

DIALOGIC GATHERINGS

E-Book



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1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, humankind has created artistic works and knowledge that are a legacy and a treasure to be enjoyed by all. An excellent way to approach, learn from, and enjoy these creations is to do so in dialogue with others. In the exchange of perceptions, the works take on a special meaning for everyone, and the conversations generate new bonds and interpersonal understanding that go beyond the moment of interaction.

For decades now, schools and other entities in different countries have held Dialogic Gatherings (Flecha, 2000) on literature, arts, music, science, mathematics, and others. Participants often belong to disadvantaged groups that have historically faced prejudices about their intellectual capabilities and cultural interests. Dismantling these prejudices, thousands of highly diverse participants engage in powerful discussions about the highest quality works of humankind and become more active learners and citizens.

This book describes the characteristics and functioning of Dialogic Gatherings and brings together examples and specific ways of carrying them out in different contexts. It aims to help teachers and educators working in formal or non-formal education.

The book is part of Dive-In Dialogue, a European project co-funded by Erasmus+. In this project, teachers from Greece, Slovenia, Hungary, Serbia, North Macedonia, and Spain collaborate to implement, improve, and exchange dialogic gatherings. The project, in turn, continues other formal and informal initiatives that have been expanding Dialogic Gatherings around the best works of humanity to improve the participants' key competencies and foster their inclusion in school and society. We hope it will be helpful to those who are interested and will be an incentive for you to try and organise Dialogic Gatherings on your own.

2. THE ORIGINS AND SPREAD OF DIALOGIC GATHERINGS



Dialogic Gatherings were created more than 40 years ago in an underserved neighbourhood in Barcelona (Spain) where many of the residents had virtually never been to school because they had been working since they were children and migrated from other rural areas in Spain during Franco's dictatorship (1939 – 1975).

In 1978, Ramón Flecha, with a group of neighbours, created La Verneda-Sant Martí adult school, which has been the driving force behind the transformation of the neighbourhood and an internationally essential reference for democratic adult education (Aubert et al. 2016). Led by the adult participants, the school has been acknowledged as a place where “people dare to dream” (Sánchez-Aroca, 1999).

In this context, Flecha held the first Dialogic Literary Gathering in 1980 (Oliver et al., 2016) with adult men and women who had not read any books before. They started with works by Federico García Lorca, Julio Cortázar, Sappho, James Joyce, and Franz Kafka. Hundreds of adults became actively engaged in the Dialogic Gatherings and in many other activities in the school and the neighbourhood. Participants also led the formation of other groups and started disseminating their experiences to other adult education organizations.

In 2000, the adult democratic education movement launched the initiative “1001 Dialogic Literary Gatherings around the World”, which was named to pay tribute to the literary classic “The Arabian Nights” (Oliver et al., 2016). They organised conferences that gathered people from different adult schools, cities, and, later on, countries, where they shared their increasingly diverse experiences around the Dialogic Gatherings. People such as the Nobel Prize in literature José Saramago, the singer-songwriter and politician Juan Antonio Labordeta, the professor at Harvard School of Public Health Rima Rudd, and other academics from various international universities expressed their admiration for how the Dialogic Gatherings fostered culture and dialogue.

Soon, primary and secondary school teachers were interested in transferring the experience to their classrooms, and they created the first experiences for these age groups, sometimes with the original works and sometimes with adaptations for the age of the younger participants. The dissemination of Dialogic Literary Gatherings also spread the idea that the experience should not be limited to the best literary works but also on the best works of humanity in all its fields: scientific, visual, musical, etc. because all these works in all these fields could and should be made available to all people through the dialogic learning approach (Flecha, 2000).

The Dialogic Gatherings were identified as a ‘Successful Educational Action’ within the INCLUD-ED research project (2006-2011). The INCLUD-ED project was funded by the Sixth Framework Programme of the European Commission, which is the European programme of the highest scientific level and was devoted entirely to analysing Successful Educational Actions that improve both learning and coexistence in any educational environment so that the knowledge would have a social impact. For this reason, INCLUD-ED was the only Social Sciences and Humanities Project selected in a list of the “ten success stories” funded in all areas by the Programme¹.

Progressively, either through informal contact, national or European projects, networks of professionals, and academic dissemination, literary Dialogic Gatherings expanded to different countries of the world, for example, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Italy, Malta, Mexico, Portugal, United Kingdom, and among various educational contexts (formal education, non-formal education, prisons, residential centres for children and youth in state care among others).

The idea of the 1001 gatherings has long since been superseded, and today, thousands of groups of people get together regularly to enjoy a Dialogic Gathering. Furthermore, we maintain the dream of expanding this opportunity even further to everyone, making the right to quality education a reality.

¹ European Commission. (2011). Added value of Research, Innovation and Science portfolio. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_11_520

3. THE SCIENTIFIC AND THEORETICAL BASE OF DIALOGIC GATHERINGS



3.1 Dialogic Learning

The Dialogic Gatherings are framed within the theoretical conception of Dialogic Learning elaborated by Ramón Flecha in the book “Sharing Words: Theory and Practice of Dialogic Learning,” published in 1997 and later translated into English (Flecha, 2000). In line with contributions from education (Freire, 1970), psychology (Bruner, 1996; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978), sociology (Mead, 1934), philosophy (Habermas, 1981), and literature (Bakhtin, 2010) among others, Dialogic Learning highlights the essential role of dialogue and interaction in learning processes. Flecha has more recently developed the theory of the Dialogic Society (Flecha, 2022), which includes contributions from various theories from the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities and overcomes their errors. This theoretical approach emphasises the transformative potential of dialogue in addressing social challenges and building a society where individuals have a voice in the decisions that shape their lives.

While the development of learning sciences in the last decades has also shared the conception of dialogue as a pivotal element in learning, many common educational practices are not dialogic. On the one hand, classroom interactions remain, in many cases, a replica of the traditional initiation-reply-evaluation structure: the teacher poses a question looking for a specific answer, students respond, and the teacher evaluates the answer. On the other hand, teachers often invite students to “talk to each other”, but this does not guarantee a genuine dialogue and productive learning.

Dialogic Gatherings are based on the principles with which Flecha defined dialogic learning: egalitarian dialogue, cultural intelligence, transformation, instrumental dimension, creation of meaning, solidarity, and equality of differences. Moreover, the practice of the Dialogic Gatherings enhances the individual and collective capacity to act according to these principles.

Egalitarian dialogue



Dialogue is egalitarian when participants’ contributions are considered according to the validity of their arguments instead of their positions of power. It means that all contributions hold value, regardless of the individuals presenting them, as long as reasoned arguments support them. In Dialogic Gatherings, the teacher or moderator does not intervene to clarify the correct interpretation or correct other interventions, but to ensure that all participants can express their opinions and that all views are respected. If a student has more competence or facility with the subject matter, their opinions are not considered superior to those of another student. Along the same line, contributions from participants who are more used to or skilled in public speaking are threatened in the same way as those from people who are shy, less experienced in public speaking, or have less specific knowledge.

Cultural intelligence



Cultural intelligence transcends the constraints of academic intellect and encompasses the diverse aspects of human interaction, such as academic intelligence, practical intelligence, and communicative intelligence. Cultural intelligence is inherent in all individuals, irrespective of their educational background, language, or socioeconomic status. Acknowledging the cultural intelligence of every student challenges “deficit thinking”, whereby students’ learning difficulties and failures (particularly for those of low-income or ethnic minority background) are attributed to their “deficiencies” or difficulties. Dialogic Gatherings open up opportunities for bringing to light the different knowledge and skills of the participants rather than pointing out what they don’t know or don’t have the skills. An immigrant student may have difficulties reading aloud the text but understand very well the experience of the novel’s protagonist, who has gone through a migration process.

Transformation



The education offered to learners is often ‘tailored’ to their starting situation. Thus, students with disadvantages and low proficiency levels are downgraded in difficulty. Even when done with good intentions, lowering expectations and demanding little of students reduces their learning and accentuates social inequalities. Rather than lowering learning with an adaptive approach, dialogic learning embraces a transformative vision to ensure that all students gain access to basic skills and conventions, as well as to critical thinking and other higher mental functions. Thus, participants are invited to discuss in-depth, high-quality works in Dialogic Gatherings.



