# FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

## REPLAY

Renewing bottom-up Educational Practices and Learning Alternatives with Youth

coatl

Consultoria para o
desenvolvimento

# REPLAY - Renewing bottom-up Educational Practices and Learning Alternatives with Youth

The project REPLAY - Renewing bottom-up Educational Practices and Learning Alternatives with Youth was implemented by ECOS, in partnership with Loulé Educating City and several social inclusion projects such as Mud@ki (Projecto Escolhas), Bairrarte (social and community intervention project), Almancil's Secundary School and Alte's Professional School, and funded by the European Youth Foundation under the Pilot Activities Program. The project aimed to strengthen social cohesion in the municipality of Loulé by improving the educational practices implemented in youth programs addressing social inclusion.

In Loulé, both state and non-state actors believe that the educational practices being put in place at local level should be re-though and re-newed to ascertain whether goals are being met and to feed lessons of experience for ongoing and future initiatives.

The project was developed to three main objectives:

1. To promote a bottom-up analysis of the educational practices carried out in local programs, reflecting on how they are contributing to fight social exclusion situations affecting young people in vulnerable groups;
2. To promote the transformation of educational practices at the local level – for them to become more inclusive;
3. To strengthen cooperation between educational actors with an active role at the local level.

By pursuing these objectives, the educational team of the project, composed by Ana Morgado and Nuno da Silva, believed they could contribute to transform this local informal network into a community of practices, where participation, cooperation, learning and change are embraced.

An important aspect of this project was the educational approach proposed, based in the principles of Non formal Education and in the U theory: based in participants experience; awareness of different learning styles; balanced co-existence and interaction between cognitive, affective and practical dimensions of learning; structured and clear objectives, times and support; the voluntary and often self-organised character of learning; the close link to young people's aspirations and interests; the participative and learner-centred approach; the evaluation of success and failure in a collective process and without judgment on individuals; the 'right to make mistakes.

The learning process relied on both site and online moments, local encounters and on the practical experiences of the participants. It was also important the atmosphere created among the group of participants and the educational team, characterized by a mutual respect and a horizontal relationship. These aspects lead to a valuable confidence between everyone involved in the project and the learning process and to the development of a non-judging and supportive environment that allowed the sharing of each other's experiences, fears and expectations since the beginning.
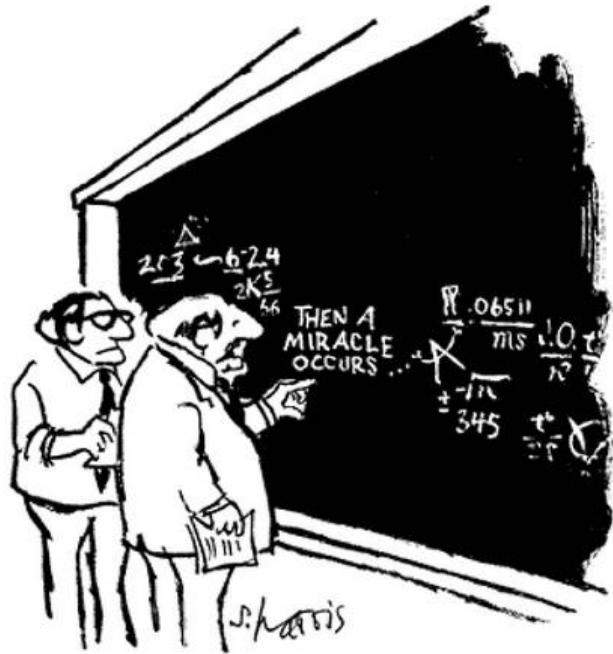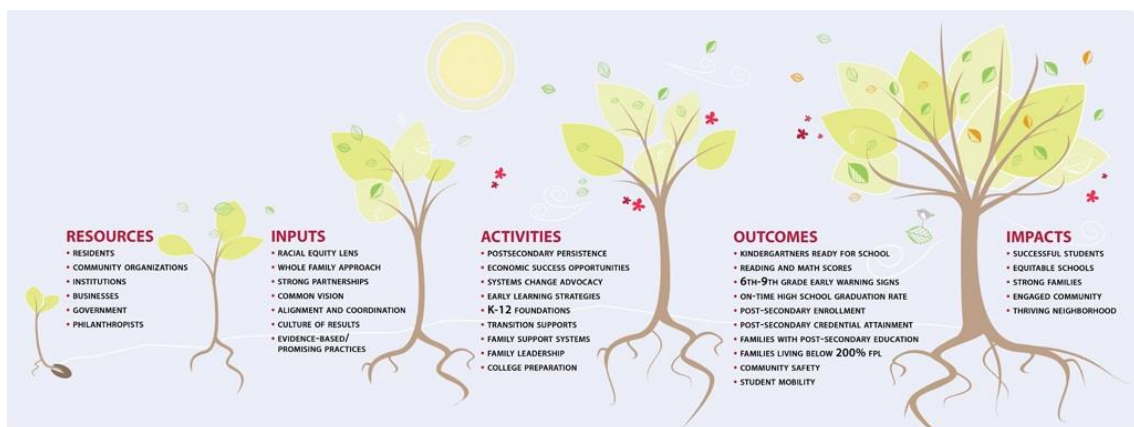
# EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Being the project REPLAY - Renewing bottom-up Educational Practices and Learning Alternatives with Youth a challenge and a provocative approach to the traditional forms of social work, focused on the exploration of unconventional working methodologies and a style of learning that encouraged and invited participants to share stories and personal experiences that facilitate the change in behaviour, practices and ways of being and working, a monitoring and evaluation model was adopted to promote, above all else, the learning and collective discovery about the chain of change that the project promoted.



