

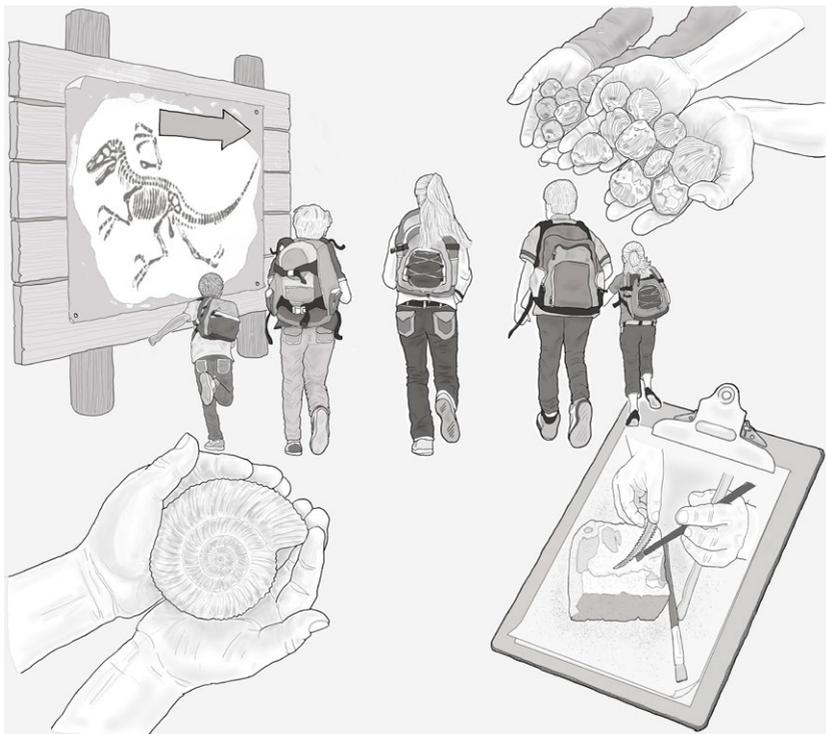
## Participation and solidarity. The process of institutionalising Service Learning in Small Schools

By Lorenza Orlandini and Patrizia Lotti

Stories

Tools

Studies



*Service Learning: the architecture of the education offered at the school*

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## **SMALL SCHOOL NOTEBOOKS • TOOLS**

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We wish to thank the small schools and teachers who responded to the survey on institutionalising Service Learning carried out by INDIRE in the April-June 2023 period. We also wish to thank Daniela Pampaloni for the collaboration and support provided to the teachers of the Istituto Comprensivo Griselli, who wrote the chapter dedicated to their school and Head Teacher Marco Benucci.

The *Biblioteca di Lavoro* (Work Library) was a unique and innovative editorial work, desired and directed by Mario Lodi and created between 1971 and 1979 by a group of educators made up of Fiorenzo Alfieri, Francesca Colombo, Tullio De Mauro, Caterina Foschi Pini, Alberto Gianola, Angelica Gianola, Roberto Lanterio, Palmira Maccarini, Luciano Manzuoli, Gioacchino Maviglia and Francesco Tonucci.

The idea was an educational project that emerged as an alternative to the single textbook. In a format carefully designed for essential functionality, 80 volumes including “Documents”, “Readings” and “Guides”, as well as 68 flashcards, offered ideas, suggestions and operational tools to teachers, leaving them the greatest freedom of choice for working according to the needs of their class.

A true encyclopaedia of the most significant teaching experiences carried out in Italy. A reference index from which teachers, parents and children were able to take inspiration to carry out activities, in any geographical and social situation, as alternatives to schooling based on the transmission approach, through a methodology structured upon tools permitting concrete and organic teaching interventions.

Mario Lodi and his collaborators wanted to help teachers and families get to know the child and help the child get to know him/herself and others.

We all want a better, humane and scientifically correct school that starts from the child's experience, in order to understand the world we live in. The *Biblioteca di Lavoro* (Work Library) helped to do this.

*Cosetta Lodi*

*President of Casa delle Arti e del Gioco - Mario Lodi*

<http://www.casadelleartiedelgioco.it>

Many years after the experience of the *Biblioteca di Lavoro* (Work Library), the desire to build a better school is still alive. However, still today, perhaps even more now than before, the resistance of schooling based on the transmission approach is strong and deeply-rooted, both in practices and in the imagination, as “normal schooling”.

INDIRE has the task of providing support and visibility to research carried out by teachers that seeks to “carry teaching towards proposals, organisations and learning environments that enhance the value of students’ autonomy and responsibility and are capable of developing significant knowledge, skills and lasting competences” (*Indicazioni Nazionali. Nuovi scenari*, 2017.) (National Directions. New Scenarios). The operational tools of the *Biblioteca di Lavoro* (Work Library) conceived by Lodi were very effective in this regard. With their simple, clear language, basic form and the credibility of the research work deeply rooted in the practices and in the living experience of teaching, they contributed to the spread of active, inclusive and democratic ways of teaching. More than many programmatic documents, the documentation and teaching techniques included in this “encyclopaedia” have offered teachers tools for making changes and for acting coherently in practical terms, with a view to pedagogical innovation.

