

# University education: Analysis of the Learning Process and Identity Change through Service-Learning in Communities of Practices in Contexts of Exclusion

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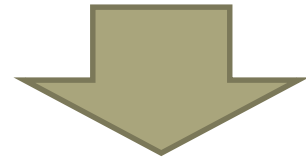
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# 1. Introduction:

## Why to do research in service-learning?

- There are statements of service-learning that are relevant for us
  - SL can embrace both missions of teaching and social action, promoting systemic changes in society and in particular in university system.
  - SL can embrace learning as more than knowledge acquisition, but as a holistic process of competence earning, knowledge learning and personal change, that we could call authentic learning, nevertheless there is not much results and theory about how it exactly happen
- Both, the potential of Service-Learning as a social sustainable methodology, and the need of stronger results and theoretical fundamentals about the processes that take place in SL, are the reasons that motivate our study
- Our research was founded by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities of the Spanish government. 2015-2018, and carried out by researchers of two universities (UAB and UPO).

## 2. Theoretical models for research in Learning Process and Identity Change through Service-Learning



From the study inputs-outputs to the study of the activity

# Studying Service-Learning through inputs and outputs

- Most of the research are input-output studies
- Purely empirical, without explicit theory on learning
- Only possible to focus in the effectiveness, but not on there meaning of the research or program: inputs and outputs.
- Focus on the pedagogical methodology: Student as an object

# Experiential learning in Service-Learning

- John Dewey and Paulo Freire
- **Learning happens through experience:** Learning is not a preparation for life, it is a dimensión of the life itself
- Learning as a **holistic personal process:** connecting “me” to the social “we”
- Experience and reflection as motor of the **meaning-making process**
  - Social mind (Vygotsky)
  - Accomodation and asimilation (Piaget)
  - From cicles observation-reflection-action to **reflection-in-action**
- **Sense for Service-Learning: learning as process of connecting and personal change**

# Transformative learning in Service-Learning

- Mezirow: New experience entail awareness of the cultural position, which entails questioning. Importance of context, contradiction and identity.
- Service-Learning entails a ***boundary crossing*** and *distorting dilemma*
- The ***distorting dilemma*** cannot be solved with the old reference, learners questions himself and his worldview through critical reflection
- Self-questioning and opening to new worldviews allows for **the *personalization of others***, that cease to be stereotypical concepts to be real people
- Students start ***processing***, acting towards constructing a new meaning and agency-taking
- Then ***connection*** is constructed between the two contexts, changing “me” and “them” into “we”.

# Critical Theory in Service-Learning

- Education as liberation and social justice endeavour.
- Importance of **engagement in community** and social purposes
  - **Concientization** as necessary for real learning
  - SL cannot be transformative if it does not **deconstruct power and discrimination**
  - **Critical conscience** and *authorial voice* is constructed in interpersonal relations
- **Agency taking and vinculation** lead to **empowering** students and communities
- **Problematization** of different elements of S-L
  - **Asimetry** on relationships
  - **Instrumental** reciprocity
- Reconceptualizations of S-L
  - **Communitary** Service Learning
  - Solidary Service Learning
  - **Community Engaged** Learning



# Cultural-historical lens for Service-Learning

- **Focus of analysis:** changes from individual who learns, to the **activity system** that organizes learning.
- Importance of **mediating artefacts** and **organization**.
- Service-Learning as a **hybrid context**, a **third space** with two-fold objectives
- Not crossing the boundary but **participating on the boundary**
- Hybrid entails change, **negotiation of practices and meanings**. Students:
  - Participate in negotiation, legitimating them for creation and **agency** taking
  - Need to earn **competence in community of practice**, appropriating them for being core members
- Participation in the community of practice bounds development of the community **and produce learning and identity change of the students**

# From recalling lines towards a new study

- We learn in activities **addressed to goals**
- Activities are developed collectively **in a community**
- **Boundary crossing and negotiation of meaning entail critical reflection and identity change.**
- **Commitment** with social endeavours is necessary for *real learning*
- **Real learning** is bounded to **identity change**.
- Identity change happens in **communities that are changing, hibrid contexts**
  
- **Theoretical standpoint of our study:**
- Service-Learning is a powerful tool that convivenes commitment to change, both individual and social. Social participation is the link of both of them.

