International Conference „School as a Playful Space 2025"

PROGRAM
Thursday 9th October

8.00 – 9.00: Registration

9.00-10.30: Plenary session

Welcome

Antonella Brighi, Faculty Dean

Francesca Berti & Simone Seitz, Conference Scientific Committee

Keynote

Cultivating Play-full Learning (EN)

Petra Anders, Humboldt University, Berlin

Short input

Establishment of the new working group "Gioco ed Educazione" within the Italian Society of Pedagogy (SIPED)

Elena Pacetti, University of Bologna

Liliana Silva, University of Modena-Reggio Emilia

10.30-11.00: Coffee break

11.00-13.00: Parallel Panels

Panel 1 – PBL through Board games

"The Art Tree": An Intercultural and Creative Journey in the Classroom. Exploration of Cultures and Knowledge (EN)

Donatella Donato, University of Valencia

On playfulness in a board game project in primary education in Tanzania – insights from a 360 degree video study (EN)

Wiebke Waburg, University of Koblenz

Claudia Quaiser-Pohl, University of Koblenz

Lars Boettger, University of Koblenz

Gertraud Kremsner, University of Koblenz

Boardgames in classroom: an innovative way to learn about the evolutionary theory (EN)

Federico Plazzi, University of Bologna

Matteo Bisanti, University of Florence

Alessandro Soriani, University of Bologna

Game Mechanics and their Impact on Learning (EN)

Andrea Ligabue, University of Modena-Reggio Emilia

Panel 2 – Spatial metaphors

Creating worlds together - rethinking spatial concepts (EN/DT)

Andrea C. Schmid, University of Erfurt

Agnes Pfrang, University of Erfurt

Spielräume des Lernens (DT)

Isabel Wullschleger, University of Köln

"You Just Do Things That You Actually Can't Do" – Children, Secrets, and Secret Places (EN)

Iris Nentwig-Gesemann, Free University of Bolzano/Bozen

Playful Learning Spaces – Learning Architectures as a Participatory Meta-Method in Primary Education (EN)

Laura M. Lewald-Romahn, University of Oldenburg

Panel 3 – Embodied learning

Spoilsports and other non-Coplayers in school (EN)

Wiebke Lohfeld, University of Koblenz

Playfully 'doing school' with the *ActiveFloor*? (DT/IT)

Katja Kansteiner, Free University of Bolzano/Bozen

Stephanie Mian, Free University of Bolzano/Bozen

Susanne Schumacher, Free University of Bolzano/Bozen

Embodied Learning and Drama in Education in the classroom (EN)

Mariasole Nigro, teacher

Il ruolo del gioco e del movimento nella scuola primaria: la consapevolezza corporea come prospettiva per un embodied learning inclusive / The role of play and movement in primary education: body awareness as a pathway toward inclusive embodied learning (IT/EN)

Alessandra Lo Piccolo, University of Enna-Kore

Daniela Pasquetto, University of Enna-Kore

Letizia Pistone, University of Enna-Kore

13.00-14.00: Lunch break

14.00-16.00: Parallel Panels

Panel 4 – Narrative play

Playing with poetry through picturebooks (EN)

Alessandra Basile, Free University of Bolzano/Bozen

Playing with language, writing and images in *Literature Didactic Miniatures* – The wordless picturebook *The Lazy Friend* in multilingual kindergartens and primary schools (EN)

Jeanette Hoffmann, Free University of Bolzano/Bozen

Once Upon… The playful subversion of gender norms in The Little Mermaid (EN)

Elisabeth von Leon, Free University of Bolzano/Bozen

Imagination at the Edge of Structure: Storytelling in the Playful School (EN)

Susanne Michel, University of Bremen

Panel 5 – Inquiry play & learning

Imaginative play and planetary belonging in elementary school with an educational focus on learning with and in nature (EN)

Serafina Morrin, Catholic University of Applied Social Sciences Berlin

Playfulness and Thinking Education in primary school: the Philosophy for Children perspective (EN)

Valerio Ferrero, University of Turin

Tinkering as a Playful Pathway to Scientific Inquiry: Exploring Children's Inquiry Through the Lens of the TIDE Model (EN)

Sara Ricciardi, University of Bologna

Stefano Rini, University of Bologna

Adele Bracci, Istituto Comprensivo 11 Bologna

Antonia Carbone, Istituto Comprensivo Castel Maggiore

Fabrizio Villa, Istituto Nazionale di Astrofisica - OAS Bologna

The House of Games: From Game Design Experiment to Play-Based Learning Tool in Educational Contexts (EN)

Mirko Novello, game trainer, Archè Cooperativa Sociale Onlus di Castel Goffredo (MN)

Panel 6 – Teachers' professionalism (1)

Tiefenstrukturelle Wirkungen des spielenden Lernens im Sachunterricht / Deep Structural Effects of Playful Learning in Science Studies (DT/EN)

Gabriela Moser, PH FHNW Switzerland

Play&Save: Teaching Emergency Skills through Game-Based Learning in Primary Education (IT/EN)

Federica Pelizzari, University Cattolica del Sacro Cuore

Greta Giana, University Cattolica del Sacro Cuore

Integration of Game-Based Learning (GBL) in Italian Schools: Teachers' Perspectives and Pedagogical Implications (EN)

Massimiliano Andreoletti, University Cattolica del Sacro Cuore

Andrea Tinterri, University Telematica Pegaso

Escaping from Geometricon castle: Playful and embodied itineraries to improve geometric skills in second-year primary school children (EN)

Alessandra Landini, Istituto Comprensivo "A. Manzoni", Reggio Emilia

Chiara Crespi, Istituto Comprensivo "A. Manzoni", Reggio Emilia

Silvia Ferretti, Istituto Comprensivo "A. Manzoni", Reggio Emilia

16.00-17.00: Parallel Workshops - 1st Slot

Workshop 1

PowerBase – Promoting basic psychological needs in children and adolescents life areas through play-based learning in school / PowerBase – Förderung psychischer Grundbedürfnisse in jugendlichen Lebenswelten durch spielerisches Lernen in der Schule / PowerBase – Promozione dei bisogni psicologici fondamentali nei ambiti di vita giovanili attraverso l'apprendimento del gioco a scuola (EN/DT/IT)

Francesco Ciociola, University of Siegen

Stefanie Roos, University of Siegen

Antioco Luigi Zurru, University of Cagliari

Workshop 2

Play-based learning environments in primary schools (EN/DT)

Janine Hostettler Schärer, University of Teacher Education St. Gallen

Ruth Lehner, University of Teacher Education St. Gallen

Workshop 3

Play, work and playfulness in primary school: a Montessori contemporary reading (IT/DT)

Giulia Consalvo, University of Bolzano/Bozen

Barbara Caprara, University of Modena-Reggio Emilia

Workshop 4

Stupore e meraviglia: raccontarsi con le "cose" / Begeisterung und Wunder: Sich mit „Dingen" zu erzählen (IT/DT)

Anna Maria Venera, University of Torino

17.00-18.00: Parallel workshops - 2nd Slot

Workshop 5

Game-Based Civic Education and EU Values: Insights and Critical Reflections (EN/DT/IT)

Doris Kofler, Free University of Bolzano/Bozen

Virginia Vergara, Institute for Minority Rights, Eurac Research, Bolzano/Bozen

Mattia Zeba, Institute for Minority Rights, Eurac Research, Bolzano/Bozen

Workshop 6

Weavering Memescapes: Initiating Literary Citizenship while playing with Poetry (EN)

Petra Anders, Humboldt University, Berlin

Julia Babiel, Humboldt University, Berlin

Clara Michel Plácido, Humboldt University, Berlin

Cornell Raab, Humboldt University, Berlin

Workshop 7

Pretending to... Performativity and theatre games for the embodied learning (EN/IT)

Marica Girardi, University of Chieti-Pescara

Workshop 8

Spielerische Achtsamkeit: Ein körperorientierter Zugang zu Achtsamkeit mit Kindern in der Grundschule (DT)

Nancy Quittenbaum, University of Erfurt

Workshop 9

Inclusion for All with Makey Makey: Promoting the Participation of Students with Special needs in Scratch Programming Projects (EN/IT)

Adele Bracci Istituto Comprensivo 11 Bologna

Antonia Carbone Istituto Comprensivo Castel Maggiore

Elena Pacetti, University of Bologna

Sara Ricciardi, Istituto Nazionale di Astrofisica - OAS Bologna and University of Bologna

Stefano Rini, University of Bologna

18.00-19.00: Open visit to the Faculty's EduSpaces

- Children's Literature Lab (*coming soon*)

- Edenlab (https://edenlab.unibz.it/)

- Lernwerkstatt/Laboratorio Didattico (https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/education/eduspace-lernwerkstatt/)

19.00-23.00 Pizza & Play ☺

Friday 10th October

09.00-11.00: Parallel Panels

Panel 7 – Teachers' professionalism (2)

Mediate play, to help learning (IT/EN)

Daniela Maccario, University of Torino

Establishing a Permanent Centre of Excellence on Gamification and Serious Games in Early Childhood Education at IUL University, Florence (IT/EN)

Antonella Coppi, University IUL, Florence

Gioco e professionalità docente nella scuola primaria: un'indagine qualitativa in due Istituti Comprensivi di Taranto (IT/EN)

Alessandro Barca, University Telematica Pegaso

Mariella Tripaldi, University of Bari

Panel 8 – Digital play & AI

Code, Play, Teach: A playful approach to computational and mathematical thinking for pre-service teachers (EN)

Federica Pelizzari, University Cattolica del Sacro Cuore

Sara Bagossi, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano

Designing playful learning paths: AI and gamification for hospitalized children (EN)

Francesco Palma, University Europea, Roma

Gianluca Amatori, University Europea Roma

Prompt'n'Play: Enhancing prompt writing for AI with Game-Based Learning in Primary School (EN)

Massimiliano Andreoletti, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore

Sara Malaguti, Flowerista SRL Società Benefit

Exploring artificial intelligence in the first years of primary school: the potential of guided pretend play (EN)

Marius Vogt, St.Gallen University of Teacher Education

Lena Hollenstein, St.Gallen University of Teacher Education

Franziska Vogt, St.Gallen University of Teacher Education

Panel 9 – Free and outdoor play

Exploring Nature Playfully: A Toolkit for Outdoor Learning and Biodiversity Education (EN)

Greta Persico, University of Milano-Bicocca

Letizia Luini, University of Milano-Bicocca

Balancing Risk and Safety in Childhood Play: Ethical Dilemmas and Educational Challenges (IT/EN)

Milena Masseretti, University of Bologna

From Forest Light to Classroom Shadows: Exploring Play in Outdoor and Tinkering-based Science Education (EN)

Michela Schenetti, University of Bologna

Sara Ricciardi, Istituto Nazionale di Astrofisica - OAS Bologna and University of Bologna

Stefano Rini, University of Bologna

Play and children. A research project in the Molise Region (EN)

Livia Petti, University of Molise

Paolo Lucattini, University of Molise

11.00-13.00: Parallel Panels

Panel 10 – Play in Non formal education contexts

Conclusions for civic education learning based on a study to perception and organization of citizen participation in German municipalities (EN)