Instrumental dimension

The importance of dialogue between people does not mean that learning focuses on values such as respect or empathy at the expense of learning specific instrumental knowledge or skills. Learning sciences agree that language-based actions, such as explaining, reasoning, and asking questions, are instruments for acquiring knowledge and skills. Thus, Dialogic Learning goes beyond the dichotomy between instrumental and humanistic dimensions of knowledge (“teaching content” or “teaching values”). It encompasses both dimensions without separating one from the other. In Dialogic Gatherings, participants achieve great learning of concepts, history, spelling, and different abilities.



Creation of meaning

Learners often struggle to find meaning in their education as it usually fails to align with their everyday experiences, cultural background, language, and behaviour. Dialogic learning aims to connect learning experiences to the lifeworld of girls and boys and their families, with a re-enchantment in the communication between teachers, students, and their relatives. This occurs clearly in Dialogic Gatherings, as participants attribute their meaning to a work of art, for instance, and feel their identities and future endeavors are respected. They also perceive the social value of their learning and change attitudes from rejection to interest and desire to participate.

Solidarity



Authentic dialogue entails, by its very nature, the predisposition to listen to and understand the other person's point of view. Dialogical learning is based on this premise and promotes collaboration in the joint search for meaning, knowledge, and completion of tasks. Previous research has already shown that learning is the result of social interactions in which participants share and jointly construct knowledge. With this collaboration, dialogical learning also fosters solidarity and mutual help among participants during and beyond the activity. In Dialogic Gatherings, for instance, priority is given to those who have yet to engage in the discussion or find participating more challenging. Moreover, participants see the world from others' perspectives, building empathy and solidarity.

Equality of differences



In many instances, schools fail to acknowledge cultural minorities and to celebrate diversity. In some cases, the emphasis on difference seems to imply a renunciation of equality and the denial that universal values exist. Dialogic learning recognises that genuine equality encompasses the equal right of every individual to live according to their choices and preferences, but without renouncing the objective of quality and excellent learning. It implies a rejection of ethnocentrism and homogeneity – which does not respect difference – and of relativism - which neglects the objectives of equity and justice. And it recognizes the imperative that everyone, from their different and diverse starting points, should achieve the same results of excellence in learning. The principle would be “neither homogenizing equality nor unequal diversity”. Dialogic Gatherings are a perfect forum for contrasting different points of view and learning from each other.

3.2. Scientific evidence with social impact

Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts, and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. Therefore, researchers are also responsible for generating scientific knowledge that contributes to society's benefit and making it available to citizens. Different agents must be able to access this knowledge and use it appropriately in their daily work.

While “scientific evidence” has often been referred to as generated by a rigorous scientific process, it is essential to highlight the concept of scientific evidence of social impact, that is, scientific evidence on actions that have demonstrated to obtain positive results concerning a specific area or problem.

In education, for example, much research is limited to diagnosing or measuring the prevalence of educational inequalities. This knowledge may be necessary, but it does not in itself lead to a reduction in inequalities. To achieve this, practitioners should ensure that their interventions are informed by available scientific evidence with social impact.

In the case of Dialogic Gatherings, a wide range of researchers have already explored the dynamics of and corroborated their effectiveness in improving competencies in very different settings. In addition to the INCLUD-ED Project, which we have already mentioned in another section, in recent years, scientific journals as diverse as *Frontiers in Psychology*, *Journal of Pragmatics*, *Cambridge Journal of Education* or *Qualitative Inquiry*, among others, have echoed the benefits of dialogical discussions. In 2023, an article published in *Educational Research Review* (ranked No. 1 in the JCR ranking of scientific journals in educational sciences) systematised the evidence found in 46 articles on Dialogic Literary Gatherings. It concluded that (Ruiz-Eugenio et al., 2023):

- » Dialogic Literary Gatherings promote a taste for reading in all ages.
- » People who have never read universal literature before enjoy this type of reading.
- » Dialogic Literary Gatherings are developing a proactive attitude toward reading and learning.
- » They are allowing participants to reach deeper levels of understanding.
- » They are promoting prosocial behaviour.

4. DIALOGIC GATHERINGS IN PRACTISE



Dialogic Gatherings do not require significant resources or specialised training for their implementation. The essential criteria that you must take into account if you are going to do it are:

- Choosing a work that can be considered among the “best universal works” (outstanding literature, art, music, or any form of creative or intellectual endeavour considered exemplary or significant globally). “Universal” in this context implies that these works are widely recognized, appreciated, and relevant across different cultures, languages, or regions, making them universally acclaimed or esteemed. It could encompass a variety of works, such as influential novels, timeless artworks, impactful scientific discoveries, or significant philosophical treatises that have had a profound and lasting impact on humanity as a whole).
- Ensuring an egalitarian dialogue among the participants.

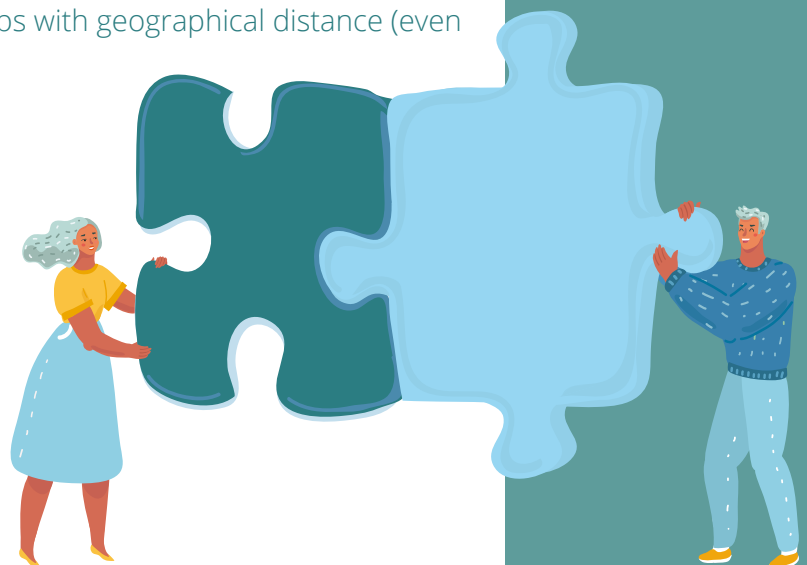
The accumulated experience and research also allow us to have a set of clues that may be helpful. In this chapter, we present practical arrangements for carrying out Dialogic Gatherings.

4. DIALOGIC GATHERINGS IN PRACTISE

4.1. Structure and format

The number of individuals, length, and frequency of the gatherings should/ could be determined by the particular circumstances of the group in which they will be conducted.

- **Number of individuals:** a gathering may be held with groups from 4 to a large number of participants.
- **Disposition:** in face-to-face activities, the best way to have a dialogic gathering is to have participants sitting in a circle so they can see each other.
- **Length:** There is no stipulated duration. It can be half an hour, an hour, two hours.... whatever the group decides.
- **Frequency:** the higher the frequency, the faster the learning is achieved. A frequency of one dialogic Gathering per week ensures that the group establishes the dynamics, allows the same work to be discussed over several sessions easily, and achieves clear improvements in learning and group dynamics. A one-off discussion (e.g., once a year) is a stimulating experience but does not lead to significant learning gains.
- **Online format:** Most dialogic gatherings are held in a face-to-face activity. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many schools maintained online Dialogic Gatherings, allowing their students to have an interactive activity and their families to be aware of and participate in it (Elboj et al., 2021). Some groups have now created or maintained online Dialogic Gatherings. These also allow the participation of groups with geographical distance (even schools from different countries).



4. DIALOGIC GATHERINGS IN PRACTISE

4.2 The works selected

The selection of works is crucial for Dialogic Gatherings. As we stated, one of the essential criteria is choosing a work that is universally relevant. Many book clubs do not share this criterion. However, in Dialogic Gatherings, time and effort are invested in dealing with those works on which there is a broad consensus on their value and relevance. While there does not exist a comprehensive list of those “classic” or universal works, there are works that are indisputably literary or cultural landmarks. So, not everything fits in the Dialogic Gatherings. If we desire to claim the value of an interesting but rather unknown author, we can do it as another activity. Dialogic Gatherings are devoted to bringing best works of humankind closer to all people and using their unquestionable qualities to have exciting discussions. In Chapter 5, we suggest some works for every type of Dialogic Gathering. We suggest consulting the resource bank of the Dive-In-Dialogue project, as well.

