard Deviation

The data from Table 5 suggest that the participants positively assessed the teacher's role in stimulating cooperation during classes, creating space for dialogue and stimulating involvement. Only one person disagreed that the leader's actions impacted creating a sense of community. It is worth underlining that the students didn't know each other before classes, and they represented different cultural backgrounds.

Table 6. Perceived collaboration, Course 2.

Perceived collaboration	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD
a) I felt part of a learning community in my group	-	-	13 61.9%	8 38.1%	3.38	0.498
b) Getting to know other course participants gave me a sense of belonging in the course	-	-	13 61.9%	8 38.1%	3.38	0.498

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree, SD=Standard Deviation

Analysis of responses from Table 6 shows that participants felt a part of a learning community and that during the course they developed a sense of belonging together. High grades allow us to conclude that through artistic activity during classes, which required cooperation and commitment, students created group bonds and learned to cooperate.

Table 7. Relation with peers, Course 2.

Relation with peers	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD
a) I actively exchanged my ideas with group members	-	1 4.8%	14 66.7%	6 28.6%	3.24	0.539
b) I was able to develop new skills and knowledge from other members in my group	-	1 4.8%	12 57.1%	8 38.1%	3.33	0.577
c) I was able to develop problem solving skills through peer collaboration	-	1 4.8%	12 57.1%	8 38.1%	3.33	0.577
d) I felt comfortable participating in the course discussions	-	-	15 71.4%	6 28.6%	3.28	0.483
e) I felt comfortable interacting with other course participants	-	-	14 66.7%	7 33.3%	3.33	0.483
f) I felt comfortable disagreeing with other course participants while still maintaining a sense of trust	-	2 9.5%	15 71.4%	4 19%	3.09	0.539
g) I felt that my point of view was acknowledged by other course participants	-	1 4.8%	16 76.2%	4 19%	3.14	0.478

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree, SD=Standard Deviation

According to data from Table 7, most participants considered themselves part of a group, which let them freely exchange ideas, interact and learn from each other. The group felt a sense of cooperation and was characterised by mutual trust. Apart from one negative vote, the majority agreed or totally agreed with the above statements.

Table 8. Evaluation of collaborative learning, Course 2.

Evaluation of collaborative learning	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD
a) I felt that collaborative learning in my group was effective	-	1 4.8%	13 61.9%	7 33.3%	3.28	0.560
b) I felt that collaborative learning in my group was time-consuming	-	8 38.1%	8 38.1%	5 23.8%	2.86	0.793
c) I felt that the collaboration developed in the group will continue in the future	-	5 23.8%	11 52.4%	5 23.8%	3.00	0.707
d) Overall, I am satisfied with my collaborative learning experience in this course	-	3 14.3%	10 47.6%	8 38.1%	3.24	0.700

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree, SD=Standard Deviation

Opinions in the final evaluation of the collaborative process vary among participants. Many indicated that collaboration was effective, and it may pay off in the future. There were also sceptical voices, pointing to a lower sense of the effectiveness of the group process and lower identification with the group. It is worth recalling that the study group was international, so linguistic and cultural factors may have influenced difficulties in cooperation.

Changes and continuities between both questionnaires

Participants differed in all aspects studied. Statistical analysis is not possible with such a small number of participants, and it is difficult to speak about trends in the case of a small and highly diverse group in terms of sociometric characteristics.

In the case of both questionnaires (intermediate and final), students declared that their involvement was very high. They also noticed the high commitment of teachers, but they perceived it in a very positive way, because the commitment made it possible to complete the course, divided into several thematic blocks, as a whole.

In student's opinion, all content covered during the course regarding Socially Engaged Arts (SEA) and its Big Ideas deepened their knowledge and skills. Digital interventions significantly deepened the understanding of the topic, but also were an area in which students broadened their perspectives, built new structures for perceiving art today and saw the potential in using online tools and applications in teachers' work using SEA. Some of them believe that it is necessary to include digital tools in socially engaged art education, given the times we currently live in. In addition, students learned about new opportunities for cooperation that encourage the involvement of all people (including those who, for example, are not so good at expressing themselves linguistically). Students declared that they would use the methods and techniques learned in the future.

The responses to the questions in the final questionnaire were slightly more precise, but this may stem from the development of the students during a course. They were more open-minded and expressed their opinions and emotions more quickly and accurately.

The use of collaborative learning and engagement with digital methods increased the attractiveness of the course. They emphasized that the media are an indispensable element of modern times. Even though some people had not previously noticed the need to use blended learning methods in the work of teachers at SEA, they changed their beliefs during the course. In the opinion of the participants, the mixed method was mostly assessed very positively and the understanding of SEA and Big Ideas during the classes increased significantly, which resulted in an increase in the involvement and attractiveness of the exercises.

Participants indicated that digital activities were attractive to them, strengthened understanding of the content and increased engagement. Students felt satisfied with this and often used the application after classes, showing the results of their work at the next meeting. However, it was also noticed that students and teachers spent much more time preparing for subsequent classes (because working in applications such as Canva or Pixton was time-consuming).

In summary, both questionnaires – intermediate and final – showed a positive attitude of students towards involvement, understanding of SEA and satisfaction with cooperation and learning new learning methods (at first they were driven by curiosity, but later by following the topics of classes, engaging from each class). The role and personalities of teachers were inspiring for pre-service teachers, they often used advice and suggestions for exercises.

6.3 Interviewees' demographics

We have conducted interviews with 5 students from the course Drama Method for Social Inclusion in Teaching Practices. Each interviewee was representative of one of the 5 final teams that prepared the final course project (micro-teaching based on their script of drama classes):

- PL1: Kazakhstan, female, 18 y.o.; 2nd grade of "Foreign languages teaching", offline microteaching experience during courses at university.
- PL2: Kazakhstan, female, 20 y.o.; 3rd grade of "English teaching", online teaching experience in private school, offline microteaching experience during courses at university.
- PL3: Turkey, female, 22 y.o.; 4th grade of "Math teaching", microteaching during courses at university, placement at public primary school.
- PL4: Turkey, female, 19 y.o.; 2nd grade "English teaching", no practices so far, offline microteaching during courses at university.
- PL5: Spain, female, 22 y.o., 4th grade of "Primary education", offline internship at kindergarten and primary school, microteaching during courses at university.

We have conducted interviews with 4 students from the course Creative Arts for Social Inclusion. Interviewees represented different countries and study programs:

- PL6 - Ukraine, female, 20 y.o.; 3rd grade of Psychology, teaching experience during obligatory practices (70 days), microteaching during courses at university.
- PL7 - Czech Republic, female, 33 y.o.; 3rd grade of "Teaching at Pre-school Level"; 2 weeks of student practices during the studies, microteaching during courses at university.
- PL8 - Turkey, male, 24 y.o.; 3rd grade of "English teaching", no practices so far, offline microteaching during courses at university.
- PL9 - Spain, female, 20 y.o.; 3rd grade of "Social Education", no practices so far, microteaching during courses at university.

6.4. Analysis of the interviews

Notions of collaborative learning

The interviewees were asked to define collaborative learning at the very beginning of the interviews. They tried to give short and precise definitions showing an understanding of the issue. Their attempts can be characterised by four tendencies in defining process: 1) searching for synonymous words or categories, 2) listing the elements (characteristics) of learning process 3) creating typologies of contraries, and 4) exemplifications from practice.

The synonymous categories (in italics) brought by students were comparing "collaborative" learning with: "*collective* learning" (PL2, PL4, PL6, PL7, PL8), "*team* learning" (PL1, PL3), "*working together* with group" (PL1, PL2, PL5, PL6, PL8, PL9), "*cooperative* working on issue" (PL3, PL5, PL6, PL9), "*taking joint* activities" (PL5), "*working toward common* goal"

(PL1, PL3, PL4, PL6, PL7, PL8, PL9). All those meanings were to stress that “collaborative learning” means learning together with other people in a group (team).

Interviewees often listed the elements (characteristics, traits) of this type of learning. From their answers the 4 characteristics (in italics) always emerged, so they can be considered as the core categories for “collaborative” learning: cooperating *with others* in a *group*, having *common goal* (the same aim, object, issue, interest), *sharing/exchanging* their experiences (knowledge, opinions, practices) while working in atmosphere of *interpersonal trust* (respect, listening to each other) during learning process (studying the issue, solving problem, focusing on a topic, creating something new, improving ourselves).

From the negative definitions students most often related to the two contraries: collaborative vs. *individual* and collaborative vs. *traditional*. All of the interviewees have done comparisons between collaborative and individual learning processes, showing the advantages of the first one. Students showed that the final effect of common work is not only the sum of individual efforts, but brings creative, new, higher quality:

Two people may have different opinions, and ideas, maybe vice versa, but they can somehow put it together, collaborate, and make a really great thing, a great idea. (PL2)

(...) in the end, we can have one idea, we gather every idea and make one. (PL3)

Collaborative learning is connected to the collaborative process. It's about to learn like a whole group, not separately (PL6)

I think collaboration is one of the strongest points when all students work together on a common solution since this will make them very excited and makes work seem easier (PL8)

Some students have also shown that collaborative learning is opposite to the traditional model of teaching with transmission of knowledge. They shown collaborative learning as a modern one and connected with modern tendencies in teaching philosophy supplementary to constructivism, inquiry learning, and problem-based learning.

In old times, in our school time, we didn't know about teamwork, we just did lectures. Working together toward a common goal it's a really helpful kind of learning. (PL1)

If everyone has the same opportunity to say something, do something, be in connection with others and the vibes are positive and results will be faster. (PL8)

Students often brought some exemplifications of collaborative learning from their practice. They usually gave examples from their school or university experience. They also noticed that the courses about which they were interviewees stimulated collaboration, by bringing examples of activities taken both – online (e.g. on MSTEams or Padlet) and offline (e.g. preparations of microteaching for the final tasks). They also analysed the process of collaborative learning by showing relationships between students:

It was like in our drama classes. We usually were divided into groups, received some tasks and worked together. Creating a team and sharing knowledge and opinions with the class and creating

something together, giving a word, listening to everyone. We care about each other's opinions, we want to be listened to, so we react how we want to be reacted. (PL4)

The most collaborative was the last task. To think about, in the group you always have people with different opinions and you have to deal with those different opinions. (PL2)

I really liked my classmates. At each meeting, we talked more and I managed to meet new people (e.g. from Greece), which was an additional advantage of group classes. (PL8)

We worked in an international group, so first everyone presented their point of view and then we made decisions together. I liked that in group work, each vote was important and we agreed together on what we would do one by one (PL9)

Characteristics of un/successful collaborative learning experiences

The second part of each interview was dedicated to successful and unsuccessful collaborative learning. In this part, the interviewees analysed their collaborative learning experiences gathered during both courses. They focused mainly on positive aspects and successful experiences. They did not mention any negative experiences, thus we asked them to define and list also the elements of successful and unsuccessful collaborative experiences in general (not only in relation to the courses).

Interviewees were asked about the most successful collaborative activities taken during the courses. A couple of common elements emerged from all interviewee descriptions, bringing the criteria of *success*, namely: 1) *participation* (balances enrolment) of all group members, 2) positive emotions, *feelings of "flow"*, 3) *"trust"* and *feedback* during the learning process. With some interviewees we would also add 4) *effect of scale* – long-lasting activities with many participants (PL1, PL2, PL3, PL6, PL7, PL8).