Gernot Herzer, IKPE Erfurt

Apprendimento basato sul gioco, tradizione e innovazione educativa: un modello educativo per migliorare la partecipazione nei piccoli centri / Game-based learning, tradition, and educational innovation: an educational model to improve participation in small towns (IT/EN)

Stefania Massaro, University of Bari

Vincenza Albano, University of Bari

Maria Teresa Santacroce, University of Bari

Community music with primary school children: Supporting and subverting learning settings (EN)

Udo Dengel, Free University of Bolzano/Bozen

Carlo Nardi, Free University of Bolzano/Bozen

Panel 11 – History and Heritage

Encounters of children of compulsory school age with historical culture (EN)

Johannes Brzobohaty, University College of Teacher Education (KPH) Vienna/Lower Austria

Playing with cultural heritage. An experience in primary and secondary schools between tangible and intangible heritage (EN/IT)

Franca Zuccoli, University of Milano-Bicocca

Alessandra De Nicola, University of Milano-Bicocca

Maria Luisa Sbarra, University of Milano-Bicocca

Gamification e didattica della storia / Gamification and Teaching History (IT/EN)

Stefania Massaro, University of Bari

Vincenza Albano, University of Bari

Maria Teresa Santacroce, University of Bari

Play in the alpine landscape: voices from "Kids meet Alps" (EN)

Francesca Berti, Free University of Bolzano/Bozen

Franca Zuccoli, University of Milano-Bicocca

Panel 12 – Art and playfulness

Laughing in the classroom. Humor as a performative pedagogical mediator for diversity and inclusion   (EN)

Leonardo Menegola, University of Milano-Bicocca

The PhilosophArt atelier as a festive space for playing, thinking, marking and dreaming (EN/IT)

Sofia Marina Antoniello, University of Padova

The *Play of Painting* in Schools: The Closlieu as a Space for Free and Playful Expression (EN)

Alessia Trivigno, University of Milano-Bicocca

Colorfit: a new board game for the early detection of color blindness in primary school children (EN/IT)

Michela Bettinelli, University of Modena-Reggio Emilia

Elsa Manzini, University of Modena-Reggio Emilia

Alessandro Rizzi, University of Milano

Liliana Silva, University of Modena-Reggio Emilia

13.00-14.00: Closing remarks with keynote & brunch

International Conference „School as a Playful Space 2025"

BOOK of ABSTRACTS

Thursday 9th October

9.00-9.30:
Keynote

Cultivating Play-full Learning (EN)
Petra Anders, Humboldt University, Berlin

The keynote addresses the central question of how play can be strengthened as an authentic pedagogical core element of child-centered primary school practice – deliberately distinguishing it from the instrumentalizing gamification of learning.

The focus lies on the significance of play and playfulness for holistic educational processes: play as a foundation for verbal expression (Andresen 2005), as a basis for thinking in drafts (Wieler 2024), and for mental rehearsal (Abraham 1999). Aesthetic education that demands self-expression (Duncker 2018) and the concept of „doing responsibility" (Breser 2025) are discussed alongside Resnick's Creative Learning Spiral (2017), which understands playfulness as an essential component of creative learning. Drawing on Pearce's framework of playframes (2024), the presentation explores how we recognize and maintain authentic play situations in educational contexts.

Empirical findings from current research (Demi/Babiel/Anders 2025) illuminate the challenges teachers face when dealing with children's natural playfulness in the school context. Practical examples such as Poetry Slam projects, designed for both children and teachers (Anders 2025) demonstrate concrete ways in which school can become an authentic play space.

The presentation aims to anchor play both as an attitude and methodologically in school development, thereby laying the foundation for a future-oriented, child-centered primary school – far removed from instrumentalizing play as a mere learning program for predetermined curricular standards.

- Abraham, U. (1999). Vorstellungsbildung und Literaturunterricht. In K. H. Spinner (Ed.), *Neue Wege im Literaturunterricht* (pp. 10-20). Schroedel.
- Anders, P. (2025). Poetry Slams als Lerngelegenheiten der Demokratiebildung. In S. Anselm (Ed.), Demokratiebildung: Sprache. *Der Deutschunterricht*, *2*, 34-42.
- Andresen, H. (2005). *Vom Sprechen zum Schreiben: Sprachentwicklung zwischen dem vierten und siebten Lebensjahr*. Klett-Cotta.
- Breser, B. (2025). 'Doing Verantwortung' heißt: das Demokratische bilden. In S. Bacher (Ed.), *Bildungsethik. Philosophie und Bildungswissenschaften im Dialog* (pp. 113-123). Verlag Julius Klinkhardt.
- Demi, A.-L., Babiel, J., & Anders, P. (in press). Poetische Bildung für die postdigitale Grundschule. In J. Brüggemann & V. Frederking (Eds.), *Digitale Souveränität als Ziel sprachlicher, gesellschaftlicher, wirtschaftlicher und ästhetischer Bildung.* Waxmann.

- Duncker, L. (2018). *Wege zur ästhetischen Bildung. Anthropologische Grundlegung und schulpädagogische Orientierungen*. kopaed.
- Pearce, C. (2024). *Playframes: How do we know we are playing?* The MIT Press.
- Resnick, M. (2017). *Lifelong kindergarten: Cultivating creativity through projects, passion, peers, and play*. The MIT Press.
- Wieler, P. (2024). Children's own stories as representations of self and their views of the world (Eigene Geschichten von Kindern als Selbstausdruck und ihre Sicht auf die Welt). In M. C. Gatti & J. Hoffmann (Eds.), *Storytelling as a cultural practice – Pedagogical and linguistic perspectives*.

11.00-13.00:
Panel 1 – PBL through Board games

"The Art Tree": An Intercultural and Creative Journey in the Classroom. Exploration of Cultures and Knowledge (EN)
Donatella Donato, University of Valencia

"The Art Tree" is an innovative educational resource aimed at fostering intercultural dialogue, creativity, and the co-construction of knowledge through a playful, artistic approach rooted in the decolonisation of education. Developed through a collaboration between the NGO ActionAid and the Faculty of Education at the University of Valencia—within the framework of Professor Donatella Donato's course on "Organisation of School Space, Materials and Teaching Skills" (2023–2024)—the project challenges hegemonic narratives by foregrounding collective memory and knowledge from the Global South.
Designed for children aged 3 to 6, as well as educators and families, the game invites participants on a journey through the artistic practices and biographies of nine women artists from diverse cultural and geographical backgrounds: Maruja Mallo, Lubaina Himid, Doris Salcedo, Nguyễn Thị Châu-Giang, Elvira Espejo, Malgorzata Mirga-Tas, Robyn Kahukiwa, Boris Nzebo, and Marina Ester Castaldo. These figures exemplify the role of art as a vehicle for community empowerment and resistance. Players engage with a set of cards and a companion website that offers access to each artist's expressive universe, emblematic works, and tailored workshop proposals that can be implemented in classroom and domestic settings.
Through this fusion of art and play, *The Art Tree* cultivates critical reflection on conventional pedagogies and nurtures the development of a creative, empathetic, and culturally aware citizenry. By centering pluralistic perspectives and alternative epistemologies, the project constitutes a meaningful stride toward a more inclusive, equitable, and transformative educational paradigm.

- Ashcroft, B. (2022). Transformation as resistance. In E. O'Sullivan, A. Morrell, & M. A. O'Connor (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of learning for transformation* (pp. 555–570). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-84694-7_41
- Chaika, O. (2024). Bridging the gap: Traditional vs. modern education (a value-based approach for multiculturalism). In *Lifelong learning—Education for the future world*. IntechOpen. https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.112345
- De Sousa Santos, B. (2010). *Descolonizar el saber, reinventar el poder*. Ediciones Trilce.
- Donato, D. (2025). Encuentro de saberes y cogeneración de conocimientos. El futuro nos apela: una formación posible entre creatividad y reconversión ecológica. In A. López & R. García (Eds.), *Educación para la sostenibilidad: Estrategias, innovaciones y retos* (pp. 107–124). Octaedro.
- Kurniati, E., & Mwariko, S. A. (2025). Decolonizing play: Rediscovering and revitalizing traditional play practices in post-colonial context. *Policy Futures in Education*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/14782103251321047
- Saquichagua, F. F. Q., & Carchi, N. M. M. (2020). Currículo y justicia social: Un abordaje desde la interculturalidad. *Ciencia e Interculturalidad*, *27*(2), 22–29. https://doi.org/10.5377/rci.v27i2.10580

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On playfulness in a board game project in primary education in Tanzania – insights from a 360 degree video study (EN)

Wiebke Waburg, University of Koblenz
Claudia Quaiser-Pohl, University of Koblenz
Lars Boettger, University of Koblenz
Gertraud Kremsner, University of Koblenz

We report on an ongoing interdisciplinary play-based project (between psychology and pedagogy) in public primary schools in Tanzania. We present the results of the first exploratory play intervention conducted in a public elementary school in Marangu, Tanzania (located in a rural area). 49 fifth graders, 20 boys and 29 girls, participated in this guided intervention with board games focusing on spatial reasoning (for results on this: Quaiser-Pohl et al., 2024a; Quaiser-Pohl et al., 2024b; Quaiser-Pohl et al. 2025). The following games were used: 4 in a row; IQ-Fit; Ubongo Junior; Ubongo Family. The pupils were divided into groups of approximately equal size. The groups played the games for about 40 minutes every school day for 5 weeks. The children were free to choose which game they wanted to play. The games were facilitated by student volunteers from Germany and teacher from the school. The results of the ongoing play intervention at Olosiva Public Primary School in Arusha (located in a metropolitan area) are used for comparison. Our presentation of results is based on the analysis of 360 degree videos recorded during all phases of the game project. The videos show a visible change in the children's behavior over time. The findings are presented in detail and discussed within the theoretical framework of playfulness.

- Quaiser-Pohl, C., Waburg, W., & Boettger, L. (2024a). Board Games in East African Schools – Enrolment and Effects. Paper presented on the 30th PsySSA Congress 2024. October 8-11, 2024, Johannesburg.
- Quaiser-Pohl, C., Waburg, W., Boettger, L., Welsch, M., & Saunders, M. (2024b). A Comparative Cultural Study on the Effects of Games with Spatial Content. Poster presented on the Spatial Cognition Conference 2024. June 25-28, 2024, Dublin.
- Quaiser-Pohl, C., Neubusch, A., Wickord, L.-C., Saunders, M., Minja, E. (2025). Mental-Rotation Performance in Tanzanian Primary-School Children - Its Cross-Cultural Assessment and its Development through Spatial Board Games. Paper presented on the European Conference of Psychology (ECP) 2025. July 1-4, 2025, Cyprus.