Among the works that meet this criterion, in most cases, the group itself chooses the literature, music, or work they want to discuss. The moderator may suggest some options and let the group decide which one they want, and many times, other options are left on the list for future gatherings. Participants frequently make suggestions themselves, especially when they become more familiar with the activity.

Depending on the age of the participants, we may need an adaptation of the chosen work. An adaptation of a book of universal literature still has the advantage over other books on the market that the pupils will become familiar with the characters, stories, and plots of the great works. That said, some adaptations are better than others. Some adaptations simplify the text so much that it becomes distorted and loses all its richness. Thus, while judging the quality of adaptations can be tricky, we should check that the original content and meaning are maintained as much as possible.

Ideally, each participant should have a copy of the work they are discussing. The book, or a reproduction of the work of art, or a file or link to the music. There are different options to guarantee participants’ access to the work. Some schools, for example, have several books already chosen and purchased by the school, which different pupils use each year. In other cases, they are ordered from libraries or with a grant or aid. The resource bank of the Dive In Dialogue project, which has open works in various languages, is also helpful for this purpose.

4. DIALOGIC GATHERINGS IN PRACTISE

4.3 The moderator

One member of the group is designated as the moderator of the Gathering. This person may be a teacher, a family member, a volunteer, or anyone else. The moderator is also usually the one who facilitates the whole decision-making process: explaining the dynamics, ensuring the appropriate selection of the works to be discussed, and its availability. In many groups, such as adult groups, all these tasks may be shared responsibilities. In the discussion, the moderator is responsible for ensuring that everyone willing to contribute does it, and everyone adheres to turn-taking while also ensuring that the views of others are acknowledged. Special attention is given to individuals who are less participatory or encounter more significant challenges and they are given the floor before a person who has already participated. Thus, participation is as impartial and varied as possible. The moderator can participate as a participant but must not impose their personal opinions or viewpoints.

4.4 Before the meeting: preparation of the Dialogic Gathering

Before attending the Dialogic Gathering, participants must read, listen, or watch the work previously agreed upon. In the case of literary works, the group agrees on how many pages will be read by the next Gathering before the first session and at the end of each session. In the case of a scientific article or a work of art (a painting, a statue, or a piece of music), they may agree that the debate will be about the whole piece or just a part of an entirety.

Beyond just “reading”, participants may prepare contributions to the debate. In the case of literature, they may select a specific paragraph they want to share with others and state the reasons for finding that excerpt particularly noteworthy. They can discuss paragraphs or excerpts that piqued their interest or that they found enjoyable or reminiscent of something. In other cases, the selection can be a specific issue of the work we want to share and discuss within the group.

4.5. During the meeting

The following steps illustrate the dynamics of the Dialogic Gatherings, whatever type they may be:

01



The moderator starts the session and reminds the participants of the rules (if needed): interventions are made in turns when the moderator indicates; when one person speaks, the others must listen and may not talk or interrupt; all interventions are respected, and derogatory comments will never be made; we make it easy for everyone to speak and those who have not talked have priority.

The moderator asks who wants to contribute and prepares a list of participants. There are no criteria for the order of the contributions (they do not have to follow the order of the pages of a text or the equivalent in other works). The moderator encourages the participants to contribute with their already-made selections.

02



Then, the moderator asks the first participant on the list to read the chosen paragraph out loud or explain the selection and share why they chose it, what they found important in that part of the work, or any other personal reason for choosing the idea (maybe a individual memory, for instance).

03



After the participant shares their thoughts, the moderator opens the discussion to all participants, encouraging them to share their opinions and reflections on that particular excerpt. The moderator gives priority to those who are less participative or who find it difficult to express their ideas, thus fostering equitable and diverse participation. The moderator ensures no interruptions while one person is speaking and prevents disqualifications or inappropriate remarks toward other participants.

04



This process is repeated for each excerpt read during the Gathering, allowing new meaning to be created through a dialogic exchange of ideas. The goal of the Gathering is not to arrive at a particular conclusion but to create a safe space for dialogue and joint reflection.

05



The last minutes of the Gathering are dedicated to agreeing on the next session.

06



In essence, the Gathering is a space for exchanging views and emotions experienced by participants while reading the text or enjoying a piece of music or art. Through this intersubjective dialogue, participants can examine complex topics in more depth together, connecting their experiences with forms of instrumental learning.

The Dialogic Gathering creates an environment where all contributions are valued and respected, promoting values such as respect, tolerance, solidarity, and coexistence. Active participation in the shared construction of knowledge is encouraged, allowing for mutual assistance and learning.

DIALOGIC GATHERINGS

What they are	What they are not
<p>Dialogic Gatherings are rooted in dialogic learning, which entails a shared interpretation within a process that values reasoning over assumptions of status or power. Through this dialogic process, both individuals and the entire group contribute fresh perspectives and additional layers of meaning to the experience of reading classic authors, listening to classical music, or appreciating works of art. This interactive approach facilitates the achievement of deep levels of critical thinking and comprehension that would not be possible when engaging in these activities alone.</p>	<p>A gathering where the necessary preparation work, such as reading the agreed book chapter or listening to the piece of music, is not completed before the Gathering, or a meeting revolves around an engaging topic where an expert imparts knowledge.</p>
<p>The work selected and discussed is a “classical work” or one of the best universal contributions to humanity.</p>	<p>Any work can be selected as long as participants agree on that.</p>
<p>The shared understanding of the work is formed through collective interpretations facilitated by egalitarian dialogue among all participants.</p>	<p>The dialogue conforms to power dynamics where individuals with higher academic status monopolize the discussion or impose their interpretations rather than valuing the validity of reasoning.</p>
<p>Values such as coexistence, respect, and solidarity are nurtured and fostered through egalitarian dialogue. The main goal is that every participant learns the maximum possible.</p>	<p>Each participant strives to learn to the best of his or her abilities individually and perceives that the difficulties of others can be detrimental to them.</p>
<p>Decisions related to the activity, including the choice of works, frequency of sessions, selection of a moderator, etc., are made through a dialogic process involving all participants.</p>	<p>Participants do not have a say in the decision-making process regarding the activity.</p>
<p>The moderator of the Dialogic Gathering is not required to be an expert in the specific field. Their role is to possess knowledge about the functioning and criteria of Dialogic Gatherings and ensure the orderly conduct of the activity.</p>	<p>The moderator, who is an expert in the specific field, provides relevant explanations to other participants.</p>

5. TYPES OF DIALOGIC GATHERINGS



5.1. Dialogic Literary Gatherings

Dialogic Literary Gatherings are devoted to the greatest literary works of humanity from a wide diversity of cultures and times: books such as *The Odyssey*, *The Thousand and One Nights*, *The Divine Comedy*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, or *The Metamorphosis*, among many other classics from all times and cultures.

Notably, the Dialogic Literary Gatherings are about the whole book, not one specific section or chapter; therefore, the reading and dialogue of a book lasts several sessions. For example, many schools that hold weekly gatherings may do one or two books each term. At the end of each session, the group agrees on the chapter(s) or excerpt(s) to be read and discussed at the next meeting.

Whenever possible, participants read the original version (or a translation). However, with children, it is often necessary to use adaptations. In this case, it is essential to choose good-quality adaptations. As we mentioned before, adaptations must preserve, as much as possible, the contributions of the work, adapting those aspects necessary for participants to access its content, for instance, adjusting the language to the participants' age or using images to support/explain the story. No adaptations are recommended in adults with low literacy skills, but the reading pace should be adjusted to the needs and support provided, if necessary, in the preparation of the Dialogic Gathering.

Dialogic Literary Gatherings promote a taste for reading in all ages. Furthermore, they have the added benefit of enhancing critical thinking skills and cognitive abilities related to comprehension. These gatherings also provide an opportunity for participants to develop their vocabulary, grammar and spelling, as well as gain awareness of history and narrative techniques. Through dialogue, participants also improve their communication skills, including turn-taking and expressing their opinions and personal reflections while strengthening their power of reasoning (Ruiz- Eugenio et al., 2023).