The *Small School Notebooks*, divided into “Stories”, Tools” and “Studies”, pay tribute to this experience, which is an example of how to value and follow up on the research and educational experimentation conducted in schools.

We thank Mario Lodi’s heirs for having authorised the use and reworking of the material taken from the *Biblioteca di Lavoro* (Work Library) and also Grandi & Associati, who collaborated in the publication of this volume.

Researchers of the INDIRE - Piccole Scuole group  
<http://piccolescuole.indire.it>

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# Introduction

## 1 Service Learning: where are we at?

*Lorenza Orlandini*

The introduction of Service Learning (SL) into the Italian school scene has been an opportunity to focus on planning educational activities that connect schools and their territories in a methodological and value-based framework.

The roots of the approach appear to be consistent with Italian pedagogical tradition, making reference to some great masters: “I care” by Don Milani, “Reciprocal Maieutic Approach” by Danilo Dolci, “La comprensione dei problemi del proprio contesto attraverso le discipline” (Understanding the problems of your own context through disciplines) by Alfredo Giunti, “Il superamento del voto come sistema di ricompensa e punizione” (Going beyond the vote as a system of reward and punishment) by Mario Lodi and “La formazione integrale” (Integral education) by Antonio Gramsci. It is, therefore, an opportunity to rediscover and modernise these teachings that have contributed to the creation of the educational culture that SL is inspired by and that we can identify in the tradition of civic commitment, pedagogical thinking and in a set of regulatory tools that have supported the development and diffusion of SL<sup>[1]</sup>.

The connection with tradition has, in fact, allowed teachers and head teachers to ‘rediscover’ several teaching experiences characterised by a value-driven direction of a supportive nature and by an attitude of openness, dialogue and exchange, resulting in mutual enrichment acquired by the school regarding the territory of reference.

### **Annotations**

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[1] Fiorin I. (2020), *Una via italiana al Service Learning (An Italian way to Service Learning)*, in Orlandini et al. (2020), *Il Service Learning per l'innovazione scolastica. L'esperienza del Movimento delle Avanguardie educative (Service Learning for school innovation. The experience of the Educational Avant-garde Movement)*, Carocci, Rome, pages 119-130.

[2] Tapia M.N. (2000), *Educazione e solidarietà. La pedagogia dell'apprendimento-servizio (Education and solidarity. Pedagogy of service learning)*, Città Nuova, Rome.

In fact, as Maria Nieves Tapia<sup>[2]</sup> writes, the practice of service-learning can arise spontaneously and “empirically”. In the Italian context, as specified in the ministerial publication *Una via italiana per il Service Learning* (An Italian path to Service Learning), it can count on useful references: inclusive culture, consolidated by law no. 517/77, the *National Guidelines for the curriculum of infant school and the first cycle of education* of 2012, the *Percorsi per le Competenze Trasversali e l’Orientamento* (Paths for Cross-cutting Skills and Orientation) proposal for all secondary schools and teaching oriented towards the development of skills<sup>[3]</sup>. SL is positioned as a theoretical approach to which school procedures refer, in connection with the territory, using an attitude of responsibility and care towards themselves, others and the environment<sup>[4]</sup>.

[3] MIUR (2018), *Una via italiana per il Service Learning* (An Italian way for Service Learning), Department for the System of Education and Training, Rome.  
Url: [www.miur.gov.it/web/guest/-/una-via-italiana-per-il-service-learning](http://www.miur.gov.it/web/guest/-/una-via-italiana-per-il-service-learning).

[4] Orlandini L., Chipa S., Giunti C. (2020), *Il Service Learning per l’innovazione scolastica. Le proposte del Movimento delle Avanguardie educative* (Service Learning for school innovation. The proposals of the Educational Avant-garde Movement), Carocci, Rome.

### Annotations

## 2 Service Learning and Small Schools: when school and territory speak to each other

*Lorenza Orlandini*

The relationship between school and territory is back in the centre of the debate on possible future scenarios for education and training systems. In fact, this reflection highlights the need for school, territory and community to strengthen their relationship in order to respond to old and new emergencies, based on a global and integrated approach. This approach calls for the involvement of the entire school community (head teachers, teaching and non-teaching staff, students, parents and families) in a cohesive, collective and collaborative action, in close cooperation with the external parties involved and with the community as a whole<sup>[5]</sup>. A particular condition of the 'small schools' is that they often live in a situation of constant emergency due to the elements that characterise their very identity: school population made up of small numbers with the need to manage unbalanced class groups, a population in progressive decline, lack of services in the territory, teaching staff subject to frequent turnover and geographical isolation.

The focus on the link between school, community and territory is evident in the Small Schools Manifesto: "Small schools traditionally strengthen and preserve their distinctive cultural and historical traits, becoming communities based on memory. Their relationship with the natural, social and cultural environment can represent a resource with strong innovative potential by linking learning to reality and enhancing it's value in accordance with the territorial vocations".