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Boardgames in classroom: an innovative way to learn about the evolutionary theory (EN)

Federico Plazzi, University of Bologna
Matteo Bisanti, University of Florence
Alessandro Soriani, University of Bologna

The use of board games in educational settings, more specifically in primary schools, is a well-explored practice within the pedagogical research community (Andreoletti & Tinterri, 2023; Erdogan et al., 2022; Chiarello & Castellano, 2016). The different models for using board games in education – direct, indirect, critical, and creative (Soriani et al., 2022) – offer manifold opportunities for teachers seeking to enrich their daily teaching with methods and assessment strategies that foster greater student engagement and innovation (Bonaiuti, 2014).

This contribution presents the experience of using a game specifically designed to address the topic of evolutionary theory: *Endless Evolution*. *Endless Evolution* was created to bring into primary schools a topic of great complexity and tremendous scientific and societal relevance: modern evolutionary theory is, in fact, one of the key frameworks for understanding the natural world.

The game was developed following a rigorous review of existing board games on the subject. Currently, only a handful of board games explicitly address evolutionary theory. All of them were assessed according to ten dimensions, each corresponding to a key aspect of the theory. This allowed us to identify limitations and underexplored elements in the available games – for instance, the importance of heredity processes is rarely considered, and humanity is seldom portrayed as a product of evolution itself.

Endless Evolution was designed and play tested to address these gaps. Furthermore, it is a cooperative game that can be used in classrooms as a cooperative learning experience, making it particularly well suited for primary schools. The game was subsequently introduced and played in eleven classes across four primary schools located in the Bologna Metropolitan City area.

The gameplay experience was accompanied by reflections with teachers and students, which were collected through questionnaires using a mixed-methods research approach (Trinchero & Robasto, 2019). Among the main findings, pupils described *Endless Evolution* as fun and engaging, partly because they noted that board games are rarely used by teachers in the classroom. Conversely, teachers evaluated the experience very positively, but some felt that the game was occasionally too difficult for their pupils' age group. However, this concern was not reflected in the pupils' own perceptions.

- Andreoletti, M., & Tinterri, A. (2023). *Apprendere con i giochi: Esperienze di progettazione ludica.* Roma: Carocci editore.
- Bonaiuti, G. (2014). Le strategie didattiche. Roma: Carocci editore.
- Chiarello, F., & Castellano, M. G. (2016). Board Games and Board Game Design as Learning Tools for Complex Scientific Concepts. Some Experiences. *International Journal of Game-Based Learning*, **6**(2), 1-14. https://doi.org/10.4018/IJGBL.2016040101
- Erdogan, A., Sunay, M. A., & Çevirgen, A. E. (2022). How to Play Board Games? A Framework Proposal for Classroom Settings. *Board Game Studies Journal*, **16**(2), 101-122. https://doi.org/10.2478/bgs-2022-0021
- Soriani, A., Silva, L., & Fabbri, M. (2022). Oltre i Serious games: Potenzialità educative dei giochi da tavolo e dei videogiochi. *Nuova Secondaria Ricerca*, **2**(ottobre), 206-222.
- Trinchero, R., & Robasto, D. (2019). *I Mixed Methods nella ricerca educativa*. Milano: Mondadori Education S.p.A.

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Game Mechanics and their Impact on Learning (EN)
Andrea Ligabue, University of Modena-Reggio Emilia

Game mechanics are a fundamental and not negligible element that must be considered when proposing a project of playful teaching. Structured play and playing, in school and educational contexts, have different levels of effectiveness mainly linked to the planning and management of the teaching unit as a whole. One of the salient aspects of Playful Teaching (Didtattica Ludica) is the particular attention to mechanics; students involved in the game activity commit themselves to achieving the objectives by trying to make the best use of what the game, with its mechanics, can offer. Playing "well", managing to achieve objectives, even partial ones, is gratifying and this is done through significant choices that are based on the game mechanics. Sometimes the structured game activities proposed in primary school do not pay attention to what the game mechanics actually require of the participants but focus on aesthetics, on the topics covered by the game, on question and answer mechanisms. For the game to work, players must be truly involved in the activity, and the proposed challenge must be within their reach: the challenging game is the one that is most interesting for the school environment. In this presentation, the mechanics of various board games suitable or used in primary school will be examined, trying to understand what is actually required of a student engaged in the activity. Attention will be paid to the difference between an activity that is truly a game and those that instead go more in the direction of gamification.

- Bertolo M. & Mariani, I. (2014). *Game Design: Gioco e Giocare tra realtà e progetto.* Pearson.
- Engelstein, G. & Shalev, I. (2019). *Building Blocks of Tabletop Game Design*. Crc Press.
- Ligabue, A. (2020). *Didattica Ludica: competenze in gioco.* Erickson.
- Mayer, B. & Harris, C. (2019). *Library Got Games. Aligned Learning Through Modern Board Games.* American Library Association.
- Nesti, R. (2017). *Game Based Learning: progettazione ludica in educazione*. Edizioni ETS.
- Schell, J. (2019). *The Art of Game Design: A book of lenses Third Edition.* Taylor & Francis.
- Swertz, C. (2019). *Game Media Literacy*. Wiley Online Library.
- Thi Nguyen, C. (2020). *Giocare è un'arte. Il gioco come tecnologia trasformativa.* ADD Editore.
- Zimmerman, E. (2014). *Manifesto for a Ludic Century*. The Gameful World, MIT Press.

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Panel 2 – Spatial metaphors

Creating worlds together - rethinking spatial concepts (EN/DT)
Andrea C. Schmid, University of Erfurt
Agnes Pfrang, University of Erfurt

The paper focuses on the particular importance of learning atmospheres, as children and young people are significantly affected in their learning, behaviour and actions by the atmosphere experienced in the room. The studies on the topic of learning atmosphere, which focus on the learning experiences of children and young people influenced by the learning atmosphere, relate to the following three fundamental questions: What features characterise the learning atmosphere in an ideal learning space from a child's perspective? What impact does the atmosphere experienced in the actual classroom have on the children's learning experiences? What aspects are important in the design, equipment and use of learning spaces to ensure that children experience an atmosphere conducive tolerancing?

Especially the perspective of the children and young people themselves, which can be reconstructed from their drawings, conversations and text productions, for example, has to be taken into account in all considerations in this regard. Another important focus is the reference to Friedrich Fröbel (* 21.4.1782, † 21.6.1852) and his concept of the human being and philosophy of the sphere, examples are given of how his room concept and the didactic materials he developed. For this reason, a second, more practice-orientated focus is on the promotion of (early) education in the sense of rethinking spatial concepts and the consideration of research findings on learning atmospheres. Finally, the consequences for practice and theory will be discussed.

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Spielräume des Lernens (DT)
Isabel Wullschleger, University of Köln

Ausgangspunkt dieses Beitrags ist die empirisch-phänomenologische Studie „Spielräume des Übens und Lernens" (Wullschleger 2025), die der Frage nachgeht, was Kinder erleben und erfahren, wenn sie sich intensiv mit einem ästhetischen Gegenstand auseinandersetzen und sich einer körperlich-praktischen Tätigkeit widmen.

In Anlehnung an den *potential space* nach Winnicott (1974/2006) werden Spiel- und Möglichkeitsräume vorgestellt, in denen Neues entstehen, Ungeahntes hervortreten und Ereignishaftes geschehen kann, in denen sich Gefühle und Zustände etablieren sowie Wissen und Können transformiert werden können. Es werden Erfahrungsräume gemeinsam musizierender/übender Schulkinder fokussiert, die auf vielfältige Weise von sich selbst, dem eigenen Körper und dem Instrument/Gegenstand herausgefordert werden. In der zunehmenden Abstraktion handelt es sich um eine lerntheoretische Argumentation, die sich der allgemeinen Bedeutung von Lernerfahrungen in körperlich-praktischen Aneignungsprozessen widmet und Dimensionen des Entdeckens und Gestaltens *neuer* Spiel- und Ausdrucksräume aufzeigt.

Die Fachlichkeit, die pädagogisch inszenierte Aufgabe und der normalisierte Lernraum Schule werden ausgeklammert. Stattdessen werden am Exemplarischen des gemeinsamen Übens unter Kindern Räume der Erkundung, der Exploration, der sinnlichen Wahrnehmung und ästhetischen Hervorbringung untersucht. Es wird gezeigt, welche (geteilten) Erfahrungsräume sich bei einem körperlich-praktischen Aneignungsprozess etablieren (können) und welche Rollen und Bedeutungen dabei der *Materialität* der Dinge (Stieve 2008), dem *Körper* als Träger und Speicher von Wissen (z.B. Klinge 2017, S. 93 f.), dem *Üben und Umüben* (Brinkmann 2012), dem *Lernen und Umlernen* (Meyer-Drawe 1982/2019) zukommen. Besondere Aufmerksamkeit gilt dem Erwerb von neuem Körperwissen, dem Können, der Sinnlichkeit und ästhetischen Praxis, der *Negativität* im Lernprozess (Benner 2005), der dabei involvierten *Sozialität* sowie Selbst- und Anderenbezügen, die thematisch werden.

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"You Just Do Things That You Actually Can't Do" – Children, Secrets, and Secret Places (EN)
Iris Nentwig-Gesemann, Free University of Bolzano/Bozen

„Geheimnisse geben uns einen sicheren Hafen, der uns die Freiheit erlaubt, herauszufinden, wer wir sind" (Secrets provide us with a safe haven that allows us the freedom to discover who we are) (Saltz, 2007). Having secrets and sharing them are as inseparable from children's autonomy and identity development as they are from the formation of community and the delineation from pre-structured, 'powerful' familial, organizational, or societal institutions. Children need secrets to develop a sense of self, to detach from parents, to form friendships, to resist social constraints, and to explore the world. They also need 'secret' places as retreats from the omnipresent attention of adults – to be alone, to play and learn undisturbed, to dream, to create imaginary worlds, and to play with boundaries (Nentwig-Gesemann, 2018).

Referring to studies situated within the documentary method and the documentary children's perspectives research (Nentwig-Gesemann, 2025), such as „Kinder als Akteure in Qualitätsentwicklung und Forschung"

(Children as Actors in Quality Development and Research) (Nentwig-Gesemann et al., 2021) and "Lernen aus der Perspektive von Kindern. Resonanzerfahrungen des Lernens in ganztägigen Grundschulen" (Learning from the perspective of children. Resonance experiences of learning in full-day elementary schools) (Nentwig-Gesemann, Walther & Lake, 2025), this presentation explores the significance of the secret and the mysterious for children's play and learning processes. In particular, it reflects on how the spatial, material, and temporal structures of full-day care, learning in classroom and extracurricular settings should be developed to connect with children's needs, orientations, and interests, and to shape schools as resonant spaces for life, play, and learning.