Research has already shown the benefits of reading classical literature, or what we can understand as the best literary works. For example, a neuroimaging study showed that reading Shakespeare activates many more brain regions (like a kind of storm) than reading a bestseller, which triggers virtually no brain activity (Keidel et al., 2013). Another research published in the prestigious journal *Nature* (Lenhart et al., 2023), which consisted of a longitudinal study involving more than six thousand German adolescents aged between 10 and 15, concluded that only classic literature was able to improve the prosocial behaviour and social adjustment of adolescents compared to non-fiction, comics, and popular literature genres. Ruiz-Eugenio and colleagues (2023) demonstrated improvement of language and reading skills as well as the enhancement of values that promote social cohesion.



Dialogic Literary Gatherings enhance critical thinking, communication, and social cohesion through reading classic literature.

5.2. Artistic Dialogic Gatherings

The best artistic works of humanity have marked a before and an after in our societies. Observing and discussing these magnificent works allows us to broaden our artistic knowledge and understand and reflect on crucial social issues. In Artistic Dialogic Gatherings, participants discuss visual arts, such as paintings, sculptures, architecture, or performing arts.

Ideally, the participants may have had access to a reproduction of the work before the debate. As preparation may be shorter than in Literary Dialogic Gatherings, the work can be shown and discussed in the same session.

During the discussion, the moderator notes the people who want to introduce an idea. He or she then gives the floor to one of these people, after which there is a turn to discuss the idea. Comments can be about details of the work (such as the colours of a sky, the expression of a bust) or the work as a whole. Participants share their thoughts and emotions as viewers, and the dialogue allows for a deepening of how diverse

viewers perceive, feel, and respond to a work of art. Besides, the personal and social circumstances in which an artist created a painting impact our interpretation of it and the reflections it suggests to us. For instance, Artistic Dialogic Gatherings about Botticelli paintings promote relevant dialogues and learnings on the figure of Venus, goddess of love and beauty.

As in the other gatherings, the dialogue is as meaningful as the selection of works, universal references of all times. The gatherings develop the interest and curiosity to delve deeper into the history of the art.

Although the Artistic Dialogic Gatherings are relevant in themselves and do not require other gatherings, many works of art indeed make it possible to connect with works from other gatherings: Michelangelo's David with the story of David and Goliath; the Mona Lisa with the scientific works of Leonardo Da Vinci; or the Taj Mahal with the Mahabharata poem.



Image: La nascita di Venere - Sandro Botticelli

5.3. Mathematical Dialogic Gatherings

Mathematical Dialogic Gatherings consist of Dialogic Gatherings about classic readings in mathematics, scientific articles focused on mathematics, or even mathematics textbooks. They are not intended to replace other activities for learning mathematical procedures but to open further learning opportunities.

The process is the same as the above described Dialogic Literary Gatherings. Participants select a classic reading on a specific topic, such as the history of number systems. In Mathematical Dialogic Gatherings, participants engage in egalitarian dialogue to scaffold their learning and comprehension of the mathematical concepts covered in the books. Through egalitarian dialogue, participants learn together the meaning of the discussed mathematical objects, leading to a collective learning experience (Díez-Palomar, 2017; 2020).

There are fewer Mathematical Dialogic Gatherings experiences than Literary Gatherings and fewer suitable adaptations of reference works for primary or secondary education. Even so, some authors worked in different centres are Euclid, Hypatia of Alexandria, Archimedes, Bhaskara, Descartes, Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and authors like Boyer, Klein, Jean-Paul Collette, and others. While gatherings of novels and literary works are conducted on the whole book, in this case, there may be experiences in which specific parts of the works are selected - for example, because they are coherent with the theme of the mathematics curriculum that is being worked on at that moment in the school.



Mathematical Dialogic Gatherings enhance collective learning and comprehension of mathematical concepts through egalitarian dialogue, focusing on classic readings and scientific articles.

5.4. Scientific Dialogic Gatherings

Scientific Dialogic Gatherings strengthen the dialogue between science and society, enhance relationships, and reinforce the capacity of all people to question themselves, seek information, and make better decisions in the face of the challenges of today's society (Buslón et al., 2020).

These Gatherings can start with participants' interest in getting involved in science or can be introduced as a different approach to biology, chemistry, and linguistics. It is important to mention that Scientific Dialogic Gatherings are not limited to the natural sciences but include all areas of scientific knowledge accumulated by humanity over time (e.g., the natural sciences, formal sciences, engineering and technology, life and health sciences, social sciences, and humanities).

The selection of scientific texts may consist of whole books, articles, or texts of particular relevance. They can be classical texts (e.g., by Lucretius, Galileo Galilei, Copernicus, Kepler) or by scientists of our time (e.g., Hawking or Kandel). Articles published in reputable scientific journals recognized and validated by the international scientific community for their scientific impact, can also be selected. Open Access policies in scientific journals facilitate this option. In all cases, the works must be texts belonging to the original source, not interpretations from other authors or summaries done by different authors. In the case of translated texts, the quality of the translation must be ensured.

The participants' ability to work on a text with a particular difficulty level must not be underestimated, as there are many more excellent opportunities for understanding and reflecting together in these cases. Besides, some classical scientific books, such as Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, have good adaptations for children. Very interesting initiatives are emerging to bring scientific discoveries closer to children, such as the journal *Frontiers for Young Minds*, offering open-access scientific articles written by scientists and reviewed by kids and teens.



5.5. Musical Dialogic Gatherings

Music's communicative and expressive power differs from that of words, often leaving us to remark, "This cannot be expressed in words". Exploring the realm of music is an exhilarating adventure.

In today's world, we constantly have music around us, often without even choosing it. There is music in the shops we go into, in advertising, on the Internet, in our neighbours' flats, in our home. We create our playlists, go dancing or listen to music, and choose music as background to other activities. Boys and girls shape their musical preferences from an early age with a decisive conditioning factor of the trends set by the music industry, which has a substantial economic and social influence.

In contrast to the music students are exposed to and deliberately listen to daily, classical music has increasingly become a minority choice, even in music classes. Beyond this, it seems that some discourses go so far as to accuse classical music of being elitist or representing and reproducing social inequalities. Then, with the aspiration of connecting with the preferences of young people, classical music is replaced by more "popular" and "modern" music, like fashionable bands.

The Musical Dialogic Gatherings offer the opportunity to learn the skills of active listening to music, to discover fundamental pieces of music history, to appreciate and understand cultural heritage, and to broaden musical tastes. Participants listen to the work at home or in a previous session, and the Gathering is

devoted entirely to a dialogue about the sensations, interpretations, and experiences of listening.

Research shows that Musical Dialogic Gatherings confirm that all people can appreciate and enjoy the highest quality music, challenging theories of cultural elitism (López de Aguilera et al., 2023). Works such as Mozart or Verdi's operas, Bach's cantatas, Beethoven's concertos, and Mahler's symphonies are just a few examples worth sharing. The resonating chorus of "Va, Pensiero" from Verdi's Nabucco still holds relevance in present-day situations, more than 150 years after its composition, leading to intense debates about crises, people, racism, and injustices.

Symphony No. 5
in C Minor
Op. 67
Beethoven

Allegro con brio. $\text{♩} = 108$.

Image: Sheet music for Beethoven's 5th Symphony

6. CONTEXTS AND PARTICIPANTS IN DIALOGIC GATHERINGS



Dialogic gatherings occur in various educational settings. Below are a few examples illustrating how they are adapted and reimagined within specific geographical and institutional environments.

6.1. Early Childhood Education

Enjoying the great mythological tales from the earliest years

Preschool educators have incorporated Dialogic Literary Gatherings into their classrooms, extending the learning and critical thinking abilities of the early childhood students they serve.

An example can be observed at Mare de Déu de Montserrat School in Catalonia (Spain), where they have been consistently employed with three-year-old children to foster learning, self-regulation, and prosocial behaviours. Adaptations of classical literature are introduced through shared reading and guided discussions. Dialogic Literary Gatherings enable children to familiarise them-

selves with figures from classic cultures, such as Ulysses and Penelope, the significance of Ithaca, the power of Zeus, or the scientific explanation of the reason for Mr Fogg's early arrival in London. Through the practice, children acquire and employ language more effectively and demonstrate increased interest in reading.