### **Annotations**

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[5] European Commission (2020), *Education and Training 2020. Politica scolastica. Un approccio globale e integrato della scuola nella lotta contro l'abbandono scolastico (School policy. A global and integrated approach of schooling in the fight against early school leaving)*, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, Education and Training, School policy, European Commission, Brussels.

Thus, within these contexts, the school becomes a point of reference for the community and the territory: as a reference point - integrating other services for the community in addition to the educational one - and as a lever for educational, social and cultural innovation - for example, by planning an offer of education that allows new generations to acquire knowledge of the past and of the identity of the territory to which they belong.

SL facilitates this relationship to the extent that it builds virtuous and reciprocal relationships with the various external contacts and allows the creation of paths starting from the specific features and needs that exist in the territory. Among the identifying characteristics of SL<sup>[6]</sup>, the relationship with the territory of reference is described by the “creation of partnerships” element, which includes the activation and consolidation of alliances and collaborations with groups, institutions and organisations in the territory that engage the entire educational community in the planning, design and execution of the SL path, fostering and supporting horizontal relationships of solidarity.

Some topics characterise the planning of schools within the SL framework, although each has a specific interpretation within each context.

- *Enhancing the value of intergenerational dialogue:* rereading and rediscovering the stories and traditions of the past allows new generations to understand that they are part of a territory that has a specific identity. In this way, it is possible to strengthen the bond between young people and the territorial context in which they find themselves.
- *Promoting the territory of reference:* communicating the specific features of the context to the community, while at the same time acquiring knowledge of the history, characteristics and values that, in this way, become an integral part of the education proposed by the school, contributing to the pinpointing of the school curriculum.

[6] Furco A. (1996), *Service-Learning: A Balanced Approach to Experiential Education*. In Taylor, B. and Corporation for National Service (Eds.), *Expanding Boundaries: Serving and Learning*, Washington, DC: Corporation for National Service, pages 2-6.

Tapia M.N. (2006), *Educazione e solidarietà. La pedagogia dell'apprendimento-servizio (Education and solidarity. The pedagogy of service-learning)*, Città Nuova, Rome.

Orlandini, L., Chipa, S., Giunti C. (edited by). (2020). *Il Service Learning per l'innovazione scolastica. Le proposte del Movimento delle Avanguardie educative (Service Learning for school innovation. The proposals of the Educational Avant-garde Movement)*, Carocci, Rome.

**Annotations**

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- *Supporting a vision of education as a common asset:* openness to the outside can be put into action through the possibility of ‘living’ in the school premises beyond school hours and, in the same way, creating situations in which the school is spread across the territory of reference, for example, by redeveloping the internal and external school spaces.
- *Bringing the population closer to local bodies and institutions:* SL positions the school as a civic reference point for the community of reference, through the creation of information and communication services that allow the community to get closer to the administrations and access the existing services correctly and effectively.

In summary, therefore, SL offers schools and communities the possibility of common growth through an active and participatory dialogue between schools (of all levels) and the community.

***Annotations***

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### 3 Institutionalisation, self-assessment and improvement

*Patrizia Lotti*

A few years after the start of the process of spreading the SL educational approach in Italy, Indire proposed an analysis of the level of institutionalisation in schools of all levels.

This path of analysis must be interpreted as the natural evolution of the process started in recent years by the Ministry and Indire respectively, aimed at supporting school networks for the implementation of educational activities based on the specific features of SL, raising awareness and training teachers and head teachers in the approach and spreading teaching and organisational innovation.

SL is a complex educational approach, based on collaboration, an interdisciplinary approach and interaction between formal and non-formal learning, in order to really intervene in the territory. Implementing a single SL project in a school is possible, even in a single class, and this can allow that educating community to evaluate its challenges and potential. Taking it on at the school identity level, through its own documents that contain guidelines and planning of the education offered, makes it possible to prevent fragmentation of the project, by offering a common framework of values and pedagogical reference. However, it also needs to facilitate the discussion on the implementation and management of alliances with the territory, educational strategies, times and places that can be used for the various activities, documentation and enhancement of results, as well as their communication. This is the meaning of the institutionalisation of SL: a process based on progressively taking possession of the characteristics of the educational approach at school governance level.

#### ***Annotations***

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The institutionalisation of SL is a process of change<sup>[7]</sup> that generates an impact on the organisational scene and its dynamics, while observing its progressive consolidation. In this sense, the Rubric is a self-assessment tool and allows schools to monitor the evolution of the consolidation process of SL within their own community. It therefore makes it possible to acquire data and, consequently, useful indications with a view to improving the school, as it allows for the visualisation of one's own positioning with respect to the dimensions that characterise the institutionalisation of SL. In fact, the Rubric presents itself as a multidimensional tool that takes into account the factors that facilitate the quality and effectiveness of SL in the institutions that introduce this educational approach with dynamics geared towards the teaching and learning process and the system of relationships, inside and outside the school.

