

Service Learning: between education and volunteering. When learning is useful to others.

Nowadays, we hear more and more about service learning, both in and outside the school environment, but many people still fail to understand what it is. Often, during explanations, this phenomenon is associated with volunteering, which is similar to it but not 100% identical. While volunteering is all about helping others and those in need, Service Learning is focused on learning, which is why a growing number of schools want to learn more about it. In this approach, the involvement of students, especially in practical activities that put them in touch with society and the various associations in the community, is considerably more proactive than traditional classroom learning.

But let's see what Service Learning is and how it can be developed in schools.

According to Italo Fiorin, one of Italy's leading experts on the subject, and to what he stated in his study entitled 'Service learning and changing the paradigm', published by LUMSA, it consists of five basic steps, which are essential for its implementation.

These steps include:

Motivation: You need to ask why you want to do one action rather than another. Here the students, in connection with the needs of the territory, are truly involved in the construction of their pathway;

Diagnosis: it is necessary to understand what the social criticality that the community is highlighting may be, in this way it will be possible to plan the intervention in the best possible way;

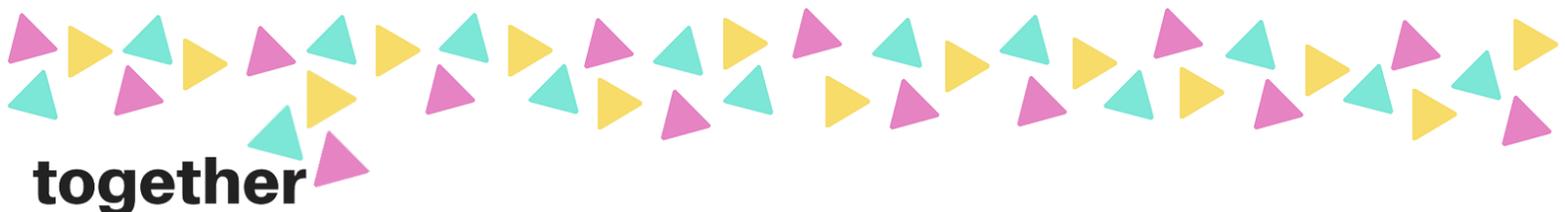
Conception and Planning: it is necessary to plan the intervention to be carried out, reflecting on possibilities, risks, unknowns, constraints. This aspect is coordinated by the teacher but again puts the students and the community at the centre;

Execution: after planning it is time for the intervention which may vary in duration depending on many factors (objectives, timeframe, possible funding, participation of external parties, etc.)

Closing and Evaluation: After finishing the intervention it is very important to reflect not only on the contents learned but also on the quality of the intervention and the impact of the change.

The advantages of using service learning are manifold, such as: a greater sense of social responsibility, a better relationship with others, greater sensitivity to cultural diversity, more meaningful situated learning, a closer teacher-pupil relationship and a more relaxed school climate.

The school that undertakes Service-Learning paths wants to put culture, but also training and education, back at the centre of social relations, today increasingly threatened by commercial and profit dynamics.





The Erasmus+ TOGETHER project aims to develop the phenomenon of Service Learning in schools, developing an innovative service-learning methodology for secondary schools focused on the digitisation of cultural heritage.

Students, together with teachers and school managers, should take up an active role within the community they live in, thus establishing a regular collaboration with local stakeholders and providing an actual service catering at the same time for the students' learning objectives and for the community's needs.