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Playful Learning Spaces – Learning Architectures as a Participatory Meta-Method in Primary Education (EN)
Laura M. Lewald-Romahn, University of Oldenburg

Learning Architectures are a new didactic meta-method between subject-specific didactic, reform pedagogy and special needs education. The aim of this method is to make subject learning more individualised and to enable learners to participate to co-construct their own learning paths (co-agency). While general didactic and educational approaches such as "learning houses" or "learning environments" are already under discussion, the term *Learning Architectures* is new. At the same time, there is currently no subject-specific didactic modelling of the concept. This talk lays the theoretical and reconstructive foundation of the method, which is based on reform pedagogical thinking and the concept of mental model building. *Learning Architectures* intentionally incorporate narrative and imaginative elements from tabletop role-playing games (TTRPGs or pen-and-paper games) to enrich the subject matter with vivid imagery. The method ist structurally related to simulation games and dramatic role play.A key component is the use of mental modelling to reinterpret the classroom in a visual and symbolic way. *Learning Architectures* reshape the classroom into a performative and collaboratively negotiable learning space that actively promotes participation and individualisation, while maintaining a clear focus on subject-specific learning. The speaker has further developed the method through practical teaching experience and conducts empirical research in literature and media didactics. Examples from German lessons will be provided.

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Panel 3 – Embodied learning

Spoilsports and other non-Coplayers in school (EN)
Wiebke Lohfeld, University of Koblenz

The lecture analyzes exemplary play situations in schoolyards - that is, in an almost free play context - bringing the social implications of play behavior into the center in its excluding and, on the other hand, equally inclusive character. But, while it is generally assumed that play "regulates" interaction and, in doing so, organizes the social structures of a group, the lecture will approach the game from the other side and ask to what extent play also deregulates and shapes groups in their exclusionary social capacity. In addition, the question arises as to whether social inclusion and exclusion created in play and having a lasting effect on the group dynamics, for example in a class, can lead to counter-games and which individual and collective coping strategies can emerge. A central focus will be on the individual level of pupils, when the question is raised as to what individual challenges the 'non-playing along' child faces considering situations in which children can be observed being branded as spoilsports or excluded from the game and disrespected by the group.

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Playfully 'doing school' with the *ActiveFloor*? (DT/IT)
Katja Kansteiner, Free University of Bolzano/Bozen
Stephanie Mian, Free University of Bolzano/Bozen
Susanne Schumacher, Free University of Bolzano/Bozen

Playing as a form of learning is crucial in primary education, taking various forms. Whether through educational games, serious games, or playful exercises, the intention is to utilize positive gameful experiences for educational purposes (Kirchner-Krath, et al., 2021).
Digital games additionally employ specific motivational methods to encourage learners to engage in learning (von der Heiden et al., 2011). Simoltanously, they open up ludic spaces where unexpected events and non-predetermined negotiations can occur (Raczkowski, 2018).
An example of a digital learning application is the ActiveFloor. It offers a gamified learning environment by projecting game designs from a laptop onto the floor via a ceiling-mounted box. Learners interact with the game field while a tracker records their movements. Depending on the game's goals and mechanics, players can develop media competences as well as communication and collaboration skills (Vuorikari et al., 2022).
To meet classroom needs for differentiation, personalization, and individual support, it's vital to examine the specific didactic stimuli each child encounters and the dynamics within the educational setting. Our pilot project aims to evaluate ActiveFloor's potential and identify necessary pedagogical improvements for effective learning implementation. We use a Concurrent Monomethod Multistrand design (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006), to collect data from both external observers and the children's internal perspectives.

Strand 1 involves ethnographic protocols (Bock, 2019) to reconstruct the overall situation when a class uses ActiveFloor (Antony, 2023). Strand 2 captures players' experiences through phenomenological vignettes (Agostini, Schratz & Eloff, 2024) from a co-experiential viewpoint. Strand 3 adds the children's self-perspectives. The presentation offers initial insights supporting its expected knowledge potential.

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Embodied Learning and Drama in Education in the classroom (EN)

Mariasole Nigro, Istituto Comprensivo Lozzo Atestino (Padova)

Teaching history at the primary and lower secondary school levels can be transformed into a vivid and engaging experience through the use of theatre as an educational tool. The approach proposed here is based on the creation of true "lesson-performances," where the teacher becomes a historical character and guides students on an immersive journey into the past.

At the primary school level, this method fits perfectly with the cognitive and emotional characteristics of students, who learn more effectively through play, imagination and direct experience. The lesson begins with a strong scenic component: the classroom is slightly transformed through small changes in its arrangement and the use of evocative background music. This helps create a suspended and expectant atmosphere, ready to welcome the entrance of the historical character.

The teacher, using simple costumes or symbolic elements (Teacher in Role), steps into the scene embodying a historical figure – such as a pharaoh, a medieval knight, etc. Through first- person storytelling, the character presents their era, the values of the time and the challenges they faced, offering students a personal and engaging narrative of history.

Students actively participate in the encounter by taking on the role of interviewers (Mantle of the Expert): they ask questions, request clarifications and engage in spontaneous and curious dialogue with the character. This dynamic encourages conscious and active participation, stimulates curiosity, develops critical thinking and strengthens communication and interpersonal skills.

The approach integrates cognitive, emotional and bodily aspects of learning: knowledge is not simply transmitted but constructed through an aesthetic, multisensory and dialogic experience. The use of theatre in teaching and learning processes fosters deep engagement, makes historical content more accessible and promotes inclusion, allowing each student to participate according to their own expressive modes.

This method is rooted in the principles of Embodied Learning and Drama in Education, enhancing the experiential and creative dimensions of learning. Through theatre, history is no longer just a sequence of events to be memorized, but becomes a field for exploration and reflection, capable of evoking emotions, questions, identification and critical thinking – starting from the primary school years.

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Il ruolo del gioco e del movimento nella scuola primaria: la consapevolezza corporea come prospettiva per un embodied learning inclusive / The role of play and movement in primary education: body awareness as a pathway toward inclusive embodied learning (IT/EN)

Alessandra Lo Piccolo, University of Enna-Kore
Daniela Pasquetto, University of Enna-Kore
Letizia Pistone, University of Enna-Kore

In the contemporary pedagogical landscape, body and movement increasingly emerge as fundamental epistemic devices for constructing inclusive educational environments. This paper, grounded in an embodied approach, focuses on the methodological dimension of inclusion, exploring the potential of motor play and Giocosport as pedagogical strategies that foster participation, cooperation, and the appreciation of diversity in primary education.

Through a phenomenological lens, educational practices integrating perceptual, emotional, and cognitive dimensions are analyzed, including inclusive motor routines, movement workshops, cooperative games, and relational playful dynamics. Special emphasis is placed on Giocosport, conceived as a polyvalent context that supports the development of body schema, motor skills, and socio-relational competencies, while stimulating autonomy, self-regulation, and behaviour rooted in fairness.

These methodologies contribute to redefining the body not merely as a vehicle of experience but as a driving force in multisensory and intersubjective learning processes. Contrasting with traditional transmissive models, the proposed approach promotes embodied, dialogical, and transformative learning, reconfiguring didactics as an ecological, situated, and diversity-oriented experience.

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13.00-14.00: Lunch break

14.00-16.00: Parallel Panels

Panel 4 – Narrative play

Playing with poetry through picturebooks (EN)
Alessandra Basile, Free University of Bolzano/Bozen

"Der Mensch spielt nur, wo er in voller Bedeutung des Worts Mensch ist, und er ist nur da ganz Mensch, wo er spielt" (Schiller, 1795). Friedrich Schiller wrote this in his treatise *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795), a collection of letters exploring the aesthetic phenomenon of beauty. The experience of freedom inherent in play—allowing one to transcend the constraints imposed by necessity and duty—leads back to beauty. Thus, play, like art, can be seen as a pathway through which the educational process, arising from the pleasure of free creativity, can be realized and potential worlds produced by imagination (Hoffmann 2020).

Rhythm, onomatopoeia, and the repetition of sounds, engaged in by children from their earliest months of life (Spinner, 2015)—serve as ideal tools for playful scenarios that can nonetheless lead to significant aesthetic and poetic experiences (Spinner, 2016).

Within this framework, my contribution focuses on the legendary figure of the mermaid Loreley, depicted in Heinrich Heine's 1827 poem, later republished in 2006 as a picturebook by Kindermann Verlag. Through the Heine's verses and the illustrations by Alioscha Blau, primary school children can explore typical features of lyric poetry, such as rhetorical figures, which on one hand evoke a humorous effect and on the other hand stimulate the refinement of language through playful engagement with sound. The literary exploration of this mythic figure, through picturebooks, provides a playful and multimodal encounter with the German collective memory (Grimm 2006) and a globally recognized icon of German poetry.

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Playing with language, writing and images in *Literature Didactic Miniatures* – The wordless picturebook *The Lazy Friend* in multilingual kindergartens and primary schools (EN)
Jeanette Hoffmann, Free University of Bolzano/Bozen

Wordless picturebooks tell stories in narrative pictures. They invite children to play with possibilities (Hoffmann, 2021) and to imagine, talk and tell stories together (Wieler, 2024). Visual literacy, imagination and language development (Andresen, 2005) are closely linked in playing with possible worlds (Bruner, 1986). In the process of transforming narrative images, the playful moment as an anthropological constant (Stenger, 2014) is of importance, as image viewing processes do not proceed linearly, but dance playfully across the image (Uhlig, 2014). The sociality and multimodality of shared reception situation in the educational context open up narrative and ludic participation spaces (Naujok, 2023).

This presentation focuses on how teacher students in tandem create *Literature Didactic Miniatures* with wordless picturebooks as part of an internship in the EduSpace Children'sLiteratureLab (Hoffmann, 2025) at unibz and explore them in multilingual kindergartens and primary schools in South Tyrol. Therefore, selected discussions, drawings and texts by children on the wordless picturebook *The Lazy Friend* (Badel, 2014) and excerpts from reflection texts by teacher students using key incident analysis (Kroon & Sturm, 2007) are

interpreted regarding their playful engagement with language, writing and images in the context of multilingualism.

The research questions are as follows: What literacy experiences do children have in playful interaction with talking, drawing and writing to wordless picturebooks in multilingual environments? How do teacher students reflect on the children's playful literacy experiences and their own literary-didactic learning processes? Finally, pedagogical and didactic conclusions for the professionalisation of kindergarten and primary school students are made.

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Once Upon… The playful subversion of gender norms in The Little Mermaid (EN)
Elisabeth von Leon, Free University of Bolzano/Bozen

Within literature, culturally predetermined gender patterns and identities can suddenly appear open, fragile, contradictory and even changeable (Kliewer, 2016). This presentation explores the playful subversion of gender norms through the fairy tale figure *The Little Mermaid*. After a brief historical overview of the mythical narrative of female water creatures, who have endured as a powerful literary motif for centuries (Bessler, 1995), Benjamin Lacombe's artistic reimagination of *The Little Mermaid* as a picturebook will be analysed. The main focus is on how gender constructions are either perpetuated or irritated in the visual representations (Seidel, 2024). Special attention is paid to Lacombe's androgynous, dynamic depiction of the mermaid, which destabilizes heteronormative interpretations and plays with more fluid, queer readings (von Leon, 2025). In the context of school education, one of the central socialisation tasks is the exploration of gender identities (Böhm, 2021; Benner & Zender, 2022; Nieberle, 2016): The classic figure of the mermaid serves as a starting point for play-based learning activities that allow children to explore, experience and deconstruct gender stereotypes in a playful way. For this purpose the method of the "reader's theatre" (Nix, 2006) is proposed. Lacombe's adaptation disseminates certain narratives that may function as scripts for the performance of gender and sexuality (Benner & Zender, 2022). Learners gain access to the characters through bodily engagement and role exploration (Mayer, 2024). The intense emotional, imaginative, cognitive and physical engagement with the picturebook via play-based learning promotes an inclusive approach to gender in the classroom.