The periodic use of the grid to self-assess the process of institutionalisation of SL can thus make it possible to monitor the process and continue to act in order to bring about innovations in the educational context, in which it is important to offer competitive solutions, so as to react quickly to external changes<sup>[8]</sup>.

[7] Raciene, L. (1999). Les formes d'action sociale réciproque. *Sociologie et sociétés*, XXXI(1), 77-92.

[8] A. M. Sidorkin, Human Capital and Innovations in Education, in A. M. Sidorkin, M. K. Warford (edited by), *Reforms and Innovation in Education: Implications for the Quality of Human Capital*, Springer Verlag, Cham 2017.

***Annotations***

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# 4 The dimensions of institutionalisation

*Patrizia Lotti and Lorenza Orlandini*



*Representing the dimensions of the institutionalisation of SL*

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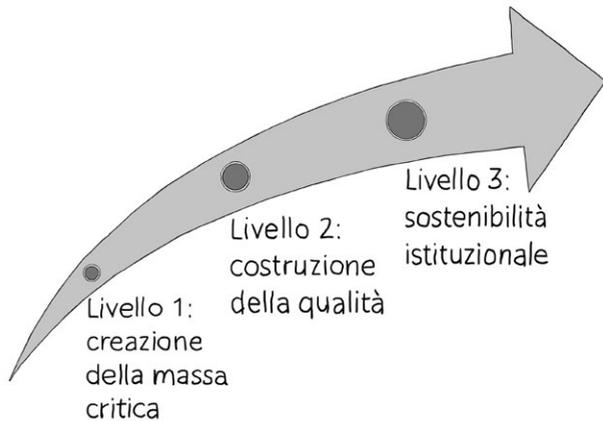
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The development of the Rubric for the self-assessment of the level of institutionalisation of SL began with the work of Andrew Furco (1999)<sup>[9]</sup> for higher education in the American context. It connects the development of SL paths with the mission, research, academic programmes and relationships with the territory. The tool envisages five dimensions: Philosophy and mission, Involvement of teachers in the development and in-depth study of Service Learning, Support and involvement of students in Service Learning, Participation and collaboration with local community partners and Institutional support for Service Learning. Each dimension is structured with a variable number of components (sub-dimensions). The compiler can position himself on three stages of development that include the transition from the “creation of critical mass” (level 1) to the “construction of quality” (level 2), up to “institutional sustainability” (level 3).

### Tappe di sviluppo dei percorsi di SL



*The stages of development of Service Learning towards institutionalisation*

[9] Furco, A. (1999). *Self-assessment rubric for the institutionalization of service-learning in higher education.* University of California, Service-Learning Research and Development Center.

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The purpose of the Rubric is to self-assess and analyse the evolution of SL over time within schools of all levels. Based on the results obtained for each school, it is possible to understand the school's level of SL institutionalisation, identify the dimensions and components on which to intervene for continuous improvement and structure and organise the debate with the community inside and outside the school.

## 4.1 Adapting to the Italian context

For the localisation of the research, it was decided to rework the Rubric proposed by Andrew Furco and adapt it to the Italian context of schools of the first and second cycle of education. The components were therefore revised by eliminating those pertaining exclusively to the university context and by introducing the dimensions of school-time, learning environments, teaching strategies and devices for the first and second cycle of education that support collaboration between school and territory. In addition to the three-level stages of each component, an open space was maintained for the compiler's notes, where narrative stimuli were added to support the description of the dimensions by the schools. The general structure of the tool remained unchanged in the number and quality of the five dimensions.

A process of progressive improvement of the tool, carried out through the analysis of the results, case studies and comparison with expert schools, allowed us to move from the first administration of the tool to a purposive sample of schools in 2021 to sending it to all Italian schools between April and June 2023.

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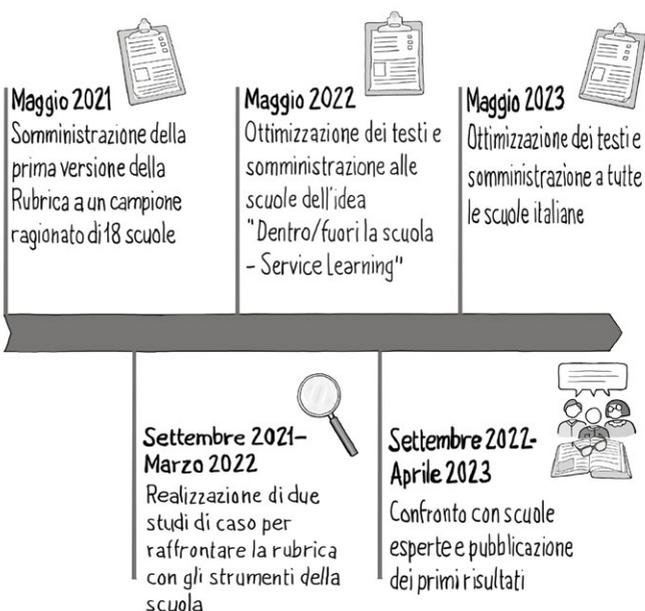
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*The phases of creation and adaptation of the Rubric*

The dimensions that make up the Rubric are described below: 1. Philosophy and mission, 2. Involvement of teachers in the development and detailed study of Service Learning, 3. Support and involvement of students in Service Learning, 4. Participation and collaboration with local community partners, 5. Institutional support for Service Learning.