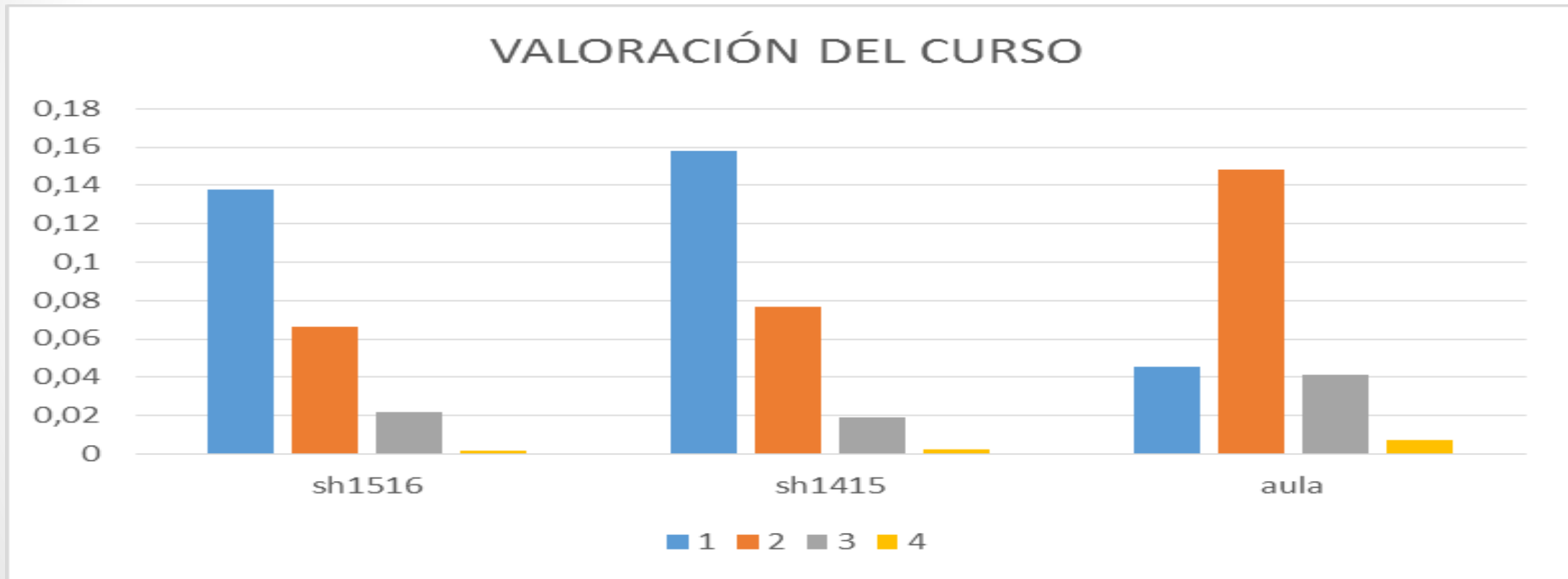
# 3. Preliminary Quantitative Results:

## Course Valuing Inventory (Nehari & Bender, 1978)

- 152 university students responded to the CVI
  - SR 2016. Students with SL experience
  - SR 2015. Students with SL experience
  - AU 2015. Students without SL experience
- 4 Subscales (9 item each one)
  - I. General Course Valuation
  - II. Content Learning
  - III. Behavioral Learning
  - IV. Personal Learning
- Likert scale.  
1- total agreement; 2 agreement; 3 no agreement; 4 none of agreement

