

RIMA WORKSHOP

HandBook for educators





Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

INTRODUCTION

“The words, slowly and painfully,
become action, life” (Danilo Dolci, 1984)¹

The Reciprocal Maieutic Approach (RMA) is a dialectic method of inquiry and “popular self-analysis” for the empowerment of communities and individuals and it can be defined as a **“process of collective exploration that takes, as a departure point, the experience and the intuition of individuals”** (Dolci, 1996).

RMA is a group communication strategy (Habermas, 1986)² that enables all the elements in 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)³. The methodology was developed by Danilo Dolci from the Socratic concept of Maieutic: Socrates' Maieutics is unidirectional, while for Danilo Dolci the concept of knowledge comes from experience and a reciprocal relationship is necessary. As the name says, RMA is a “reciprocal” process between at least two persons and it is normally done inside a group, with one person that asking questions and others giving answers. It is the reciprocal maieutic communication that brings out people's knowledge, with all participants learning from each other.

Who is Danilo Dolci?

Danilo Dolci (Sesana, 28 June 1924 - Trappeto, 30 December 1997) was a sociologist, poet, educator and activist of Italian non-violence.

From 1952 he moved to western Sicily (Trappeto and Partinico, small villages close to Palermo) where he promoted non-violent struggles against the mafia and underdevelopment, for rights and work: such social commitment earned him the nickname of “Italian Gandhi” or “Gandhi of Sicily”

In his activity of social animation and political struggle, Danilo Dolci has always used with coherence and courage the instruments of non-violence.

Why RMA?

The RMA, developed by Danilo Dolci, is an important characteristic of the social and educational work of Dolci and his working method: he considered that no real change could ignore the involvement, the direct participation of those directly affected, rather than dispense “pre-packaged truths”.

The RMA comes from the concept of Socrates’ maieutic. It derives from the ancient Greek “μαιευτικός” that literally stands for the midwife art: every educational act is like giving birth to all the inner potentialities of the individual who wants to learn, as the mother wants her child to birth from her womb. Socrates’ maieutic compares the philosopher to the “midwife of knowledge” that does not fill the student mind with a priori information, but helps him bring his knowledge to light, using the dialogue as a dialectical tool. What makes the difference between these two concepts is the fact that Socrates’ Maieutic is unidirectional, while Danilo Dolci, despite the fact that knowledge can be born from experience and its sharing, requires reciprocity in communication.

In the meetings coordinated by Dolci, everyone wondered, learned to deal with others, to listen and to decide. It is during meetings with local farmers and fishermen that some of the most important ideas for change in western Sicily were taken shape.

These ideas were later put into practice, and they represented an important incentive for the economic development of the area, removing an important branch from the mafia, which made the control of the limited available water resources an instrument of control over the citizens. Providing in this area of western Sicily, the birth and development of many companies and cooperatives, becoming an opportunity for economic, social and civil change.

¹ **Dolci, D.** (1984). *The World is only one creature*. Warwick, Amity House.

² **Habermas, J.** (1986). *Teoria dell'agire comunicativo*. Bologna, Il Mulino.

³ **Mangano, A.** (1992). *Danilo Dolci educatore*. S. Domenico di Fiesole (FI), Edizioni cultura della pace.



The workshop

**“Many participants realised they had deeper needs and dreams - RMA workshops tend to transform such needs and personal dreams in shared objectives in order to make the become common social development projects.”
(Giuseppe Barone)⁴**

The RMA workshop application of the Reciprocal Maieutic Approach developed by Danilo Dolci. The completeness and simplicity of a RMA workshop can be disclosed only to whom experiences it: questioning is a science and an art.

RMA has a wider applicability as educational approach so it can be adapted to different topics and situations, fostering participatory learning in a non-violent, stimulating and cooperative environment for learners. Going through the RMA process and therefore learn how to employ it, it is an important achievement in the field of communication with sensitive targets.

The target group of the In&Out project is disadvantaged young people, with and without a migrant background. Their position as young people, foreigners and socially excluded, makes it difficult to express their opinions, thoughts and dreams, and places them in a passive position, as “receivers”, not always considering their opinions and dreams or listening to them.

Our project regards these young people as a resource, and through RMA methodology, In&Out participants and all young people experimenting it, they had the opportunity to express themselves, listen to each other and reach a common point, which is important for the development of the group and its individuals.

⁴ Barone, G. (2010) Una rivoluzione nonviolenta (Non-violent revolution). Italy.

The RMA learning process starts with a long-term process of analysis and discussion about meaningful themes for the group getting deep into feelings, inner perspectives and needs that people have. Emphasizing individual learners' capacity to discover their own vital interests and to express their feelings freely.⁵ Through the RMA workshop, trainers and youth workers support youth development, improving quality on communication competencies; analysing the meaning of key-words important in intercultural learning process; improving soft skills, such as: self-reflection, listening, empathy, open-mindedness and respect.