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## 4.2 Dimension 1: philosophy and mission

This dimension allows us to identify the presence of a shared and recognised definition of the approach within the school in relation to its policy documents. It is structured into four components that allow the school to self-assess itself with respect to:

- The school's **definition of SL** in relation to the type of paths present. In particular: projects that fall within the vision of schools in collaboration with external subjects, relative to their episodic nature or their organisation with teaching activities.
- **Strategic plan**; this is functional in understanding the connection between curricular activities and the planning of service-learning paths relative to the school's lines of innovation.
- **Integration in the educational vision of the Three-Year Educational Plan (PTOF)**: this component identifies the purposes that connect the school planning with the SL paths, quantifying and describing the level of integration between the two.
- **Integration with the education system's inputs regarding innovation**: it connects the alliances with the territory initiated by the school through the regulatory (civic education, PCTO) and financial (PON, POR, PNRR) devices provided by the education system.

## 4.3 Dimension 2: involvement of teachers in the development and detailed study of Service Learning

This dimension evaluates the level of involvement of the school's teaching staff with regard to SL experiences, their connection with teaching methodologies and the level and type of leadership present in the school for supporting and promoting these activities. This

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dimension can be considered the heart of the innovation process through SL, as it has the highest number of components:

- **Teachers' knowledge and awareness:** useful for quantifying the teachers at the school who know the characteristics of SL, also with respect to other forms of collaboration with the territory.
- **Involvement and support of teachers in the implementation of projects:** it allows us to see how many teachers actively collaborate in the implementation of these paths.
- **Interdisciplinarity/time:** to evaluate the impact on the schedule and on the forms of multi- or interdisciplinarity determined by the implementation of SL paths.
- **Learning environments inside the school (classrooms and appurtenances):** to describe the ways in which school environments are used during SL paths.
- **Teaching methodologies:** to identify the methodologies used in the implementation of the paths with regard to the training needs triggered through SL.
- **Teachers' leadership:** to verify the involvement, in these activities, of teachers who have been in service at the school for the longest amount of time and who are responsible for coordination.
- **Incentives and recognition for teachers:** useful for evaluating the forms of incentive and recognition, especially for the initial additional commitment that the implementation of these projects entails.

### 4.4 Dimension 3: support and involvement of students in Service Learning

This dimension evaluates the level of awareness of students with regard to the existing opportunities for active participation at the school. It is also possible to detect the way in which commitment is recognised in the context of the study path. For this reason, it uses the following components:

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- **Student awareness:** useful for examining the spread of information on SL in the student body, starting from direct involvement in the paths to communication through study plans.
- **Opportunities for students:** examines the possibilities of participation in SL projects, from randomness to the systematic approach envisaged through the planning of the study path.
- **Student leadership:** useful for evaluating their desire to be the centre of attention, from that determined by participation in projects to the spreading of information through their own representative bodies and communications through internal and external communication.
- **Evaluation and certifications for students:** useful for examining the school's own system of evaluation and certification for the activities carried out through SL paths, starting from the context of the project to the impact in the grading meeting.

## 4.5 Dimension 4: participation and collaboration with local community partners

The dimension investigates the reciprocal relationships established with external contacts (formal and informal groups, associations and social organisations, public institutions, etc.) and also aimed at the shared implementation of SL projects. For this reason, it uses the following components:

- **Raising awareness among partners of the local community,** which evaluates their participation in the creation of SL projects accompanied, or not, by knowledge of the characteristics of the educational approach.
- **Mutual understanding,** which examines the exchange determined by the fulfilment of activities connected to SL in relation to recognition of the respective needs, linked to the learning and to the service.

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- **Connection between internal and external school environments,** which makes it possible to evaluate the use of the external environment for the fulfilment of SL-related activities, also with regard to the presence of community educational agreements.

## 4.6 Dimension 5: institutional support for Service Learning

The dimension allows the school to investigate its ability to facilitate professional, scientific, administrative and financial support for implementing and supporting SL paths over time. It is therefore structured into the following components:

- **Management staff and work group:** makes it possible to evaluate the connection between teachers involved in SL activities and staff roles, hence the presence or absence of coordination personnel to provide support over time.
- **Funding and administrative support:** makes it possible to evaluate the connection between the implementation of SL paths and the necessary and possible resources in relation to the different forms of funding present.
- **Evaluation of the innovation process:** makes it possible to examine whether and how the evaluation of SL paths is related to the school innovation process and to the networks of which it is part.

