



Work discussion Approach in primary schools
Teachers observe **CH**ildren

WHY THE WORK DISCUSSION APPROACH

The school plays a very important role in the lives of young people by providing a reference point that helps or hinders the mental and emotional growth of the pupils.

This is because teachers usually face complex dynamics and need specific tools to hone their interpersonal skills and to deal with the emotional distress that is sometimes connected to their job.

It is then essential to create appropriate spaces in educational contexts and to support operators in their crucial and delicate task of fostering the development of children entrusted to them.





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The WATCH project expects to achieve this support by introducing in the involved schools the “Work Discussion” Methodology.

Through this methodology, teachers will be helped at increasing their capacity to understand the children, to relate to them, to provide for their inclusion in the class and identify appropriate educational strategies that can procure them a support for their development.



The Work Discussion methodology is fruitfully used in UK where was first developed at Tavistock Clinic and has become one of the central model of teaching and learning within professional development courses.

It is well known also with different names and already applied in other training contexts but unfortunately it is still scarcely tested and adopted in the school framework which is so delicate and so needy, where the relationship between teacher and student needs to be supported.

The Work Discussion Approach originates from the Infant Observation methodology.

The infant observation method is a type of direct observation introduced since 1948 during the training of infant therapists in the Tavistock Clinic in London, adopted in 1960 by the Institute of Psychoanalysis in London, and subsequently disseminated all over the world.



This observational methodology was born, therefore, for the training of psychotherapists; however, due to its great ductility and its characteristics, it is also suitable for other areas of applications within the mental health and social care sectors such as for social worker, nurses, doctors, ...

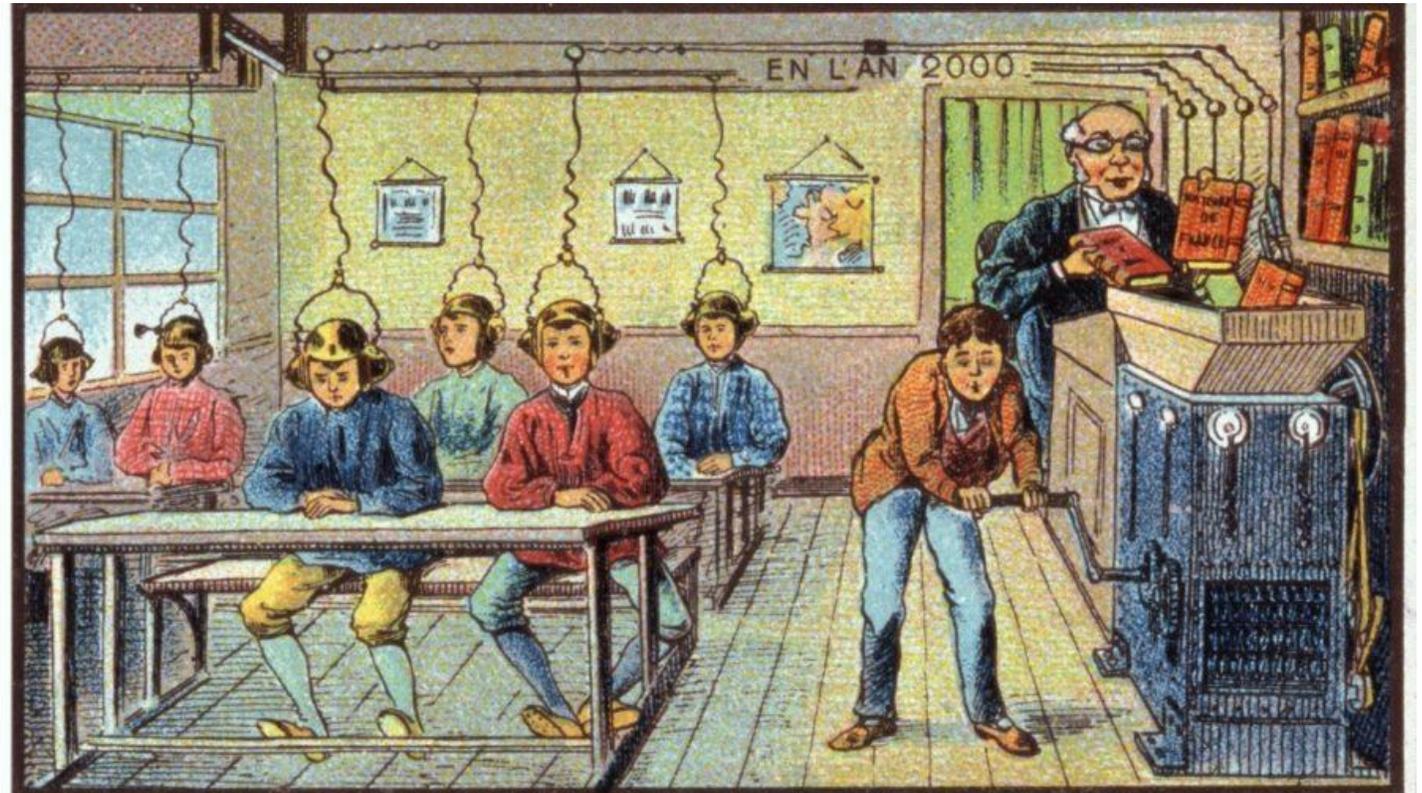


The original method consists of going and observing, once a week for an hour, the development of a newborn within his family from birth to two years of age.

The work discussion methodology is similar to traditional infant observation, but in this case each educator chooses to look at his/her class group, one or more of the children he/she works with, and keeps a diary on which observations are reported.