All interviewees mentioned the *participatory* character of taken activities as the crucial element of successful collaborative learning. This participatory character means that the group members have to be engaged in the learning process and the goal of the activity. Enrolment brings some sort of behavioural aspects - taking activities and actions, as well as the emotional aspects – interest in the topic (studied issue, field). According to the students all team members have to be engaged, to have a common interest and to do something. It was understood as the *possibility* to do so, by creating conditions (next paragraph), but also as the *obligation* for sharing responsibility of the taken process:

All members of the group have to be involved, the group need to have an interest in a common thing and they have to work together. (PL1)

Some people take too many responsibilities and others don't and it doesn't work. Everyone should have some word to say and everybody should to the same points. (PL4)

The success of collaborative learning is not a perfect project. This is the process of doing things, and how they (students) will be connected to each other. It's about the process if you see the group is connected and everyone is doing it. (PL6)

In the Kamishibai theatre task, everyone was responsible for their own task, in our group communication was perfect, we shared the tasks and achieved success. We drew and created a story, which was also approved by the other class members (PL9)

The emotional aspects were mentioned in statements of all the interviewees. The interest in the topic of learning (mentioned previously) is just one of them. Students described the successful collaboration as the activity recognisable (perceptible) by the strong, positive emotions and feelings, which can be called “flow” or “immersion”. Participating in those activities brings joyfulness and satisfaction, while limiting tiredness:

That day when we made a world with colours. Then we saw this ideas very clearly. When I took a look at other people’s faces, they were happy and wanted to take a picture together - it was our product - we felt it was ours, we were so laughing and entertained. (PL4)

(...) the moment when we did the final task, sharing ideas, having some insight feeling - when you wake up in the morning and you are able to wake up. And when you do not feel that time has passed away. (PL5)

Everyone feels safe, everyone is satisfied with how it works. If everyone participates in activities, no one is excluded. (PL7)

Two teachers gave us two different ways of presentation and emotions; I liked this during a class with Miss Kasia – music (expression), and during class with a second teacher I had the opportunity to be in a role, paint, draw my own ideas (what was so funny and practical) I should be myself with children. (PL8)

We could see all the ideas prepared online, because they were uploaded by the teacher (comics, songs and ideas) and then we discussed them together it in the classroom. (PL9)

The *feedback* received from the teacher (leader of the group) and from the colleagues (other group members) was another extremely important determinant of success in the collaborative learning process. The expectation was to make it “proper” – with clear and direct information and critical comments (but free of criticism and judgements!). The crucial conditions for that is full interpersonal “trust” delivered by strong bonds of the group members and the climate of openness and acceptance:

(...) it was successful when we finished the exercise and we talked about it, then it was always collaborative, because we talked about how we felt during the exercise and how we did it. (PL5)

(...) thinking about our presentation, if we think that it’s full of information, it’s the first step, then you need to compare it with others. If teachers and students think that it’s informational, then your opinion is confronted and then you have the feeling that you did well. (PL2)

While performing the exercises, we did not judge each other. The works allowed us to open our minds... e.g. using the Ebru method (and earlier with name music), everyone introduced themselves, and there were no wrong answers, even though each work was different. (PL8)

Some interviewees indicated that for success you need to put a lot of effort into the process. It can be characterised as an *effect of scale* – the longer the activities last, the more complex it is, the more people it enrolls – the more successful it will be:

I remember the colourful sheets, when we made big paintings – and that was the best example, when we scratched the newspapers – we were a big group. First we did it alone, then we communicated with each other in the group and finally presented on the forum. (PL3)

Each class was connected with each other, e.g. First, we created the melody of the name musically, then we conveyed it in colours and finally described it. We devoted time and focus to each task, but only when we described the work did I feel satisfied. (PL9)

The students listed no negative experiences from their course participation. Thus, we asked them about general experiences (out of courses) and areas of improvement for better collaboration. They mentioned: more mixing of people while taking group activities, e.g. by changing seats (PL1); stimulating the interest of participants, clear delivering of tasks and duties, increasing information flow between group members (PL2); clarifying communication – in case the instruction for the tasks are not understandable (PL3), using mediation by teachers in case of conflicts of interests:

We could be not ideal with each other (...). We can work between groups. We can change the topic of work, to make sure that they will cooperate. (PL4).

(...) maybe in its first lecture, we could do some ice-breaking games. (PL6)

I definitely felt a sense of community. But the Spanish group is a little bit closed. When we were doing exercise, we were all together. But later they discussed it in their own language. (PL7)

Finally, some of the key characteristics of successful collaborative experiences are: 1) participation, 2) feelings of “flow”, 3) feedback in trust atmosphere, and 4) effect of scale – long-lasting activities with many participants. This list was already developed by the answers to the direct question about key characteristics of successful collaborative learning. However, some of the answers were not so common – mentioned by single people (some of them resembled previously mentioned traits). Those characteristics were: similar ideas, views, and attitudes for accelerating the feeling of a good relationship (PL1, PL7, PL8) eg. relation with a teacher: “I think that the tutor acts like a guide. be on the same board with students, be friendly to the students and support them. Make safe atmosphere, and student can tell him everything” (PL7); some surprising events – unpredictable games (PL1); high level of creativeness of the collaboration’s results (PL2) and in this connection “I didn't think that creating avatars could be used educationally! (cards with emotions, comic book) Wow!” (PL9); in-depth reflection, social exchange (PL3); internal positive sensation after finishing working on a task, that “everything went good and that you learned something new” (PL5); increasing curiosity of other group members in the presented content – “when people ask you about it, one day they think it is relevant and that you took something for you” (PL5).

Expectations and ideas about future collaborations

All interviewees have revealed the educational context as the main field in which collaboration (and collaborative learning) can be continued by them. Thus, in the future they consider using it at educational institutions: universities, schools, kindergartens, and educational centres (both governmental and private). They mention implementing collaborative learning methods with all kinds of students (pupils and participants of all forms of learning) during the courses, classes and other forms of learning (regardless of their field and content).

In the “near” future they mentioned academic classes – other courses at AMU University and their home universities after returning from international exchange. What is important, they noticed that collaborative learning and using some elements of art techniques (e.g. drama, music and fine arts) can be implemented in all courses:

I can take knowledge in other classes, offer games at my home university, (...) for other subjects, with people who study physics, chemistry. (PL1)

We are teachers and we can use drama in every lesson, in every day, even in other classes we can use some techniques. It's not only teaching skills. (PL2)

I did not work with Padlet or Canva earlier. I learned a lot. (...) Pixton was so funny, I did some crazy things. I think it could be because in primary school, for kindergarten I will create a comic book and show them. (...) Art in the box. I think it's a good idea for primary schools. I will use it. (PL7)

I liked every activity from Ebru and Canva, I will show them to my class: you can have a great time while making good educational materials. (PL9)

Many of the interviewees mentioned that they would like to use specific methods of our courses (e.g. drama, music, fine arts projects) for their future collaborative work. Some have also declared searching for an art group and leaders to develop their skills (PL2, PL4, PL6, PL8, PL9). While thinking about more “distant” future usage of collaborative learning all interviewees indicated working with pupils at schools. The role of collaboration was reflected for various reasons, e.g. integrating classes, coping with stress, and increasing students' engagement and activities. For example:

In every class we can have some time for activities like that, at the end or the beginning, at least 15 minutes, not to make notes it's helpful for our mind, when we can laugh. (PL1)

I would use it in a school, but now I learned to use it with kids, because we have to consult, work and collaborate with students, and not to teach them individually. I think when you are sharing knowledge with your family and other places, but school is the best. (PL5)

Each class had something different, but it all came together. It was something revealing for me, I learned a lot. About techniques but also about how to give instructions. (PL8)

All interviewees have mentioned the crucial meaning of educational institutions for future collaborations. However, they have also expanded understanding of it for all institutions

offering collaborative work. They explained that every institution (not only school) where teaching-learning is the main process, when people work together, exchange experience and knowledge; might implement collaborative learning.

Universities, schools and maybe kindergartens, (...) in some companies maybe, when you need a brainstorming, they need to collaborate. When you are trying to learn something you can do it yourself, but it's better to exchange opinions. (PL2)

Out of educational institutions, you can use it in offices, but you can use it everywhere – like when you are dealing and working with people. (PL5)

Certainly in kindergarten and school (...). Conducting workshops from another institution, e.g. conducting training for teachers, social educators. (PL9)

The interviewees were asked about skills, competencies and knowledge necessary for future collaborations. In their statements, they have focused on the main abilities of teachers (educational process leaders). Those abilities were: sharing knowledge, managing process of knowledge and experience exchange (PL2, PL3, PL5, PL7, PL8, PL9), empathy – sharing the same emotions and feelings (PL1, PL4, PL6), creativeness and cultural knowledge (PL3, PL6, PL7, PL8), awareness of social, emotional and cognitive functioning of people (PL4, PL5, PL9). The knowledge mentioned for future collaborations reflects the individual axis (psychology, pedagogy) and social axis – group processes and activity context (sociology, cultural studies):

I can say maybe psychology, mediation and cultural knowledge would be important. As people respect others' opinions and to better understand their psychology – thoughts, attitudes, well-being, and human relationships. For teaching progress, you have to be able to tell them what to do, and you have to say clearly to make them understand. (PL4)

I will probably choose not a classical museum. Something more interactive which provides the long memories and lets them participate and make a positive boundary to art. (PL7)

I see the potential of using Big Ideas and SEA in social education with children from poor families, etc. Art (also online) can help them work with their problems. (PL9)

Modes of adapting collaborative activities to different learning styles

The students were asked about possible adaptations of collaborative activities. They usually considered it as an advantageous, helpful and modern way of learning and teaching. However, they have identified situations where they consider it as demanding some adjustments to the participants' traits, with a focus on:

- 1) *temperamental/personality traits*, e.g. “when you are very shy” (PL1), being a perfectionist and “preference to prepare tasks alone” (PL2);
- 2) *learning style* with a preference for individual learning, e.g. “finding collaborative learning as useless” (PL1), having previous “bad experiences” with collaborative learning or lack of that experience, when “you have never tried this” (PL3); “I will probably choose not a classical museum. Something more interactive which provides

them the long memories and lets them participate in activities and maybe make a positive boundary to art" (PL7)

- 3) *communication and social abilities*, with specific *disorders*, e.g. social or emotional – "you are paralysed when you have to speak in front of the group" (PL3), "social phobia, when you cannot talk to others" (PL4).
- 4) *participation and physical disabilities*, e.g. using a wheelchair – "for students who cannot move, but can participate in the meeting via online availability". (PL9)

Interviewees have offered several ways to solve those obstacles. Among them the most often mentioned (by all of them) were two solutions: emerging students in group/collaborative tasks and alternative individual tasks.

The most common way offered by the interviewees was emerging students into collaborative learning. It was a way offered mainly toward students, who were not used to that form of learning. Interviewees mentioned a couple of strategies: illustrative tasks or passive activities by observation; showing powers of collaborative learning in comparison to individual strategies; and integrating students before introducing collaborative tasks with a "step-by-step" strategy. For example:

If somebody is super-shy we could have some stages, from lower to highest. Some people need time, so we could do the task when they can introduce themselves and then work in pairs, [...] maybe it's better to start with small groups or with their friends, where they can speak a bit, communicate and know better and then change the peers. (PL2)

To have them in a group, we can give them some roles, make their roles longer and bigger when the time passes and we can make them be more adjusted. (PL4)

The division of tasks, as we had during classes, from one exercise to another, allowed all people to be involved, so no one watched, everyone participated. (PL8)

Some students mentioned that it might be necessary to use a "tough" approach – make collaborative work obligatory and monitor its implementation (PL3, PL5), others consider a more "mild" approach by offering collaboration (PL1, PL2, PL4):

Even when you have people who prefer to do something individually, you can say that it's obligatory to work in a group. Maybe he or she didn't experience it in their life, and then they can do it. With no obligation that person will never work in a group. (PL3)

This "emerging" could be done also by encouraging students with support of other members of a group to show the benefits and advantages of collaboration (PL3). Apart from that, in students' statements, they also emphasised the multitude of activities undertaken through art. They also noticed that the diverse treatment of one topic through various types of creative activity made them not realise that they were working within the syncretism of arts. Still, they perceived the process as coherent and holistic (PL6, PL7, PL8, PL9).

The second idea – alternative individual tasks – was about finding for the students "resistant" to collaborative learning, a way to be engaged in some parts of the activities taken by the group. It could be done in multiple ways, e.g. preparing individually some content

(outlet, presentation, form) for other course participants (PL1, PL2, PL4), sharing the prepared elements of a common task in online form instead of presenting it in the forum (PL3, PL5). For example:

You can ask them to write a comment and to share ideas – they do not have to comment in a group. Maybe do some writing and prepare a paper anonymously e.g. online. (PL5)

Some online tasks were individual, but they involved creative problem solving and the grading rules were not always clear to me. Individual tasks were necessary because we could go through the learning process through online art ourselves, but I would add clear criteria for assessing this task and, for example, presenting the best works in the room, because they were only available to the teacher. (PL6)

Some students (PL3, PL5) also offered a *modification or adjustment* of the task to the specific needs of the students. Important element mentioned by the students was the recognition of those needs (by direct questioning) and offering full adaptation:

We can get their interest and we can give them tasks, if they like listening to music, we can do tasks in the group to make something with music. (PL4)

Maybe some activities like a presentation where you have to go in front of all the people can be done by sitting in their chair instead of going to a table. They can feel more confident. We can also ask them what we can do to make them feel better. (PL5).