In many schools, teachers undertake preparatory actions to ensure the smooth functioning of the gatherings. For instance, in each weekly session, before commencing the gathering, supportive materials like puppets and flashcards are utilized, and students are organized into diverse small groups to foster familiarity and trust. Additionally, the teacher reviews the norms of the Dialogic Gathering (e.g., raising hands, respecting turn-taking when speaking, and respecting all contributions), revisits the critical elements of the story, and employs cards to represent characters and their attributes visually. These measures create a secure and contextualized environment for meaningful engagement.

The positive impact generated by the Dialogic Literary Gatherings implemented in the schools goes beyond their walls, establishing partnerships with other schools and communities. For example, primary school students have collaborated in transferring these gatherings to other schools in their city, including kindergartens. Students and teachers from a primary school called Mare de Déu de Montserrat (Spain) carried out a Dialogic Literary Gathering on the Odyssey for students from 0 to 3 years old who attended a kindergarten in the same area. Family and community members also collaborated to construct a Trojan Horse that was used during the Gathering.



Image: Dialogic Literary Gathering on "The Trojan Horse" in Early Childhood Education at the Mare de Déu de Montserrat School in Terrassa (Spain)

6.2. Primary education

Stimulating scientific curiosity to all

There is evidence that Scientific Dialogic Gatherings stimulate scientific curiosity. As an example, teachers in a culturally diverse school in a low socioeconomic neighbourhood in Tarragona (Spain) implement Dialogic Gatherings in grades from 3 to 16-year-old students. Specifically, children participating in Scientific Dialogic Gatherings read adaptations of articles published in reputable scientific journals such as Nature or Science. These articles present concepts that surpass the children's current level of understanding, considering their age and grade, thus providing both a challenge and an opportunity for further scientific learning. The discussions cover topics not typically addressed in their regular science classes, including DNA, the human genome, microplastics, climate change, and neuroscience.

Through these Dialogic Gatherings, students gain access to scientific knowledge beyond their curriculum. Children truly comprehend and absorb these scientific concepts during their interactions with their peers rather than rely solely on independent reading. Egalitarian interactions among children are fundamental, and facilitators guide rather than explain to the children. Ensuring the principles of dialogic learning throughout the gatherings poses a significant challenge for facilitators due to the specificity and sometimes technicality of the content.



During their discussions, children actively raise questions about constructing science and conducting scientific research. As an illustration, in the following excerpt, ten years children who were discussing an article expressed their curiosity about how scientists were able to sequence the entire human genome using a piece of chewed resin (Díez-Palomar et al., 2022, p.5):



"The entire genome has been extracted." It caught my attention because it seemed incredible to me that they had all the information about a person with only one chewing gum.

Ana (Spanish Roma female)



Well, I think they can know it through the saliva because the DNA is in the saliva, and that's why they can realize it.

Ilias (Moroccan male)



But it was 5700 years ago.

José (Spanish Roma male)



It was not because of saliva, because it had already dried.

Ana



No, but it remains; I think it would stay . . . not that if you touch it, it is wet, no, but I think there would be something left. The DNA, I think, would remain, the saliva itself would go away, but the DNA would continue to stay. DNA remains because it is unique [. . .] let's see. . . DNA comes from the saliva but, [. . .], the saliva [going away] does not mean that the DNA goes with it.

Ilias



The DNA remains in the resin because it was trapped, DNA has been sucked.

Ana



This type of dialogue is reproduced in the various Scientific Dialogic Gatherings carried out in schools around the world.

Literature, Fine Arts and Music with 8 and 9 years-old students

Brusnice Primary School is a small school with just over 200 students in Novo Mesto, Slovenia. There, a teacher of grade 4, with 22 pupils aged 8 to 9, started to implement Dialogic Gatherings within the context of the Dive-In-Dialogue project.

She started with Dialogic Literary Gatherings in Slovenian literature lessons. First, she decided to deal with Hans Christian Andersen's passage – Ugly Duckling. The pupils were previously acquainted with the reading instructions – to read, think about it at home, and mark the part of the text that touched them most emotionally, left an impression on them, and gave them a reason to think about an event from their life. They could write their thoughts on paper or tell them at the meeting.

Sitting in a circle at a Dialogic Gathering was something close to the students, as the teacher often used this form of work in the classroom. When asked who would share their thoughts first, only a few children raised their hands at the first Dialogic Gathering. The teacher noticed that those who were otherwise involved a lot in classes and who were already generally confident in expressing their beliefs and thoughts were keener to contribute to the Gathering, and the dialogue started with them. But soon, others saw that no thinking was wrong or correct. However, all participants were willing to help each other find the proper terminology. So, at the second meeting, there was a difference in cooperation. In every single work they discussed, children find many different perspectives. The teacher was particularly interested in how students sincerely rejoiced when they saw that their peer had the same part of the text marked and had a very similar opinion about it as himself. She felt that such moments in Dialogic Gatherings certainly connect the participants. Knowing that no one will judge them when sharing their views with others, even the most closed and shy are always encouraged after just a few Gatherings.



After her initial literature lessons, the teacher developed Dialogic Gatherings in music classes by listening to Mozart's Magic Flute and Artistic Dialogic gatherings by observing works by Picasso, Van Gogh, and Klimt.

Since the paintings are much more abstract than the literary works, the teacher also highlights a difference in student responses. They linked the literary work to events they experienced with their family or peers. When observing the paintings, they came up with more "abstract" topics such as birth, life, and death ... At the same time, many negative emotions arose that the pupils experienced during various events and felt again while watching classical paintings. On the other hand, Mozart's music took children into the world of nature. They focused more on sounds that reminded them of natural phenomena like animals.

One of the teachers who has promoted these gatherings explains her impression with these words:



In the Dialogic Gatherings I have been conducting in my practice, I found only positive things from my professional point of view. With classical works that we read, listened to, or observed during the Dialogic Gatherings, it does not matter who the author is and what they want to say with their work. Students need to see the works with their hearts and feel that however they understand it, it is absolutely right. Such an approach is closer to students than the classic treatment of such works prescribed in the curriculum. Dialogues also blur the boundaries set by their social status and learning abilities among pupils. And I believe that after the Dialogic Gathering, students also know all the other characteristics they need to know about a classical work from an educational (curriculum-related) point of view.

In today's world, where we increasingly need to act rationally in collaboration with digital technology, a Dialogic approach that strengthens expressions of emotions, empathy, compassion, and people's interconnectedness is welcome. My work is guided by the idea that if I positively influence one student in each generation of pupils, my work has achieved its purpose. I see regular Dialogic Gatherings as one of the opportunities to achieve this goal.

From one painting to the world

During a discussion of Hans Holbein's painting *The Ambassadors* where 16 students participated between the ages of 7 to 10, students had a lively discussion of what ambassadors did at the time of the painting and what they do now. This led to a discussion of current world affairs and especially the war in Ukraine which is geographically close to the children living on the Serbian-Hungarian border. Children discussed the horrors of war and tried to find solutions for bringing peace to the world, comparing historical methods and present day solutions. Political systems were compared in Europe and elsewhere.

As the painting also presents a wide variety of scientific tools, the discussion also moved to scientific discoveries and how they affect the everyday life of people. Artificial intelligence was mentioned and some of them expressed their wish to become inventors when they grow up and to invent a time machine with which they would be able to move back to the time of the painting and interview the ambassadors.

All in all, it was a rich and informative discussion, children were able to participate with their varied level of knowledge in several subjects and contribute with their own interest while also using their imagination and gaining a deeper understanding of the painting and its historical background.



6.3. Secondary education

Critical debates and personal growth

Education professionals in one of the participating secondary educational institutions in Greece have incorporated Dialogic Literary Gatherings into the prescribed curriculum as a pedagogical approach to studying ancient Greek literature. Specifically, within the context of their exploration of Sophocles' renowned play, "Antigone," students had the opportunity to engage with the text and articulate their perspectives on fundamental themes, including but not limited to gender roles, the recognition of vulnerabilities, and the pursuit of justice, all while adhering to the parameters delineated in the school's instructional materials.

Within the Dialogic Literary Gathering mentioned above, educators have observed that students experience a heightened sense of inclusion. It is noteworthy that the teachers have discerned a remarkable evolution in mutual support among the students as these sessions progressed. A characteristic illustration of this transformation is the extraordinary journey of a female student who previously struggled with speech impediments and exhibited reluctance in active classroom participation. In the first sessions, she initially requested a friend's assistance to communicate her thoughts on the excerpts under examination. However, as the sessions continued to unfold, she underwent a profound transformation and began expressing her viewpoints independently. By the culmination of the school year, she had acquired the self-confidence to articulate her perspectives and actively engage in relevant dialogues fully.

Equally notable was the unprecedented level of support she received from her peers, which played an instrumental role in empowering her progress. During her contributions, her classmates attentively listened to her and shared their own experiences, fostering a rich exchange of ideas and nurturing an environment conducive to personal growth and collaborative learning.




6.4. Residential care centres

Promoting educational equality for children and youth in out-of-home care

Researchers on out-of-home care have identified several challenges that children and youth living in centres face, including the impact of institutionalization on cognitive, social, and language development and the low academic expectations they often receive from educators and caregivers. These factors contribute to high rates of academic failure and early school dropout, with consequences on other spheres of life.

Dialogic Gatherings can be implemented in these settings to combat educational inequality experienced by children and youth. For example, the staff and a volunteer in a residential foster care centre in Catalonia (northeast Spain) decided to implement Literary Dialogic Gatherings to promote a joint and quality leisure activity. In the centre, there lived boys and girls aged 12 to 17 who had suffered family violence and neglect. The group decided to read an adaptation of *Oliver Twist* by Dickens. Besides the moment of the debate, residential workers supplied additional reading support throughout the week, particularly to those children who faced challenges with reading.

Participating adolescents got progressively engaged with the activity, improved their reading skills, gained knowledge, and deepened feelings of empathy and dynamics of respectful conversation. Abel, a 15-years youth with family members who had experienced prostitution, drug abuse, and child sexual abuse, reflected on how reading that book helped him understand and discuss events that occurred in the lives of his peers, such as the loss of a mother (Garcia et al., 2018, p. 6):



“With this book, you realise what happens to everybody. This book is similar to what occurs to us. (...) For example, in the first chapter, when they talked about the mother who died while giving birth (...) We can advise one another, among us”.

6.5. Community and Adult Education

Doing Dialogic Gatherings for more than 40 years

At the La Verneda - Sant Martí adult school, where the first Dialogic Literary Gatherings began, these have become part of the DNA of the centre and the whole neighbourhood. The school regularly hosts literary, musical, art, mathematical, scientific, and even feminist gatherings (on key feminist texts).

Many now elderly neighbours are originally from southern Spain. These women enjoy listening to the music of the composer Manuel de Falla and discussing how he incorporated folkloric elements in his compositions, drawing influences from various Spanish dances that women know well, such as the Jota and Flamenco.

The connection between the works of the dialogic gatherings and their cultural knowledge and experience is also present in the other dialogic gatherings. For example, during a discussion of a book on the history of mathematics (Collette, 1973), one of the topics that emerged was the evolution of the use of different units of measurement. The various experiences of the participants provided an opportunity for critical examination. One of the participating women – all of them were over 50 years old and with elementary education level - explained she still used pounds as in older times (Díez-Palomar, 2020, p.479):



They explored the mathematical aspects inherent in using different units, such as the concept of “equivalence”. They became aware of their ability to navigate between the metric system and traditional measures. This awareness, in turn, stimulated their inherent numerical skills and contributed to improving their self-concept and empowerment.

Some women have been participating in the dialogic gatherings for more than 30 years now and have read, among others, Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*, Tagore’s *The Gardener*, Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves* and *The Kingdom of This World* by Alejo Carpentier. Their enrichment has gone hand in hand with personal and social transformations, leading many women with minimal formal schooling to participate in solidarity movements. When a dialogic gathering on *The Grapes of Wrath* by Steinbeck coincided with the Syrian refugee crisis, the debate led them to promote solidarity and reception activities in their centre. Likewise, the dialogues about *A Doll’s House* (Ibsen) and *Antigone* (Sophocles) sparked tremendous debates and questions about the role of women. They contributed to theory engagement in Women’s Movements (García-Yeste et al., 2017).

The many years of experience with dialogic gatherings allow for a great deal of self-management, and people who have previously been participants take over the moderation. Some doctors from the health centres in the area learned about the experience and realised the benefits it had for the participants. The collaboration of these doctors with the school led to the promotion of dialogic gatherings at health centres as well.

The school participants had many dreams that were coming true. One of them was to have a library where they could continue to share and promote cultural access in a working-class neighbourhood. In 2022, and after many demands, the City Council finally inaugurated a new library. The one that in 2023 was declared the International Best Public Library of the Year¹.

¹ <https://www.ifla.org/ifla-systematic-public-library-of-the-year/>

“I still use them (the pounds) many times because I do not want 1 kilo, I mean... one pound, or half a pound ... and they look like that (making a gesture meaning 'lack of understanding') ... and they do not understand me: “what is half a pound?” they say. Well ... less than 200 grams. Less than a quarter of a kilo.”



6.6. Penitentiary centres

Beyond the prison walls

Among the new contexts in which dialogic gatherings have been implemented as they have spread, we have some initiatives in prisons.


In the framework of the Dive-In project, one of these initiatives has taken place in Slovenia. In particular, the involved teacher works with a group of inmates from different linguistic, cultural, and religious backgrounds – Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Turkey, Chad, Russia, Poland, Palestine, Italy, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The teacher uses dialogic literary gatherings to enhance the linguistic competencies and intercultural abilities of attendees and to diminish the fundamentalistic views and beliefs of attendees notably.

One of the examples of how Literary texts offer a chance to understand other cultures, gain new cultural references, and change their worldview came with a debate on a section of the *Odyssey* (Homer). Due to the characteristics of the group and conditions in terms of sessions and calendars, the teacher offered a summary of the story and then selected a part of the *Odyssey* instead of the whole book. The teacher also read it out loud, as some did not know how to read well or only attended a few years of school. In verses 1000-1110 of the epic, Odysseus returns home and tells Telemachus that he is his father. Most of the attendees had children, and the rest still had parents. All of them were separated from their loved ones as they were imprisoned due to criminal acts in Slovenia. Most had not seen their families in person in many months/years. Families were too far geographically; for some, even online or telephone conversations were not an option. A son was born to one of the attendees as he was imprisoned in Slovenia. All the attendees could easily relate emotionally and by experience with the father and son in the epic poem and enhance their understanding through personal experience. They listened to each other and found classmates with similar experiences. After the meeting, there were no more comments regarding the individual's nationality, religion, or customs ... Joint experience of distance regarding their loved ones connected the attendees. They tried harder to find a "common Language" as they tried to have a conversation with someone who understood them. Thus, language learning takes place by including intercultural competencies. Attendees in such a process gain skills in linguistic communication and additional skills, allowing them to connect, cooperate, and better their interpersonal understanding.

Previous experiences in other prisons have demonstrated that participants reflect upon their narratives by reading and discussing narratives and themes in classic literature, which portray deeply human dilemmas and passions, fostering constructive self-criticism and revitalizing values that may have been eroded or lost during their criminal activities. Dialogic Gatherings impact the participants


during their imprisonment within the correctional institution by enhancing relationships between inmates and their social and family environments and opening opportunities for other impacts after their release.

An inmate in a women's prison shared the following reflection resulting from her participation in the Dialogic Literary Gathering, highlighting her commitment to education as a positive role model for her children (Alvarez et al., 2018, p. 15):



"I truly studied, right? In some moments of my life, but when I started in the bad life, I forgot all the books. And now (with the Gathering), well, I realized that it is necessary to feed the brain; you can't just put it on hold because it will grow old, and you learn, and you feel much better about yourself; and I can also take it as an example for my children so that they read".

Furthermore, Dialogic Literary Gatherings have proven to impact penitentiary institutions by transforming how officers and other professionals view inmates. The fact that participants engage with classic works of universal literature, as opposed to other types of books, contributes to reshaping the perception of correctional officers regarding the potential for learning, interests, and concerns of inmates, as well as their regard for them as individuals. Rafael, one of the inmates participating in the Dialogic Literary Gatherings, explains this (Flecha et al., 2013, p. 149):



"When the officers started seeing several inmates carrying classic literature books, their perception of us began to change. And that new perspective brought about a transformation in how we saw ourselves and in the institution itself [...]. When someone changes their perception of you, it compels you to change your perception of yourself."

7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS



Dialogic Gatherings aim to enrich all participants, prioritizing egalitarian dialogue and the pleasure of learning. Therefore, teachers should not use them as assessment tools, and the interventions made by the students should not be assessed as in an exam.

Even so, Dialogic Gatherings give us valuable information about the competencies of our students and their progress. Moreover, it is interesting to identify the effects of this action on students' learning, social relations, and personal aspects.

Below, we present three examples of tools or ways to monitor or evaluate Dialogic Gatherings.

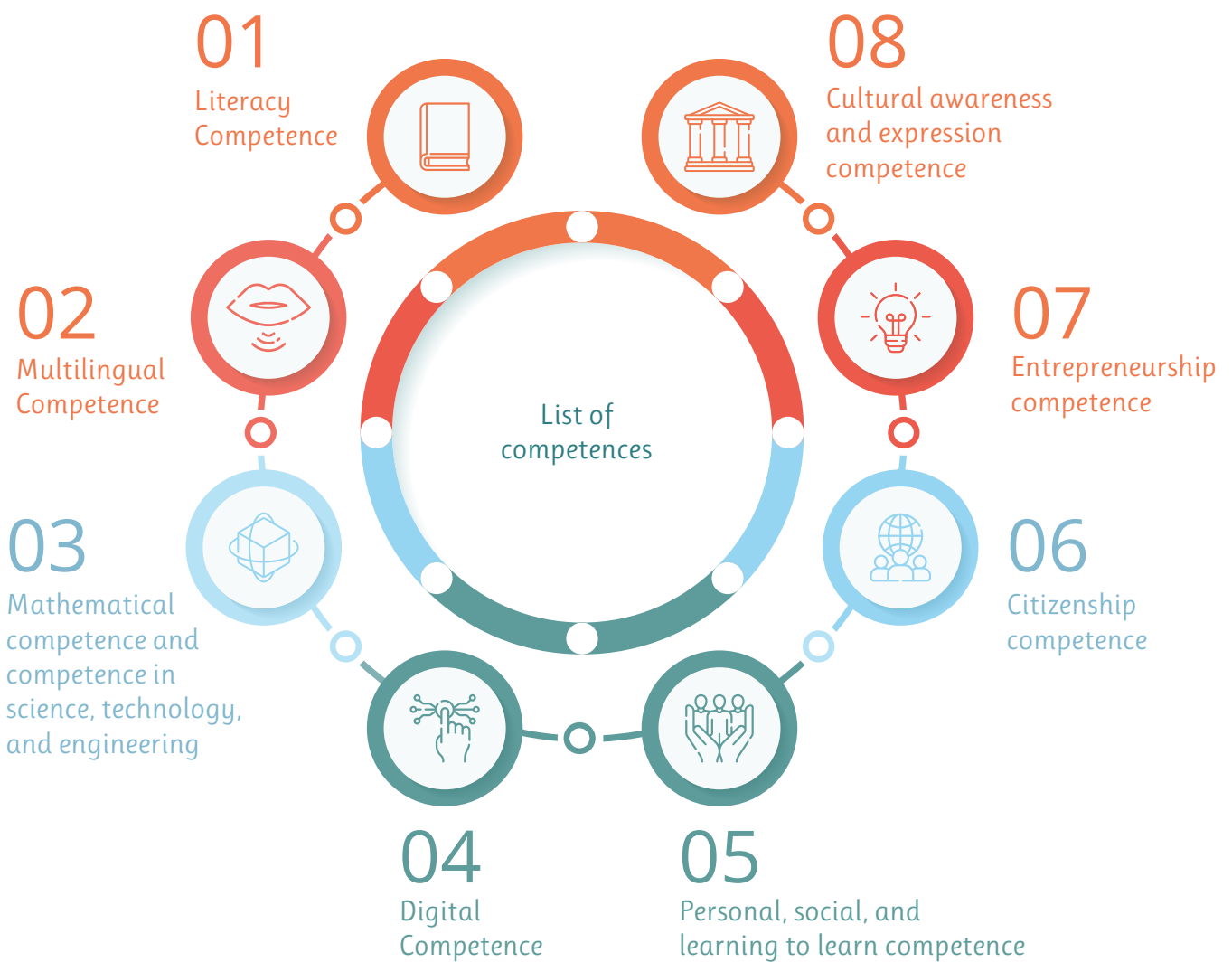
7.1. Monitoring instrument

This tool can be used as a checklist to ensure that the Dialogic Gathering meets the criteria and characteristics that define it.

	Yes / No / Ways to improve
1. Is the DG regular? (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly?)	
2. Is it developed using a best universal work? (Which one/ones?)	
3. Is the work appropriate for the age group?	
4. Has everyone had access to the work beforehand?	
5. Did the moderator ensure everyone had a chance to participate?	
6. Did the moderator organise proper turn-taking?	
7. Did the moderator make interventions that helped the children engage?	
8. Did the moderator speak as little as possible?	
9. Did the moderator encourage a free discussion (no direction)?	
10. Did the children make connections with their own lives? (The moderator can provide a practical example/question to encourage linking abstract ideas to real life).	
11. Are the children reminded to be respectful of others' feelings?	
12. Did at least 50% of the group contribute?	

7.2. Evaluation of the critical competencies (teachers' perception)

The teachers who implement the dialogic gatherings are aware of the evolution of their students, so their assessment of learning is relevant. One possibility for systematising the evaluation of the discussion groups is to collect teachers' perceptions concerning improving key competencies. The following table includes the EC definitions of key competencies (European Council, 2018) to facilitate responses.



Teacher perception

A Do you think the Dialogic Gatherings have contributed to improving this competence among the participating students?

B If yes, to what extent? (0 to 7)

C Examples of the improvements achieved in this competence (optional)

01. Literacy Competence



Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, express, create, and interpret concepts, feelings, facts, and opinions in both oral and written forms, using visual, sound/audio, and digital materials across disciplines and contexts. It implies the ability to communicate and connect effectively with others in an appropriate and creative way. Development of literacy forms the basis for further learning and further linguistic interaction. Depending on the context, literacy competence can be developed in the mother tongue, the language of schooling and/or the official language in a country or region.

02. Multilingual Competence



This competence defines the ability to use different languages appropriately and effectively for communication. It broadly shares the main skill dimensions of literacy: it is based on the ability to understand, express, and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts, and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in an appropriate range of societal and cultural contexts according to one's wants or needs. Language competencies integrate a historical dimension and intercultural competencies. It relies on the ability to mediate between different languages and media, as outlined in the Common European Framework of Reference. As appropriate, it can include maintaining and further developing mother tongue competencies, as well as the acquisition of a country's official language(s).

03. Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology, and engineering



A. Mathematical competence is the ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking and insight to solve a range of problems in everyday situations. Building on a sound mastery of numeracy, the emphasis is on process, activity, and knowledge. Mathematical competence involves, to different degrees, the ability and willingness to use mathematical modes of thought and presentation (formulas, models, constructs, graphs, charts).

B. Competence in science refers to the ability and willingness to explain the natural world by making use of the body of knowledge and methodology employed, including observation and experimentation, in order to identify questions and to draw evidence-based conclusions. Competences in technology and engineering are applications of that knowledge and methodology in response to perceived human wants or needs. Competence in science, technology and engineering involves an understanding of the changes caused by human activity and responsibility as an individual citizen.

04. Digital Competence



Digital competence involves the confident, critical, and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society. It includes information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, media literacy, digital content creation (including programming), safety (including digital well-being and competencies related to cybersecurity), intellectual property-related questions, problem-solving and critical thinking.

05. Personal, social, and learning to learn competence



Personal, social, and learning competence is the ability to reflect upon oneself, effectively manage time and information, constructively work with others, remain resilient, and manage one's learning and career. It includes the ability to cope with uncertainty and complexity, learn to learn, support one's physical and emotional well-being, maintain physical and mental health, and to be able to lead a health-conscious, future-oriented life, empathize and manage conflict in an inclusive and supportive context.

06. Citizenship competence



Citizenship competence is the ability to act as responsible citizens and to fully participate in civic and social life, based on understanding of social, economic, legal, and political concepts and structures, as well as global developments and sustainability.

07. Entrepreneurship competence



Entrepreneurship competence refers to the capacity to act upon opportunities and ideas and to transform them into values for others. It is founded upon creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving, taking initiative and perseverance, and the ability to work collaboratively to plan and manage projects that are of cultural, social, or financial value.