### *Annotations*

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# 5 Specific nature of Small Schools in the institutionalisation process

*Patrizia Lotti*

Between April and June 2023, the *Maturità di impiego dell'approccio pedagogico del Service Learning* (Maturity of use of the Service Learning educational approach) feature was sent to all schools, in the form of a questionnaire to be filled out by the Head Teacher. As indicated in the accompanying email, spreading this tool has allowed the schools that have already started to create a relationship between their procedure and this approach, to take stock and thus self-evaluate the innovation process implemented with regard to the Service Learning educational framework. 9 schools belonging to the Small Schools Movement participated in the survey, 4 of which indicated that the activities linked to SL paths only involve one or two specific school complexes in their organisation, while the other 5 indicate that the educational approach is generally widespread in all the schools. Furthermore, 6 respondents declared that they also belong to other networks dedicated to Service Learning, starting from the regional ones, launched by the hub schools appointed by the Ministry<sup>1</sup>.

The result diagram of the modal value of the responses to the 21 components distributed among the 5 dimensions of the Rubric has a shape similar to a star that, together with the points relative to an indication of stage 3 (level of greater maturity), are placed next to others relative to stages 1 or 2 (level of lesser maturity), even within the same dimension.

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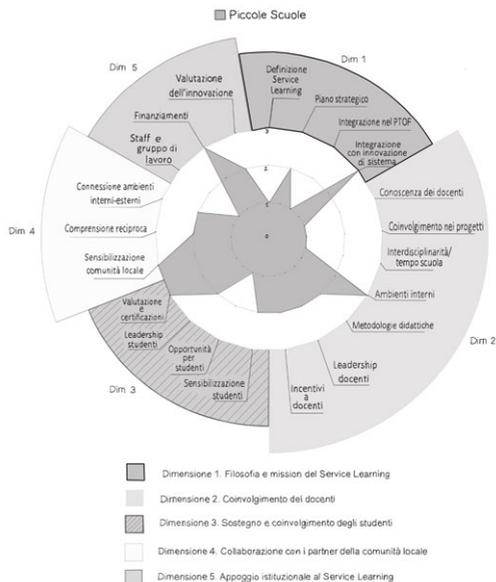


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1. With departmental decree no. 55 of 24 January 2018, the Ministry of Education announced a selection for the identification of three national hub schools to support the spreading of SL at secondary education institutions, starting from the 2018-2019 school year. The three national hub schools were identified within three geographical areas (North, Centre and South) with the aim of ensuring that the entire national territory is covered. Among the dissemination actions implemented, there is the establishment of networks of schools at regional level, for SL experimentation and the promotion of training activities in the territory, organised by leading regional schools.



*Results of the small schools participating in the survey*

In literature and in relation to each of the 5 dimensions, the recommendation is to consider oneself in the stage containing the component with the lowest result, in order to focus on actions useful for strengthening it, to the advantage of the entire dimension in which it belongs.

In the case of the modal value of the responses obtained, we are faced with a wide heterogeneity of placement within each of the dimensions and it is therefore useful to look at all the components and their possible interactions in order to improve the institutional sustainability of Service Learning at your school.

In particular, the strongly heterogeneous placement, for example in dimension 1, could suggest focusing on a constant and participatory

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discussion by the educational community on the choices of strategic documents and their own definition of SL. Besides, in dimension 2 "Involvement of teachers in the development and detailed study of Service Learning" it is possible to see a first 'completeness' due to the common placement in stage 2 of the components linked to teaching methodologies, leadership and incentives for teachers. This is a sign of being able to count on a group of innovative teachers, while on the other hand lacking greater dissemination of knowledge and involvement in the projects and their potential for interdisciplinarity. Again, dimension 3 denotes an intermediate level of knowledge on the part of the students, despite counting on the right attention for the evaluation of those involved. Instead, for the partners (dimension 4), we have good knowledge, but less mutual understanding and, in dimension 5, a poor connection between teachers involved and staff roles.

Regardless of the progress of several components towards stage 3 of institutionalisation, we can conclude that, for what concerns the 5 dimensions and therefore the various players involved (teachers, students, external partners, management component) indirectly, it is necessary to insist more on the information and communication of the pedagogical values and educational purposes of SL, based on the specific elements indicated in the institutional tools of each school.

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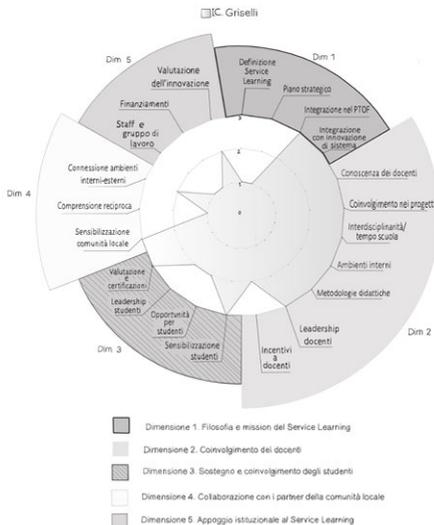
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# 6 A virtuous case: the IC Griselli of Montescudaio (Pisa)

The responses of this school, according to which SL characterises the educational proposal of all the complexes, form a range of responses featuring a larger area of 'completeness' due to the common placement in stage 3 of almost all the components of dimension 2. In fact, the compilation of the Rubric brings about the emergence of the spontaneous and empirical connection between the characteristics of this educational approach and the systematisation of the processes of civic participation in interaction with the territory.