Understandings of PLCs

The interviewees' statements showed that they understood the "professional learning community" in two ways: 1) the group of professionals in some field working together (recognisable by all interviewees) and 2) the group of people who are professionally in the field of learning (educators). Those notions were often intermingled, whereas the first one was dominating over the second one.

The professional learning community was perceived by all interviewees as a group of people with a high level of skills and abilities in the field. Those skills were developed by previous practice and meant that the members of the learning community were prepared for it. Leading such a group was considered ambivalent.

The main advantage of leading "professionals" (in comparison to "newbies") was that they do not need so many introductory meetings, explanations and instructions, because they already are experienced in the field. It may lead to fewer duties and more time to be focused on the content of the subject and techniques of teaching. For example:

They behave they know what to do, they have strict time, they do tasks frequently, faster, better, they have some basis, knowledge behind them (...). (PL2)

In a professional learning group, you can teach what you think is important for learning – you can teach them the most important things about techniques. They know how to act, but they are not professionals in how to teach and how to do it for inclusion. (PL5)

Learning goes faster because everything is well organized and arranged. (PL9)

Also, the teachers expect more from professionals. They will be: assigning a more difficult task to them, expecting more creative results and non-standardised solutions to a problem, which can bring new knowledge:

My expectation is that I do not need to explain everything in the class. I would expect big ideas from them. I believe it's the best way of learning. If I gave them a duty, they should do their best and I expect they to give me the things that I do not know (PL3)

They expect unconventional and quick solutions for creative works combined with socially engaged art. As a creative teacher, I will expect this from my students as well (PL8)

The interviewees noticed that the main disadvantage while working with professionals would be a higher level of expectations toward classes and teachers (e.g. expecting practical solutions for everyday problems). As a result, it may be more demanding and stressful for teachers to lead a group of professionals:

For professionals, it's not enough to get structured knowledge. It was a bit too easy, to be a professional learning community we need to get more professional information, like on the lessons – we really need to do more tasks, get more information. (PL2)

I would be more stressed if I led a professional group. If they know something I do not know, I wouldn't be very nice. You can make surprise them. (PL5)

For professionals, fine arts tasks are often about crossing their own boundaries, but I don't feel comfortable crossing them with a group. (PL6)

Important is the role of different areas of knowledge in future collaborations. (PL7)

The interviewees also shared the expectation that among professionals there might be more tension (fights, quarrels) – due to their experience they might be more “stiff”, “narrowed”. That will demand more communication skills from teacher (e.g. mediation):

They may have some opinions about the topic, that might be problematic, because they have something behind them, and there can be little fights. (PL2)

Working with professionals may demand teachers find new solutions for leading the group and making some adjustments, but in the end, it may be more fruitful:

They would expect to gather some high skills – it could be about some practical solutions and developing skills. We could find some projects – like creating a product for visible results – they could do something more for society. (PL4)

These projects could bring about positive changes in society, especially in families with social problems. (PL9)

Interviewees in their statements have recognised several ways to increase the level of professionalisation of collaborative learning. Those identified strategies were:

1) increasing the level of activity and participation, making students more engaged:

Students cannot just sit, read, and not answer about something, everyone is engaged. (PL1)

The art boxes were great. For international students, having creation tools allowed them to complete the task in a given time without additional time spent searching for materials (in another language). This increases engagement. (PL9)

2) increasing the level of expectations and demands toward course participants (giving fewer explanations and demanding more advanced effects). For example:

We need to do more things about our classes. We could do some high-level things – we would need some knowledge first. Maybe we could do some scenes and audience later on (theatre with audience). (PL3)

3) more openness toward the environment and more activities for the needs of the local community. That could make the course experiences more meaningful:

We can create some projects together and present them to other people to get their attention and attract them, and that would be a real experience. When we work on some problems here, but they are all over the world and we can show how to deal with them. (PL4)

Other participants' reflections

All of the interviewees at some point in their statements have shown their interest in microteaching. They strongly stressed that this was one of the most collaborative experiences they had during the courses. It allowed them for: increasing skills (e.g. communication), create strong bonds with other group members and gain a better understanding of the role of a teacher and what it means to be a teacher:

When students do the teaching themselves, they start to appreciate teachers more, it's like with some intention he did. In the teacher role, we do not hesitate – there is no way to be shy, we stop being shy in talking because we are the ones to talk. (PL1)

We have communicated a lot during the final task. My group were my friends in normal life, so we had good communication with each other. (PL3)

In the beginning, I thought that the Spanish students were a closed group (they spoke only in their own language). But during the puppets exercise, I was alone among students of this nationality and we talked in English. I met new people with whom we still keep in touch after the classes and have common topics to discuss and spend time together. (PL8)

Students have also noticed the importance of taking *online activities* during the course. According to students, it increased the quality of collaborative learning, by: creating

conditions for communication and flow of information (MSTeams), exchanging knowledge and experience (Padlet), making them engaged during the time between classes (interactive presentations) and stimulating their engagement and sharing knowledge (Padlet); e.g.:

Padlet was very useful for the collaboration, within all the things you can bring your own ideas, but you have to find the appropriate picture. (PL1)

When you have online and offline workshops, then you can go home, to get some information and work on task, you do not lose time on workshops. (PL2)

The course was really useful for me because I need these tools and activities for my work. (PL6)

6.5 Conclusions on professional learning communities

During both courses offered at AMU, students had the opportunity to acquire or deepen their knowledge of drama methods and some art disciplines (music, dance, visual arts) and apply them in a new context. The courses' content strongly emphasised the social dimension of activities. It could be stated that the form was fully cooperative and collaborative. Almost all of the meetings were conducted in the form of workshops, with the activities held mainly in forms demanding interactions between participants. Most of the tasks and activities were conducted in a collaborative form: some demanded full cooperation between all group members, and some were conducted in teams created randomly by the needs of exercises. Even in the case of individual tasks, they were usually held in front of the group, with sum-ups (reflections, questions and feedback) done in the forum.

The integration of technology in the courses was also crucial, enriching it and uncovering new possibilities for students' collaboration. The usage of ICT tools in asynchronous mode became a stimulus for the exchange of opinions, knowledge and experiences during the "in-between" time of running meetings.

The teacher's role in facilitating engagement and productive dialogue received high praise from students. Collaboration was highly satisfying, with students expressing in intermediate and final questionnaires a strong sense of being part of a learning community and feeling a connection to the courses. The use of active teaching methods (drama, dance, group work during workshops) and the usage of digital tools contributed to creating an environment conducive to deep integration and collaboration.

Peer relations were generally positive, and participants reported comfort, active engagement, and skill development. While there was a slight indication of potential discomfort in expressing disagreement, it was infrequent, and overall, participants felt acknowledged in their interactions. The overall evaluation of collaborative learning in the course was overwhelmingly positive, with participants finding it effective and expressing satisfaction. While there were mixed responses about the perception of collaboration continuing in the future, the overall sentiment remained favourable. Notably, a significant portion did not find collaborative learning to be excessively time-consuming, indicating a balanced perspective on the required time investment. It seems that the time devoted to collaborative working was considered as worth taking it without a feeling of regret.

All these experiences contributed to the enrichment and reflective consideration of one's own teaching skills. Students noticed their personal development, and the increase of

competence in using methods and techniques presented during classes. One of the most fruitful solutions was microteaching sessions, which allowed students to experiment with the role of meeting leaders and tutors/teachers in a safe environment. They have also mentioned multiple links and possibilities to use those methods for their teaching careers.

The experiential nature of collaboration, engagement, and involvement in dimensions beyond regular classes conducted using different methods enriched the group of future teachers. It provided them with an opportunity to reflect not only on their teaching tools but also on their own teacher identity, and also on the methods for building a group, fostering collaboration, and utilising the possibilities of the presented methods when dealing with challenging and demanding topics.

The main features and expectations were related to new possibilities of utilising the trained techniques and methods as an example of SEA, especially in the context of online and blended learning. The course fulfilled these expectations, as evidenced by student assessments conducted during and at the end of the course. The experiences of students proved that actions taken by them can interfere with social processes and stimulate social justice and social change.

Students' engagement in the course was notably high, reflecting the effectiveness of engaging class formats and compelling topics with real-world connections. The participants experienced a transformation in their understanding of SEA through classes, deepening their knowledge and expanding their perspectives. They received the possibility to deepen their individual enrolment in broader social processes.

The usage of digital tools in the course was well-received, with participants recognising their appropriateness and effectiveness in enhancing SEA work. Blended learning was highlighted as a valuable approach, enabling a more detailed exploration of topics, deepening knowledge, and fostering active participation and enjoyment. The online forms (e.g. interactive presentations, sending materials by platforms) allowed for rational management of the time. The contact classes were consumed for integration and reflection and were fully focused on the content of learning. It was a fully experiential, constructivism-based process.

The course not only introduced new collaboration methods but also facilitated relational connections among participants, fostering friendships and deeper insights into human relationships. Students appreciated the opportunities to integrate newfound knowledge and skills into their professional practices, with some aligning course content with specific career plans.

The interviews conducted with chosen students proved that they received an in-depth understanding of collaborative learning. They were able to define crucial elements of professional learning communities with a focus on: cooperation, team spirit, participation, interpersonal trust, openness for diversity, engagement, common goal orientation, sharing knowledge, exchange of experiences, emotional immersion, etc. They considered learning in such communities as modern and adjusted to the current world's demands.

Furthermore, participants acknowledged specific techniques they learned during the classes, attributing inspiration for their future endeavours to both the course structure and the personalities of the instructors. Overall, the course had a positive impact on participants, influencing their understanding of SEA, collaboration methods, and providing practical insights applicable to their professional paths.

The courses have charted new paths in educating students, pre-service teachers. It successfully merged the potential of Socially Engaged Art (SEA) with online and blended learning, creating unique conditions not only for learning but also for expanding their educational and social competencies. For many individuals, it was a time of self-reflection and exploration of their role within the group, as well as their approach to teaching.

We plan to repeat both courses in the upcoming years, as they brought even more benefits and uncovered more areas of inquiry than initially anticipated.

CHAPTER 7. *University of Barcelona report*

Diego Calderón, Joan Miquel Porquer, Paula Estalayo and Aurelio Castro

The University of Barcelona organized two distinct training courses: “Bringing Socially Engaged Arts to Secondary School Using Digital Technology” (Course 1), offered for students in the Master’s degree on Teachers’ Training for Secondary Education, at the Faculty of Education of the University of Barcelona; and “Bringing Socially Engaged Arts to Primary School” (Course 2), specifically designed as a professional training course for in-service primary school teachers.

A total of 45 educators participated in these two courses: 21 in Course 1 and 24 in Course 2. It should be noted that the responses gathered from the questionnaires do not reflect the views of all the course participants since not everyone completed the questionnaires. 33 participants completed the intermediate questionnaire (15 in Course 1, 18 in Course 2), while only 17 completed the final questionnaire (5 in course 1, 12 in course 2). Additionally, to gather qualitative insights, interviews were conducted with two Education students and five in-service primary teachers. The subsequent sections will provide a detailed overview of each course separately.

7.1 Course 1: *Bringing Socially Engaged Arts to Secondary School Using Digital Technology*

“Bringing Socially Engaged Arts to Secondary School Using Digital Technology” was a course offered to students of the speciality of Music in the Master’s Degree on Teachers’ Training for Secondary Education at the University of Barcelona. The course served as a reformulation of an existing subject in the Masters’ Music itinerary, under the title “Music and Technologies for Learning and Knowledge”, with the incorporation of Socially Engaged Arts (SEA) as a framework for the use of these technologies. Future Secondary school teachers had the opportunity to explore examples of Music SEA projects – in a Master’s context where SEA were not present before – while working as a community and critically approaching technological tools.

7.1.1 Demographics of the participants in the intermediate and final questionnaires

Regarding the course developed in the Master’s for Secondary School Teacher Training, below we present the answers obtained with the intermediate and final questionnaires.

Observing the gender of the participants who responded to the intermediate questionnaire (IQ), 73% were men, 20% were women, and 7% identified themselves as non-binary (figure 1, left). Regarding the gender of the respondents to the final questionnaire (FQ), 60% were men while 40% were women (figure 1, right).