"I think you should be more explicit here in step two."

Thus, the evaluation methodology that was implemented throughout the project was the **Theory of Change**, a non-experimental evaluation methodology that seeks to explain how the activities implemented lead in the long term to lasting structural changes.

In short, the **Theory of Change** seeks to be a comprehensive and illustrated description of how and why a desired change has been brought about (or not) by a set of activities or initiatives implemented in a given context. This methodology of participatory evaluation is focused, in particular, to try to explain in a simple way the chain of changes that occurs through the following logic:



Obviously, not all interventions can be fully planned in advance, and in the case of the REPLAY project, it was impossible to anticipate all the changes that may result from the interaction between the participants, the process of self-reflection induced or the effects that the methodologies used could awaken in each one. In these cases, an initial Theory of Change is usually developed to describe the desired or expected causal chain and, throughout the monitoring and evaluation process, the evaluation team seeks to develop an emerging Theory of

Change that documents the changes that have taken place, allowing all parties involved to understand the real reasons for the changes (positive, negative, expected or not). This continuous process of comparison and discovery is called adaptive learning and is only possible with the use of mostly qualitative data and the involvement of all project stakeholders through the sharing of information and testimonies about how the experience was experienced by each one.

## INITIAL THEORY OF CHANGE

According to the project design, expectations of the participants and beliefs of the educational team, REPLAY was thought to be a transformational process that would start by promoting individual changes that lead, in the medium/long term, to organizational and community developments at the educational, social inclusion and networking levels.

Though, the Theory of Change initially imagined for the group was the following:

### ACTIVITIES

- 1st Local Encounter
- Journaling
- Interviews
- Coaching circles
- Empathy walks

- Sensing journeys
- Mentoring
- 2nd Local Encounter
- Prototyping
- Coaching circles

- Mentoring
- Individual encounters (mentoring)
- 3rd Local Encounter

### SHORT TERM CHANGES

- Greater awareness of the levels of listening and dialogue in which we operate
- Greater knowledge about different worldviews and the social inclusion work (including understanding of local policies, educational processes, mechanisms, structures, platforms fostering social inclusion at local and national level and their limits and possibilities)
- Greater knowledge about various educational perspectives and alternative forms of education
- Awareness of a systemic perspective of the world and societies, but also of the environment in which they work
- Greater self-knowledge (awareness of own biases when acting as an educator)
- Ability to put into practice the levels of listening and dialogue acquired (in the space / environment of the project)
- Greater knowledge of the publics or contexts in which the projects are implemented
- Knowledge of new techniques and tools that allow a better understanding / knowledge of the contexts and how they can operate in these environments