IC Griselli results

## Annotations

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## 6.1 Service Learning as the architecture for the education offered at the IC Griselli school

*Francesca Arzilli e Tiziana Falorni*



*IC Griselli logo*

The Istituto Comprensivo Griselli is divided into 10 small schools spread across five Municipalities. Its vision is to “develop knowledge, skills and competences through complex thinking and to educate and train citizens capable of reading and interpreting the complexity that surrounds them”.

The mission is expressed in innovative and experiential teaching, in which the territory is a “learning landscape” of school experience (specifically of the backpack-free school model to which the infant and primary schools of the institute refer); today, more than ever before, it is necessary to re-establish a significant link with the community, in order to allow students to acquire civic skills through high-quality educational processes, paths of environmental, social and economic sustainability, education in appreciation of beauty and stimulating their creativity.

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*Outdoor space set-ups*

Strategic choices also arise from proposals formulated by Municipalities and other cultural and social institutions in the territory, as well as by active parent organisations and committees.

While families and Administrations are active partners and participants in the Comprehensive Institute's projects, it is however necessary to increase collaboration with the economic institutions present in the area and create important relationships "outside and inside" the school so as to build an "Educating Community".

What has been achieved in recent years through the SL educational approach is the framework of reference for relationships with the outside world and it is also spread via the "Radio Griselli" web radio.

Among the consolidated Educational Offers, the "IO...CITTADINO" Project was created to ensure that the school community is a centre of positive collaborations, where students learn to be "active and thinking citizens" by experimenting with the first forms of responsibility and social participation.

One of the fundamental prerequisites for acquiring active citizenship skills is, in fact, participating in decision-making processes and in the

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democratic and shared management of your own living environment from an early age. Added to this, is the need to “think together” with others, planning activities that have the well-being of the community as their primary goal, making the most of differences while respecting the needs and rights of children and adults.

Primary school students are called to the polls to elect their representatives, who make up the Student Representatives Council (SRC). It is set up as a true democratic body with a President and a Secretary who draws up a report, during the meetings, containing requests addressed to the teachers, the Head Teacher (HT) and the Administrations. The SRC representatives participate in the Interclass Councils and IN Open Days illustrating the spaces and organisation of the schools.

The Youth Municipal Council (YMC) is also established in two complexes.

**SRC and MCC seen through the eyes of the children:**

*It's October and everything is ready at the Istituto Griselli schools.*

*The students who intend to run as class representatives begin to quiver and think about actions and ideas to improve the class, the school and the territory.*

*The candidates' programmes include simple and feasible ideas, but also utopian ones (e.g. constructing a swimming pool in the school garden).*

*When the SRC voting day arrives, which is obviously secret, assemblies are held in each class, during which the candidates present their ideas.*

*No one can imagine who's going to win until the count... the suspense is high... but the two names for each class are finally here!*

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*A moment of the Council of Student Representatives*

*What emerged in the classrooms is shared at the first SRC meeting.*

*The secretary draws up the minutes and proposals, requests and ideas are discussed without discarding the interesting ones made by those who were not elected.*

*The date for voting is established, in which the Mayor and Deputy Mayor will be elected shortly thereafter.*

*On the fateful day of the YMC elections, the ballots and ballot boxes are ready.*



*The Youth Municipal Council elections*

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*In the days preceding the elections, the mayor and deputy mayor candidates and their supporters present their programmes to their classmates.*



*Group work on the proposals for the YMC*

*On the school bus, rather than during break time in the garden or in the dining hall, all the children discuss the proposals and who to vote for.*



*Information material for the YMC elections*

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*Like in real political elections, the programmes include the logo, which must then be crossed on the ballot papers during the vote.*

*The electoral commission, with the President and two poll-clerks, proceeds with the counting of the ballots and with the record. In the meantime, the Mayor “of the older students” arrives, carrying the sash for the Youth Mayor. There’s great excitement!*

*Once the counting is over, the President reads the results of the votes and the Youth Mayor and Deputy Mayor are both officially appointed. The ritual photo with the sash is taken.*

*Installation in the council chamber will take place shortly. It is in this institutional setting that the requests made by the YMC to the Mayor, the councillors and all citizens are shared.*



*Installation in the council chamber in the Mayor’s presence*

For some years now, the various YMCs that followed one another at the Riparbella Primary School had requested, in their programmes, the creation of a road sign that would tell drivers to slow down, motivated by the fact that the village children still play in the street.

This request was fulfilled this year, in collaboration with the Administration and the Carabinieri Police Headquarters (where the marshal held some road safety lessons).

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### The Youth Mayor says:

*“Although falling and getting dirty in the mud and grazing your knees was considered normal many years ago, today it risks not being so anymore.*

*For this reason, our school’s SRC and YMC have proposed this civic education project: the creation of a new road sign with a clear message: it invites passers-by to slow down because, in this village, children still play in the street...!*

*In fact, it was we students who chose our favourite games: from hopscotch to tug of war, cycling, using a skipping rope and then had the designs added onto the road sign.*

*The idea emerges from **community value**, which is fundamental in our No Backpack school where teachers and students meet and work together”. “A creative child is a happy child” and playing is one of our fundamental rights. We must not forget that, as Bruno Munari affirmed, “Playing is a serious thing”!*

On 8 June, during the 2023 Arts Week, in the presence of the authorities and regional TV channels, the first eight road signs were inaugurated at strategic places in the village.