To apply the methodology RMA workshop, it is essential to consider the following general characteristics:

Group of people:

The group can be made at any age and for any kind of person: children, youth or adults, professionals or simple citizens;

If possible, it is important to enable a coexistence between simple people, experts and professionals within the group;

The size of the group is maximum 20 participants and minimum 10.

⁵ **Dolci, A.; Amico, F. (2009) Reciprocal Maieutic Approach In adult education.** Lifelong Learning Programme – Sub- Programme Grundtvig. EDDILI. Project N.: 502999-LLP-1-2009-IT-GRUNDTVIG-GMP. <https://danilodolci.org/media/English.pdf>

Coordinator:

There is only one RMA coordinator for each session;

He/she is the person who coordinates the session and guides the group in the maieutic process; in this case, the coordinator could be the youth worker, social worker or youth leader who is applying this module with a group of young migrants or disadvantage young people;

The coordinator is not a leader or boss. One of the intrinsic features is to create a democratic dialogue where everybody have the possibility to listen, to question and to think about making responsible choices;

Advices on the characteristics of the Coordinator:

- Capacity to coordinate the group and the same time to be at participants' level
- Capacity to ask questions and analyse problems
- Capacity to “read” and get through the group, empathy, capacity to valorise each individual experience
- Communication skills: active listening and capacity for clear expression, presentation, cross-cultural communication
- Capacity of summarizing and using key word
- Capacity to manage conflicts inside the group in a positive way
- Open to diversity
- Creativity.

Duration:

Minimum duration is 2 hours.
Maximum duration suggested is 3 hours.

Space:

Room or outdoors space, with enough space for all the members of the group, set out in a circle and normally sitting in chairs.
The space is organized in order to create a democratic, non-hierarchical environment.

Tips for the RMA workshop in intercultural learning.

This section contains a list of tips that were useful during the experimentation phase of the RMA workshop. It includes some general tips for the coordinator, and the development of the workshop established by RMA theories and some tips added by the In&Out partners, after the experimentation phase, to adapt the methodology to the characteristics of the target group and the real needs of the project:

Tips for the coordinator:

Use the RMA workshop to create a more cohesive group at the beginning of the process or in the middle to find common goals and interesting topics for the group.

RMA workshop could be used also as problem solving methodology, to share between the group the real needs and worries and try to find a common solution that comes directly from the group.

To ensure the effectiveness of the activities, it is advisable that the workshops are structured in at least two or three meetings, that they are not too spaced in time (it is advisable not to exceed a maximum of ten days between one meeting and the next)

Preparation...

It is not necessary to present previously the RMA theoretical framework.

The subject to discuss during the session is decided before the workshop, as it is necessary that everybody agree on the theme.

To choose a proper subject, you can make a list of the most important topics come up during the sessions and let group decide.

It is advisable for everyone to make a priori preparation (by reading documents, researching, bringing articles...)

Participants and coordinator are invited to sit in a circle, to create a democratic environment, warm, bright and comfortable.

Introduction...

In the first meeting, coordinator will start presenting him/herself, him/her background and a personal dream.

It is important to put emphasis on real needs, interests, desires and dreams first, in order to understand new relations.

After this introduction, it is important that participants introduce themselves in a personal way or by presenting their personal dream. Coordinator will invite them to do it respecting the circle order.

Sharing dreams, especially within a group in which people do not know each other, helps to find common interests and desires, especially to discuss them gradually in subsequent meetings (but also in groups that know each other always comes out something new!)

It is useful to have a flipchart or a notebook to write down the diverse interventions and to record the outcomes of the session.

Discussion...

The starting point of the discussion on RMA workshop can be simply just a word or two. Gradually each of these initial words are associated to an adjective, and idea a point of view and so this is how the actual workshop activity begins.

The coordinator invite the participants to share their point of view from their personal experience one by one, respecting again the circle order.

Example:

What is Art according to your personal experience?

What is creativity according to your personal experience?

During the previous phase, coordinator takes notes and summarizes the most important outcomes from each participant's reflexion.

It is time to discuss. Coordinator will continue asking questions regarding the words and the topic, and the group will answer, always using their knowledge and previous experiences as references.

Example:

Do you feel creative? In which moments?

Art and creativity are necessarily connected or not?

During the session, participants ask when they want to speak, creating an order that should be respected.

It is important that everybody listens actively to each other's voice

The RMA coordinator might intervene and give his own contribution in order to enable true reciprocity.

Conclusion...

To conclude the workshop, the RMA coordinator should synthesize all the interventions and summarize the sequent questions emerging from the dialogue.

The group, together with the coordinator, could use the conclusion time to discuss and agree on the topic to be discussed during the next session

Coordinator also invites participants to reflect individually and to reopen the discussion during the next workshop.

Organization:

CESIE

Organization's role in the project:

Leader of IO2 and TC

GENERAL PART



WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

General Objective/s of the workshop:

- To exchange opinions, ideas and point of views
- To overcome limits and continue growing as a group and individuals
- To interact and meet each other using dialogue
- To analyse the meaning of the words, the difference existing between them and the potential effects of both concepts on the learning process.