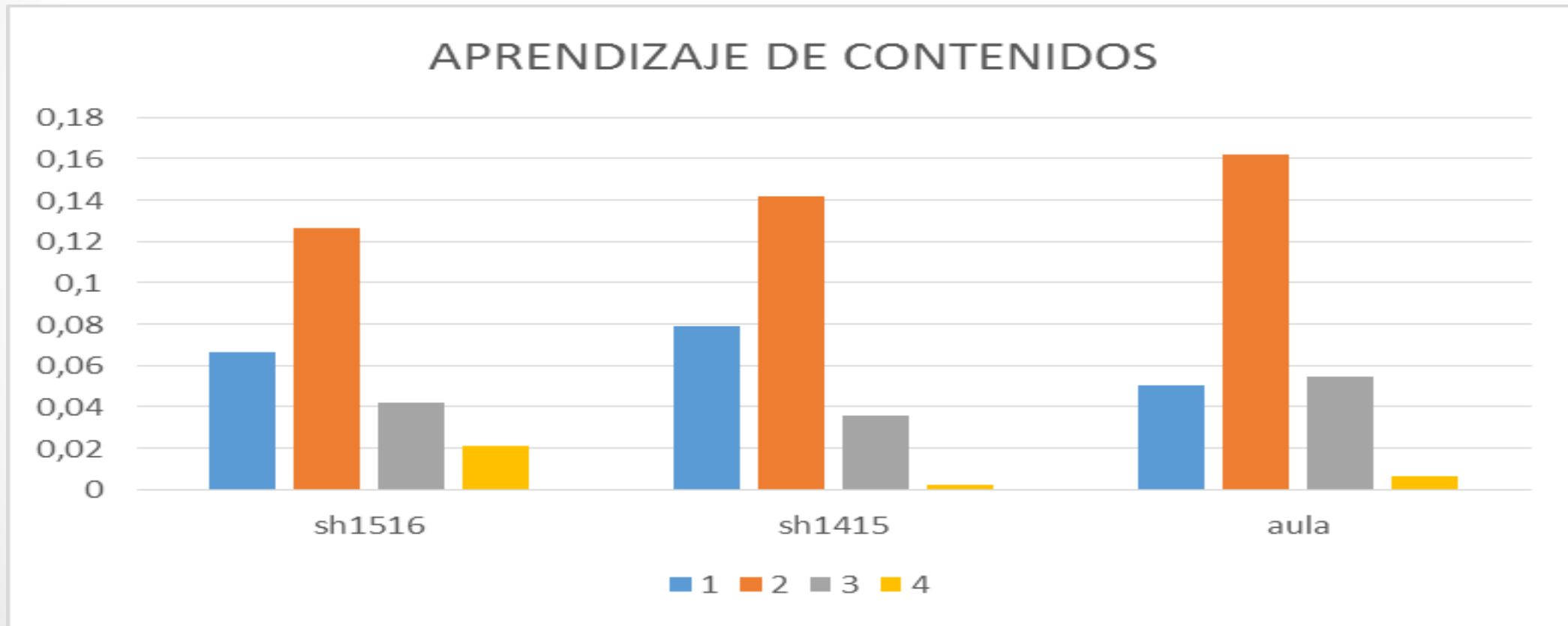
# CVI : Intergroup comparison

## Subscale 1. Course valuation



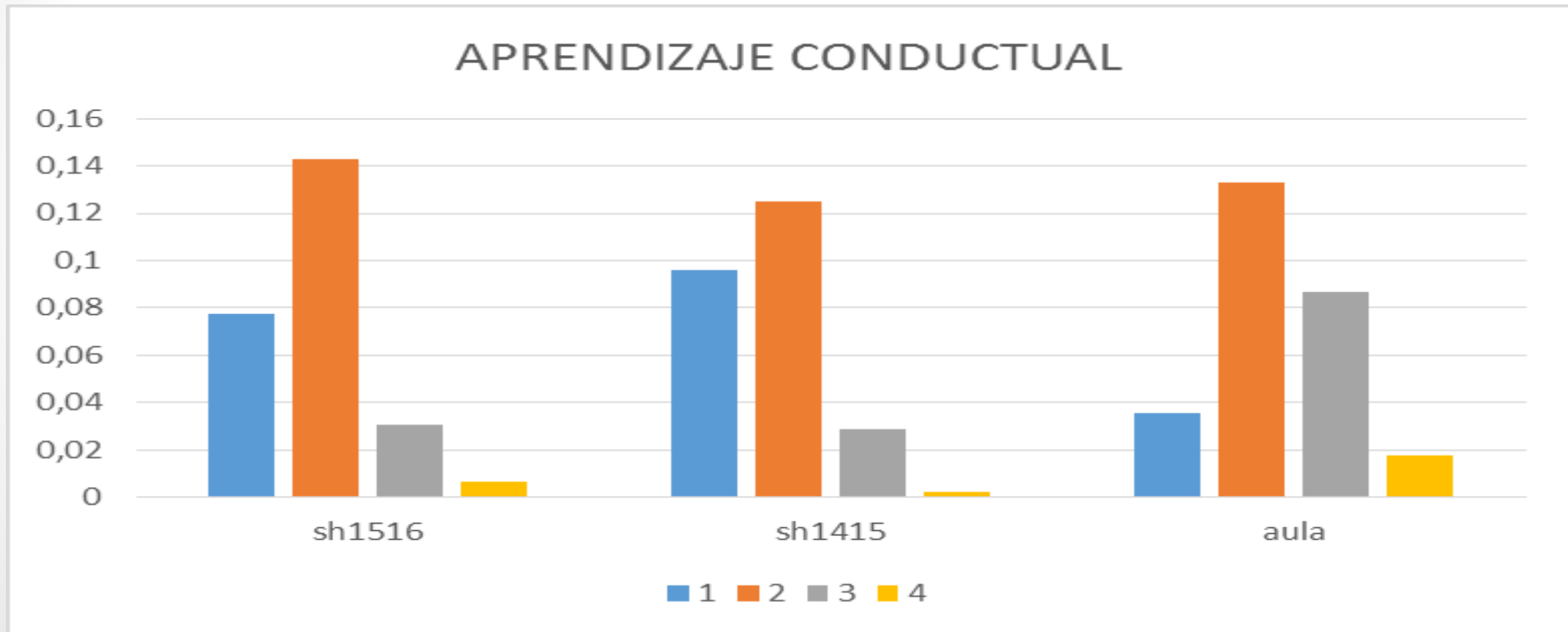
# CVI : Intergroup comparison

## Subscale 2. Content learning



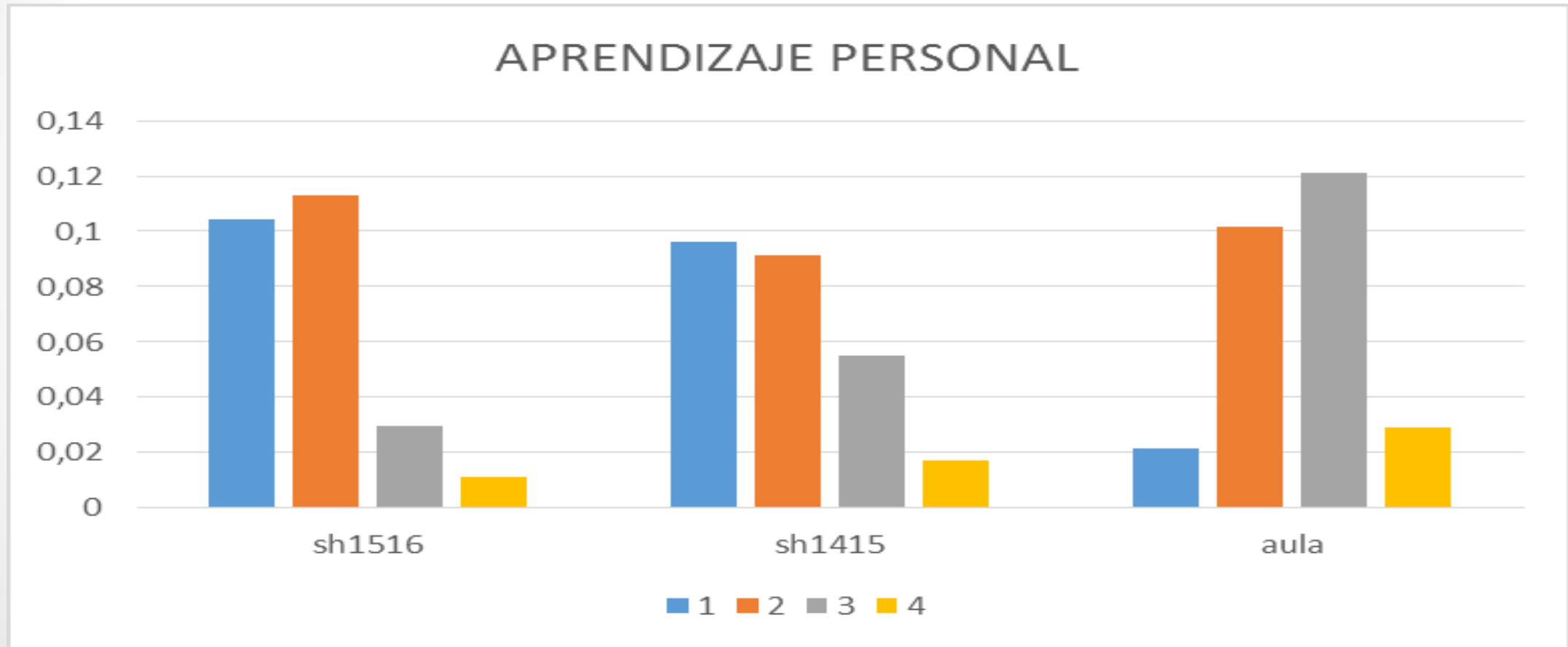
# CVI : Intergroup comparison

## Subscale 3. Behavioral learning



# CVI : Intergroup comparison

## Subscale 4. Personal learning



# CVI : Global results

- Different valuation in general between SL/no-SL students