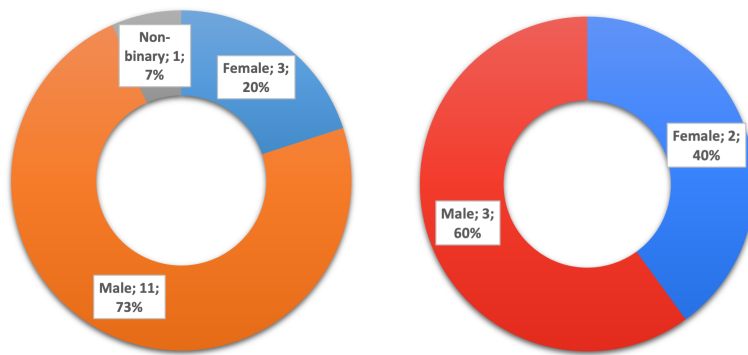


Figure 1. Gender of the participants in the IQ (left) and FQ (right).

Concerning age, in the IQ the majority of respondents, 53%, were between 26 and 35 years old (figure 2, left), while 80% of the FQ participants were between 26 and 35 years old (figure 2, right).

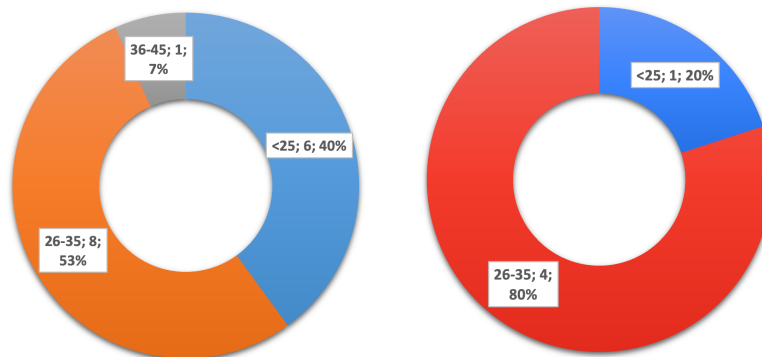


Figure 2. Age of participants in the IQ (left) and FQ (right).

Regarding Higher Education previous to the Master's degree, 2 students held a Bachelor's degree in Education while 3 students did another type of university-level degree (figure 3). 73% of the participants in the IQ had no teaching experience in formal contexts (figure 4).

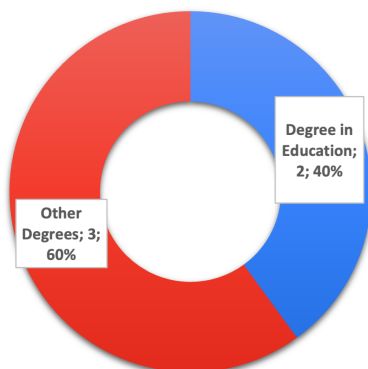


Figure 3. Education of participants.
Data from the FQ.

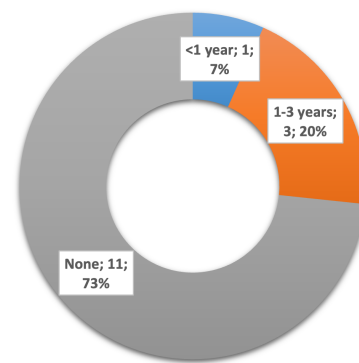


Figure 4. Participants' teaching experience in formal environments. Data from the IQ.

Most of the participants in the FQ (60%) had the availability of new technologies and software programs in their learning environment (figure 5). The responses in the FQ about the

perception of technology proficiency were varied. While two participants considered themselves to have a high proficiency, one perceived it as low, one as medium and one as very high (figure 6). Finally, most participants in the FQ spoke Spanish and another language (figure 7).

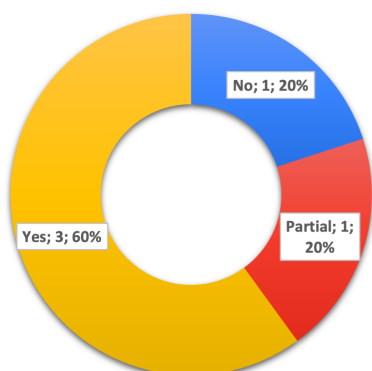


Figure 5. Availability of new technologies and software in the learning environment.
Data from the FQ.

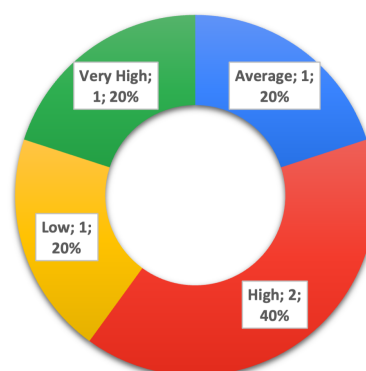


Figure 6. Perceived proficiency with technology. Data from the FQ.

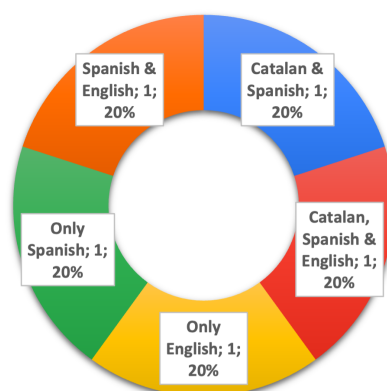


Figure 7. Language spoken by the participants of the FQ.

7.1.2 Description of the results of the intermediate and final questionnaires

Intermediate Questionnaire

Regarding the activities carried out among future secondary school teachers during the course, their commitment was very high. On one hand, it was a participation linked to a mandatory subject that contributed to the final grade. On the other hand, the topics were based on students' interests and were connected to the work previously done in another subject they had already taken. Participants valued particularly the dynamism of the sessions (that were "entertaining and promoted personal development" and forced "reflection, mental activity"), the variety of technological tools and SEA examples provided (that "open a lot of possibilities" and show the way to "a more entertaining and personally engaging" learning system) and the class being a safe space to explore this new knowledge in group ("I've gained more confidence [in exploring SEA with the methods explored in the subject]").

The changes in the interpretation of SEA projects through virtual interventions were not substantial, since a great deal of students in the subject were already sensitized to this topic. In this respect, many of them were already involved in various SEA projects. The significant change was the awareness that some of the projects in which they were already participating or familiarized were SEA projects. One of the students stated it as: "I knew different examples of SEA projects before, but I wasn't aware there *were* SEA projects".

The course was filled with digital activities. From the application of resources to the critical examination of their use, it was the guiding theme of the sessions. More specifically, the discovery of new forms of collaboration was more based on the knowledge of the course peers and their interests. This led to numerous proposals for external collaborations, both during the course and for the future. However, students felt that even using digital strategies (like blended learning) to stretch the boundaries of the course, more time should be allowed to "deepen in the social commitment" of arts and technology, and "question power structures [rooted in educational curricula]."

Regarding the connection with the participants' teaching, this was notable in non-formal contexts but not yet in their secondary school teaching. This is because, as already mentioned, the course was addressed to pre-service teachers, so they had not worked yet as educators (although some of them had some experience in formal teaching environments, none were in service during the time of the training).

Final Questionnaire

In Table 1, all the responses related to the role of the teachers, perceived collaboration, Relation with peers, and assessment of collaborative learning are displayed.

Table 1. Results obtained from the final questionnaire regarding course 1.

Role of the teachers	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD
a) The tutor/teacher stimulated collaboration	-	-	3 60%	2 40%	3,4	0,547
b) The tutor/teacher helped to keep course participants engaged and participating in productive dialogue	-	-	4 80%	1 20%	3,2	0,477
c) The tutor/teacher actions reinforced the development of a sense of community among participants of the course	-	3 60%	2 40%	-	2,4	0,547
Perceived collaboration						
a) I felt part of a learning community in my group	-	1 20%	1 20%	3 60%	3,4	0,894
b) Getting to know other course participants gave me a sense of belonging in the course	-	-	4 80%	1 20%	3,2	0,447
Relation with peers						
a) I actively exchanged my ideas with group members	-	-	1 20%	4 80%	3,8	0,447
b) I was able to develop new skills and knowledge from other members in my group	-	-	2 40%	3 60%	3,6	0,547
c) I was able to develop problem-solving skills through peer collaboration	-	-	3 60%	2 40%	3,4	0,547
d) I felt comfortable participating in the course discussions	-	1 20%	2 40%	2 40%	3,2	0,836

e) I felt comfortable interacting with other course participants	-	-	1 20%	4 80%	3,8	0,447
f) I felt comfortable disagreeing with other course participants while still maintaining a sense of trust	-	1 20%	3 60%	1 20%	3	0,707
g) I felt that my point of view was acknowledged by other course participants	-	1 20%	3 60%	1 20%	3	0,707
Evaluation of collaborative learning						
a) I felt that collaborative learning in my group was effective	-	2 40%	2 40%	1 20%	2,8	0,836
b) I felt that collaborative learning in my group was time-consuming	1 20%	-	1 20%	3 60%	3,2	1,303
c) I felt that the collaboration developed in the group will continue in the future	1 20%	2 40%	2 40%	-	2,2	0,836
d) Overall, I am satisfied with my collaborative learning experience in this course	-	2 40%	2 40%	1 20%	2,8	0,836

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree, SD=Standard Deviation

Although receiving an overall low number of answers in the questionnaire (N=5), we might venture a summary of the results as follows:

- **Role of the teacher:** All participants agreed or totally agreed that the tutor effectively fostered collaboration and maintained their engagement in course activities. However, 3 out of 5 respondents indicated that the sense of community was not notably reinforced by the instructor. This disparity should inform future iterations of the course, aiming to bolster connections among participants. One potential approach could involve expanding community-building activities to encompass other subjects within the Master's Degree program.
- **Perceived collaboration and relation with peers:** Despite the findings from the earlier section, most respondents perceived themselves as members of a learning community within their group (with 4 out of 5 in agreement), all of them even reporting a sense of belonging – as will be further elucidated in the interviews outlined in this report. The course's emphasis on group activities aimed at fostering familiarity among students – to know each other, their shared formative and life experiences, and future teaching aspirations – likely contributed to these outcomes. Building upon this collaborative environment, the majority of participants expressed positive sentiments regarding their relationships with their peers.
- **Evaluation of collaborative learning:** Responses in this section exhibit a range of agreement levels, spanning from total agreement to total disagreement. Notably, however, all statements contain elements of negativity to some degree. It's important to highlight, even taking into account the small sample size, the notable perception that collaborative learning was time-consuming (with 4 out of 5 respondents concurring) and the scepticism regarding the continuity of collaboration between peers after the course (with 3 out of 5 respondents expressing doubts about it). While we acknowledge that the perception of time consumption may be influenced by the overall workload inherent to the Master's Degree program, the doubt regarding future collaboration contrasts with statements made during the interviews. Interviewees observe that the community of music teachers in training intends to maintain

connections, share professional experiences, and exchange knowledge in the foreseeable future.

Changes and continuities between both questionnaires

As only 5 people responded to the final questionnaire, it is difficult (if not impossible) to establish such relationships accurately. In any case, the daily observation of the in-training teachers allows us to affirm that the acceptance of technology as an educational resource, perhaps linked to the participants' generation, mediated their learning experiences during the course.

Overall, no changes were observed between the intermediate and final questionnaires concerning the attitude of the participants. Therefore, we consider their attitude as consistent throughout the course.

Although digital methods were recognized as a valid and sometimes desirable option for promoting collaborative learning, the participants would rather use face-to-face meetings. It is noteworthy that the participants were musicians, an art form in which communication is indispensable, and where virtuality can be a substitute but will never be at the same level as in-person interactions.

The fully online and blended methods were acknowledged as useful, especially for delivering unidirectional content and as a strategy in certain group work scenarios. In the case of online teaching, some participants recognized them as particularly beneficial for avoiding long commutes to the Faculty of Education (since some students lived and worked far from it, especially as the Music specialization was exclusively offered at the University of Barcelona in Catalonia). However, it was acknowledged that considering the content and the music specialization, online teaching wouldn't be suitable in many cases. Therefore, blended learning was preferred, as theoretical content could be delivered virtually, while practical activities could be reserved for face-to-face sessions.

7.1.3 Demographics of the interviewees

The list below presents the primary data gathered from the individuals who were interviewed. Recruiting students for interviews posed a challenge, as many transitioned directly into service roles upon completing their Master's Degree. Although other participants in the course expressed interest in being interviewed, it was only possible to conduct interviews with two of them, both male. Nonetheless, the insights provided by these individuals were valuable and significant.