Each educator can choose to observe a particular child or more children in various situations that he/she thinks are significant or problematic with respect to his/her experience.

The observation allows to think children beyond teaching and learning aspects, and each teacher can refine his/her relational skills to promote not only the cognitive development, but also the affective and emotional ones.



Regularly, all educators meet in a discussion group led by a psychotherapist and a psychologist who play respectively two roles: the "conductor" and the "observer".

The reports produced by the teachers will be then analysed in the framework of these periodical work discussion groups.

The group offers participants a spatial, physical and mental dimension in which operate in continuous reflection on what is happening in the observatory setting.



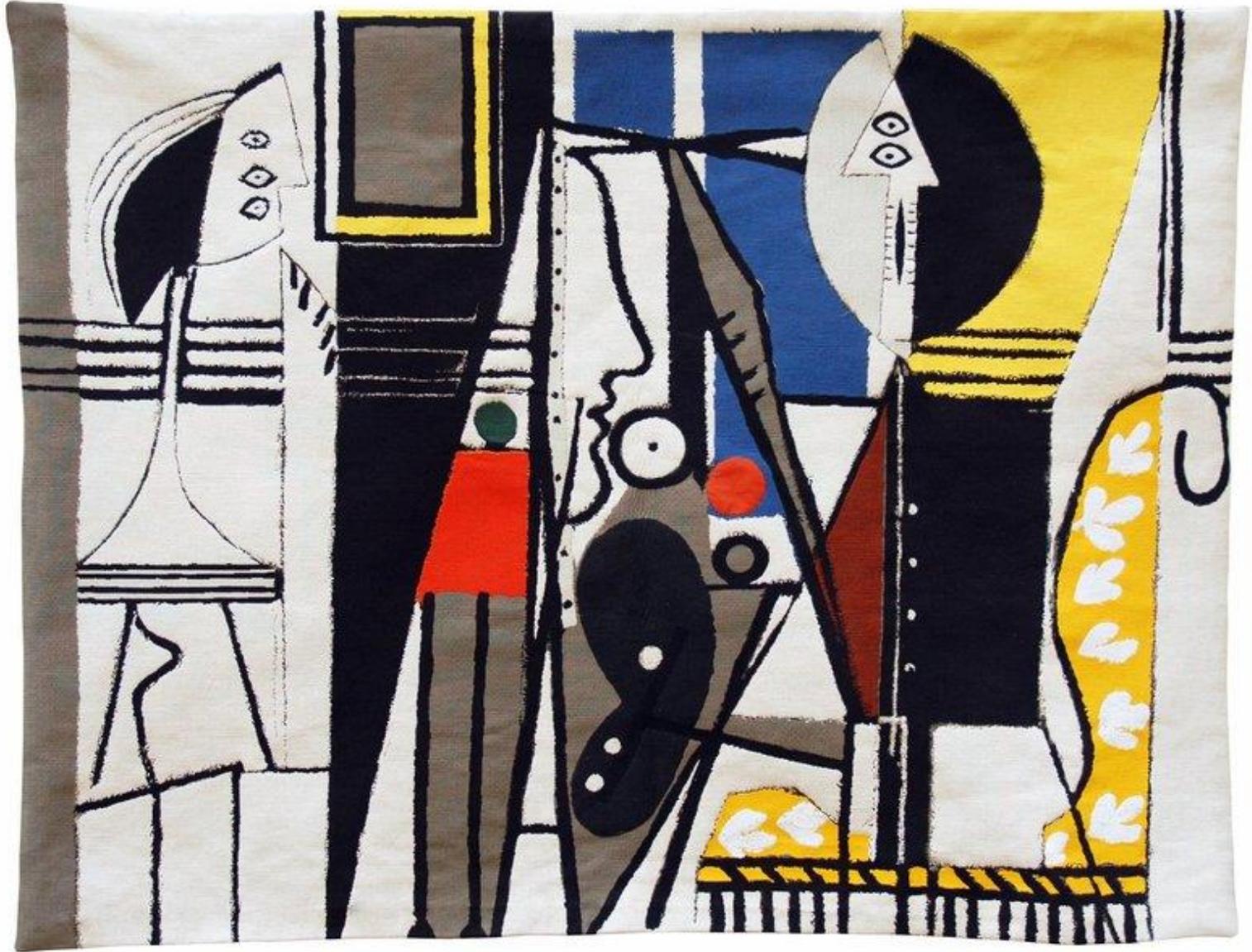
Also the observer psychologist will produce a report of what discussed and achieved - a kind of working memory that contains the observations made during the previous group discussion meeting.



The so called "work discussion" groups will then represent the achieved spaces where the teachers can train themselves to reflect on different ways of relating, they can learn to accept, without judging, 'negative' feelings, sorrow, anger, aggressiveness of the children, as well as to understand and manage their affective requests.

This methodology will be also the space where the problems are faced and discussed and will represent the space for dealing with the observations made in turn by the participant teachers.

The work discussion groups will finally become an important support to teachers in their difficulties and labours that daily work requires, and will give them the opportunity to share their experiences not only with psychological experts but also with their colleagues.



The peculiarity of these discussion groups during the project life is that of gradually "training" teachers to maintain an observational and reflective function during the phases of the work in which they are usually involved.



The act of writing down a report is the first step for developing this reflective function.

The time spent for reflecting and writing is an important stage: the teacher rethinks a situation and starts his/her understanding of it.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION



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