- SL experience was mainly positive valuation, while no-SL classes had more neutral answers
- This trend is similar en 3 subscales: General Course Valuation; Behavioral Learning and Personal Learning
- Unless the trend is the same, the results are not so different in the subscale related to the content learning



# 4. Objectives

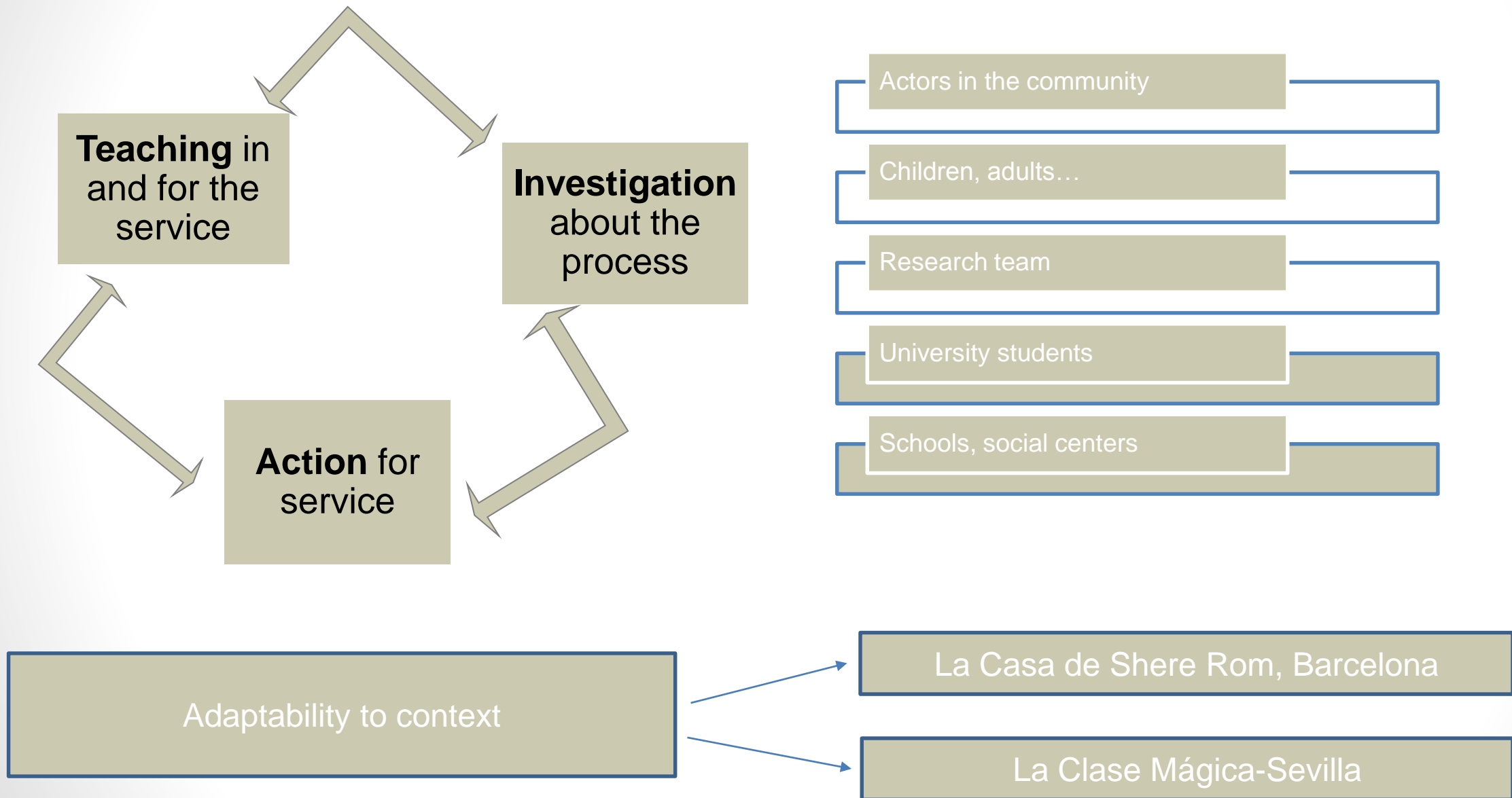
Our research have as main aims:

- a) Participation in SL activities facilitates the acquisition of contents and professional competencies related to intervention in real context
- b) Participation in SL activities supposes an emotional impact that contributes to give sense to learning.
- c) Participation in the SL activity supposes cognitive procedure and attitudinal learning that should derived in identity change processes. The experience transforms the person as a whole

# 5. Metodology

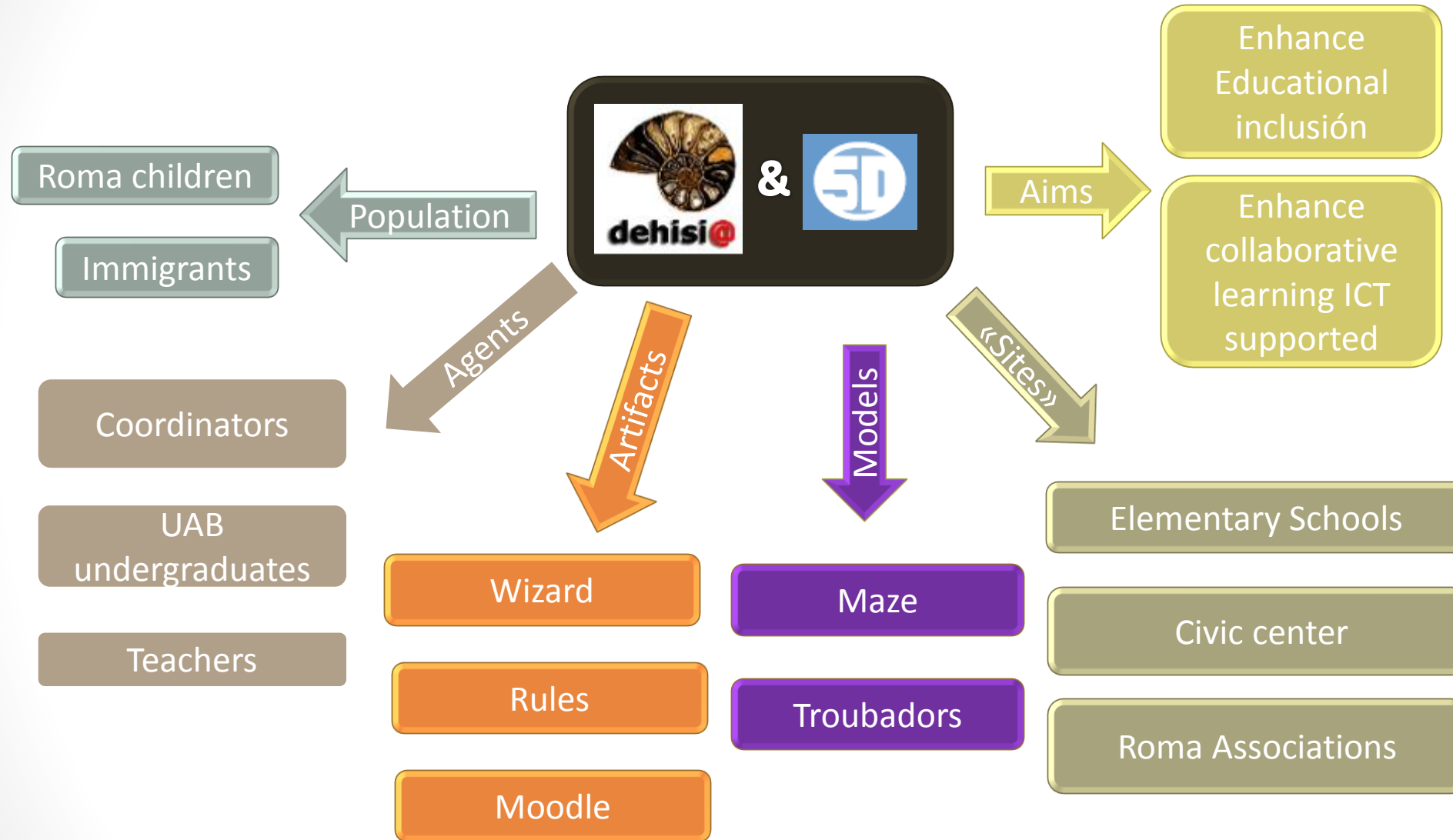
- General bases...
  - Qualitative research is needed to understand the process
  - Collection of the first person voices of the students.
  - Analysis of reflection where learning happens
  - Narrative as the discursive activity for meaning-making
  - Experiential, methodological and theoretical roots in the 5D