- ES1 is 27 years old and has one year of teaching experience in non-formal Music Education. He holds a Higher degree in Modern Music and a Master's degree in Teachers' Training for Secondary Education.
- ES2 is 32 years old and had no teaching experience at the moment of the interview. He holds a Higher degree in Classical Music and a Master's degree in Teachers' Training for Secondary Education.

7.1.4 Analysis of the interviews

Notions of collaborative learning

As described by ES1, collaborative learning is a group learning approach where all members work together to achieve a common goal. Everyone collaborates to attain a shared learning outcome, a common objective.

Along the same line, ES2 considers collaborative learning as a type of learning that, as the word itself suggests, “is not an individual effort where you are alone”. Instead, it involves relying on assistance and maybe the collective generation of thoughts that can emerge from other people. “Ultimately, if you want to achieve a common objective or a specific goal, you are not alone in this case. Two minds think better than one, four minds brainstorm better than two”, he points out. So, in this sense, ES2 sees collaborative learning as the pursuit of a shared goal or the acquisition of knowledge through mutual support within a community of students.

Characteristics of un/successful collaborative learning experiences

The students responded to this aspect positively, acknowledging successful experiences. In ES2’s perspective, the success of collaborative learning is established by defining objectives at the outset. The goal is to accomplish specific objectives, striving to attain elements within the learning process. Success is measured by evaluating the degree to which these objectives are met. The assessment may depend on the nature of the objective – whether it's more quantifiable, such as a metric, or involves elements that are less easily measured. He states: “It varies. In my case, after setting these initial objectives – clarifying what we aim to achieve and the direction we intend to take in our learning –, the outcome determines how closely I have approached those objectives. It could be quantified to some extent, indicating the level of accomplishment. If the achievement falls short, it becomes crucial to identify the factors that hindered reaching the goal”.

Meanwhile, ES1 views success in collaborative learning as the group's exceptional ability to perform tasks necessary for achieving a goal. This entails leveraging everyone's skills within the group, with everyone contributing. This is essential to collectively reach a common objective. According to him, “the key experiences of success in collaborative learning would involve finding a challenge”. In other words, the collaborative experience should pose a challenge for everyone in the group, so that everyone can have a meaningful learning experience to a similar or relatively equal extent. On the other hand, ES2 summarized it as “a clear understanding of the intended direction, that is, making sure that the direction is well understood so that, collectively, the group can materialize that goal”.

Expectations and ideas about future collaborations

In terms of collaborative efforts, the interviewees predominantly highlighted their interactions with classmates. ES2 thus expressed his viewpoint: “Certainly, the collaboration will persist. However, there are various factors at play, contingent on the institution... The positive aspect we've all experienced is when you find individuals with whom you enjoy working and can establish a collaborative synergy. It becomes challenging to resist working

with those who make the process more seamless. Undoubtedly, if the opportunity arises to continue working and collaborating with these individuals, I will readily embrace it. We already understand each other's work styles, fostering a mutual understanding that significantly streamlines the work. Should the opportunity present itself again, we'll wholeheartedly seize it, knowing that success is likely".

Conversely, ES1 emphatically stated: "Yes, and in fact, [the collaboration with classmates] continues to this day. Our WhatsApp group remains active, serving as a platform for sharing information related to learning scenarios, innovative materials, and insights about job exams. Casual conversations are also part of it, and whenever someone seeks clarification, we are all poised to assist to the best of our abilities. I intend to sustain this connection, and we will collectively nurture it".

The participants did not express any preference for collaboration with other institutions. Perhaps this is because this course was offered within the framework of a regulated education system where, at least in practice, there was no room for collaboration with other institutions.

ES2 hadn't thought about the topic of collaborations, while ES1 referred to the school where he already worked. In that context, language and literature teachers approached him because they had created a debate group that they were taking to the school radio. They would like the music teacher to create a learning situation where students might compose the theme for the school radio debate podcast. Therefore, the different knowledge areas in the school where he worked were somewhat connected in certain aspects and collaborative projects.

In any case, both interviewees agreed that to carry out collaborative activities, it was crucial to have a deep understanding of both the teachers and the students who would be involved. This understanding could be gained through studying their profiles, interests, and so on.

Modes of adapting collaborative activities to different learning styles

Both interviewees agreed that the course effectively addressed various learning styles among students. It is worth noting, however, that the majority of students possessed similar levels of experience, competence, and skills. Since a great deal of the activity took place in groups, in cases where some of the members had less capacity in certain aspects (for example, the use of certain technological tools), members tended to help each other and level the overall results.

One of the course sessions delved into the utilization of Artificial Intelligence (AI), exemplified through hands-on experience with ChatGPT. ES2, in his interview, expressed appreciation for the chance to engage with such tools during class and pondered their implications for music education. He advocates for approaching AI without preconceived notions of "good and bad", but rather with an open mindset: "It was interesting to me to explore this tool [ChatGPT] in the course and being open to its use... to not have fear for what [AI] might bring anew and its potential ... Moreover, we should explore this potential and establish its limits". While not directly aligned with the objectives of the CARE/SS project, the incorporation of AI into future SEA online and blended learning courses may necessitate considerations of fair usage, although it presents an opportunity for enhanced engagement.

7.1.5 Conclusions on professional learning communities

The philosophy of the course “Bringing Socially Engaged Arts to Secondary School Using Digital Technology”, together with all those that compose the Master’s program, places at its centre the creation of a PLC entirely made by future secondary education music teachers. The speciality of music in the Master’s degree is especially adequate, as it is generally composed of a small group of students with the same professional objective who coexist stably throughout an academic year.

This course, based on the use of technological tools for the teaching of music and using SEA as a framework, aimed to nurture this kind of relationship, using almost entirely teaching-learning activities based on collaborative work, in groups that were shuffled for each activity. This forced students to relate and become a community, and allowed the consolidation of links between teachers in training, who had the possibility of recognizing their individual abilities while discovering mutual work possibilities.

The experience of this course underscores the indispensable role of direct human interaction, particularly in face-to-face settings, in cultivating a PLC, whether or not it is associated with the SEA. Hence, a blended learning approach assumes significance over a purely virtual one. Technological tools should enhance direct communication processes and optimize face-to-face learning experiences, both formal and informal, by facilitating the format, organization, and transmission of information, while also allowing ample room for attentive listening.

While the surveys raised doubts about the sustainability of this particular learning community, the interviews revealed a will to keep it active through technology. They reported keeping in touch and sharing experiences through instant messaging platform groups, at least during the early stages of their professional journeys. However, it is crucial to consider whether this PLC can endure, especially if many students do not transition into teaching roles that keep meaning or purpose onto it. Moreover, for those who do enter service, it is still to be seen if the demands and pressures of embarking on their careers might detract from fostering this emerging community.

If this PLC persists, with students ideally transitioning into teaching roles across various schools in Catalonia and Spain, it is worth contemplating its potential integration into larger, pre-existing PLCs. While we cannot be certain whether this integration will occur, we can hope that at least some of the now-teachers will uphold the SEA as a reference in their practice and integrate its principles, or *big ideas*, into new PLCs.

The teaching experience proved to be extremely enriching for both the participants and the tutor. One of the highlighted aspects was the shift in the pedagogical focus. While the critical use of digital technology remained central to the learning process, the incorporation of SEA projects and the exploration of initiatives undertaken in other subjects allowed for the weaving of connections between different educational experiences.

This change in perspective not only enriched digital content but also opened new possibilities for integrating diverse knowledge and skills. Contextualizing the course topics through specific projects not only added relevance but also fostered more meaningful learning, collaboration and recognition between students and future teaching professionals.

Furthermore, this experience led to adjustments in teaching methodology. The inclusion of case studies enabled the addressing of concrete situations and contextualizing theoretical

concepts. Likewise, the integration of resources such as gamification not only made learning more interactive and engaging but also motivated active student participation. The short activities proposed to students during class sessions included a competitive approach that aimed to motivate small-group dynamics, rewarding additional points in the evaluation to those teams that provided well-elaborated or innovative answers to the tasks (such as arguing about “good” and “bad” uses of technology, finding examples of SEA projects, etc.). This, as observed, promoted interaction at first, but became weary for the teachers in training by the end of the subject.

In conclusion, this pedagogical approach based on project integration and the adaptation of methodologies has proven effective in creating a more comprehensive and meaningful educational experience for both teachers and students. However, as the interviewees suggested, a thorough review of both the reward system cited above and the summative evaluation process for the course is necessary, especially if we want to further foster the creation of a healthy PLC. Obtaining a deeper understanding of the students’ profiles has been identified as an urgent need, and this presents a considerable challenge, especially in a course with limited interaction time. Thus, the brief duration of contact in this specific course adds complexity to the task of comprehending individual student profiles. A more nuanced understanding of their backgrounds, learning styles, and preferences would undoubtedly contribute to adapting the educational experience more effectively. This calls for a meticulous examination of the rewards structure and evaluation methods, aligned with the broader objective of improving the educational process of the Master’s Degree as a whole.

Essentially, the challenge lies in reconciling the time constraints inherent in the course with the imperative to gather meaningful insights into each student’s characteristics. Strategies to address this challenge might involve implementing more efficient data collection methods or exploring innovative approaches to rapidly grasp key aspects of student profiles. In any case, the effort to refine the rewards and evaluation aspects reflects the commitment to continuously enhance the educational experience within the given constraints.

7.2 Course 2: Bringing Socially Engaged Arts to Primary School

The course “Bringing Socially Engaged Arts to Primary School” was an advanced, blended learning program for in-service teachers, accredited by the University of Barcelona’s Institute for Professional Development (IDP). Hosted at CESIRE, a centre committed to educational innovation and research, the course explored both the theoretical frameworks and practical applications of integrating SEA into educational practices. More specifically, it equipped in-service teachers with comprehensive, experiential knowledge of key concepts, real-world examples, and effective methodologies for infusing SEA into their respective school environments. The curriculum emphasized the pedagogical and critical elements of arts education, aiming to promote a multifaceted engagement with societal issues.

7.2.1 Demographics of the participants in the intermediate and final questionnaires

The majority of the participants who responded to both questionnaires were female, with only one male participant. In the intermediate questionnaire, most of them work in public

schools (75%), while 16.7% work in private schools. Only one person indicated that she worked in another type of educational context.

Concerning age, most participants are between 36 and 45 years old (as we can see, 50% in both questionnaires):

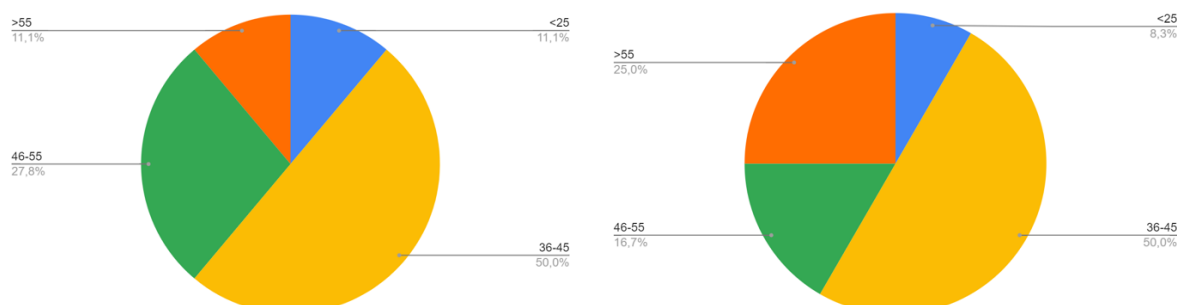


Figure 8. Age of the participants in the IQ (left) and FQ (right).

The vast majority of the participants (75%) have a Bachelor's degree in Education. 33.3% of the respondents to the final questionnaire are arts teachers (art education, music, etc.), while 66.7% are educators in other areas. Their positions are in management (42.9%), head of studies (28.6%), pedagogical coordinator (14.3%) or other issues (14.3%). Most of them are residents of Barcelona (66.7%), while the rest live in other Catalan regions. 75% stated that new digital technologies and software programs are available in their work environment.

7.2.2 Description of the results of the intermediate and final questionnaires

Intermediate Questionnaire

In the intermediate questionnaire, the participants expressed a high level of enthusiasm for the course, particularly in anticipation of how it would enhance their teaching methods through the use of art in schools. One participant highlighted the transformative impact of the course on her perspective: "It has given me a new perspective based on observation and reflection and on the artistic experiences we explored in schools" (52-year-old, female). Among other notable methodological contributions, the participants valued the opportunity to think about the interdisciplinary nature of the arts in their teaching practice. They also appreciated the solid theoretical grounding of the course, the enriching experience of sharing and learning from their peers, and the spaces for reflection during the sessions.