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Imagination at the Edge of Structure: Storytelling in the Playful School   (EN)
Susanne Michel, University of Bremen

The presentation explores potential spaces and tensions in children's storytelling practice in inclusive primary schools. Selected results from an autoethnographic teaching study will be presented.

Storytelling is conceptualized as bodily, intersubjective and culturally embedded practice of meaning- and identity-making (Schultheis 1998). Drawing on Ricoeur's triple mimesis (2007), narration represents the interplay between cultural frameworks, imaginative transformation and life-world refiguration. The embodied and emotional dimension of experience is meaningful thereby (Wulf 2018; Zirfas 2021).

Imagination is understood as constitutive element of storytelling (Combe & Gebhard 2009), allowing children to transcend the given and construct meaning spaces. This imaginative movement unfolds in Winnicott's (1993) potential space—a relational zone where fantasy and outer reality become entangled. Such fragile spaces require pedagogical conditions that allow them to be 'held' (Sesink 2014).

Creating space for children's stories enables articulation of diverse experiences, having inclusive potential (Ziemen 2018; Bröcher 2022). They open spaces of recognition (Prengel 2013). However, school remains structured by dominant orders (Kalthoff & Kelle 2000) and systemic contradictions (Helsper 2022) that affect storytelling spaces.

Dewey's (2024) notion of playfulness becomes relevant as an experimental attitude toward uncertainty, required from both children and educators navigating between institutional demands and maintaining space for open-ended expression (Vartiainen et al. 2024).

The (auto-)ethnographic (Adams et al. 2018) and ethnopsychoanalytical influenced approach (Nadig 2017) enabled proximity to emotional dynamics, here also seen as a manifestation of institutional dynamics (Michel 2023). The presentation invites reflection on holding storytelling spaces open as fragile, playful, relational fields of educational possibility within school's institutional framework.

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Panel 5 – Inquiry play & learning

Imaginative play and planetary belonging in elementary school with an educational focus on learning with and in nature (EN)

Serafina Morrin, Catholic University of Applied Social Sciences Berlin

We live in the Anthropocene, an era marked by conditions threatening the future of life on Earth. Education plays a critical role in transforming society towards sustainable development. This study explores the role of play and play cultures in nature-based primary education settings, specifically examining what knowledge of humans, nature, and global citizenship (Wulf 2021) emerge through children's play. A materiality-theoretical approach to play is relevant, as imaginative play forms the basis of cultural action (Huizinga 1938) but can also reflect themes of limitation, destruction, and escape, especially in the context of planetary crises (Caillois 1958). Play is central to children's lives and plays a key role in social order and global belonging (Morrin 2023). Current research largely overlooks play in relation to planetary belonging. When planetary crises are addressed pedagogically, approaches often assume humans can control nature (Engel 2023) or focus on individual responsibility (Gaubitz 2024). Moreover, pedagogical concepts often reflect a harmonious vision of nature (Husted 2024), which some critique as "greenwashing" (Deckert-Peaceman 2024). This study investigates how children's play practices reflect or challenge these pedagogical ideas. Ethnographic observations from two urban elementary schools reveal how children engage with nature and interconnectedness in their play. Preliminary findings suggest that even within anthropocentric frameworks, children's play addresses complex relationships with nature, indicating the potential for broader understandings of coexistence beyond human-centered perspectives.

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Playfulness and Thinking Education in primary school: the *Philosophy for Children* perspective (EN)
Valerio Ferrero, University of Turin

This theoretical contribution draws on the ongoing debate about thinking education in primary schools (Kuhn, 2005; McPeck, 2016) and aims to explore the links between playful approaches (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009; Salmon, 2016) and *Philosophy for Children* (Lipman, 2003). In particular, the links between playfulness, play-based learning and the development of a critical and reflective mindset will be explored. Reasoning and reflection emerge not only in formal contexts, but also through physical, imaginative and relational experiences (Phillips, 2016). Narratives, assumed roles, shared rules and collective decisions lead to ethical, logical and existential questions. When children play, they spontaneously think about what is right, possible, desirable, true or invented, activating complex thinking in an embodied and situated way (Kuby, 2014; Pouw & Looren de Jong, 2015). Thus, the playful element promotes divergent and meta-reflective thinking and improves the cognitive, emotional and social dimensions of the experience.

Playfulness and *Philosophy for Children* (*P4C*) share a common pedagogical approach based on participation, dialogue and co-construction of meaning (Trickey & Topping, 2004). Both emphasise the process rather than the product and the exercise of thinking rather than the right answers. The community of philosophical inquiry that is central to *P4C* can be seen as a form of regulated play, with emergent rules and an imaginative space (Haynes & Murris, 2013). In a playful context, philosophy becomes accessible and tangible. It provides tools to transform play into a reflective experience and contributes to a generative and participatory vision of primary education.

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Tinkering as a Playful Pathway to Scientific Inquiry: Exploring Children's Inquiry Through the Lens of the TIDE Model (EN)

Sara Ricciardi, University of Bologna
Stefano Rini, University of Bologna
Adele Bracci, Istituto Comprensivo 11 Bologna
Antonia Carbone, Istituto Comprensivo Castel Maggiore
Fabrizio Villa, Istituto Nazionale di Astrofisica - OAS Bologna

This contribution presents an ongoing project aimed at validating and deepening the TIDE model (Tinkering, Ideas, Disciplinary connections, Exploration), which seeks to integrate constructionist tinkering practices within meaningful disciplinary learning in primary education. This study investigates the transformative potential of tinkering as a child-centred, play-based approach to scientific learning.

The project involves three primary school classes. Co-conducted tinkering sessions and disciplinary mentoring were implemented through a flexible framework conceptualised as a canovaccio—a modifiable pathway rather than a prescriptive lesson plan—supporting teachers in responding to students' authentic inquiries. This flexibility enables the emergence of student-driven questions, fostering scientific citizenship and critical engagement. Three main research questions guide the study: Can tinkering practices stimulate deep scientific questioning in children? Can tinkering practices support the emergence of disciplinary knowledge and the co-construction of scientific understanding grounded in children's ideas and experiences? Can tinkering practices support teachers in developing a professional identity responsive to students' authentic questions and capable of translating them into disciplinary inquiry?

A rich qualitative dataset—including observations, mentoring notes, children's artifacts, and documentation protocols—is being analysed using iterative and interpretative methods inspired by Making Learning Visible. Documentation is approached not only as evidence collection but as a strategy for pedagogical reflection and inquiry.

Rooted in the Italian tradition of ricerca-formazione, the project positions teachers as co-researchers and promotes a vision of schooling as a space for co-learning, inquiry, and educational transformation. Tinkering emerges as a practice of scientific citizenship that empowers students and teachers to actively engage in knowledge construction and critical participation in contemporary scientific culture.

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The House of Games: From Game Design Experiment to Play-Based Learning Tool in Educational Contexts (EN)

Mirko Novello, game trainer, Archè Cooperativa Sociale Onlus di Castel Goffredo (MN)

This contribution presents an action-research project developed within the Master's program in *Gamification and Game-Based Learning in Educational Contexts* at the University of Urbino. The project explores the use of play as a tool for learning within groups, with particular focus on primary school students. Starting from two guiding questions—how play can generate authentic learning experiences in group settings, and what role the facilitator plays—a ludic tool was created: *The House of Games*, an educational card deck designed to support children's relational, emotional, and cognitive development.

The project integrates the theoretical frameworks of constructivism, understanding play as an embodied, multisensory, and symbolic space. Special attention is given to the group as a generative learning context, to the role of the facilitator as an intentional guide, and to educational cards as ludiform tools capable of fostering storytelling, reflection, and cooperation.

The deck, designed with a user-centered approach, was developed using the MDA model (Mechanics, Dynamics, Aesthetics) and tested over five months in various educational settings. The results highlight the tool's effectiveness in promoting inclusion, group cohesion, and active participation. *The House of Games* emerges as a flexible educational "environment," where play, the body, and relationships become meaningful mediators of the learning process.

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Panel 6 – Teachers' professionalism (1)

Tiefenstrukturelle Wirkungen des spielenden Lernens im Sachunterricht / Deep Structural Effects of Playful Learning in Science Studies (DT/EN)

Gabriela Moser, PH FHNW Switzerland

The effects of deep structures on pupils' learning dominate pedagogical discussions and form a prevalent subject in educational research (Kunter, 2013). It has been proven that the selection of learning methods in teaching can significantly impact pupils' learning outcomes, both positively and negatively (Schreyer, 2024). Games such as Memory, guessing games, rule-based games, and perception games are used in the classroom to engage with the learning content, delve into a topic, consolidate learned material, or promote the transfer of knowledge (Moser, 2024). Successful cognitive activation initiated by a teacher in the classroom leads to pupils being so externally activated that their consistent attention and constructive learning processes are fostered and developed. Playing cannot occur without enthusiasm, activity, and cognitive processes. Therefore, the foundation for learning through playing is naturally present. In Science Studies, various learning forms are used to challenge and promote pupils' learning. Playful learning enables pupils to intrinsically explore scientific content through perception mechanisms and the joy of functionality. A strong

deep structural factor influencing learning in the classroom is classroom management. Playing not only positively affects the learning environment but also has a regulatory impact on classroom management and the social climate. This paper discusses how play must be organized in the classroom to allow cognitive processes to develop and how classroom management as another aspect of deep structures stimulates the learning environment during play. Evidence addressing these questions is presented from ongoing independent research in Science Studies. Using Qualitative Content Analysis, evidence on cognitive activation in elementary studies is collected and categorized, compared, and evaluated through qualitative content analysis. The research examines how playful cognitive activations compare to other activations in terms of their impact on pupils' learning and the effects of playing in the classroom on pupils' behaviour.

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Play&Save: Teaching Emergency Skills through Game-Based Learning in Primary Education (IT/EN)

Federica Pelizzari, University Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
Greta Giana, University Cattolica del Sacro Cuore

This study adopts Game-Based Learning (GBL) as both a theoretical and methodological framework, viewing play as an authentic learning environment that fosters motivation, active participation, and knowledge construction. Core elements include immersive learning, storytelling for engagement, collaborative problem-solving, and skill development through challenge and feedback (Gee, 2003; Plass et al., 2020; Qian & Clark, 2016). Within this framework, the *Play&Save: Life at Stake* project engages students in narrative-based simulations of real-life emergencies (e.g., domestic accidents, playground injuries). Supported by technologies such as VR headsets, tablets, and interactive whiteboards, students make decisions, collaborate with peers, and reflect on their experiences. The Learning Unit unfolds across four levels, structured through the Play-Plan model (Whitton & Moseley, 2019), which integrates storytelling, playful dynamics, and targeted digital tools to support educational objectives. The teacher plays the role of facilitator and game master, adapting support based on student progress. The research follows a mixed-methods approach, using observation grids, rubrics, and self-assessment questionnaires. Preliminary results show enhanced intrinsic motivation, teamwork, and awareness of first aid procedures. The co-creation of the *Heroes of Safety Guide* encouraged metacognitive reflection and shared responsibility. Findings suggest improved skills in risk identification, emergency response (e.g., CPR, AED use), and communication. The study highlights how immersive, playful environments support transferable learning and promote inclusive, citizenship-oriented education (Van Eck, 2015; Arnab et al., 2015).