# 5.1. Context of activity: the model 5D-LCM



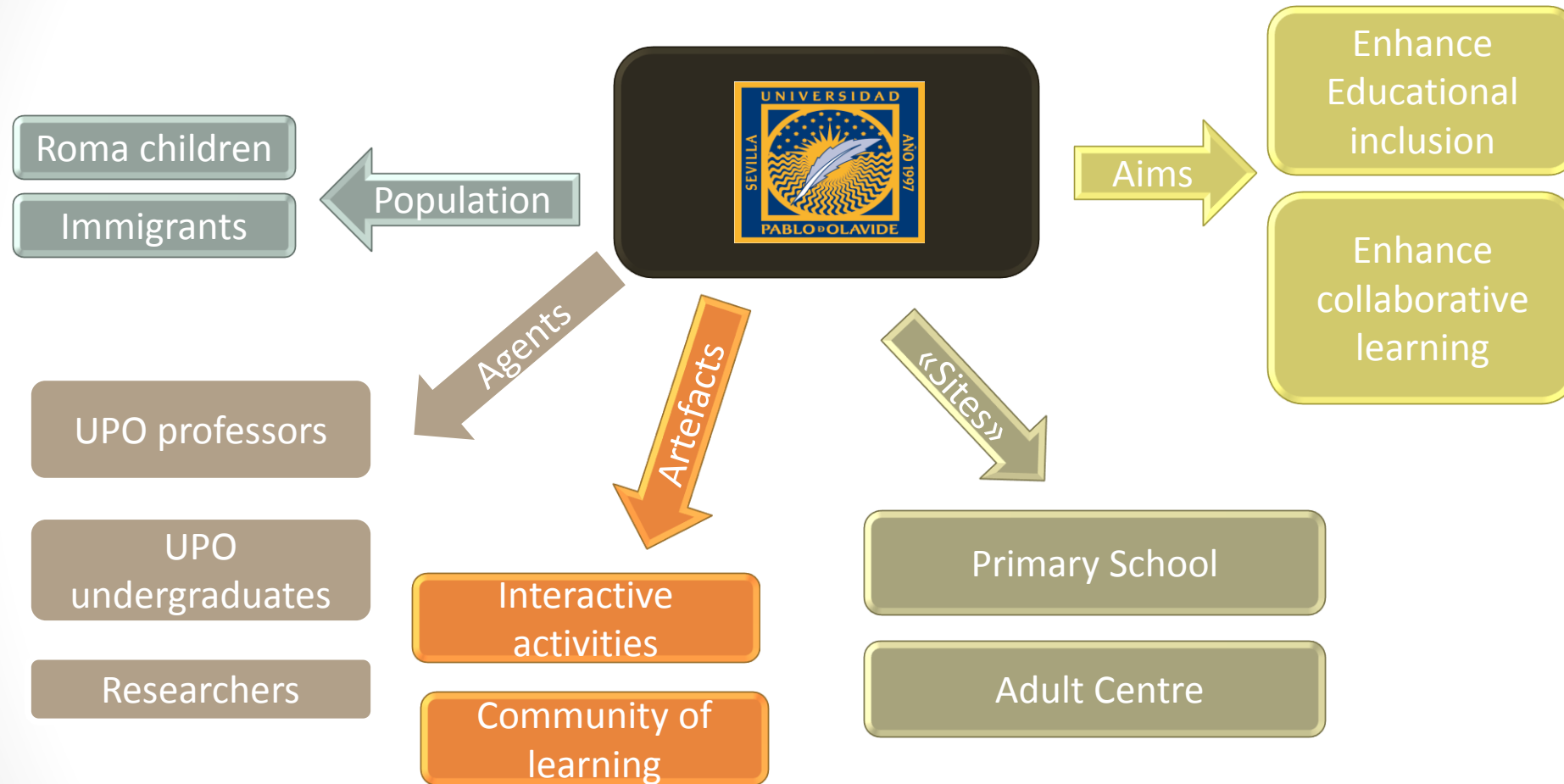
# LA CASA DE SHERE ROM-BARCELONA

# COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE



# LA CLASE MAGICA-SEVILLE

# COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE



# Samples and Subjects

- 30 Students from LCM-Seville
  - 19 years old average,
  - 1st year in university
  - Social Education degree
- 30 Students from CSR
  - 23 years old average
  - 4th year in university
  - Psychology degree

## 5.2. Data generation

- Students' field notes of their participation
  - Field notes that each student produced in each visit to the site (2 hours per week; 10 weeks: 10 field notes in total);
  - First person voice of the students
  - Specific structure (with theoretical and personal reflection)
- Focus groups
  - Dialogue about dimensions on learning and service

# 5.3. Data analysis

- Based in Discourse Analysis,
  - ... that allows us to follow the trail of the students' learning process and their identity changes (Wortham, 2001, 2003, 2006; Bruner, 1986; Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001)
- Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) In order to define the categories
  - Iterative analysis: A) Generation of codes, b) Discussion and c) Construction of new codes
  - Re-approaching the data with new codes
  - Atlas.Ti software to categorize the data
- Unit of analysis:
  - Utterance (Bakhtin, 1986) unit with meaning in relation with the whole text
- Reliability:
  - Joint construction of preliminary codes
  - Specialization in the study aims, two researchers each category (general code)
  - Triangulation between notes and focus group