At the beginning of the course, not all participants were very familiar with SEA projects. Their responses to the intermediate questionnaire showed a meaningful change in their way of understanding SEA, largely due to getting to know a wide range of SEA experiences and projects during the course. Key to this change was the introduction of new referents, which participants considered to be a crucial component of their learning experience. They also noted a paradigm shift in their conception of artistic roles and purposes, moving beyond the view of art as merely aesthetically pleasing to acknowledge its potential for community engagement and societal impact. "The integration of local communities and environments into the creative process has revolutionised my approach to [artistic] ideas and methods. I am very inspired and motivated by the idea that artistic creation can also be a participatory

process”, one respondent (44-year-old, female) said. Further, the course led participants to focus on the artistic processes rather than the results. Most of them recognised the growing importance of connecting with other groups and contexts, thereby fostering collaborations through their artistic endeavours. Echoing this idea, another participant (37-year-old, female) pointed out: “The course has broadened my understanding of art and its potential to engage with neighbourhoods, communities and the environment through school projects”. In summary, by emphasising community engagement, societal relevance and participatory approaches in artistic practices, the course facilitated a significant evolution in participants’ perceptions of SEA.

Overall, the participants showed a positive attitude toward the use of digital activities during the course and attributed its success to two main factors. First, the well-structured design of the course, including blocks and themes that were clearly defined and eased the use of the materials. Second, the choice of software tools (particularly Padlet), which were highly praised for their effectiveness. Several participants specifically noted how these digital tools encouraged group participation and engaged them in meaningful dialogue. However, while acknowledging the value of digital media, they also expressed a preference for face-to-face sessions. In addition to this, one participant expressed concern about the limitations of online group discussion and in-depth exploration of issues.

The participants found new forms of cooperation in the design and implementation of SEA projects, as these could be interwoven with local and neighbourhood organisations. In this respect, one participant (37 years old, female) emphasised that through the SEA framework, “the school opens up to the neighbourhood, engaging in already existing projects and connecting the children with the immediate environment”. Others also mentioned that the course offered them new ways of working together through the arts, especially when approaching the school environment in an interdisciplinary way. Finally, some of the responses referred to the collaboration with other peers on the course itself, as mentioned by this teacher (43 years old, male): “We were able to share our own experiences and combine them with those of other course participants”.

Finally, some respondents to the intermediate questionnaire pointed out that they had not found yet new ways of working together, as sharing ideas and projects with other colleagues was not exactly that. It was difficult for them to answer this question at this point in the course.

The intermediate questionnaire provided positive feedback on the connection between the course content and the participants’ teaching practice. One of the links they mentioned was the use of interdisciplinary strategies (both in the SEA projects and in their teaching practice). Additionally, they expressed their intention to use SEA project features seen during the course in specific projects undertaken in their schools or when designing new projects. In this sense, many participants said they intended to transfer the content of the course to their schools by setting up collaborative projects with local organisations.

Final Questionnaire

Table 2. Results obtained from the final questionnaire regarding training course 2.

Role of the teachers	1 TD	2 D	3 A	4 TA	Mean (1-4)	SD
a) The tutor/teacher stimulated collaboration	2 16,7%	3 25%	1 8,3%	6 50%	2,08	1,24
b) The tutor/teacher helped to keep course participants engaged and participating in productive dialogue	4 33,3%	1 8,3%	2 16,7%	5 41,7%	2,33	1,37
c) The tutor/teacher actions reinforced the development of a sense of community among participants of the course	3 25%	3 25%	2 16,7%	4 33,3%	2,41	1,24
Perceived collaboration						
a) I felt part of a learning community in my group	3 25%	2 16,7%	4 33,3%	3 25%	2,41	2,41
b) Getting to know other course participants gave me a sense of belonging in the course	3 25%	3 25%	2 16,7%	4 33,3%	1,16	1,24
Relation with peers						
a) I actively exchanged my ideas with group members	3 25%	2 16,7%	3 25%	4 33,3%	2,33	1,23
b) I was able to develop new skills and knowledge from other members in my group	2 16,7 %	3 25%	5 41,7%	2 16,7%	2,41	0,99
c) I was able to develop problem-solving skills through peer collaboration	2 16,7%	5 41,7%	5 41,7%	-	2,75	0,75
d) I felt comfortable participating in the course discussions	3 25%	3 25%	2 16,7%	4 33,3%	2,41	1,24
e) I felt comfortable interacting with other course participants	3 25%	3 25%	1 8,3%	5 41,7%	2,33	1,30
f) I felt comfortable disagreeing with other course participants while still maintaining a sense of trust	2 16,7%	5 41,7%	2 16,7%	3 25%	2,5	1,08
g) I felt that my point of view was acknowledged by other course participants	2 16,7%	3 25%	2 16,7%	5 41,7%	2,16	1,19
Evaluation of collaborative learning						
a) I felt that collaborative learning in my group was effective	2 16,7%	4 8,3%	3 25%	3 25%	2,75	1,48
b) I felt that collaborative learning in my group was time-consuming	1 8,3%	8 66,7%	2 16,7%	1 8,3%	2,75	0,75
c) I felt that the collaboration developed in the group will continue in the future	2 16,7%	7 58,3%	-	3 25%	2,75%	1,21
d) Overall, I am satisfied with my collaborative learning experience in this course	-	4 33,3%	4 33,3%	4 33,3%	2,75	1,21

TD=Totally Disagree, D=Disagree, A=Agree, TA=Totally Agree, SD=Standard Deviation

Based on feedback from 12 people who completed our survey, here's a simple summary of what we found:

- **The role of the teachers:** Most respondents felt that the teachers did a good job of encouraging collaborations between the participants. However, despite it being the majority, only 7 out of 12 were satisfied with how well the teachers kept participants engaged and involved in the course activities. Similarly, there was a 50/50 split on the role of teachers in fostering a sense of community. This dissonance may be related to lower participation in the final period of the course. Also, this finding should guide future training courses to strengthen the bonds between participants.

- **Perceived collaboration:** Most respondents saw themselves as part of a learning community in their group (4 agreed and 3 totally agreed), but responses were more mixed in terms of feeling part of developing a sense of belonging to the group (50% disagreed or totally disagreed and 50% agreed or totally agreed). As will be developed later in the report, most participants had overall positive responses about their relationship with their peers, but there are challenges in developing a professional learning community through hybrid formats.
- **Relationship with peers:** Following on from the previous point, the majority of responses indicate that participants felt they were learning from each other. This reinforces the idea that will emerge from the interviews that the learning generated by peer-to-peer relationships was positively valued. However, the responses are very mixed in regards to whether participants felt comfortable discussing, sharing ideas and interacting in the group. This insight suggests the challenges of creating this space of comfort in the virtual format, as well as the need for trainers to work more on this aspect in future courses.
- **Evaluation of collaborative learning:** The responses in this area were spread across all levels of agreement. However, it is notable that a majority (9 responses) disagreed that the collaboration developed in the course would continue in the future. However, also the majority (8 respondents) agreed or totally agreed that they were satisfied with the collaborative learning experience of the course. This may indicate that despite the feeling that a partnership has been established during the training course, collaborations take time to develop and to be sustained in the future.

Changes and continuities between both questionnaires

The analysis of the data revealed no discernible correlation between demographic variables and the responses obtained from the questionnaires.

One of the most important changes was the group's attendance at the course since participation declined in the last four sessions (that is, from September on). Despite their initial interest, only 8 of the 24 enrolled teachers completed the course. This decrease was mainly due to the difficulties that most of the participants experienced in balancing the demands of the course with their professional responsibilities.

The role of the trainers was positively evaluated in both the intermediate and final questionnaires. In the final questionnaire, respondents emphasised that the trainers were facilitators of dialogue and were committed to the course. Throughout the sessions, the participants felt supported and guided.

The responses to collaborative learning were varied in both questionnaires. Also, there seemed to be a slight decrease in enthusiasm for collaboration between participants in the future from the intermediate to the final questionnaire. Although the majority of respondents of the final questionnaire felt that collaborative learning had been effective during the course, in the sense of being able to learn from their peers, there was less agreement about future collaborations with other course participants (although this was qualified in the interviews, where one participant did consider such collaborations possible, as will be discussed below). A similar concern was already raised in the intermediate questionnaire when all the participants answered that they were not very confident about continuing working together

in the future. This may indicate that, although collaborative activities during the sessions led participants to bond among themselves and co-construct learning experiences, creating a learning community and sense of belonging beyond the course was still seen as challenging.

Responses to both questionnaires indicate that, in general, participants felt comfortable and involved in peer interactions, feeling that their perspectives were acknowledged. However, not all respondents felt comfortable sharing ideas and developing skills and knowledge with their peers.

Using digital methods for collaborative learning was rated positively. In the mid-term questionnaire, participants mentioned that the digital methods enabled them to relate course content to their teaching, share suggestions, learn about examples of SEA projects and develop concepts and ideas together. Two responses in the mid-term questionnaire indicated a lack of time to be able to delve deeper into the material and examples shared during the virtual sessions. One of the responses also mentioned that other aspects to be improved were some technical problems during the sessions or the lack of time to be able to listen to and analyse the contributions of other participants.

The role of teachers was crucial in promoting collaboration and engagement within the teaching-learning environment. This was reflected in both the intermediate and final questionnaires, where the respondents reported that they felt comfortable participating in the course sessions and interacting with other participants. This can be considered a positive aspect of blended learning methodology. However, in the intermediate questionnaire, three respondents emphasised that they preferred face-to-face sessions and that the first one of the course had been very important to them within the course experience. The responses to both questionnaires also showed a lack of agreement about future collaboration between participants. This relates to the fact that participants reported that it was more difficult to create links between them in the online format than in the face-to-face sessions. Thus, Course 2 shows how blended learning faces challenges in creating collaborative learning.

7.2.3 Demographics of the interviewees

We interviewed five female participants of the course Bringing Socially Engaged Arts to Primary School.

- ES3 is 60 and has a very extended teaching experience with children from 3 to 15 years old year. She works in a private school and holds a Higher degree in Education.
- ES4 is 52 and has been a Primary School teacher for 27 years: 2 years as a tutor, 16 as a Music specialist and 9 as an English specialist. She holds a Higher degree in Music Teaching and currently works as a pedagogical coordinator in a Public School.
- ES5 is 39 and works in the Department of Didactics and Attention to Diversity in a Primary public school. She holds a Higher degree in Primary Education, a Master's degree in Arts in England, and a Degree in Drama. ES5 has also 25 years of working experience with children.
- ES6 is 37 and works in a public school as a special education teacher since 2011. She holds a Degree in Education and has also been a primary school teacher and tutor since 2000.

- ES7 works in a Government centre that provides pedagogical resources and support to educational communities. She holds a degree in History.

7.2.4 Analysis of the interviews

Notions of collaborative learning

The interviewees had different ideas of what collaborative learning means, although there can be found common ideas in their definitions. ES3 emphasised collaboration with organisations and people outside the school. For her, collaborative learning was related to the links between agents outside and inside the school to share concerns and commitment. For ES4, collaborative learning refers to the exchange of ideas and challenges. The definitions of ES5 and ES6 are alike. According to ES5, collaborative learning should not be based on a hierarchical pedagogical relationship in which one person has the knowledge and transmits it, but rather on exchanging different knowledge and collective wisdom. Likewise, ES6 argued:

I believe that learning comes from being together, when everyone can contribute from within, that is, when all people contribute from their differences to the group experience (...). I think that this is what really makes it a collaborative learning, that everyone starts from their own reality and shares it. Just the fact of sharing, what I do, how I approach it, what difficulties I encounter, all this, just listening to it, means that you build new things, just by listening to the experience of others.

Finally, for ES7, all learning is always to some extent collaborative, in the sense that even individual learning is to some extent based on collaborative relationships.

Characteristics of un/successful collaborative learning experiences

For ES5, two of the features of successful collaborative learning during the training course were listening to other participants and having the trainers' support to do so. However, she missed more theory and materials. On the contrary, for ES3, ES6 and ES4 the materials and content offered during the sessions became one of the key aspects of successful collaborative learning in the course. All three valued the theoretical and artistic references shared online or face-to-face. More specifically, ES4 highlighted the type of activities carried out during the sessions:

For online sessions, the resources you used seemed right to me. The Miro or the Padlet made the sessions dynamic. And when there were face-to-face sessions, you always took care to do a collaborative activity and that creates a good working atmosphere (...) Regarding the dynamics you did, all of them seemed good to me.

ES3, too, considered that the course had led to fruitful collaborative learning experiences by providing "a space for ideas, opinions, points of view". Furthermore, according to her, the content worked on was useful not only for the course but also for the daily work in the school where she works. In this sense, she reported that she has been able to build bridges and open

dialogues between the course and her work. Both she and ES6 also valued positively that the course had different trainers throughout the sessions.

All interviewees emphasised that, in order to develop a successful collaborative learning experience, any group should have common goals and that there should be an evaluation of what has been achieved, with appropriate self-reflection. The interviewees also mentioned other features of successful collaborative learning. First, recognising and taking into account the particularities of all participants in the group, “so that everyone can feel that they are contributing to the group and that everyone’s contributions are taken into account” (ES6). Second, sharing concepts and sustaining dialogue, since otherwise “you can’t work together very much” (ES7). Third, clearly defining the roles within the group (ES7). Fourth, using constructive criticism where “everyone contributes from their point of view but [...] also [tries] to understand the others and contribute to the others” (ES4). Fifth, having the ability to put into practice what has been learnt (ES5). Finally, ES3 believes that there must have been some change, some movement in the participants after the experience, being in this way a significant experience.

One area for enhancement in the training course involves aligning more closely the course content with the specific school contexts of the participants. ES5 mentioned that she sometimes felt frustrated because she found it challenging to apply the course material to the reality of the school where she works, while ES4 expressed the wish that the course had been more grounded in her particular context. Therefore, it is important to consider more carefully how theoretical content gives rise to collaborative, situated learning experiences.

Another suggestion for improvement concerned temporality. ES3 and ES6 would have liked the sessions to be spread out over a longer period so that they could have made more progress with their respective SEA projects during the training. In other words, they would have liked to continue interacting with both their classmates and the trainers, relying on their support and guidance throughout the process. Lastly, ES7 recommended increasing the interactivity of online sessions, while ES4 proposed the implementation of a feedback mechanism between sessions.

Expectations and ideas about future collaborations

Four of the five people interviewed did not think that there would probably be any collaboration between the participants in the future. In the words of ES4,

I don't believe it will happen. I've only given my phone to Ingrid (one of the participants), whom we've been talking with more, so we could send things to each other. It's really the start of making contact. The distance complicates the chances of collaboration, yet it's always interesting to connect with people from different places, and online interaction greatly aids this. However, it's true that we haven't been in touch much. I'm not sure why; perhaps the meetings were too spaced out, or maybe it's because we work in very different areas.

ES6 also blamed geographical distance for the difficulty of working together. ES3, however, was more optimistic with the possibility of future collaborations. Although she felt, in line with other interviewees, that online environments made it more difficult to establish connections for future collaborations, she also argued:

I think things have come up between us (...) I take note of everything my colleagues say. We talk and at some point something might come up. For example, if I want to do some sound art, I'll probably let Xavier (a course's participant) know.

As a result, the participants got to know each other and each other's interests, and some connections were made that will allow for continued exchanges in the future. But it is also a challenge to make the learning community work beyond the course.

Three of the interviewees reported that they had not yet collaborated with institutions, but that it would be interesting and that they had some ideas. The other two, ES4 and ES3, had already carried out collaborations that they wanted to continue in the future. In the case of ES3, the collaboration was between the school where she teaches, the public library L'Ateneu, the Esparraguera Archive, the Escola de les Arts and an association that works on issues of historical memory. In the case of ES4, the collaboration was between her school, IE Tres Fonts de Les Corts, and the Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona (MACBA), the Fundació Suñol (an organisation dedicated to the promotion and dissemination of contemporary art and social and cultural programmes) and La Caldera (a dance creation centre).

Some of the participants reported on collaborations between different disciplines that already took place and are likely to continue in the future. ES4's SEA project for the course has involved collaboration among the fields of environmental knowledge, language, physical education, and music. In ES3', between history – inquiring into the city's past (Esparraguera) and the civil war – and various artistic fields such as video, mapping and storytelling. ES6 explained that combining different fields of knowledge was the way of working in her school: "We don't work by areas. We mix everything and there is no separation. In the projects we make sure that mathematical, artistic, media, oral and written skills are present".

ES5, on the other hand, said she could not achieve any collaboration in her school for the SEA project because the other teachers were not interested in arts. However, she would like to do so in the future.

Modes of adapting collaborative activities to different learning styles

ES5 felt that the course did not take into account different learning styles. For ES4, however, the course did consider the different abilities of participants: "Even digitally, maybe it was difficult for some of us and you helped us. It was focused on everyone". ES3 and ES6 also agree that the course activities were adapted to different learning styles: "All the participants were able to follow them well". The five interviewees stated that they took this aspect into account when implementing the projects in their respective schools.

One of the interviewees, ES7, mentioned that she enrolled in the training but couldn't complete it due to conflicts with her work schedule. She attended only a few sessions. This reflects a challenge many participants had to face, i.e. balancing professional commitments with training programs.

Both ES3 and ES6 emphasised the course gave them a space to stop and reflect on their practice. In the words of ES3:

Having to present ideas to others has made me think a lot about the work we do and the things I might want to change... We can't think much daily about what we do. You just keep doing it and

moving forward, forward, forward; it's hard to look back. It was good for me to stop and look back to be able to explain some things in the course.

ES3, ES6 and ES4 shared their desire to apply the course content to their teaching practice, especially networking with schools' communities, environments and neighbourhoods through SEA projects.

7.2.5 Conclusions on professional learning communities

The trainers approached and explicitly referred to the pedagogical relationship with and among the participants during the course as an opportunity to start developing potential PLCs. In the first sessions, we shared the term with the group, explaining its main features and linking it to the design and implementation of SEA projects. Also, we fostered active engagement and proposed collaborative activities where the in-service primary teachers had to share and discuss their own experiences, questions and perspectives on SEA in small groups. It was a way of establishing a reflexive learning space to critically explore the participants' teaching practices regarding the social turn of arts.

Thus, although the group of participants effectively worked many times as a PLC during the sessions, some also pointed out that maintaining and extending such community beyond the conclusion of the course was challenging. As repeatedly highlighted by the five interviewees, a key characteristic of PLCs is about carrying out collaborative, more mutual learning experiences. In the interviews, they valued the course as a chance to gather and exchange knowledge among all the participants, often engaging in shared reflections and considering these encounters as a learning source. They also noted that it was difficult to create such synergies only through virtual settings. As the course was blended, moving from online to face-to-face sessions and vice versa helped the participants build a stronger sense of community, thereby enhancing the possibility of sustaining the group bonds after the course. However, bringing this possibility into life mostly depends on not having geographical or contextual distance among participants. In this respect, the interviewees' insights suggest that face-to-face interactions play a crucial role in the formation and longevity of PLCs, and that the loss of presentiality makes it complicated to ultimately sustain one.

When referring to what makes collaborative learning successful, the interviewees shared several aspects that can be taken as both features and expectations about what a PLC should become. Among other things, a PLC has to be based on attentive listening, dialogue, common goals, the exchange of conceptual and/or artistic references (specifically if the PLC stems from a SEA project), constructive criticism, and self-reflection on teaching and learning practices. However, the participants hardly expect to achieve this through virtual tools. As discussed in the previous question, presence (even if it's blended with online meetings) was felt as a must for carrying out PLCs.

For the trainers, the most significant challenge during the course was maintaining the in-service teachers' attendance. While it is common for not all the participants who enroll in a distance training course to ultimately complete it, in our case less than half reached the final session. We think it had to do, on one hand, with splitting the course into two terms, one before and another after the summer holidays. On the other hand, we realized about the

participants' difficulties in meeting the program's schedule as a result of the heavy teaching load they would face from September on.

However, those who did complete the course report positive feedback and satisfaction about its participatory dimension. For instance, ES8: "I'm glad I did it. It is an effort on a daily basis because you are running out of time, but I liked it a lot. There were sessions when I was very tired and then I'd come out and think, 'How good I've had the course!' I mean, it's worth it". Moreover, the face-to-face sessions were highly valued for building a bold sense of community and taking the content forward through collaborative activities. The pedagogical orientation of the course, especially the design and discussion of SEA projects, sought thus to prefigure a PLC among the participants.

Part III

CHAPTER 8. *Concluding remarks*

Aurelio Castro Varela

For the PR4 study, 191 participants in the CARE/SS training programs conducted across the five countries (Cyprus, Greece, Malta, Poland and Spain) completed the final questionnaire, while 209 answered the five open-ended questions from the intermediate questionnaire (see appendix B). Fifty (50) participants were also interviewed at the end of the courses. These numbers far exceeded the initial PR4 objective of 30 interviewees and 100 respondents to only one questionnaire. In this respect, the intermediate questionnaire let us evaluate how the participants were experiencing the course in terms of engagement and collaboration, as well as observing the changes and continuities between that halfway moment and the end of the program.

The data gathered from all these responses offer a rich picture of two issues that have been central to the PR4 CARE/SS project. First, exploring participants' engagement and learning experiences regarding the group activities and collaborative teaching methods employed in the 12 courses. As 10 of these had a blended mode of delivery and two were fully online, the role of digital tools in fostering collaboration among participants was also a point to be addressed, especially in the intermediate questionnaire. Second, assessing the sense of community built during the training course and how it fed into the creation of potential PLCs and their continuation beyond the programs. The CARE/SS goal of training pre- and in-service art educators through distance learning also meant that the participatory methodologies at play during the courses were intended to improve and reshape participants' teaching practices. Therefore, the focus of these concluding remarks is necessarily put on the transfer towards future collaborations in educational contexts, where arts become a means of creating new partnerships and extending the experiential, always collective nature of any learning.

Behind the number of participants, the PR4 study encompasses a varying array of themes, student types, group sizes, technology, disciplines and knowledge, thereby mirroring the diversity that characterises the field of arts education. In what follows, emphasis is placed on the similarities and differences among the five countries concerning the pedagogical relation between the CARE/SS training programs and the development of PLCs. In this respect, SEA's perspective and *big ideas* crucially work to sustain that relationship, in the sense of providing the participants with numerous skills to engage in interdisciplinary encounters, knowledge exchanges and contextual artistic practices. If PLCs are grounded on shared values, collective responsibility, reflective inquiry, collaboration and group learning (Stoll et al., 2006), the SEA approaches shared in the CARE/SS training programs planted the methodological seed to start bringing these features to life. Most participants in the five countries recognized that CARE/SS courses made them get to know, enhance or deepen their understanding of how arts connect with and affect societal issues. Further, many in-service teachers began to view themselves as agents of this perspective by carrying out microteaching activities or designing SEA projects. In so doing, they also had to figure out how to involve their students, colleagues and external groups or institutions in socially engaged artistic processes. This cooperative endeavour also paved the way for the potential development of PLCs.

Understandings of collaborative learning

Although nuanced by some contextual differences, there existed an overall agreement among participants from the five countries in understanding what collaborative learning is or, rather, how it should be. Their responses were usually connected with specific activities experienced during the CARE/SS training programs. Some similarities among the five universities' reports can be found in the following points:

1. *Emphasis on inclusivity.* Across the five countries, most of the participants pointed out that collaborative learning must be inclusive with all the students, highlighting the importance of supporting each other regardless of different views or cultural backgrounds. In this regard, respectful interactions and reciprocity were considered the basis of inclusivity.
2. *The role of educators.* Participants in the reports from Frederick University (FU), Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) and the University of Barcelona (UB) frequently underscored the essential work of educators in promoting collaborative learning. Art teachers were often depicted as actively engaging with students, offering support and facilitating the collaborative process.
3. *The need for a common goal.* The achievement of a shared objective, or at least the attempt to attain it collectively, was seen as a crucial aspect of collaborative learning in the reports of the five universities. Moreover, this pursuit becomes incongruent with the idea of learning alone since it requires mutual support within a learning community.
4. *Positive outcomes.* Learning collaboratively not only depends on the positive energy mainly fuelled by educators (FU) but also has positive effects on personal and social levels such as fostering teamwork and socialization among participants (FU and Adam Mickiewicz University [AMU]) or creating solidarity in practice (AUTH).
5. *Multiple attributes.* Collaborative learning tended to be portrayed as a multifaceted notion that encompasses active participation, mutual respect, knowledge-sharing, cooperative work, and so on. Therefore, in the view of most participants, what makes learning collaborative is not one specific thing or procedure but the concurrence of several of these components.