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Integration of Game-Based Learning (GBL) in Italian Schools: Teachers' Perspectives and Pedagogical Implications (EN)

Massimiliano Andreoletti, University Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
Andrea Tinterri, University Telematica Pegaso

This study aims to investigate Italian teachers' perception and acceptance of Game-Based Learning (GBL) in relation to their teaching experience with GBL. The research focuses on understanding the factors that encourage or hinder teachers' adoption of GBL in their classrooms. A quantitative research tool, the Acceptance of Game-Based Learning (AGBL) model, was developed by adapting the Acceptance of Digital Game-Based Learning (ADGBL) framework proposed by Hsu et al. (2013). The AGBL model incorporates recent research findings and introduces a new factor, Teaching Opportunities (TO), which measures the extent to which teachers can manage teaching activities using games. The study presents data obtained from over 3,500 Italian teachers of all levels who completed the section of the questionnaire dedicated to the Learning Opportunities (LO) factor of the AGBL model. The results provide valuable insights into teachers' concerns and the factors that influence their acceptance of GBL, contributing to the development of meaningful curricula that integrate game-based learning into the Italian educational context. Understanding teachers' perception and acceptance of GBL is critical to the successful implementation of this innovative pedagogical approach in classrooms.

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Escaping from Geometricon castle: Playful and embodied itineraries to improve geometric skills in second-year primary school children (EN)

Alessandra Landini, Istituto Comprensivo "A. Manzoni", Reggio Emilia
Chiara Crespi, Istituto Comprensivo "A. Manzoni", Reggio Emilia
Silvia Ferretti, Istituto Comprensivo "A. Manzoni", Reggio Emilia

This case study begins with the aim of enhancing geometry skills among primary school children. A project was created, at Manzoni School Institution in Reggio Emilia, addressing 2nd grade pupils. The work, grounded in playfulness (Dewey, 1938) and embodied experiences (Gallese & Lakoff, 2005), started from indications of INVALSI Open. Thanks to the theoretical assumptions on Embodied Cognition (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991; Sonneson, 2011), a path was designed by choosing the INVALSI area *Space and Figures*. The work hypothesizes that learning processes could be improved if the body became the privileged medium in teaching-learning experiences, fostering motivation, fun and engagement. The assumption is to go beyond the idea of "Teaching to test" to investigate a "Playing to test" approach.

A mythical story is the guiding thread. Children, in groups, take on the role of inhabitants of the town of Polygonia, which is held under the "*spell of perfection*" by the sorcerer Geometricon. This spell prevents the imperfect shapes from having full citizenship in Polygonia and the children must break the spell, to live free in the city. Pupils have to pass through five escape rooms inside the sorcerer's castle, in which they experience, working together, educational items regarding *Space and Figure* area. The correlation between body involvement and the learning process, the interplay of emotional and immersive environments, seems to lead to the skills enforcement of most of the children, specifically in some items of the standardized tests.

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16.00-17.00: Parallel Workshops – 1st Slot

Workshop 1
PowerBase – Promoting basic psychological needs in children and adolescents life areas through play-based learning in school / PowerBase – Förderung psychischer Grundbedürfnisse in jugendlichen Lebenswelten durch spielerisches Lernen in der Schule / PowerBase – Promozione dei bisogni psicologici fondamentali nei ambiti di vita giovanili attraverso l'apprendimento del gioco a scuola (EN/DT/IT)

Francesco Ciociola, University of Siegen
Stefanie Roos, University of Siegen
Antioco Luigi Zurru, University of Cagliari

The four basic psychological needs according to Grawe (2004) – orientation/control, pleasure/avoidance of displeasure, attachment, and strengthening/protection of self-esteem – are essential for the psychological well-being of young people. Especially during adolescence, a phase of intense identity formation, satisfying

these needs is really important. Nevertheless, there are only a few empirically validated instruments that capture all four needs in different areas of life. Unsatisfied needs can contribute to psychological stress and an increased risk of mental illness (Schmitz, Wolf & Bauch, 2024).

PowerBase aims to develop a playful teaching and learning concept that helps young people explore and strengthen their psychological needs without pressure to perform or compete. Game-based learning and movement-based educational approaches play a central role in this (Mura, Tatulli & Zurru, 2019) and are implemented through the MGML methodology (Girg, Lichtinger & Müller, 2012) and adapted SeELe materials (Müller, Grieser, Roos & Schmalenbach, 2022).

Starting in 3rd grade, especially during the transition to secondary school, young people discover personal resources and develop strategies to meet their needs. The validated MYNEEDZ questionnaire (Ciociola, Roos & Borg-Laufs) identifies individual needs profiles in school and clinical contexts. Based on this, tailored interventions are developed and transferred from strong to challenging areas of life. A mixed-methods approach combines quantitative (status diagnostics) and qualitative (e.g., "message to myself") elements.

The workshop presents initial conceptual work and implementation ideas. PowerBase contributes to rethinking schools as playful, safe spaces for development, where learning and mental well-being are meaningfully connected.

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Workshop 2
Play-based learning environments in primary schools (EN/DT)
Janine Hostettler Schärer, University of Teacher Education St. Gallen
Ruth Lehner, University of Teacher Education St. Gallen

Research and practice show that 4 to 8-year-old children progress enormously in their learning and development while playing (Bürgi & Amberg, 2023, p. 15). The Swiss Elementary School curriculum focuses on play: Learning through play, free play, play supervision and play environments are considered pivotal (D-EDK, 2015, p.25ff).

In Swiss Kindergarten, playful learning situations are most likely to take place in so-called play-based learning environments, which are prepared and accompanied by teachers (Schütz, Campana, Wehren & Wyss, 2021, p.29). Such play-based learning environments combine subject-based learning with free play (ibid., p.29). These include a variety of learning opportunities focusing on learning through play and implementing the development of skills according to curriculum specifications.

However, school time dedicated to cross-curricular and theme-oriented teaching in play-based learning environments is still limited in Swiss primary schools (Kübler and Rüdisüli, 2020). Our project aims at defining and developing play-based learning arrangements for the first years of primary school and exploring the potential of play for learning in the school context. The focus will be set on the three aspects of attitudes, structure of the learning opportunities, and play and learning support. Our goal is to enable teachers to initiate, accompany and evaluate play-based learning environments so that children can interact in a self-determined, competent and social way. Therefore, we focus our workshop on teacher's professionalism and discuss our professional development program and its practical implementation.

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Workshop 3
Play, work and playfulness in primary school: a Montessori contemporary reading (IT/DT)
Giulia Consalvo, University of Bolzano/Bozen
Barbara Caprara, University of Modena-Reggio Emilia

Notwithstanding the growing recognition of the value of play in education (Petillon, 2017), the specific agency of children in school play practices remains under-researched (Seitz & Hamacher, 2024), as does the professional role of primary school teachers in relation to play (Wood, 2011). While pedagogical discourse largely focuses on early childhood, attention to play in primary school still appears fragmented (Staccioli, 2008; Seitz & Berti, 2024). However, as Montessori suggests, school-age children also have a 'hungry mind' that is eager to discover, build, cooperate, and learn about the world. Thus, play, understood not as recreational activity but as a constitutive aspect of existence, offers a privileged vehicle for cultural and social growth, particularly in this age group.

Starting from these premises, the proposed workshop aims to reflect on the concept of the 'prepared environment', the heart of the Montessori method, as a playful space (Thibault, 2020) in its strongest interpretation: a symbolic, material and relational space that stimulates initiative, supports curiosity, promotes freedom of movement and encourages social interaction. Each element is designed to support the child's self-directed action, enabling them to navigate the world with confidence and joy. In this context, playfulness is expressed in both the child's attitude and the adult's approach. The adult takes on the role of a discreet guide, attentive observer, and facilitator of the child's natural developmental process. The presence of 'self-correcting materials', the organisation of time, and flexible spaces enable a school that fosters learning through play, discovery, and cooperation (Berti, Consalvo & Seitz, 2024).

The workshop is divided into three parts: 1. a critical reflection on the Montessori 'play/work' dichotomy and the potential for their integration; 2. an analysis of Montessori sources, i.e. the concept of 'child's work' as a form of playful learning; 3. examples of Montessori practices in primary schools that demonstrate how a structured, yet open environment can foster autonomy, relationships, and well-being.

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- Caprara, B. (2020). *Innovare la didattica con i principi montessoriani*. Roma: Armando.
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- Montessori, M. (2021). *Lezioni da Londra 1946* (A. Haines, a cura di). Torino: Il Leone Verde.
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Workshop 4
Stupore e meraviglia: raccontarsi con le "cose" / Begeisterung und Wunder: Sich mit „Dingen" zu erzählen. (IT/DT)
 Anna Maria Venera, University of Torino

Le "cose" custodiscono *idee, affetti, emozioni e simboli*, contribuendo a dare senso alla nostra esistenza. *Le cose recano tracce umane*: sono concentrati del tempo e sono depositarie di memorie, sogni, aspettative. Gli oggetti diventano così *fabbricanti* di relazioni, personalità, storie, memorie - individuali e collettive.
Ogni bambina e bambino inizia l'esplorazione del mondo raccogliendo "piccole cose": conchiglie, sassi, foglie, castagne, biglie, tappi o piccoli oggetti. La curiosità e il piacere di conoscere il mondo, uniti al desiderio di scoperta, alimentano emozioni come lo *stupore* e la *meraviglia* e favoriscono nuovi apprendimenti attraverso l'esplorazione e la raccolta di oggetti.
Nel workshop si propone una recente ricerca universitaria con alcune chiavi di lettura sull'*educazione al pensiero creativo e critico,* sulle prospettive di sviluppo del *pensiero narrativo attraverso l'utilizzo di "cose e oggetti" nell'infanzia*.
Si propone ai partecipanti un'attività finalizzata ad esperire in prima persona il **"**valore simbolico delle cose", su *come possono costituire tracce di valori personali e sociali* e *favorire le relazioni interpersonali.*
A seguire, una riflessione sulle *dinamiche narrative* attivate nei percorsi didattici rivolti a bambine e bambini della scuola primaria con la presentazione di obiettivi educativi, approccio metodologico, articolazione degli incontri con le attività, le evidenze emerse da osservazioni sistematiche e dai focus group con i docenti.