# Data analysis (II)

- The codes resulting were the following:

## Conceptual learning

- Theoretical concepts
- Theoretical concepts applied to practice
- Practical explanation using the theory

## Procedure/professional learning

- Communicative skills
- Conflict management
- Analytic observation
- Teaching skills (scaffolding)
- Team work

## Identity changes

- Self knowledge
- Intercultural and otherness knowledge
- Agency
- Social commitment

# 6. Main Results

6.1. Learning theoretical/curricular content through Service-Learning

6.2. Identity change through Service-Learning

## 6.1. Learning theoretical/curricular content through Service-Learning

- To know more about the learning process of theoretical content through an experience of SL, trying to understand how students appropriated it and used it in their community practices.
- We found that different roles of curricular knowledge in social participation
  - (I)- Theory as the target of reflective activity
  - (II)- Theory as an instrument of reflection about practice
  - (III)- Theory as a mediator in planning and formulating positions

# (I)- Theory as the target of reflective activity

- **Reproduction of the curricular concepts for evaluative purposes**
- *Social reinforcement is a gesture or sign from one person to another that conveys a positive intention. A smile, a high-five, approval or praise can make positive attitudes become common and are extremely efficient in the classroom. (Angela-FNotes-SE)*
  - Oriented to the goal of passing or high marks in academic community
- **Understanding deeply a concrete theory through exemplification of practice**
  - *It is very difficult to decipher... the concept of “socialisation”. I didn’t understand it, so I set out to investigate it a bit, and later I related it to the school, to how these children have a socialisation that is different to ours because they were born where they were. (MCarmen-FG-SE)*
  - Genuine interest on theory.

## (II)-Instrument of reflection about practice

- **New words to understand new realities: understand what is happening and what do we do**
  - Theory as a psychological artefact to understand practice
  - The language of the community: It is important to being competent in theory for being a valued member of community.
  - *As time goes on, I keep finding an explanation for why many children stop doing an activity, and it's because the content of the activity is too far from their zone of proximal development. There is a distance between what the children know how to do by themselves (zone of actual development) and what they are capable of doing with my help [...]. Now I remember one of the days in class a boy said to me, 'I don't know how this is done, I'm not going to do it', and I answered 'it doesn't matter, I'll explain it to you until you understand it and can do it'. I didn't attach any importance to this sentence, but now I know that Vygotsky classified these situations as 'zones of proximal development'. (Sara-FN-SE)*

# (III)- Theory as a mediator in planning and formulating positions

- Plan and design future actions.
  - *As a solution for achieving positive attributions in Sara and eliminating the negative ones, we could get the teachers to attribute success in other tasks to internal factors like capacity, energy or effort, or to attribute her failures only to internal, unstable, controllable factors, such as effort (Ángela-FN-SE)*
- Position-taking instrument
  - *In order to establish positive affective relationships which help in conflict-resolution and decision-making, as well as meaningful learning, it is essential to respect and know their beliefs and values, without being surprised by practices that are poorly looked upon or unthinkable in the cultures from which we come (Esther-FN- Ps)*
- Both ways of curricular knowledge to relate to agency

# Conclusions

- Curricular concepts are extraordinarily important elements which are incorporated into their identity narration.
- Curricular concepts are involved in planning and developing the new practice, and in the ideological position-taking with regard to social issues and education.
- Curricular concepts appeared linked to concrete processes (understanding, doing, becoming, positioning...). This make us to see theory in the curriculum as a key element in the process of authentic learning.

## 6.2. Boundary crossing in a Service-Learning community of practice

- Establishing new relationships as starting point of border crossing and personal transformation
- Appropriation of practices and negotiation in a hybrid space as borderer participation
- Reflection, personalization, connection
- Personal change: Construction of new commitments
- Activity change: Creation of third spaces



# Identity change in social learning: ways of crossing the boundary

Analysis show two complementary modes, in which the starting circumstances of each of the students and the characteristics of the activity scenario in which they participated, lead to two complementary crystallizations of an authentic learning process

- THE CASE OF MARIA
  - From deficit perspective to community partnership
- THE CASE OF PAULA:
  - Processing the experience through academic lens

# The case of Maria. 1. Deficit perspective.

- As for the students, he highlighted the lack of hygiene and academic level they presented. (note 1).
- *Soledad told me to go down to the secretariat to call the mother again and to come to visit the school and talk to her daughter. However, the answer she gave to the secretary by phone was: "I will not go because I am making the food." (note 1).*
- *My experience on the first day has left me quite impressed because, although I imagined finding similar situations, I did not think that the students had so many curricular deficiencies, nor that the alternative methodology they used would work so well (...) On the one hand, I was especially struck by the fact that the students left class without asking permission from the teacher when they did not feel comfortable or had moments of anger (...) I had never been in such a situation and, being honest, I was very frustrated not Be able to do anything to reassure or help the teacher. (note 1).*

# The case of Maria. 2. Personalized contact

- *The students have been very involved in each activity, treating the adult with respect at all times and teaching me, on the other hand, the principle of solidarity towards their classmates that I have always wanted to see in a classroom. (note 2).*
- *I was supporting Ramón at that time by writing words related to the project (plant, stem, root ...) so that he could write them next to each one. He presented several difficulties with p and z, so I went to the sound they make for the student to relate (recognizes the vowels and consonants from their sound). (note 3).*