Although these are common notions to the five reports, each educational context and the feature of each course emphasized specific issues. While FU participants placed a strong focus on inclusive collaboration and the involvement of educators in group dynamics, especially regarding arts-based activities, AUTH students' understanding evolved from considering specific tasks to thinking of collaboration as the denominator of a whole SEA project, thus highlighting effective cooperation, respect and solidarity. The University of Malta interviewees mostly valued openness, inclusion and learning from diverse perspectives. AMU participants showcased positive relations and creativity to characterize collaborative learning. Finally, the UB interviewees defined overall collaborative learning as the collective pursuit of shared goals and knowledge.

Successful collaborative learning experiences

As explained in the previous section, the reports from the five universities acknowledge the importance of having common goals when carrying out collaborative learning experiences. This includes sharing objectives, tasks and a unified purpose for developing the collaboration. The engagement from all group members, mutual respect, dialogue and recognition of diverse contributions were also highlighted by participants as key to achieving successful collaborative learning experiences. Other meaningful features that were mentioned across Cyprus, Greece, Malta, Poland and Spain are the following:

1. A supportive atmosphere. Most interviewees identified the need for a supportive learning environment as essential. It involves being capable of fostering positive interactions, building a sense of community and creating spaces where participants feel comfortable expressing their points of view.
2. Effective communication. No collaboration can lead participants to successful learning experiences without including open dialogue (FU), constructive feedback (UM, UB), and clear channels of communication between educators and students, as well as among peers (AMU, AUTH, FU).
3. Continuous interaction and reflection. This feature was especially valued by the participants in the UB report. More particularly, they expressed the desire for the sessions of one course to be spread out over a longer period, allowing for ongoing interaction and sustained progress while implementing their SEA projects. Also, receiving feedback from peers who are teachers and about teaching methods was seen as a very fruitful way of learning collaboratively (UM).
4. Acceptance of diversity. Having a common goal does not mean that there are no different approaches and opinions among participants. On the contrary, accepting and being exposed to other perspectives (UM), taking advantage of a climate of openness (AMU) and bringing together different views and moods (AUTH) become essential when learning from and along with others.

Again, each educational context emphasized different issues. In FU, successful collaboration was associated with the existence of group projects and decisions in various courses, as well as with the positive influence of educators. AUTH participants stressed the importance of finding common ground despite disagreements, showing a high level of respect and understanding of each other's opinions. UM educators highlighted a kind of social bonding based on knowing and feeling comfortable with each other. In AMU training programs, valuable collaborations would be recognizable through experiencing strong positive emotions and feelings, which some interviewees also called "flow". UB participants placed more emphasis on accomplishing specific objectives, sharing challenges for both individual and group success, and using appropriate self-reflection. Finally, recommendations across reports for achieving successful collaborative learning experiences included optimizing the size of the groups and aligning better the course content with practical contexts.

Mixed feelings about future collaborations

Overall, participants across the five countries expressed a mix of optimism and uncertainty about continuing the collaborations initiated during the training programs. On the one hand, most of them highlighted the positive aspects of working together throughout the training programs, pointing out that the courses made them feel part of a learning community and acknowledging in this respect a certain potential for further collaborations. On the other hand, geographical distances, busy schedules or time pressure were usually mentioned as the main challenges for extending that community beyond the courses. Only a few participants saw the value in overcoming these constraints to carry on with meaningful partnerships.

The SEA framework also raised awareness among participants about the importance of establishing collaborations between different knowledge areas. This includes integrating arts with other subjects of the school curriculum such as Mathematics, Language, Literature or History (FU, UB); connecting arts practices with social issues (AUTH, MT); or even exploring the intersections between different arts disciplines. Thus, collaborating with other colleagues or institutions usually pointed towards establishing interdisciplinary bonds.

Although some digital tools such as WhatsApp can serve to engage in interactions and collaborations, some interviewees – especially from the UB report – conveyed the difficulties in extending a learning community only through virtual environments. Put differently, online contacts are useful but distances complicate the opportunities to sustain partnerships in time. Art practices, however, did function as catalysts to work collaboratively, providing a common ground throughout the blended training programs for joining efforts. Drama, music or fine arts projects, for instance, offered many chances for this, as several reports show.

More often than not, pre- and in-service teachers' expectations about collaborations implied partnerships between schools and other local institutions: museums, archives, cultural centers, educational organizations, etc. In the case of AUTH, due to the limited time for the CARE/SS training courses, the organizers made a list of institutions that had expressed their willingness to facilitate SEA activities in the upcoming year with the assistance of the trainees. Also, a few participants from the University of Barcelona managed to implement SEA projects with cultural institutions such as the non-profit organization Fundació Suñol, the Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona (MACBA) or the Esparraguera Archive.

The reports also showcase nuanced differences in participants' perspectives on future collaborations. For example, the AMU report highlights a broad outlook, with interviewees considering collaborative learning applicable in diverse educational contexts (universities, schools, kindergartens, etc.), while the UM report gives several insights into collaboration within a specialized arts secondary school, with an emphasis on interdisciplinary connections. Therefore, the differences among the five reports ultimately reflect the unique characteristics and experiences of participants in each university context.

Concluding remarks on PLCs

Somehow, all the reports show the shared goal of promoting PLCs among pre- or in-service educators, particularly in the context of SEA. The integration of digital tools and platforms is also strongly emphasized across the five countries to facilitate collaborative ways of learning. Online platforms such as Zoom, Mentimeter, Padlet and others were consistently utilized to

enhance engagement, share resources and foster participants' active participation during the training programs. Also, most learners exhibited a positive attitude towards digital tools and felt open to getting to know and using digital platforms to improve their teaching practices. However, some of them still see the sustainability of learning communities as challenging if they only rely on online environments.

As the core of PLCs depends on collaborative learning, all the reports give an account of the positive impact of collaborative activities on the training courses' participants. Whether it's group performances in music education in Cyprus, collective tasks in visual arts education in Greece, or discussions among in-service teachers in Spain, the emphasis is often on building a sense of community through shared learning experiences. The reports also show that feeling part of a learning community positively transforms participants' perspectives. Thus, engaging in discussions, collective practices and group exchanges enriched their understanding of SEA, promoting problem-solving and interdisciplinary thinking.

Despite the challenges mentioned in the previous section, there also existed a shared expectation for developing and engaging in future collaborations. Some participants explained that they would like to continue collaboration beyond the training sessions with their groups. Although this extension seems sometimes hardly feasible, all the reports suggest that other learning communities can emerge as a result of the training programs, contributing to ongoing professional development and mutual support in many teachers' schools.

Beyond these similarities, however, each report includes unique courses with distinct focuses and various types of participants. The CARE/SS training programs ranged from visual arts and music education to broader arts education, and were offered to Erasmus students, pre-service and in-service teachers, or educators from the same institution. The nature of the content and participants' backgrounds gave rise to the diverse experiences outlined in each study. In summary, while the reports share many similarities in their emphasis on digital tools, collaborative learning and positive transformations regarding participants' teaching practices, the contextual factors also entail different experiences when fostering learning communities. Across these differences, the challenges and successes identified in the five reports provide valuable insights for designing and refining PLC initiatives in the immediate future.

References

Stoll, L., & Louis, K. S. (2008). *Professional learning communities: Divergence, depth and dilemmas*. Open University Press & McGraw Hill Education.

Appendices

APPENDIX A. *Intermediate questionnaire*

The intermediate questionnaire included the following five open-ended questions:

1. Do you feel engaged in experiencing arts through the methods of this course? Why?
2. How has your interpretation of socially engaged arts projects been affected by the virtual interventions throughout the sessions?
3. How can virtual presentations and/or digital applications better activate the viewer's participation (potential artists, teachers, or just students)?
4. Do you think that digital media and artistic online/blended activities have worked learning-wise in the presentation of socially engaged arts? Why?
5. Are these initial sessions leading you to find out new ways of collaborating? How are you connecting the course with your teaching?

All the partners employed the following template to gather and analyze participants' responses:

- A. Participant's engagement during the training courses.
- B. Changes in the interpretation of SEA projects through virtual interventions.
- C. Digital activities implemented in the courses.
- D. Finding out new ways of collaboration.
- E. Connections with participants' teaching.

APPENDIX B. *Final questionnaire*

Both the intermediate and final questionnaires collected the participants' demographic data through this online card:

Personal and demographic data					
<i>Tick/circle or write if applicable</i>					
Sex	Male	Female	Other	I prefer not to provide this information	
Age	<25	26-35	36-45	46-55	>55
Position	Generalist teacher	Arts teacher	Student teacher	Other	
Teaching experience (in number of years)					
Professional experience relative to arts (in number of years)					
In-service placement	Public school	Private school	University	Other	
In-service Do you hold an administrative position?	Yes		Principal		
			Vice-principal		
			Pedagogical coordinator		
			Other		
	No		-		
In-service placement	Undergraduate		Postgraduate		
City/municipality school basis	Main city		Province		
In the working/educational environment, new technologies and relevant software are available?	Yes		Free of charge		
			Full access		
			Limited Licences/access		
	No (personal purchase)		-		

Studies				
<i>Tick/circle or write if applicable</i>				
Position	Generalist teacher	Arts teacher	Student teacher	Other
Bachelor's Degree in School/Faculty of Education				
Other Bachelor's Degree				
Master's Degree	In Pedagogy	in Arts Education	In Fine Arts /Music/Theatre/ Dance/Literature	Different field (specify)
Doctoral Degree	In Pedagogy	in Arts Education	In Fine Arts /Music/Theatre/ Dance/Literature	Different field (specify)
Spoken foreign languages				
Skills in computer/new technologies				

The purpose of the final questionnaire was to assess participants' perceptions and their degree of satisfaction with the training course, as well as explore several issues related to past and future collaborations. Participants answered the following questions on a Likert scale from 1 to 5.

Final questionnaire. Collaboration				
<i>Tick where applicable</i>				
1. Role of the teachers	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Totally Agree
	1	2	3	4
a) The tutor/teacher stimulated collaboration.				
b) The tutor/teacher helped to keep course participants engaged and participating in productive dialogue.				
c) The tutor/teacher actions reinforced the development of a sense of community among participants of the course.				
2. Perceived collaboration	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Totally Agree
	1	2	3	4
a) I felt part of a learning community in my group.				
b) Getting to know other course participants gave me a sense of belonging in the course.				
3. Relation with peers	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Totally Agree
	1	2	3	4
a) I actively exchanged my ideas with group members.				
b) I was able to develop new skills and knowledge from other members in my group.				
c) I was able to develop problem-solving skills through peer collaboration.				
d) I felt comfortable participating in the course discussions.				
e) I felt comfortable interacting with other course participants.				
f) I felt comfortable disagreeing with other course participants while still maintaining a sense of trust.				
g) I felt that my point of view was acknowledged by other course participants.				
4. Evaluation of collaborative learning	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Totally Agree
	1	2	3	4
a) I felt that collaborative learning in my group was effective.				
b) I felt that collaborative learning in my group was time-consuming.				
c) I felt that the collaboration developed in the group will continue in the future.				
d) Overall, I am satisfied with my collaborative learning experience in this course.				

APPENDIX C. *Interview schedule*

Guideline for semi-structured interviews:

1. How do you define collaborative learning?
2. How do you define success in relation to collaborative learning?
3. What are the key characteristics of a successful collaborative learning experience?
4. What characteristics made this specific collaborative learning experience successful (or not successful)? (could be different from what characteristics make it collaborative).
 - a. What worked well with it (and why)?
 - b. What would you change if it were up to you (and why)?
5. Will the collaboration initiated in the course be continued in new projects? Could you give an example?
6. Have collaborations with other institutions (museums, cultural centres, schools, etc.) been considered? Could you give an example?
7. Have collaborations between different areas of knowledge been considered? Could you give an example?
8. Have there been adapted collaborative learning activities for participants with different learning styles or abilities?

Analysis template:

Demographics

1. Gender
2. In-service teacher or student
3. Years of teaching experience
4. Age
5. Country

Questions

- A. Notions of collaborative learning
- B. Characteristics of un/successful collaborative learning experiences
- C. Expectations and ideas about future collaborations.
- D. Modes of adapting collaborative learning activities
- E. Participant's reflections

4



Professional Learning Communities

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