- Bateson G. (1956), *This is Play*, trad.it. (1996*), Questo è un gioco. Perchè non si può mai dire a qualcuno: "gioca!"*, Raffaello Cortina Editore, Milano.
- Bodei R. (2009), *La vita delle cose*, Laterza; Roma-Bari.
- Huizinga J. (1938), *Homo Ludens*, trad.it. (1973), *Homo Ludens*, Einaudi, Torino.
- La Cecla F. (2013), *Non è cosa. Vita affettiva degli oggetti*, Eleuthera, Milano.
- Venera A.M. (2011), *Garantire il diritto al gioco. Studi e ricerche sul diritto al gioco,* Spaggiari Edizioni, Parma.
- Venera A.M., Nosari S. (2018), *"C" come… educare al pensiero creativo, critico, civico*, Aracne, Roma.
- Venera A.M. (2025), Stupore e meraviglia. Il gioco delle raccolte e delle collezioni, Edizioni Junior, Reggio Emilia.

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17.00-18.00: Parallel workshops – 2nd Slot

Workshop 5
Game-Based Civic Education and EU Values: Insights and Critical Reflections (EN/DT/IT)
Doris Kofler, Free University of Bolzano/Bozen
Virginia Vergara, Institute for Minority Rights, Eurac Research, Bolzano/Bozen
Mattia Zeba, Institute for Minority Rights, Eurac Research, Bolzano/Bozen

The proposed workshop aims to provide insights into an educational tool developed, a board game, called *"La Casa dei Valori Comuni"* (The House of Common Values), created within a framework of the "Euroregions, Migration, and Integration (EUMINT)" project. This project was pursued to strengthen cross-border cooperation between institutions to address social challenges such as migration, as well as economic, political and cultural issues. The primary goal, particularly emphasized in civic education across all levels of schooling and the broader citizenship, is to effectively raise both individual and public awareness of European values in a critical way. In doing so, the project aims to contribute to the formation of "responsible and active citizens who promote full and conscious participation in the civic, cultural, and social life of their communities" (DM, 2019), both in Italy and across Europe.

The board game will be experimented at three game tables (with a maximum of 6-8 people per group). Given that the game instructions are available in three languages, participants can be multilingual. At the beginning, the game's objectives will be explained, the rules clarified, and the three game tables will be assisted by the game facilitators (45 minutes).

Following the gameplay experience, participants will engage in a brief reflection on their experience. Acquired practical experience in schools, in teacher training for primary education, and through interactions with asylum seekers in previous and other related projects will be shared and discussed as potential practical applications (15 minutes).

The workshop will explore the dimensions of game-based learning, alongside aspects related to social and intercultural relations, in a perspective of play as a social practice and reflect in concrete terms citizenship education.

- D. Kofler, R. Medda-Windischer, A Carlà, (2023) *Europäische Wertegemeinschaft und zivilgesellschaftliche Integration: Erfahrungen mit einem Brettspiel mit Asylanten und Studierenden*, in H. Demo, S. Seitz, V. Macchia (a cura di/Hsrg.), *Didattica e inclusione scolastica. Inklusion im Bildungsbereich - Vernetzt: costruire comunità*, Bozen-Bolzano University Press.
- Eurac Research. Link to the Pedagogical Tools: https://www.eurac.edu/en/institutes-centers/institute-for-minority-rights/projects/pedagogical-tools
- Legge 20 agosto 2019, n. 92, *Introduzione dell'insegnamento scolastico dell'educazione civica*. Vedasi anche, Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, *Linee guida per la progettazione della sessione di formazione civica e di informazione*, di cui all'articolo 3 del DPR 179/2011, 2013.
- R. Medda-Windischer, A. Carlà, (2023) *European Civic Integration and Common Values: The Experience of a Board Game*, 5 *Peace Human Rights Governance* 1 (9-39) (2021) DOI:10.14658/pupj-phrg-2021-1-1
- R. Medda-Windischer, A. Carlà, E. Zeqo, A. Pirhofer, M. Zeba, G. Maniscalco, M. Tartarotti, P. Stoichita, Y. Patti, V. Stecchi, *The House of Common Values*, Bolzano/Bozen: Eurac Research 2020;

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Workshop 6

Weavering Memescapes: Initiating Literary Citizenship while playing with Poetry (EN)

Petra Anders, Humboldt University, Berlin
Julia Babiel, Humboldt University, Berlin
Clara Michel Plácido, Humboldt University, Berlin
Cornell Raab, Humboldt University, Berlin

This hands-on workshop invites participants to engage with diverse poetic texts, create responsive memes, and immerse themselves in an extended play phase that encourages cross-modal adaptations.

Our approach explores how playful engagement cultivates meaningful learning environments within institutional spaces of primary education. As researchers in literature and reading education, we focus specifically on moments of text comprehension and the dynamic multimodal transformation processes (Anders 2024) that emerge through playful interactions with poems and memes (Shifman 2014), ultimately fostering literary citizenship (Anders 2025).

Participants will share their creative works, reflect collectively on their experiences, and discover innovative creative and playful approaches (Resnick 2017) to literary texts. Our collaborative efforts will extend to the Scratch community (https://scratch.mit.edu/), where we will showcase our creations to a global audience and generate further playful adaptations, weaving the memescape (Baspehlivan 2023).

The workshop integrates theoretical foundations from literature didactics and media studies with practical insights derived from our school-based research project (Demi, Babiel & Anders, forthcoming). Our findings show how teachers in training and experienced educators alike begin to reflect on both their professional role as well as on their intended educational goals when working with a playfulness-based approach in the classroom—leading them to adapt to more open and collaborative teaching practices.

Drawing from this background, we illustrate how playful meme-based instructional approaches honor and integrate elements of authentic child culture (Duncker 1999) into formal learning environments, making literary learning both more accessible and engaging.

Simultaneously, these approaches support children in developing general skills needed to engage in lifelong learning through the experience of agency (Baker et al. 2021).

- Anders, P. (2025). Vom Spoken Word über Poetry Slam zu literary citizenship. Gegenwartslyrik für Heranwachsende mit mehrsprachigen Könnenserfahrungen. In: Standke, J. (ed.): Gegenwartslyrik. Beltz.
- Anders, P. (2024). What different people see on the Whiteboard. Mehrdeutigkeit im multimodalen Literaturunterricht in der Digitalität. Leseräume – Zeitschrift für Literalität in Schule und Forschung 11(10). https://xn--leserume-4za.de/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/lr-2024-1-Anders.pdf.
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- Shifman, L. (2014). Memes in Digital Culture. MIT Press. doi:10.7551/mitpress/9429.003.0001.

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Workshop 7
Pretending to… Performativity and theatre games for the embodied learning (EN/IT)
Marica Girardi, University of Chieti-Pescara

A group of children gather and decide to play by impersonating roles. Teacher, superhero, parent. A group of adults get together and, through the role played in their lives, each performs according to the context. Doctor, patient, teacher, friend, politician.

Playing *pretending to ...* is a process of embodied simulation that is common to all human beings and is a lifelong learning tool. *Pretending to ...* is a symbolic game, as Piaget calls it, which he sees as one of the main tools of cognitive development used in childhood. It is also the process at the basis of performing arts and actor training useful for mimesis awareness and training.

In fact, one of the founders of performing studies, Richard Schechner, maintains that human beings operate through retrieved acts, acting by imitation and performing deeds and roles learnt from others. Through reclaimed acts, each person interacts with society, constructs his or her own path and life experience, can embody different roles and change his or her reality when needed.

This workshop will highlight some transdisciplinary experiences using embodied simulation as a learning medium. It will involve participants in two performative games that use embodiment and performativity for learning in developmental age and adulthood. It will provide bibliographical sources useful for investigating the field of performative didactics.

- Bowditch, R., Murray Cole, P., & Minnick, M. (2023). *Inside the Performance Workshop. A Sourcebook for Rasaboxes and Other Exercises*. Inghilterra: Taylor & Francis.
- Girardi, M. (2022). *Fare finta. Un piccolo gruppo di esercizi che si è messo in testa di fare teatro*. Italia: Zabar.
- Gomez Paloma, F. (2013). *Embodied Cognitive Science: Atti incarnati della didattica*. Italia: Nuova Cultura.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1945). *Phénoménologie de la perception*. Paris: Gallimard. Trad. it.: Merleau-Ponty, M. (2003). *Fenomenologia della percezione* (trad. A. Bonomi, Collana Studi Bompiani). Milano: Bompiani.
- Piaget, P. (1974). *Lo sviluppo e l'educazione dell'intelligenza*. Italia: Loescher.
- Schechner, R. (2018). *Introduzione ai Performance Studies*. Italia: Cue Press.

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Workshop 8

Spielerische Achtsamkeit: Ein körperorientierter Zugang zu Achtsamkeit mit Kindern in der Grundschule (DT)
Nancy Quittenbaum, University of Erfurt

In diesem Workshop wird ein spielerisch-körperorientierter Zugang zur Achtsamkeit mit Kindern der 3. und 4. Klasse vorgestellt. Ausgangspunkt ist ein aktuelles Projekt an der Universität Erfurt, in dem Achtsamkeit mit Kindern erprobt und reflektiert wird – nicht als stille Meditation, sondern als lebendige, bewegte und erfahrungsnahe Praxis.

Achtsamkeit wird oft mit Ruhe und Konzentration assoziiert. Doch gerade im Schulkontext braucht es einen Zugang, der kindlichen Bedürfnissen gerecht wird: Bewegung, Begegnung, Materialität und Spiel. Der Workshop präsentiert eine Reihe von Spielen, Ritualen und Übungen, die Achtsamkeit mit den Mitteln der Verspieltheit, der Körperwahrnehmung und der sozialen Interaktion erfahrbar machen.

Die Übungen umfassen u. a.: „Spürspiele" zur Schulung der Körperwahrnehmung, „Gefühlswetter" als tägliches Ritual zur emotionalen Selbstverortung, den Sorgenfresser, das Dankbarkeitsglas, Fühlball herstellen (Quetschi) und Elemente aus der Natur- und Materialpädagogik, um sinnliche Zugänge zu fördern. Der Fokus liegt auf der Verbindung von Spiel und Präsenz, sowie auf der Stärkung emotionaler und sozialer Kompetenzen. Alle Impulse basieren auf konkreter Praxiserfahrung und orientieren sich an Konzepten aus der Achtsamkeitspädagogik der Spielpädagogik und der Bildungsforschung.

Der Workshop möchte zudem den Blick auf folgende zentrale Fragen lenken: Wie lassen sich achtsame Spielmomente in den Schulalltag integrieren? Welche Zeit-Räume braucht es dafür in der Schule? Und was zeigen die bisherigen Erfahrungen mit Kindern – wie nehmen sie achtsame Spielimpulse auf, was bewegt sie, was fordern sie heraus?

Die Teilnehmenden erhalten konkrete Anregungen zur Umsetzung im eigenen Feld sowie Impulse zur Verknüpfung von Spiel, Achtsamkeit und kindorientierter Bildung. Eingeladen sind Lehrkräfte, pädagogische Fachkräfte, Forschende und alle, die an einem achtsamen und spielerischen Bildungsansatz interessiert sind.