# The case of Maria. 3. Knowing the collective other

- *Antonio, one of the new students incorporated, finished the activity before his classmates and sat next to me to tell me how he felt (...) "Teacher, do you know that even if I am interviewing [mongrel of gypsy and payo], I consider gypsy? Because you'll see, my father is gypsy, but my mother is "paya". Here the gypsies tell me to glimpse, but since I grew up with the gypsies of Las Vegas (who are my father's cousins) I am already a gypsy. " - And why would you like to be treated like a gypsy? - I asked. "Oh, teacher, because the payos have gypsies bitter and look at us badly. Gypsy's blood is better "- he replied.*
- *Many of the fathers and mothers told me, in an approach I had waiting for a partner, that they had to feed their children working with nefarious salaries and that many people would not accept. When I decided to ask them why they thought this was happening, everyone had a common answer; "Because we are the gypsies of the 3000 and do not trust us"*
- *Unfortunately, today there is still that ethnocentrism that Anthropology talks about. We continue to find this tendency to consider our culture superior to judge others and it is a fact that, given the great progress that the situation of the gypsies has experienced, it should not be present today. (note 5)*

# The case of Maria. 4. Connection

- *In previous sessions, I watched as they moved bags and book bags to the library and I was very impressed. They were humble people who, as I was informed later, had hardly any resources, but this did not matter if they would achieve that, as a mother said, her son would learn what they could not achieve: read (...) So much is the motivation that students They feel that at the time of recess many go up to the library to get lost in the stories that hide their books, regardless of not being playing "furbolito, handkerchief or thong." (note 9)*
- *I have been very moved by the change that we have all given over these months, the transformation of some students who did not know what their future would be like and now fight to be police officers, firefighters, teachers ... Without neglecting their essence as a child and looking with perspective your future. (note 10)*

# The case of Paula. 1. Aseptic observation

- *I have observed that they have a respect relationship between them, at least for the moment I have not seen any kind of problem or fight and that, many of them have some kind of relationship: there are two twin brothers, two cousins, etc. (Note 1).*
- *The children of the class already remembered me and, even, a detail that has made me very funny is that they also did not forget my presentation in which I explained that I had a dog. It has made me realize that they are children and for them, things like these are important details. (Note 2).*

# The case of Paula. 2. Problematization

- *The march of Ali, the entrance of Juana, the departure and return of Eli, certain facts make me think that this type of movement can be quite common in this center. (Note 3).*
- *Both Fran and Juana F. P. told me last week that Juana used to miss class frequently. It seems to be a habitual event, not only said by his own companions, but affirmed by his tutor. All this makes me think that there is a certain lack of concern on the part of her family, regarding her daughter's school education. (Note 5).*



# The case of Paula. 3. Personal engagement in the activity

- *For the moment, what worries me most is Ali. At least, we will not meet again after Easter, therefore, I believe that we have not yet established a good rapport to get closer to him. Whereupon, my task for the following week will be to ensure that the four participate equally. (Note 2).*
- *During the activity, I tried that one way or another, everyone participated. For example, when he proposed to Jose to film the film. In this case, instead of asking him why he did not want to appear in the video or insist, he chose this route. This was very positive for Jose, because he stopped feeling uncomfortable (not only because we asked him why he did not want to participate but also because his teammates focused their attention on him), but also, he felt able to do something he thought I could not or would do. (note 5).*



# The case of Paula. 4. Personalization and processing

- *This perhaps to me that I have been educated under the premise that the school is a fundamental element for the evolution and development, both physical, social and psychological of the person, the fact that an 11 year old student has been three weeks without attending the center is anomalous and alarming. So, at this point I try and try not to get carried away by my beliefs, but keep in mind that the gypsy culture as explained by José Luis Lalueza, et al (2001) "their socializing practices are based on the participation of children in the social world and on guided learning techniques. "Thus, the Roma community bases its education on other standards and using other tools (note 7).*

# The case of Paula. 5. Connection

- *I find the diversity of the gypsy community curious. In the same class and, even more, in the same group I observe very different cases. This has not only been my observations but I have been extracting information from your tutor. Currently, there are gypsy families in the neighborhood who are aware of the situation and begin to change their mentality and, on the other hand, gypsy families with more traditional cultural practices. This moved to the field of education, you can see how there are parents of the class who have decided to enroll their children in less conflictive institutes and, others who have not taken this fact into account and, therefore, have enrolled their children to the centers where the family has been schooled, as would be the case of Juana F. P or even parents who do not care about enrolling their children (especially in the case of girls) because they no longer need to be educated to through "payos" methods, but through the family's own cultural practices, such as Juana FF. Thus, the multiversity of this community is very reflected in the school. (note 8).*

# Conclusions

- Learning starts when student identifies a problem that need to be solved.
- This problem progressively is embodied in particular people (children in this study) with whom student stablish affective relationships
- The student involve in the activity as an active agent
- Students connect curricular concepts with this emotional situation adopting a new position and taking a central participation in the activity

## 6. General conclusions

- The affective dimension of otherness connection mediate the learning of curricular content.
- Real learning is the result of the central participation in the activity, when student identify a goal that moves her/himself to act.
- SL as a third space, is an activity that makes possible real learning, legitimating diverse motives originated in different activity systems

*THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION*