



CARMA INCLUSION STRATEGY PAPER

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CARMA

Non-formal learning for student motivation



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Authors and Editors

Verein Multikulturell, Austria

Irene Pilshofer

Ovagem Agaidyan

Omer Duzgun

Rosina Ndukwe

Gianna Cappello

Graphic design

Verein Multikulturell, www.migration.cc

Publisher

The „CARMA“ Project: www.carma-project.eu

Coordination: CESIE, Italy

www.cesie.org

[rosina.ndukwe\[a\]cesie.org](mailto:rosina.ndukwe[a]cesie.org)

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CESIE (Italy) – Project Coordinator

www.cesie.org



University of Murcia (Spain)

www.um.es/gite

pistes solidaires

Pistes-Solidares (France)

www.pistes-solidaires.fr



Asist Öğretim Kurumlari A.S. (Turkey)

www.dogaokullari.com



University Colleges Leuven Limburg (Belgium)

www.ucll.be

INOVA+

INOVA+ (Portugal)

www.inovamais.eu



Verein Multikulturell (Austria)

www.migration.cc

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01

Executive Summary

01. Executive Summary

The CARMA (RMA and Other Non-Formal Learning Methods for Student Motivation) project has introduced collaborative non-formal learning (NFL) methods and the assessment technique Reciprocal Maieutic Approach (RMA) to learning environments as a collaborative learning strategy to innovate school culture and transform classroom practices. As part of this strategy, the Reciprocal Maieutic Approach (thereafter known as RMA) of Danilo Dolci was introduced as an assessment tool to support teachers in monitoring and responding to their students' learning progress after the use of non-formal learning (NFL) methods in the classroom. CARMA also aimed at translating these activities into a concrete evidence-based policy action. It intended to contribute to the EU Education and Strategic Framework's (ET 2020) aim to reduce the rate of early

school leaving to less than 10% and reduce the share of 15-year-old under-skilled in reading, mathematics and science to less than 15% by the year 2020 (European Commission 2009). It sought to produce a sustainable and systemic impact on the education systems of the 7 project countries Italy, Spain, France, Portugal, Austria, Belgium and Turkey as well as further European countries by providing recommendations to teachers, school principals, education institutions and governments.

This Inclusion Strategy Paper is divided into three main parts. The first part provides information about NFL and RMA applied within CARMA, together with an explanation about the CARMA project in general, its objectives, target groups and outcomes. The second part reviews the evidence base that has led to the development of specific recommendations for school education and presents the main findings from the research and the results from piloting non-formal learning techniques with teachers and students in different school environments across Europe.

The recommendations are shared in the third part of this Paper target teachers, school principals and leaders of educational institutions as well as governments, policymakers and influencers of educational policy.





Recommendations for non-formal learning practices and collaborative learning in schools have been based on the evidence collected within the CARMA project by the partnership comprising of: CESIE (Italy), University of Murcia (Spain), Pistes-Solidaire (France), Asist Ogretim Kurumlari A.S. - Doga Schools (Turkey), University Colleges Leuven-Limburg (Belgium), INOVA+ (Portugal) and Verein Multikulturell (Austria). These organisations intended to deliver concrete and substantial input to encourage teachers, leaders of schools and educational institutions as well as governments and policymakers to take the right steps towards an inclusive education.

In particular, teachers are advised to include NFL methods and RMA as an assessment tool into classroom situations in order to:

- involve their students into the learning process and motivate them to participate actively
- encourage students to express their idea and opinions
- promote collaboration – between teachers and students as well as among students
- put a focus on community building processes
- avoid “top-down” education and teacher-centred teaching (“lecturing”)
- put students’ empowerment at the centre of teaching
- not make “achieving a set” or “following the curricula” the ultimate goal of teaching but rather their students’ active involvement in the learning progress

School principals and leaders of educational institutions should:

- stay well-informed about non-formal learning techniques (NFL) and the RMA
- provide information to parents, students, teachers (educators) and partner organisations
- motivate their teachers to apply NFL
- encourage peer learning/peer coaching at their school (i.e. teachers learning from each other)
- foster interdisciplinary projects
- provide a platform for community-based problem solving
- provide teacher trainings on RMA/NFL at school
- engage school coordinators to help implement NFL
- provide a more flexible school structure (e. g. concerning decision making and time management)
- support teaching in small groups and face-to-face

- allow teachers to change the class room layout to provide an alternative learning environment
- recruit teaching staff with knowledge in NFL
- integrate NFL in the school's mission/vision and become an "ambassador of NFL"

Governments, policymakers and influencers on educational policy should:

- raise awareness of the benefits of NFL
- include NFL in teaching curricula
- encourage schools to consult NFL experts and hold workshops
- make NFL methods a (compulsory) subject in teacher education/formation, including textbooks
- allow a bottom-up policy (i. e. through seeking advice from teachers and students)
- introduce more flexibility in curricula concerning the teaching and learning content and a change of the learning environment
- change the classroom organization, i.e. by lowering the student numbers in one class and by introducing more co-teaching
- innovate students' assessment by changing the focus, i.e. put less emphasis on homework, exercises and exams but more on understanding and participation in collaborative learning procedures
- ensure that learning can be an active and creative process rather than the reproduction of knowledge
- actively involve teachers, students and parents into the discussion of how to innovate education

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The CARMA project

02

02. The CARMA project

02.1 A glance at Non-Formal Learning (NFL) and the Reciprocal Maieutic Approach (RMA)

The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYP) defines NFL as follows: “Non-formal learning is purposive but voluntary learning that takes place in a diverse range of environments and situations for which teaching/training and learning is not necessarily their sole or main activity. These environments and situations may be intermittent or transitory, and the activities or courses that take place may be staffed by professional learning facilitators (such as youth trainers) or by volunteers (such as youth leaders). The activities and courses are planned but are seldom structured by conventional rhythms or curriculum subjects. They usually address specific target groups, but rarely document or assess learning outcomes or achievements in conventionally visible ways.”¹

The most central benefit of the application of NFL to school or training environments is the empowerment of students by providing opportunities to get them motivated and thus committed to learning. NFL are holistic methods that focus on students’ motivation and self-esteem as well as on their active engagement and cooperation. That way, students feel they can control and intervene in their learning. NFL methods strengthen intrinsic motivation, e. g. through Learning Through Storytelling, which allows learning to be self-regulated. This ludic way of learning also helps students to overcome shyness. It gives them the feeling that their teacher really works for them. The establishment of a good relationship between teachers and students makes students feel recognised and appreciated as human beings, which has a positive effect on their motivation.



¹ <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/non-formal-learning> (last accessed July 2018).

The NFL approaches are based on the fundamental belief that life itself is non-formal and so should learning be. Learning does not mean memorising facts but implementing experience and promoting skills for life in the 21st century. NFL stands for a quality education that provides tools for students' future life and encourages lifelong learning.



NFL puts students at the centre, thus shifting from teacher- to student-centred-teaching, which is a fundamental requirement for students' inclusion. In this way, students feel that their opinions are being heard. Communication in the classroom is no longer seen as a one-way street (i.e. a teacher "lecturing" students) but as a network and an opportunity for everyone to be involved.

NFL has a positive effect on students' attention and concentration as they allow to include students' ideas, feelings and values into the learning process. As a consequence, students do not remain passive but become active learners. When students identify the provided information as meaningful for themselves they can engage with it in an active and self-determined way, rather

than consuming it passively – or refusing it altogether.

Furthermore, NFL facilitates students' democratic competences. It not only improves the relationships in school – between students and teachers as well as among students – but provides students with basic social skills for their future professional life.

Complementary to that understanding, the Reciprocal Maieutic Approach developed by the philosopher and sociologist Danilo Dolci during the 1950s in Sicily was applied and tested during many years to assess and visualize possible problem solutions and alternative paths that depart from the experience and the intuition of individuals. According to Dolci, no real change can abstract from the involvement and the direct participation of the people concerned. As a result, Dolci takes off from the Socratic standpoint that the resources for change are already present and should be searched and evoked in the people themselves.

RMA is strongly connected with the concept of "nonviolent communication" (Rosenberg, 1998). It can also be described as a group communication strategy (Habermas, 1986) that

enables all elements of the group to give their ideas and opinions, contributing through this to the development of a final common idea in order to make a change in the individual and collective social / political / economic / educational spheres (Mangano, 1992).

The RMA of Danilo Dolci (1996) is a “reciprocal” process between at least two people and it normally develops within a group, with a person that starts asking some questions and other people that search for the answers together and make other close examinations. In an intense dialogue that stands for a new way of education based on increasing individuals’ and group’s creativity, the maieutic process concentrates on the capacity of people potential to discover their vital interests and freely express their own reflections basing both on their experiences and their personal discovers and on the choral verification of the proposals.

02.2. The project in general

The CARMA project has been designed as a consolidated process to transfer an innovative teaching method into a common practice in school education. It introduced non-formal learning (NFL) methods to school learning environments as a collaborative learning strategy to innovate school culture and transform classroom practices. RMA was introduced as an inclusive and innovative assessment technique that supported teachers to monitor and respond to students’ learning progress after the use of non-formal learning (NFL) methods in the classroom. CARMA aimed at translating the results of this implementation into a concrete policy action and aimed to produce a sustainable and systemic impact on the education systems of the 7 project countries (Italy, Spain, France, Portugal, Austria, Belgium and Turkey) as well as further European countries by providing evidence-based policy recommendations.

All the NFL methods and RMA as an assessment tool introduced by the CARMA project were enriched and adapted by the European partnership during 4 phases. After performing an evidence-based needs analysis at the school education level, including 1225 actors in schools and within the wider school community in a preparation phase, the methods were tested, assessed and adjusted according to the experiences made in the participating classrooms.



The CARMA approach is adaptable to a wide range of subjects taught in the formal learning environments. Though it was initially intended to be adapted to subjects of basic skills, the CARMA approach has been easily extended to further subjects, since it responds to actual students' needs and motivates learners as well as a wide range of

other actors around schools to actively participate in the learning processes. Through the adoption of an innovative teaching style, teachers and students will come closer to each other and develop a better understanding of each other's needs.

In this way, the CARMA project addressed two of the EU 2020 benchmarks set for education: to reduce the rate of under-skilled in reading, mathematics and science (less than 15%) and the rate of drop-outs from school education (less than 10%, European Commission 2009). Drawing from the 2012 EU Rethinking Education initiative for school policy (European Commission 2012), it also identified the quality of teaching and learning as a primary influence on learners' performance. To improve learning outcomes, reforms in the education system and specifically in

teaching and learning approaches are required at all local, regional, national and European levels, together with well-resourced continuing professional development of teachers which should include provision of regular feedback and support from teacher educators and educational experts.

Through the involvement of teachers in the development of a new participatory but also useful and concrete method for teaching, the project highlights the benefits of collaboration among teachers for their own professional development. Their motivation at work as well as their professional skills and competences increase, while an assessment tool allows them to monitor and to respond instantly to the learning processes of their students. An involvement of the students in collaborative and participatory practices changes the image of them as being passive followers/listeners and transforms the school experience into an active discovery of the world and associated relationships. CARMA project participants developed an important understanding of sharing values and responsibilities and formed positive collaborative relationships between teachers, students as well as other stakeholders involved in school education fostering inclusive and successful teaching and learning.



The CARMA project's aimed to foster positive social interaction, creativity and reciprocal learning among teachers to teachers, teachers to students and students to students. By increasing the competences of teachers that participated in the project, CARMA initially aimed at supporting mostly disadvantaged learners and improve the attainment of students at risk of early school leaving. The interest in the methods was much higher than thought, so the beneficiary group broadened throughout the project's implementation. A larger number of 32 teachers and experts in non-formal education from schools and other educational institutions attended the European workshop for Collaborative Competences in Palermo. Across all participating countries during the 2016-2017 school academic year, 36 NFL techniques were implemented 196 times by 26 teachers, involving a whole of 3038 students.



After the implementation of each NFL technique, an evaluation with students was carried out using RMA. By participating in a collaborative learning and evaluation process, the students learned how to encourage and support each other to achieve a common goal, thus increasing their own skills and competences each time, along with the sense of responsibility and cooperation.

02.3. CARMA's specific objectives

Responding to these core challenges, the CARMA project aimed to develop, test and introduce in schools NFL as a collaborative learning strategy to innovate school culture and transform classroom practices. In addition to that, the RMA, developed and tested by CESIE's local partner "Centre for Creative Development Danilo Dolci", was introduced as an inclusive and innovative assessment tool allowing teachers to monitor and respond rapidly to students' learning progress, on the one hand, and to inform parents and the wider school community about the learners' constantly changing needs, on the other one. CARMA's specific objectives included:

- **Increase of student motivation and participation** by offering an alternative form of teaching and learning using non-formal approaches to education and RMA to support disadvantaged learners and increase achievement levels of students, particularly those at risk of early school leaving;



- **Support of the integration of RMA as an assessment tool** within school curricula to enrich the learning environment and support school communities to become collaborative learning communities;

- **Increase and improvement of the competences of teachers** through providing a training and assessment framework with the necessary skills, knowledge and resources on how to use inclusive and participatory practices in their own teaching and develop collaborative relationships in and out of the classroom, thus decreasing the distance between the teacher and learner;

- **Provision of inputs and policy recommendations** for intervention

strategies to reduce early school leaving and increase basic skills through a network that will facilitate close collaboration with key actors across different levels of education.

The structure of the CARMA project included a consolidated process of proposing, enriching, and piloting an innovative learning approach across the 7 European countries. After analysing the results of the applied practices, the project now reaches out to policymakers interested in fostering a good environment for learning in schools, a deeper understanding between teachers and learners and a collaborative working spirit in European schools.

02.4. The target groups

The two main target groups of the CARMA Project were teachers and students. CARMA targeted on the topic of collaborative learning, 26 teachers in 15 different schools were involved in the piloting phase, and invited to form part of a transnational online group and encouraged to share their experiences with other teachers and experts in non-formal learning.

Student involvement aimed at raising students' motivation and participation by offering an alternative form of teaching and learning using non-formal approaches to education to support disadvantaged learners and increase achievement levels of students, particularly those at risk of early school leaving. 3038 students between the ages of 11 to 18 were involved in the pilot.

The active involvement of these two target groups played a crucial role also in supporting the integration of the RMA as an assessment tool within school curricula, aiming at enriching the learning environment and support school communities to become

collaborative learning communities. Additionally, teaching staff and professionals within school education, community of stakeholders in the policy making process – i.e. parents, school service providers, civil society organisations and policymakers in school education were involved in the project activities and consulted with during the development of inputs and policy recommendations for intervention strategies to reduce early school leaving.

The CARMA project partners carried out 7 Educational Forums with school representatives before the pilot testing took place and during the pilot testing phase demonstration workshops took place informing 337 stakeholders about the project and its content. The participants were the school teachers of CARMA, parents, prospective teachers, teaching staff and trainers of teachers, people from school administrations and academics from universities. During the workshops all partners presented the project aims and objectives, target groups, project process and CARMA NFL techniques. The workshops proved successful in promoting the CARMA project and testing the techniques with the participants. At the end of the session, RMA was used for the evaluation of some of the demonstration workshops.

02.5. The results²

In the preparation phase, the CARMA Project surveyed the needs and analysed the factors causing early school leaving, including data at EU level as well as country-specific from the partner countries. The *CARMA Needs Analysis Survey Report* provided a basis for further project's aims.

During the 34-month duration of CARMA, the project partnership developed also a Toolkit providing a step-by-step guide for teachers on how to implement collaborative learning activities in their classroom to increase student motivation and participation, and address low achievement. The Toolkit is supported by a Teacher Competence Assessment Model that defines common standards on teachers' competences using the CARMA approach to deliver collaborative learning and assessment in classroom practices.

Furthermore, the CARMA project worked towards an inclusion strategy that sought to exploit the key results of the project in a form of a series of evidence-based policy recommendations for education authorities across the EU on how to integrate non-formal learning methods and RMA within school curricula.

² All the materials developed during the project are publicly available for an interested public on the CARMA project website: <http://carma-project.eu/download-area/> (accessed July 2018)

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The Evidence Base of the Inclusion Strategy Paper

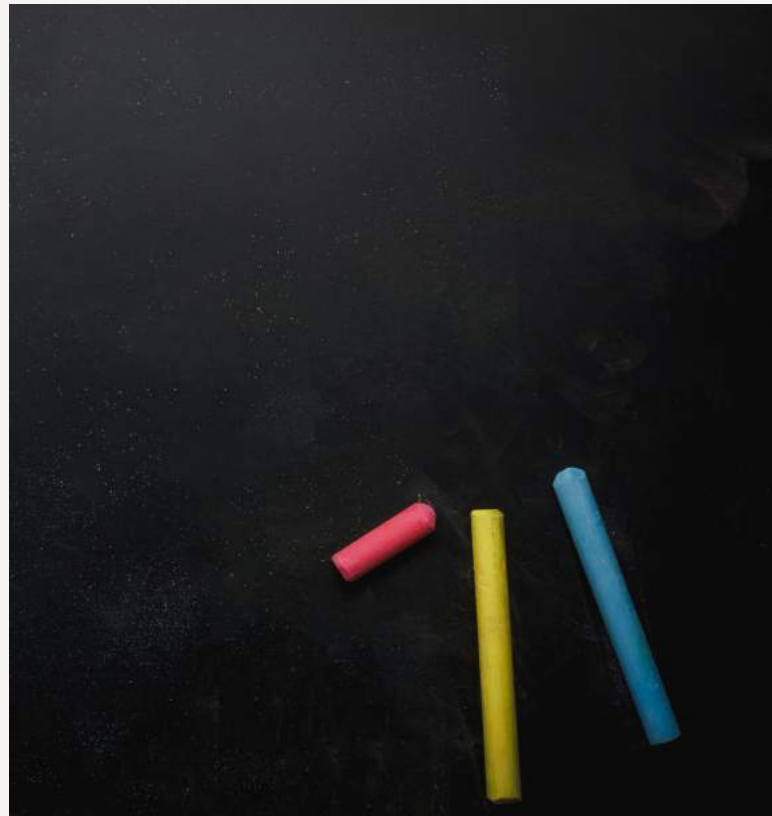
03

03. The Evidence Base of the Inclusion Strategy Paper

The CARMA Inclusion Strategy Paper aims at offering evidence-based recommendations to teachers, educators, and leaders of educational institutions across the EU (i.e. school principals and policymakers at local and national level) looking for innovative techniques able to prevent students from early school leaving by raising motivation in classrooms, fostering collaborative work and providing advice on how to integrate NFL methods and RMA into formal school curricula.

The CARMA Inclusion Strategy Paper builds up on quite articulated combination of empirical work³:

- a comparative desk research on existing policies about ESL (Early School Leaving. Statistics, Policies and Good Practices in Collaborative Learning Report);
- a survey (Needs Analysis Survey Report) performed during 5 months from June to October 2015 collecting data from 465 teachers, 531 students, 162 parents and 67 stakeholders, interviewing 1225 people in total in 7 European countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Turkey);
- a 9 months long pilot testing phase involving 27 teachers and 3038 students in 15 institutions around Europe, considering feedback on the experience made with the CARMA set of NFL techniques and RMA used as an assessment tool for teachers to foster collaborative learning;
- educational Forums, which took place in each partner country after the piloting phase, inviting in total 167 school directors, teachers and stakeholders as well as parents interested in non-formal learning activities to contribute with their view.
- A 5-days European workshop with teachers in Sicily (European Workshop 3/10 – 7/10 2016 Evaluation of Learning Outcomes), which took place in Palermo and connected 26 teachers, 7 non-formal learning specialists from all over Europe, 1 keynote speaker from Belgium, and 1 school policy expert from Italy to exchange views and develop inclusive learning.



³ Reports with findings from this work are available in the Download area of the CARMA project website: <http://carma-project.eu/download-area/> (accessed July 2018)

Main findings from this empirical work are exposed below.

03.1. Adding value to existing policy framework with CARMA

The CARMA Early School Leaving. Statistics, Policies and Good Practices in Collaborative Learning Report – a country-specific report coordinated by University of Murcia mapping data across all 7 partner countries of CARMA project – shows that early school leaving (ESL) is of concern for all governments. All have developed a national framework and/or promote initiatives and projects to lower the percentage of ESL (see Table).

PARTNER	COUNTRY	NATIONAL ACTION	NATIONAL PROJECT
University of Murcia	Spain	1	2
CESIE	Italy	3	5
Verein Multikulturell	Austria	2	2
Asist Öğretim Kurumlari A.S	Turkey	1	3
Innovamais	Portugal	1	1
Pistes Solidaires	France	1	1
UC Leuven-Limburg	Belgium	3	5

Sample of collected national actions and national projects regarding ESL⁴

Strategies often focus the individual person, especially those students who could be detected as at high risk of social exclusion and dropping out of school. Mostly, the strategies involve counselling activities and require action from the person affected. Some strategies, e.g. the French example, envision a systemic approach, involving many stakeholders by bringing together different networks and approaches on targeting the awareness of the individual, teachers and schools as well as the public. Other strategies reduce ESL to a topic related to Integration and Social Inclusion of Migrants and Ethnic Minorities, like e.g. in Portugal, where the strategy has been integrated into the High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue.

EUROSTAT statistics prove success to these policies as they show that the situation concerning ESL in Europe has improved within the last couple of years and the percentage has decreased (EUROSTAT 2017). Still, an importantly large number of young people aged 18 to 24 leave school early or drop out national education systems.

⁴ The report is available on the CARMA project website: <http://carma-project.eu/download-area/> (accessed July 2018).

Projects like the CARMA project play a crucial role in combating ESL, when addressing ESL preventively, inside schools, where students will be reached directly and can be invited to participate in actions together with their teachers and colleagues in a collaborative manner.

Taking a closer look at teacher's assessment programs in the countries, the CARMA report detected differences. In most of the 7 countries CARMA was performed in, assessment of teachers is a concern. Some governments (for example France), request schools to mandatorily assess their teachers' skills according to a national framework. Other governments (for example Belgium) provide assessment tools only as an advisory activity.

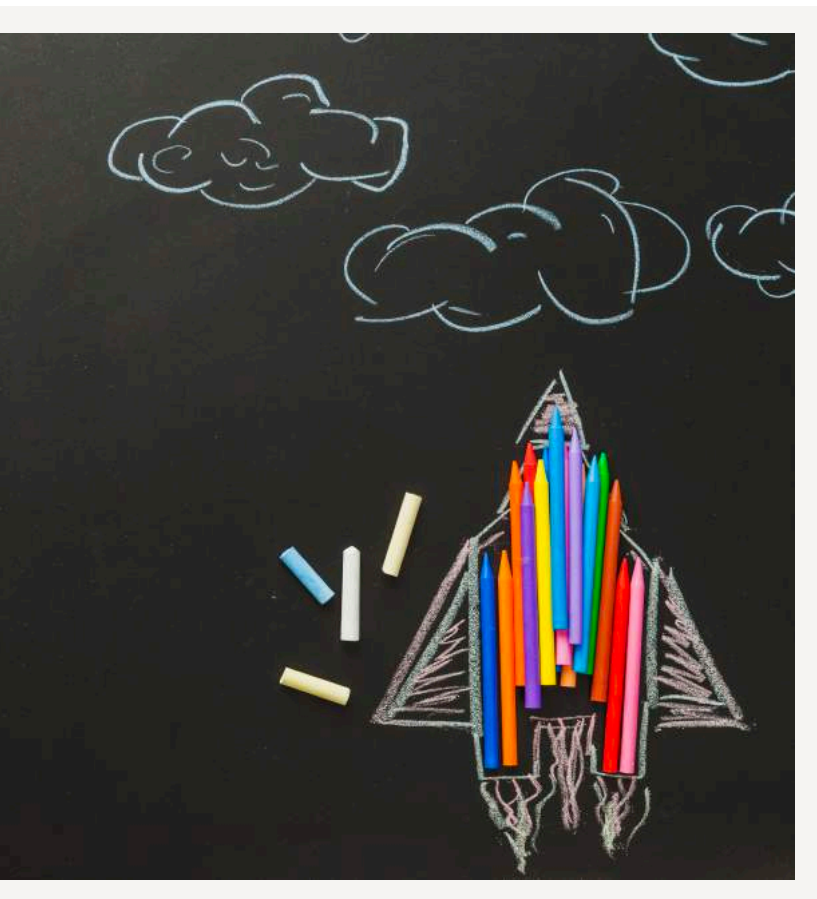
Most countries within the CARMA project's partnership thus participate in the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey TALIS which takes place every 5 years in 200 schools all over the world (OECD 2014). School directors plus 20 teachers of each school are interviewed on topics like their working conditions, the means of improvement of their teaching, sources of stress and many more. In 2013, the TALIS report revealed that nine out of ten teachers in principle love their job and would choose it again if they had the opportunity. Nevertheless, half of the teachers interviewed feel they work very isolated and rarely or never perform collaborative work. Fewer than 3 teachers out of ten believe that their profession is anyhow valued within society. Most teachers indicate a lack of feedback on their work (OECD 2014a).

Both mandatory or voluntary frameworks assessing teachers' skills or working conditions are performed to understand teachers' needs, to improve their training, to foster their professional development, to assess and certificate teacher's competencies and to nationally develop learning. None of the detected frameworks centre on collaborative work and assessment, like the CARMA project suggests. Most frameworks seem to reach to their intent, when regarding teachers' answers (OECD 2014).



03.2. Collecting the needs: CARMA Needs Analysis Survey Report

During the preparation phase of the CARMA project, the partner countries performed a comparative scientific research study coordinated by the University of Murcia designed to survey the real needs of teachers, students, parents and schools within the respective educational system. A total of 1225 people were interviewed in the 7 European countries involved in the project (465 teachers, 531 students, 162 parents and 67 stakeholders). Questionnaires included items about collaborative work experiences, existing policies, working conditions, curricula, ways of developing working skills as well as questions concerning external agents.



Most of the teachers interviewed show more than 15 years of experience in teaching at secondary level. In total most of them were well-experienced with implementing techniques of collaborative learning. In detail, the results differed a lot within the countries. France and Italy showed a high rate of teachers feeling unexperienced, while teachers in Spain and Portugal considered themselves as very experienced. Disturbingly, the majority of the participants expressed their view that national policies, if ever, only sometimes help to develop collaborative learning. The lowest rate was given to national policies in Spain, where national policies are believed to “almost never” foster collaborative learning. The teachers’ view correlates with the answers given by 50% of the parents,

who consider collaborative work as having a positive effect on their children’s learning but complain that national policies do not foster collaborative learning enough.

Considering the school curricula, teachers feel like they only “sometimes” allow for flexibility to include collaborative learning practices in classrooms. Most teachers feel like they would punctually need help in class as well as they would appreciate special equipment in order to perform lessons involving collaborative techniques. In general, most teachers say, they would consider training as well as fostered inclusion of collaborative learning into existing curricula as most important for the implementation of collaborative learning in classroom. The results of the teachers’ survey correlate to their students’ answers. Most students think their schools are adequately adapted and equipped for performing group work but think their teachers need help performing these in classrooms. Interestingly, most feel that their teacher’s competences to implement

group work is lower than their own. A high percentage of the students agreed they learned better in group settings (67%). A large number (45%) thinks that fostering group settings would help combatting dropping out of school.

03.3 Listening to teachers: RMA and collaborative non-formal learning techniques in classrooms

During and after the implementation phase of the CARMA project teachers, students and stakeholders were asked about the impact on learning of NFL methods and RMA as assessment tool tried out during the pilot testing in classrooms. The following original quotes from teacher's diaries demonstrate the positive effect of such impact.



Concerning the importance of NFL to “refine” critical knowledge, one participating teacher said: “(...) Content (...), thanks to the internet, has become easily accessible to us, while the capacity to critically assess the information still has to be developed. For this reason, my aim is to support students to acquire or refine such capacities with the support of non-formal methods.”

Collaborative teaching methods were considered as helpful and supportive and teachers felt an increased confidence in leading such methods. A teacher stresses the importance of discussing different viewpoints and the possibility to share tasks: “I am with my colleague who is attentive but doesn’t participate. My colleague started writing on the black board the observations and reflections of the students.”

When it comes to measuring the increase in the students’ motivation and engagement, a teacher noted: “When the bell rings at 13.45, the class shows disappointment: ‘No! Already!?’ and they ask me to repeat this experience. Some do not want to get up. I see that they would prefer to continue the activity. I do not force them and remain seated.”

Another teacher got feedback from a student, who told him that “for him it is not easy to talk to others because he is shy and is afraid to make mistakes, and that people think he is stupid. During this activity he felt as if (...) no one could make fun of anyone.”

About another student, the same teacher wrote that she had “confirmed that in those two hours she felt free”.

03.4 Considering the stakeholders' views

Professionals and stakeholders in policy making are an indirect target group in the CARMA project. To measure the impact on this indirect target group, a questionnaire was developed on Google Forms that was filled by the professionals and stakeholders in the different schools across the partner countries after the delivery of the Demonstration Workshops by the teachers conducting the piloting.



The post demonstration workshop questionnaire to measure the impact on the professional and stakeholders in policy making revealed that almost 94% of the participants from this group found the workshop relevant, interesting and interactive. Almost 88% found the non-formal learning methods and RMA helpful for teachers to gain competencies in collaborative teaching and learning practices. Furthermore, 91% of professionals and stakeholders think that the non-formal learning methods and RMA are of an added value to facilitate collaborative teaching and learning. Almost 88% of this target group would want to inform and tell other persons in the field of education about the non-formal methods used in the CARMA

project. Almost 94% of this target group found the tools and materials used during the workshop as useful.

In addition to that, the professionals and policy makers were asked to evaluate the interaction among the students during the workshop; 100% of this target group found that the interaction was good and almost 92% found that the students were enthusiastic during the workshop and 95% thought that they showed high levels of engagement.

Some of the challenges that they see in delivering non-formal learning methods and RMA in the school environment were related to bad student behaviour in the classroom, according to them this might play a role in the delivery of collaborative lessons. According to one professional, some of the students are teenagers and cannot understand all the different topics because of lack of social consciousness, thus these methods could be a challenge or could be useful at the same time in channelling the students. Another challenge that was mentioned was the methodology of the non-formal

methods and the content. Another challenge is that the methods available at the moment in schools are fine. In addition to that, currently many methods are available (it was not well understood what the participant meant by this). Important too is the support from the school principals and directors to the implementation of these methods.

The professionals and stakeholders think that these methods can be adopted to the school curriculum if the teachers are well trained to use them. But, it is a long process. One professional mentioned that they can be adopted individually by interested teachers, according to this professional this is the easiest and best way. As for the support that is needed to ensure their adoption to the school curriculum, the responses were mainly in two directions, one related to policy making and the support from the ministry of education and the other is related to the teacher, they need to be trained, they need to have a predisposition for innovation, they need to be motivated and active with a positive attitude.

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Non-formal learning for student motivation



**Fostering collaborative
learning. Key
Recommendations**

04

04. Fostering collaborative learning.

Key Recommendations

Within the general topic of collaborative NFL and teaching assessment, the CARMA project analysed qualitative and quantitative data and information, collected from teachers, students, parents as well as school principals and other stakeholders, concerning teaching and learning environments, curricula, support of national policies, teachers training, etc. Teachers, school principals and policy makers are the most important influencers when it comes to both definition and implementation of inclusive education as a counter reaction to ESL. NFL including collaborative assessment techniques such as RMA have proved to make an impact on collaborative work between teachers as well as among students. After testing different NFL techniques in the classroom, both target groups have considered these techniques as a gain in their daily experience in their classroom and the wider school environment.

These influencers have provided a major input to the CARMA project partners leading to a number of useful recommendations on how to include NFL and RMA as an assessment tool in schools education.

04.1. Inclusive, co-working, participative. Recommendations for teachers

The collaborative learning model has been gaining its popularity among motivated teachers. Collaborative learning methodologies transform traditional frontal classroom or teacher focused classroom environment into a student or learning centred environment. Collaborative learning is a philosophy of interaction where individuals are responsible for their actions. Within this approach, students work together to help each other understand concepts, solve problems or create projects and products and there is a sharing of authority and acceptance of responsibility among group members for the group actions. Collaborative learning shifts the responsibility for learning away from the teacher as the expert to the student. The teacher, once the task or activity is set becomes a *moderator* or *facilitator* of the process and has to create an environment in which the students can learn together as a group and joint problem solving.

The benefits of collaborative learning have been the subject of various research studies and analyses. Interviewing teachers during the CARMA project, it became crystal-clear that for them it is also motivating to see their students participate and see them get involved with the subject. Participation of students is key to a positive learning effect and it requires the ability of teachers to design lessons according to that specific intent and to use specific learning techniques fostering participation. Involving students into the learning process and motivate them to participate actively requires an inviting atmosphere and an educational method that encourages them to collaboratively develop



their idea and freely express opinions. Therefore, teachers need to put a focus on community building and avoid “top-down”, teacher-centred teaching (“lecturing”).

In order to empower their students, teachers will have to step backwards and listen to their opinions. In order to not make “achieving a set” or “following the curricula” their ultimate goal of teaching but their students’ active involvement in the learning progress, they will have to stay open minded and participate in further education for teachers introducing alternative teaching techniques.

Techniques used in NFL settings help to make classroom situations less tense. An open learning environment is useful to deepen the students’ interest on the subject, to prepare their better understanding of content through discussion and experience as well as to raise their courage to participate.

04.2. Informative, encouraging, supportive. Recommendations for school principals

Most teachers express that their school’s vision and its leadership has an enormous impact on their ways to teach. As a matter of fact, school and educational institutions’ leaders play a crucial role on teaching and learning, when it comes to fostering inclusive and collaborative learning. It needs open minded principals allowing teachers to try out non-formal learning techniques and to promote its profit. NFL could become a part of a school’s mission or vision turning teachers and school principals into “ambassadors of NFL”.

In order to be supportive, school principals should stay well-informed about NFL techniques and assessments tools like the RMA that help their staff to organize collaborative working situations with their students.

Additionally, they should provide information to parents, students, all teachers (educators) and partner organisations about the aim and the positive effects of collaborative teaching. Implementing information days on NFL or assessments like the RMA and inviting experts to inform about these concepts motivates the teachers to apply NFL methods and to use the RMA to assess their own teaching. Teachers training sessions on NFL and RMA should be integrated in the school’s concept. Moreover, teaching staff with knowledge in NFL should be recruited.

Another important aspect to encourage teachers is providing them with peer learning and/or peer coaching sessions at schools. These sessions can also serve the learning effects between disciplines. Interdisciplinary projects will help teachers to develop a broader understanding of learning techniques in other disciplines than their own, which fosters creativity and collaborative ideas within the teaching staff and could provide a platform for community-based problem solving.

Teachers learning, in trainings or peer sessions where they profit from each other's knowledge requires space and time. School principals should try to provide a more flexible school structure (e. g. concerning decision making and time management) that fosters an open learning environment.

Teaching large classes can be very challenging. In most European countries, teachers do teach as an individual confronted by a large group. Some students dissolve within that large group while others can connect more with their teachers. Principals, wherever possible, should support teaching in small groups allowing a more face-to-face teaching. Teachers should be allowed to change the class room lay-out to provide an alternative learning environment and to make group-work possible.

04.3 Innovative, empowering, visionary. Recommendations for governments and policymakers

The CARMA comparative Research Study shows that teachers and parents in the past often could not recognize national educational policies as having a positive impact on inclusion and collaboration. Most of them would like to have NFL methods and collaborative learning techniques included in curricula and therefore there needs to be support from governments and Influencers of educational policy. Furthermore, by including collaborative learning into educational policies and agendas, governments should additionally get more involved in raising awareness of the benefits of NFL.



Schools should be encouraged to consult NFL experts and to hold workshops by their regional authorities and by educational Ministries. This should include subsidies that schools can apply for easily and/or government experts that visit schools. By making NFL

methods a (compulsory) subject in teacher education/formation and including them in textbooks, schools and their teachers would be additionally supported on implementing open and inclusive learning environments that foster collaboration at schools.

Open learning environments seek an eye-to-eye level between all stakeholders. Governments should actively seek the implementation of a bottom-up approach to policy making, i. e. through seeking advice from teachers and students and learning from the good practices that have been developed and tested with both teachers and students. In order to implement innovative and collaborative NFL techniques within their classrooms, teachers need the possibility, the room, the space and the time to do so. Policy makers should intend to introduce more flexibility in curricula concerning the teaching and learning content and the change of the learning environment.

Teaching in front of large classes tends to produce a confronting position to the teacher, who as an individual loses the face-to-face contact with the individual student. Some students will benefit more than others and draw more attention to them than others. A change in the classroom organization, i.e. by lowering the student numbers in one class and/or by introducing more co-teaching supports the learning efforts of all students, fostering social inclusion and making it easier for the teachers to teach their classes. Teachers and students will get much closer and get to know each other much better, which will help students to express opinions, enter in contact and profit more from the classes. Co-teaching helps the teachers to get both an external as well as an internal view, if implemented well.

For some teachers, co-teaching was important for the success of the session, in such a way, the teacher can focus on the students participation and input and not on class management issues. Furthermore, taking good minutes of the session was mentioned in aiding the teacher to reflect properly on the students input. Another important aspect that was mentioned in several diaries and reflects the increase in competencies regarding RMA was the choice of topic. According to them it was not easy to elaborate on ideas and opinions, hence, a good question and a meaningful topic need to be chosen and addressed.

Some teachers took the role of observing, others assisted by taking notes, some did co-teaching, some trained other teachers and school personnel, and some shared lesson plans. For one partner (PISTES) they were able to create several links inside and outside the school among different stakeholders in the field of education. Two of the four teachers initiated peer-to-peer training sessions with the support and participation of the headmasters and supervisors of the schools, they trained 30 participants in total. This lead the chief education advisor wanting to use the collaborative methods to manage problems dealing with the school environment. In addition to that, numerous teachers in these schools started using the different methods. One teacher was officially assigned as an expert on collaborative methods in her school. In addition to that, and from the same partner (PISTES) two librarians who participated in the project have trained all the librarians from the regional academy on one NFL method.

Governments should innovate students' assessment by changing the focus within curricula, i.e. by putting less emphasis on homework, exercises and exams but more on understanding and participation in collaborative learning practices. In fact, this ensures that learning can be an active and creative process rather than the reproduction of knowledge.

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