### MEDIUM TERM CHANGES

- Greater awareness of the individual's emotional level and the impact of this awareness on the relationship (personal and professional) with the social environment in which one works
- Development of horizontal relations with the community fostering proximity, empathy and distance to social roles in the daily practices (personal, professional and organisational);

- A different perspective of the world and the environment in which we operate, more holistic and systemic
- Increased ability to deal with complexity and uncertainty, generating collective open processes for experimenting with new solutions to the problems faced by the groups we work with
- Development of empathy with young people living in situations of social exclusion
- Greater connection between who we are, our intentions and what we do in the world - increased assertiveness
- More capacity to suspend our tendencies for judgment, cynicism and fear, resulting in greater openness to others, the different, the unknown and the not knowing the solutions to the problems we face and that our beneficiaries face
- Greater knowledge, capacity and attitudes related to the use of U-theory and dynamic systems working instruments and relate this with our educational practices a social inclusion of discriminated and marginalized groups

**LONG TERM CHANGES**

- Organizations have become more open to new ways of acting both internally and externally
- Organizations have adopted new pedagogical approaches and practices in relation to change management and their quest for social transformation and social inclusion
- The communities where the organizations operate are more dynamic and open to collective work in search of solutions to social inclusion problems
- Relationships between people in the communities (beneficiaries) and project participants and their colleagues in organizations are closer and more open to dialogue and working together as partners
- Organizations are more open and interested in making contact with new approaches and instruments of social transformation

**SUCCESS**

At the planning stage of the REPLAY it was also identified, with the educational team of the project and tacking into consideration the expectations of the participants, an idea of what would be considered success in the end of this learning process. Though, a successful scenario was considered to be a scenario where organizations and communities begin to move from an ego-system to an eco-system in which each party regularly engages in dialogues that generate collective solutions to the major problems and challenges we face so to be more effective and resilient as educational practitioners being more capable to work together and develop skills in working with marginalized young people and young people at risk. In this successful scenario, people would have closer relationships and collaboration, recognize that they depend on one another and are inclusive and open to others, fostering a community sense in the educational and social work developed in Loulé.

Under this initial analysis were also identified possible external factors that might influence the transformational chain identified and that were out of the control of the project team. Mainly, it was said that all the rest of the society in Loulé and the Algarve continues to operate in an ego-system focused on the individual and the separation between people, organizations and community. In this context, everyone continues to operate at an insane pace and with no time to reflect, rethink and reassess what is really important for each person and for the community of Loulé.

# FINAL TEORY OF CHANGE

**NUTRIENTS**

- Availability to learn / curiosity
- Willingness to get out of the routine and the context of "always"
- Trust that the future does not have to be this way
- Need to align "my" action with "my" beliefs
- Dissatisfaction with the current system and how to do it
- Willingness to open the heart to others

**SEEDS**

- Coaching circles
- Sensitive journey
- Empathic walk
- Theory U
- Journaling
- Moments of reflection
- Activated listening levels
- Development of prototypes
- Mentoring
- Local encounters

## ROCKS ON THE WAY

- Instability in the work context
- The constant lack of time
- There is no time, no willingness to listen
- Resistance to change and to experience new things
- Materialism
- Fear and impatience
- Voice of judgment
- The lies to ourselves
- Lack of tolerance

**ROOTS**

- Awareness of the various levels of listening
- Learning to listen and to suspend the voice of judgment
- Greater acceptance of the other and
- difference
- Greater tranquility, security and self-confidence
- Increased ability to observe and feel
- Ability to share what I think and feel