The inauguration of one of the road signs created

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The activity was also one of national importance: numerous newspapers and television channels spread the news of the signs being installed, resulting in great satisfaction for the students and the community.

Last year, the Riparbella Primary School YMC, in collaboration with the Administration and the painter named Vinci, worked together on an urban landscape redevelopment project (street art), in a little street near the school, to be precise.

As well as being painted with the colours of the village and with allegorical characters, the street also features drawings from sketches made by the students based on the themes and values of the Agenda 2030 17 Goals and are organised in a sort of itinerary/game.

The YMC'S activity has now become a best practice, that of "Citizenship Education", a tool in the hands of children to concretely express their participation in community life.

The Curriculum includes participation, for secondary school students, in a pilgrimage to extermination camps, organised in collaboration with A.N.E.D. (National Association of Italian political deportees from Nazi concentration camps), which ends with the international demonstration at the Mauthausen extermination camp along with over 20,000 people from all over the world. During the 2023 Arts Week, an experience-sharing meeting was held, where the students involved were able to tell their classmates, families, teachers and institutional representatives about their experience.

The images from the pilgrimage were collected and organised into a video reportage and were then honoured, on June 29, during the commemoration ceremony for the Bucaccia Massacre in the Municipality of Guardistallo, in the presence of provincial and regional institutions, the institute's orchestra and the Primary School's Youth Mayor.

Consistently with the activities of the SRC, in the Secondary School, the students meet and represent the 27 European Union Member States, simulating a session of the European Parliament assembly, in which

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they commit to promoting the fulfilment of European environmental policies at the Institute.



*Simulation of a session of the European Parliament assembly*

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## The village through the eyes of a tourist

*Walking along the streets of the panoramic viewpoint of the village of Riparbella, you come across colourful benches created through the collaboration between the institute, the Municipality and the artist, Vinci.*



*The benches created as part of the SL path*

The benches are the final product of the artistic painting project promoted by the Municipality of Riparbella to redevelop the street furniture through a ministerial contribution for Small Municipalities and achieved by the students of the InNatura State Middle School with the painter, Vinci.

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The students drew the original sketches inspired by the history of art and the major painters, produced in the open-air classrooms in the natural setting of the InNatura school, where the woods create well-being.

In particular, among the artists of reference, as well as the classics, female artists were also chosen.

In this way, the students involved were able to learn about the history of art, the main painting techniques and the aesthetic and decorative function that this has in the urban context.

The students' sketches were exhibited during Arts Week at the village library and were subsequently purchased by the interested parties. The donations, collected by the parents of the "active group of the InNatura school", will be used as self-financing for the implementation of future school projects.

*If you walk through the streets of the nearby village of Montescudaio, you can admire the panel created by the students, near the school, as part of the Monitor 440 "In Europe with Italo Griselli" project and an interesting mural.*

The students involved in the project had an opportunity to learn more about the artist that the Institute is named after, through discussions with art experts and direct observation of the works kept in Pisa and Rome.

The mural and the panel were inaugurated during Arts Week, in a ceremony accompanied by the music of the Istituto Griselli Orchestra.

Participation in the "Images for the Earth" national competition with the educational project of the Le Badie Infant School "Say, do, Think, next to others" which refers to the "Research since infant school" method created by the educationalist Idana Pescioli, also aims to increase children's awareness regarding their gestures towards others and the environment, sensitising them to different topics such as peace, democracy, the environment and diversity, in order to "plant" the citizenship dimension inside them.

By listening, through stimulating readings, the children tackled the topics of "responsible consumption and production" (recycling and

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reuse) and participation in the Enoart competition “The beauty of light” allowed them to win a prize.

During Arts Week, they demonstrated, to families and the Community, that it is possible to develop A sense of citizenship from childhood, that is, having “ethically-oriented behaviour, respectful of others and of the environment and nature” and also to consolidate identity, in the sense of feeling part of a group, members of a community and inhabitants of a territory.



*A moment of the meeting with families*

The activities were focused on the outdoor workshop procedure, which represents an active space where children act on a physical, sensory and motor level, reinforced by fantasy and theatrical operational inputs and by a relational climate open to listening and discussion.

The growth of ecological thinking is also supported through outings to local farms that offer high-quality stimuli.

This experience allowed children to feel responsible and to develop a fondness for that world that leaves you amazed.

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Arts Week, now an institutionalised exercise at the institute, allows all the branches of the school to share the results of the activities carried out during the school year, in line with the Mission, with the institutions, the families and the community.

Considering a school a meeting place and one of exchange will allow children to have more possibilities for academic success and, from the point of view of orientation, to make targeted future choices.

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