The workshop activates a process of interchange as well as a reciprocal enrichment and only when communication between the workshop participants, it will be eventually possible to see a continuous germination of ideas.

Workshop general indicators:

- 1 Level of Integration in the group - I feel part of the group
- 2 Ability to create relationship and team work - I feel self-confident and I have new relationship
- 3 The workshop as safe and protected environment where important topics can be discussed
- 4 Capacity of reflection on positive aspects and criticism of own and hosting culture ameliorated

Target group: Youth workers, teachers, educators, young people and volunteers (if possible, it is important to enable a coexistence between simple people, experts and professionals within the group)

Duration of the workshop: 120 min

Number of participants: 10- 20 pax.

General description of the workshop/instruction:

The group, including the trainer, is sitting in a circle.

The trainer will be the RMA coordinator.

Introduce yourself and your background.

Invite each participant, respecting the order of the circle, to introduce him/herself by asking: **What is your personal dream?**

Take notes on the most relevant things tell by the group and doing summaries.

Each student starts to tell something about him/herself in a personal way. In this way, everyone can open up, by expressing themselves and listening to other people's point of view.

After the first round for personal introduction, introduce the issue or a "good question":
- **What is the meaning of "...” according to your personal experience?**

Starting from these initial questions, invite participants to focus on the arising questions and to say them out loud, following the order of the circle.

When all the participants said their reflexion, summarize the most important outcomes from the participant answers and continue to stimulate the discussion, doing more questions or telling them about your personal experience.

During the session, participants ask when they want to speak, creating an order that should be respected.

Material/space: Flipchart, pens and paper, definitions of both words

Questions for debriefing:

To conclude, summarize for the last time all the main conclusions out from the discussion and explain the real meaning and differences between intercultural and multicultural, from the etymology and morphology point of view.

Asking a short evaluation to all participants.

Tips/variations: Because of its wide applicability, RMA can be easily applied to a variety of other themes and fields. The maieutic circle should also be adapted to specific goals and to specific target groups.

The most important is to get to know the group first, how well they know each other, what are the priorities or main needs, what the group expects and desires to learn. Inform yourself well about the morphology and etymology of the words that you will use during the session.

Tips and learning outcomes from the experimentation:

Through the experimentation phase, in which each of the project partners has the opportunity to prepare, carry out and evaluate the methodology with their groups, we realised that the RMA workshop in the In&Out project context, it could be proposed in different stages of the path: at the beginning, at the end or both.

It will depend on the objectives to be achieved with the group of participants and the characteristics of the individuals. It will be a decision of the coordinator/trainer/youth worker leading the group.

- RMA workshop as part of teambuilding phase: Planned at the beginning of the path, as an introduction, the RMA method will offer to the trainer the possibility to explore the topics and interests of the group, being able, in case, to adapt the rest of the activities to the group needs. It will create a starting point to introduce the topics and to know the previous experiences of the participants.

- RMA workshop as part of conclusion and evaluation phase: Proposed at the end of the In&Out training course, this activity will be a conclusion, evaluation or reflection for the group. In this case, the group will be more consolidated and probably, the participants will feel more comfortable sharing with their fellows some personal topics, such as their dreams or their personal experiences.

Bellow, we share with you some of the difficulties find out during our experimentation phase, in order to give the possibility to prevent it and to be ready...

Knowledge vs. Transmission could be cnepts too abstract), especially in groups with linguistic obstacles.

Strong emotions and crying when the participants share their personal experiences.

Migrants could feel frustrated talking about how to be an active citizenship
It is probably, that the participants will feel more comfortable and eager to participate openly after to spend some time in presentation dynamics.
In some of the groups, the time could be too long, and some participants could decided to leave.

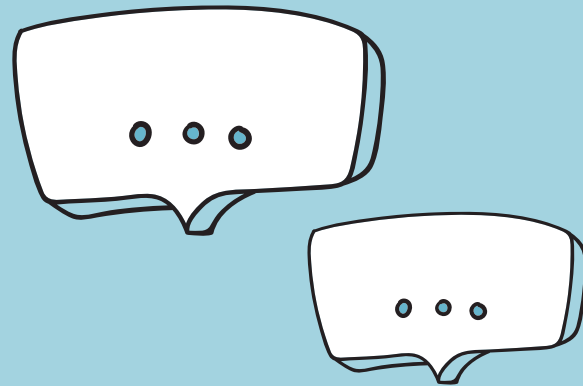
In other cases, 2 hours couldn't be enough time and it could be an idea to make a longer session with a break in the middle.

Some of the topics used during In&Out experimentation phase:

- Personal history
- Difficulties in the place where they live
- The racism and discrimination they are confronted everyday
- Art and creativity

Resources:

- **Dolci, A.; Amico, F. (2009) Reciprocal Maieutic Approach In adult education.** Lifelong Learning Programme – Sub- Programme Grundtvig. EDDILI. Project N.: 502999-LLP-1-2009-IT-GRUNDTVIG-GMP. <https://danilodolci.org/media/English.pdf>



RMA
WORKSHOP