**VISIBLE CHANGES**

- Less stress and more joy
- More time spent listening and observing others
- Better time management
- Reinforcement of personal relationships (family, friends and work)
- Greater awareness of the surrounding reality
- More positive and tolerant thinking
- Less lies as a mean of "social protection"
- (Re) meeting with my own person
- Strengthening the sense of community and team work
- Empathy towards stakeholders and beneficiaries
- Will for cooperation and getting to know others work

**FUTURE HOPES**

- Ability to "infect" others
- Ability to continue "this change"
- Relying on others
- Enhance organizational, not just personal, changes
- Introduce new ways of doing in organizations
- Strengthening the sense of community and teamwork
- More sharing and networking
- Continuing the work of this group

The figure above summarizes the inputs collected during the monitoring and evaluation process among the project participants and educational team. With the support of a wide range of instruments and methods of data collection, the different perceptions of the participants and the educational team regarding the individual and group changes were collected.

This process focused on the collection of inputs on perceived and possible changes at the individual level that result directly from the roots, as well as the possible mapping changes that result from daily use and the educational and work context of each one (visible changes). The participants were further challenged to try to project the future and identify possible changes that could be made to the community and to the social and educational interventions in which they are involved.

This analysis also resulted in the identification of a set of preconditions that determined the success of the intervention and the individual and group work (nutrients), as well as a set of threats or challenges that, during the process, conditioned some changes or Changes in practices or behaviour (rocks in the way).

Generally speaking, participants underlined a great change at the individual level, their relationship with their characteristics and with others, as well as the importance of this acceptance in the social and educational work that they operate daily. They also underlined the belief that this process could lead to a greater change at the local level, materialized through a reinforcement of networking between the people involved and the organizations to which they belong. It is also evident from the data gathered that all the participants want to continue active and involved in the construction of this informal network that has been created through REPLAY. It also results from REPLAY a set of partnerships already under way, such as the partnership between the Almancil's Secondary School and the Mud@ki project, as well as the follow up that results in the fact that many participants continue to meet weekly to continue exploring the U-Theory and ways of working together.

## TOOLS AND METHODS USED

For the implementation of the evaluation methodology proposed, were used the following evaluation tools and methods:

- Document analysis
- Semi-structured interviews with participants and educational team
- Development of logical models
- Photographic and video recording
- Workshops and working meetings
- Methodologies for visual and/or graphic data collection

# EVALUATION TEAM

## Coatl – Consultoria para o Desenvolvimento

Coatl is a consulting firm specialized in issues related to development, as a lasting structural change process of organisations, communities and societies.

Coatl focuses its work in four areas of intervention:

- Development Cooperation
- Global Education
- Social and Community Development
- Organisational Development

Coatl also works in the development of tools that promote autonomy and sustainability in the third sector organisations.

**For this evaluation Coatl's team was composed by João Mesquita.**

Degree in Economics and a Masters in Development and International Cooperation at the School of Economics and Management (University of Lisbon).

With an extensive experience in the use of Non-Formal Education methods as a privileged tool of participatory work, worked as evaluator for organizations such as the Council of Europe, EFUS - European Forum for Urban Security, Instituto Marquês de Valle Flôr (IMVF), Faith and Cooperation Foundation (FEC), Doctors of the World Portugal, European Anti-Poverty Network, AMI Foundation, Portuguese Development NGOs Platform, High Commissioner for Migration, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the Support Programme to Non State Actors (UE-PAANE), among others.

As evaluator is member of several Portuguese and international networks and platforms:

- European Evaluation Society
- Pool of Evaluators of the Camões – Cooperation and Language Institute
- Pool of experts of the European Executive Agency for the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Program (EACEA)
- AvalPortugal – Portuguese Evaluation Society
- Pool of evaluators of IEACH (*Instituto de Estudios sobre Conflictos y Acción Humanitaria*)

# CONTACTS

Coatl – Consultoria para o Desenvolvimento

info@coatl.pt

www.coatl.pt