08. Cultural awareness and expression competence



Competence in cultural awareness and expression involves having an understanding of and respect for how ideas and meaning are creatively expressed and communicated in different cultures and through a range of arts and other cultural forms. It involves being engaged in understanding, developing, and expressing one's ideas and sense of place or role in society in a variety of ways and contexts.

7.3. Evaluation of the key competencies (marks and outcomes)

The most objective way of assessing the learning achieved by pupils is by comparing results on standardized, ideally external, tests. Schools can compare the results of the same group of pupils at different points in time, results between various groups, or test results in successive years to see how they have evolved. If the Dialogic Gatherings have occurred regularly, it can be deduced that they have contributed to the results. Some experiences already collected suggest that Dialogic Gatherings and other successful educational actions contribute decisively to improving results in standardised tests.

Internal marks of the schools can also be used to compare and analyze the learning outcomes.



8. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



1) How can I obtain book copies for organizing Dialogic Literary Gatherings in my classroom? For instance, for a group of 30 students?

Typically, schools procure the necessary books for the gatherings. When the school purchases the books, another group of students can reuse them in the following academic year. Additionally, these books may be available in the school's library. Some schools have established partnerships with local libraries or secured grants from public or private organizations to fund the acquisition of books. Educators can also find classic works freely accessible on the Internet. You can look at the resources bank on the Dive-In-Dialogue project website.

2) When organizing Dialogic Literary Gatherings in Early Childhood or Primary Education, adaptations of classic works are utilized. How can I ensure the quality of these adaptations?

Adaptations of classic works vary very much in quality. A good adaptation strives to remain faithful to the original work. To ensure quality, you can verify if the version maintains the integrity of the original plot, avoids excessive simplification of the central themes explored in the work, and refrains from introducing free interpretations or altering essential characteristics of the characters.

3) Is it possible for adults with low educational levels to read and comprehend challenging classic works?

*Yes, it is. We must not underestimate the participants' ability to work on a text with a particular difficulty level. Numerous studies have demonstrated that adults without basic education enjoy reading classic works. Successful experiences showcase collective strategies for overcoming specific challenges. For instance, adult participants with low academic levels can read and discuss Joyce's *Ulysses* in Dialogic Literary Gatherings. For it to happen, participants fostered spaces of mutual support where they shared doubts, and the length of assigned reading fragments can be adjusted when encountering particularly challenging texts. By employing such creative strategies and maintaining consistently high expectations, individuals without formal academic qualifications have been able to engage in profound analyses of masterpieces.*

4) Can individuals with special educational needs or disabilities participate in Dialogic Gatherings?

Embracing diversity is a crucial aspect that enhances the learning experience for everyone involved in Dialogic Gatherings. Successful implementations of Dialogic Gatherings have included students with various special educational needs and disabilities, both in mainstream schools and specialized educational settings. For instance, a study conducted in a secondary school that educates students with special needs along with their typically developing peers and implements Dialogic Gatherings concluded that students with special educational needs achieved a significant increase in instrumental learning and an improvement in these students' overall inclusion in the school (Navarro-Mateu et al., 2021). Molina's study (2015) focuses on the positive impact of Dialogic Literary Gatherings on Alba, a student with an intellectual disability who actively participated in Dialogic Gatherings alongside her classmates.

These students' participation in Dialogic Gatherings can be facilitated by providing appropriate human, material, or technological support tailored to each individual's needs.

5) How can we encourage the involvement of students who are hesitant to intervene during Dialogic Gatherings?

It is common to come across students in Dialogic Gatherings who struggle with public speaking. One of the fundamental principles of the gatherings is to cultivate a climate of comfort and respect where all students, including the most reserved ones, feel at ease to contribute. It is important to note that participation in the discussion should never be forced upon any student. A helpful approach is to extend invitations to those individuals who have yet to participate during the session, encouraging them to share their thoughts and perspectives.

6) What actions should be taken if a participant monopolizes the discussion during the Dialogic Gatherings?

In such instances, it is the moderator's responsibility to recall the rules. For example, the moderator can clarify that any participant's opinion is welcome and that the activity's goal is not to impose one interpretation over others. Furthermore, the moderator must effectively manage the intervention time to ensure equal opportunities for all participants to contribute. If a participant makes excessively long interventions, the moderator can politely interrupt and remind them to allow others who have yet to speak to participate.

7) What actions can be taken if participants in the Dialogic Gatherings fail to follow the established rules?

In Dialogic Gatherings, the moderator plays a crucial role in explaining and mutually agreeing upon the rules with the participants. In specific educational levels, like early childhood education, it is common practice to remind students of the rules in each session to ensure adherence.

8) Not everyone likes classical music. Why should we promote it through the Musical Dialogic Gatherings?

Doing Musical Dialogic Gatherings does not prevent anyone from enjoying the top hits or whatever music they like. Instead, it opens up the opportunity to know and appreciate another type of music from the richness of universal cultural heritage. Classical music, originating in the Middle Ages, remains deeply rooted in European culture. It transcends cultural and language barriers, possessing a broad cross-cultural reach. The distinctive essence of classical music lies in its intricate structure and complexity, showcasing a diverse range of musical instruments and techniques that have evolved over centuries. Moreover, classical music has influenced and paved the way for various genres like jazz and rock, cementing its significance within our cultural heritage.

The same argument can be made for great works of literature or great paintings. Gatherings do not impede any taste, but they are an attempt to ensure that everybody has the opportunity to know and enjoy fundamental works.

9) The term "classical music" or "classical literature" typically refers to works that Western white men have historically created. May Dialogic Gatherings perpetuate the dominance of white male cultural production?

Dialogue gatherings bring undisputed works and cultural milestones closer to everyone, including works from different cultural traditions that women also produce. Men's privileges throughout history are inevitably reflected in the production and recognition of artistic and scientific works. The egalitarian dialogue in the gatherings brings not only knowledge but also critical reflections, including the history of art and science itself, the role of women, and the biases in the evaluation of art.

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10. OTHER RESOURCES

Dive-in-Dialogue Project Website: <https://diveindialogue.eu/index/>

Mini tutorial videos (DIVE IN result)

The on-boarding mini-tutorial videos are 15-minute maximum videos whose main objective is to encourage teachers and other stakeholders to test the practice and engage them in its implementation. These videos explain in a very didactic, clear, and accessible way the fundamental steps to implement a Dialogic Gathering. They are produced according to the five areas in which the project works: Science, Mathematics, Art, Literature, and Music, including the different school ages at which it is aimed. The five videos also include short testimonies of positive impact among participants. The video gives them an overview to get interested and even the first tools to provide a try to the practice. They encourage the teachers to ensure the quality of the implementation and the impact by consulting and studying the eBook, which is available after the first year of implementation.

Database Universal Books (DIVE IN result)

A resource bank with quality materials, open access in different languages, and accessibility from all devices. This resource bank facilitates the implementation of Dialogic Gatherings, providing appropriate works,

Community of practice (DIVE IN result)

This is an open space where teachers can disseminate their Dialogic Gatherings so that other teachers from other countries can join in with their classes. Apart from the facility for transnational discussions, the community of practice also has thematic channels to exchange questions and resources.

Schools as Learning Community Website - CREA (in Spanish)

<https://comunidadesdeaprendizaje.net/>

Learning Communities is a project based on successful educational actions aimed at social and educational transformation. On this website, coordinated by CREA Research Group, you can find several materials and resources related to Dialogic Gatherings.

Schools as Learning Community Website - NATURA (in Portuguese and Spanish)

<https://www.comunidaddeaprendizaje.com/>

Learning Communities is a project based on a set of successful educational actions aimed at social and educational transformation. On this website, coordinated by NATURA Foundation, you can find several materials and resources related to Dialogic Gatherings.

European School Education Platform

<https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en>

The platform is the meeting point for all stakeholders in the school education sector – school staff, researchers, and policymakers – to find news, interviews, publications, practice examples, courses and partners for their Erasmus+ projects. On this platform, you can find several materials and resources related to Dialogic Gatherings.

DIVERSITY AND
INCLUSION THROUGH
DIALOGIC GATHERINGS

2024.

<https://diveindialogue.eu/index/>