Speech Script – Symbiotic Classrooms in Practice

Fabiana Proietti – Glocal Education Conference 2025

Yeosu, Republic of Korea

[Introduction]

Good morning,

I am delighted to be here today to share our experience with Symbiotic Classrooms at Istituto Comprensivo Paolo e Larissa Pini in Milan, Italy, in collaboration with Yongjeong Middle School in Seoul, Korea.

Our session focuses on *Case Studies of Symbiotic Classrooms and Directions for Future Education*, and it resonates deeply with this year's theme: *Live Together, Learn Forward*.

I would like to share how our project, *Fostering Cultural Inclusivity and Literacy*, has transformed classrooms into spaces of inclusion, intercultural dialogue, and peace, demonstrating that learning together can indeed be a practice of building global citizenship.

[1: Educational Vision and Inclusive Context]

Let me begin with the context. Our school is located in a multicultural neighborhood of Milan, where students come from diverse backgrounds—Arabic, Chinese, Filipino, and South American communities.

Here, inclusion is not a compensatory measure; it is an ecosystemic culture, where each learner's uniqueness contributes to the collective growth of the class. Inspired by Banks' work on diversity and citizenship, we see identity and belonging as dynamic, evolving through dialogue and interaction.

Our mission aligns with OECD's *Learning Compass 2030*, emphasizing sustainability, digital fluency, and social equity. Following UNESCO and recent research on intersectional inclusion, we address linguistic, cultural, and neurodiverse dimensions simultaneously, fostering both academic success and emotional well-being.

[2: Project Philosophy and Objectives]

The philosophy behind our project is rooted in Glocal Education: education that is deeply local, yet globally aware.

Our objectives were clear:

1. To encourage authentic multilingual communication through English as a lingua franca;

2. To promote intercultural dialogue and empathy between Italian and Korean students;

3. To integrate environmental inquiry with civic and ethical engagement;

4. To develop advanced digital, creative, and collaborative competences;

5. To strengthen students' autonomy, agency, and sense of belonging.

Grounded in Dewey's learning by doing and Deci & Ryan's self-determination theory, we designed activities that promote autonomy, competence, and relatedness. UNESCO's Global Citizenship framework guided our technology-enhanced intercultural exchange ethically and purposefully.

[3: Pedagogical Framework]

Our instructional design combined several well-established pedagogical approaches:

- **Project-Based Learning**, to foster inquiry and collaboration;
- **Cooperative Learning**, to build interdependence and peer support;
- **Universal Design for Learning**, ensuring accessibility for all;
- **Culturally Responsive Teaching**, validating student identities and experiences;
- **Digital Inclusion Practices**, guaranteeing equitable access to technology.

We interpreted these frameworks through Gardner's multiple intelligences and Nussbaum's humanistic education. This allowed each student to engage cognitively, emotionally, and ethically with their learning journey.

[4: Learning Process – From Dialogue to Creation]

1. Digital Exchange and Intercultural Dialogue

Our project began by building bridges between Italian and Korean students. Using Google

Workspace and eTwinning, students introduced themselves, shared traditions, and co-created bilingual videos about their schools and communities.

English was not merely an evaluative tool; it became a language of relation—a medium for authentic communication, curiosity, and friendship.

2. Inquiry, Coding, and Knowledge Construction

Next, students explored historical and cultural landmarks such as the Duomo di Milano, Tower of London, and Puerta de Alcalá. They researched, verified sources, and developed digital narratives collaboratively.

Through StoryMapJS and interactive quizzes, coding became a tool for creating meaningful digital artifacts, following Papert's principles of constructionism, where knowledge is built through doing and creating.

3. Environmental Science and Sustainability

Our inquiry extended to environmental studies. Students investigated recycling practices, renewable energy, and air quality, designing experiments and collecting real local data.

Sharing these investigations with Korean peers revealed shared ecological concerns, emphasizing our collective responsibility for sustainability, as Louv reminds us, and turning abstract knowledge into lived experience through Kolb's experiential learning cycle.

4. Artistic Expression and Digital Storytelling

Finally, art and digital storytelling became the expressive synthesis of the entire project. Using Canva, Genially, and video editing tools, students transformed data and research into visual narratives.

The final outputs—a virtual exhibition and a multimedia e-book—combined linguistic, scientific, and aesthetic dimensions, demonstrating Eisner's idea that art is a distinct form of cognition that allows learners to see and feel meaning.

[5: Outcomes and Reflections]

The outcomes were significant. Students improved their linguistic competence, digital fluency, intercultural empathy, and environmental awareness.

Teachers observed higher engagement, collaboration, and emotional regulation. The classroom evolved into a symbiotic microcosm, where inclusion, diversity, and co-agency generated collective intelligence and peace-oriented values.

As Morin teaches us, complexity is not chaos but connection. This project embodied complexity through every interaction, every creation, and every dialogue.

[6: Evaluation and Dissemination]

Assessment followed Wiggins' model of authentic evaluation, emphasizing process, creativity, and reflection over rote performance.

Students maintained digital journals, provided peer feedback, and engaged in formative self-assessment. All artifacts—videos, maps, and the e-book—were shared via Google Workspace and eTwinning, promoting transparency, replication, and open international dissemination.

The entire project can be viewed through the following link.

https://digipad.app/p/1146831/71a317a543e9

[7: Future Directions]

Looking ahead, we plan to:

- Expand AI-assisted storytelling and digital literacy;
- Deepen inter-school collaborations across Europe, Asia and other Countries ;
- Support teacher professional development in inclusive pedagogy;
- Strengthen the link between local sustainability practices and global citizenship education.

Our long-term vision is a network of **Glocal Classrooms**—spaces that are locally rooted, globally connected, and creatively coexisting.

[Conclusion: Learning as Peacebuilding]

Education, as Freire reminds us, is never neutral. It is either a tool of domestication or a practice of freedom.

In our Symbiotic Classroom, peace was not only discussed; it was enacted. Through dialogue, empathy, and co-creation, students experienced coexistence as a skill and a value.

Ultimately, this project reaffirms that *to learn together is to build peace*—one conversation, one creation, one shared discovery at a time.

Thank you.

References

Banks, J. A. (2008). *Diversity and Citizenship Education: Global Perspectives.* Jossey-Bass.

Blumenfeld, P. C., Soloway, E., Marx, R., Krajcik, J., Guzdial, M., & Palincsar, A. (1991). *Motivating Project-Based Learning: Sustaining the Doing, Supporting the Learning. Educational Psychologist*, 26(3–4), 369–398.

Canevaro, A. (2006). *La scuola inclusiva.* Erickson.

CAST. (2022). *Universal Design for Learning Guidelines.* Center for Applied Special Technology.

Cha, S., Kim, J., & Lee, H. (2017). *Glocal Education for the 21st Century.* Seoul National University Press.

Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, Power, and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire.* Multilingual Matters.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior.* Springer.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and Education.* Macmillan.

Eisner, E. W. (2002). *The Arts and the Creation of Mind.* Yale University Press.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* Continuum.

Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences.* Basic Books.

Gay, G. (2018). *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice* (3rd ed.). Teachers College Press.

Ianes, D. (2020). *L'evoluzione dell'inclusione scolastica.* Erickson.

Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1999). *Learning Together and Alone: Cooperative, Competitive, and Individualistic Learning.* Allyn & Bacon.

Kimhi, E., & Bar-Nir, A. (2025). *Inclusive Teacher Education in a Changing World.* Springer.

Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development.* Prentice Hall.

Louv, R. (2005). *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder.* Algonquin Books.

Morin, E. (1999). *Seven Complex Lessons in Education for the Future.* UNESCO.

Nussbaum, M. (2010). *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities.* Princeton University Press.

OECD. (2025). *Learning Compass 2030.* OECD Publishing.

Papert, S. (1993). *The Children's Machine: Rethinking School in the Age of the Computer.* Basic Books.

Springer. (2025). *AI and Learning Futures.* Springer Nature.

UNESCO. (2024). *Global Citizenship Education in a Digital Age.* UNESCO Publishing.

Wiggins, G. (1998). *Educative Assessment: Designing Assessments to Inform and Improve Student Performance.* Jossey-Bass.

Zou, Y., Li, H., & Park, M. (2025). *Inclusive Digital Education: Global Trends and Practices.* Routledge.