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Workshop 9

Inclusion for All with Makey Makey: Promoting the Participation of Students with Special needs in Scratch Programming Projects (EN/IT)
Adele Bracci, Istituto Comprensivo di Pianoro (BO)
Antonia Carbone, Istituto Comprensivo 11, Bologna
Elena Pacetti, University of Bologna
Sara Ricciardi, Istituto Nazionale di Astrofisica - OAS Bologna and University of Bologna
Stefano Rini, University of Bologna

Ensuring inclusive participation in digital learning remains a major challenge in primary education, particularly for students with physical or cognitive disabilities who face barriers in traditional programming activities. This workshop introduces the use of the Makey Makey interface with Scratch as a practical solution to foster accessibility and engagement for all learners. By creating customized input devices from everyday materials, students with mobility or sensory challenges can meaningfully contribute to digital projects. Grounded in the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, the workshop emphasizes flexible approaches that accommodate diverse learning needs through multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression. Participants will engage in hands-on activities to design inclusive digital experiences, gaining practical strategies to promote creativity, agency, and equity in the classroom. Ultimately, the workshop aims to empower educators to transform playful learning into an inclusive practice that celebrates diversity and ensures equal learning opportunities for every student.

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Friday 10th October

09.00-11.00: Parallel Panels

Panel 7 – Teachers' professionalism (2)

Mediate play, to help learning (IT/EN)
Daniela Maccario- University of Torino

The contribution focuses on 'playful didactics' as an approach to be studied for its contribution to a management of teaching that can foster the acquisition of deep, meaningful learning, capable of supporting the conquest of 'power to act' and the personal development of pupils. The question arises as to 'how' to manage play-based teaching-educational practice according to criteria of quality and effectiveness. Although the idea that learning through play can help pupils learn fundamental concepts and skills within the study disciplines and beyond is widely accredited, in fact play probably represents a strategy practised mainly in educational contexts aimed at early childhood, reserved for specific moments, perhaps during recreation, in a framework of frequent uncertainty as to how to combine a natural way of learning, at all ages, with the teaching of fundamental acquisitions necessary for understanding the world and exercising citizenship. The

adoption of playful didactics requires the professionalism of teachers and educators to know how to place themselves on a continuum, between free play, totally guided by the learner, and activities totally guided by the adult: it is useful to explore on a theoretical and practical level the intermediate space of guided play, in which students can explore and direct their learning while teachers provide direction and scaffolding at the service of learning objectives. The contribution aims to reconstruct an exploratory theoretical framework in order to outline a framework for research on the development of effective play-based teaching practices and the training of teachers and trainers.

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Establishing a Permanent Centre of Excellence on Gamification and Serious Games in Early Childhood Education at IUL University, Florence (IT/EN)
Antonella Coppi, University IUL, Florence

This contribution aims to outline the design framework that led to the establishment of the Permanent Centre of Excellence for Studies and Research on Gamification and Serious Games in Digital and Analog Educational and Training Environments at IUL Online University, headquartered in Florence.

Founded in 2005 by a consortium composed of INDIRE and 25 state universities, IUL University, Florence stands as the only non-profit online university in Italy. It is distinguished by a clear pedagogical and humanistic orientation and serves as a benchmark for professionals working in the fields of education and schooling. Within this context, IUL promoted the creation of a Permanent Centre of Excellence focused specifically on the use of gamification and serious games in education, with particular attention to the 0-6 age group. Despite growing interest in gamification, research on its educational applications during early childhood remains limited and underdeveloped.

Undoubtedly, all stages of life are crucial for personal development, yet there are specific phases—due to the educability of human beings and the central role of education in this process (Grange Sergi, 2016) - in which foundational matrices are formed that shape future learning and behaviour (Dozza, in Dozza, Ulivieri, 2016). In this context are educators being prepared to design meaningful learning experiences using both digital and traditional tools in early childhood education? And are they supported in establishing collaborative communication with families as part of an educational impact? The Permanent Centre of Excellence for Studies and Research on Gamification and Serious Games in Digital and Analog Educational and Training Environments at IUL Online University headquartered in Florence can be an answer.

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Gioco e professionalità docente nella scuola primaria: un'indagine qualitativa in due Istituti Comprensivi di Taranto (IT/EN)

Alessandro Barca, University Telematica Pegaso
Mariella Tripaldi, University of Bari

Nel mutevole scenario educativo contemporaneo, segnato da crescenti complessità pedagogiche, il gioco si riafferma quale dispositivo didattico privilegiato e cornice ermeneutica capace di rigenerare il senso dell'insegnare e dell'apprendere nella scuola primaria. Lungi dal configurarsi come mera attività ricreativa o strumento accessorio, esso si rivela matrice generativa di partecipazione attiva, cooperazione tra pari, motivazione intrinseca e costruzione dialogica del sapere. All'interno di tale orizzonte si iscrive la presente indagine, volta ad esplorare le intersezioni tra didattica ludica e professionalità docente nei contesti scolastici della scuola primaria, con particolare riferimento alla capacità trasformativa dell'insegnamento quando radicato in ambienti di apprendimento ludici, intenzionalmente progettati. La ricerca, di natura qualitativa, è stata condotta tra febbraio e maggio 2024 in due istituzioni scolastiche di Taranto, operanti in un quartiere ad alto rischio di dispersione, attraverso un percorso di sei settimane fondato sull'integrazione di pratiche ludiche all'interno delle discipline curricolari coinvolgendo 102 alunni e 12 docenti. I dati raccolti – tramite osservazioni sistematiche, griglie comportamentali rivolte agli alunni e interviste semistrutturate rivolte agli insegnanti – attestano un significativo incremento dei livelli di partecipazione scolastica, impegno emotivo e relazioni cooperative, delineando una rinnovata postura professionale dell'insegnante, capace di coniugare regia educativa, riflessività situata e relazionale. I risultati confermano come la didattica ludica non solo risponde in modo efficace ai bisogni formativi degli alunni, ma solleciti, altresì, una professionalità docente complessa, trasformativa, orientata alla promozione integrale del soggetto in età evolutiva.

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Code, Play, Teach: A playful approach to computational and mathematical thinking for pre-service teachers (EN)

Federica Pelizzari, University Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
Sara Bagossi, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano

The Italian guidelines on STEM education (MIM, 2023) and the recent draft for the New Guidelines for the first cycle of instruction (MIM, 2025) emphasize an interdisciplinary approach to STEM teaching, the use of interactive and playful digital tools, and the promotion of creative thinking. Informatics has also been introduced as a core conceptual element in mathematics education since primary school. Computational thinking—defined as a set of logical and strategic processes for solving complex problems (Wing, 2006)—shares key features with mathematical thinking, e.g. problem solving, abstraction, pattern recognition, and algorithm design (Ng et al., 2023). These considerations motivate the exploration of connections between mathematical and computational thinking, particularly in digital environments and teacher education.

This contribution presents a qualitative exploratory case study conducted within a university course for future primary school teachers. Grounded in the frameworks of Playful Learning (Zosh et al., 2018) and Playful Experiences (PLEX) (Korhonen et al., 2009), participants engaged in the collaborative design of digital games using Octostudio coding app (MIT Media Lab, 2023). The activity focused on spatial orientation and path description skills. It included a questionnaire on attitudes toward computational thinking, a presentation of Octostudio, the collaborative game design, and peer feedback. A design template supported participants in structuring playful experiences.

Collected data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns in the integration of computational and mathematical thinking and PLEX dimensions. Preliminary results suggest that such playful experiences can feed the training of future teachers and support meaningful learning pathways in primary education.

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Designing playful learning paths: AI and gamification for hospitalized children (EN)

Francesco Palma, University Europea, Roma
Gianluca Amatori, University Europea Roma

The introduction of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and gamification is transforming the educational experience in primary school, offering new opportunities to personalize learning and make it more engaging. This is especially relevant for children aged 6 to 10 attending Hospital Schools, who often face long periods of hospitalization and social and emotional isolation. In such contexts, educational technologies can play a crucial role in sustaining motivation, stimulating curiosity, and supporting inclusive learning.

This contribution explores how the integrated use of AI and game-based approaches can enhance learning pathways in primary education by offering flexible and personalized experiences. AI enables the adaptation of content and activities to each child's cognitive and emotional profile, while gamification—through

interactive storytelling, gradual challenges, and reward systems—encourages self-regulation, engagement, and collaboration, even from a distance.

Drawing on current practices in Italian hospital schools, this paper reflects on the value of play as a pedagogical approach in primary education, capable of bridging care, technology, and learning. The aim is to demonstrate that even in situations of vulnerability, it is possible to ensure meaningful education that integrates both cognitive and emotional dimensions.

Hospital Schools thus emerge as spaces of educational innovation, where AI and gamification become tools to build inclusive, motivating, and child-centered learningenvironments—capable of respecting the unique needs of each primary school student and turning the experience of learning into something joyful, empowering, and deeply human.

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Prompt'n'Play: Enhancing prompt writing for AI with Game-Based Learning in Primary School (EN)

Massimiliano Andreoletti, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
Sara Malaguti, Flowerista SRL Società Benefit

The 'Prompt'n'Play' workshop explores the educational potential of the Prompt'n'Play board game, developed by the innovative start-up Flowerista, to support learning in primary schools. Through a practical and playful approach, participants will have the opportunity to experience the game first-hand, understanding its underlying mechanisms and teaching strategies. The workshop will present the main features of the game and its use in developing language, cognitive and problem-solving skills in children in Years 4 and 5 of primary school. In particular, it will focus on how the Prompt'n'Play game can improve students' ability to formulate precise requests, while promoting creativity, collaboration and critical thinking. Participants will be involved in practical activities, game simulations and moments of reflection on how to integrate this tool into their educational practices. Preliminary results of research conducted on the effectiveness of the game and concrete suggestions for its implementation in the classroom will also be shared. The workshop is aimed at teachers, educators, researchers and enthusiasts of innovative teaching, with the aim of offering practical tools and methodological insights for integrating games into learning. It is an opportunity to reflect on how games can become a bridge between technology and learning, engaging students in an innovative and engaging educational experience.

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Exploring artificial intelligence in the first years of primary school: the potential of guided pretend play (EN)

Marius Vogt, St.Gallen University of Teacher Education
Lena Hollenstein, St.Gallen University of Teacher Education
Franziska Vogt, St.Gallen University of Teacher Education

Playful learning is a key pedagogical approach in early childhood education (UNICEF, 2018). However, it is less commonly applied in primary schools, resulting in a discontinuity between preschool and primary school pedagogies (Parker et al., 2022). From an early age children include digital technology in their pretend play. In doing so, they actively engage with digital concepts and processes (Arnott et al., 2020; Vogt & Hollenstein, 2021). Guided play, which combines child-initiated and adult-directed activities (Wood, 2010), has been shown to foster high-quality pretend play and support learning in various domains (Weisberg et al., 2013). Artificial intelligence (AI) is an increasingly relevant digital technology. The potential
of guided pretend play to support children's exploration of AI concepts has not yet been examined in primary school contexts.

The research is part of the "deep development" project, which aims to develop and evaluate pretend play scenarios for early primary school grades. These scenarios are intended to foster children's understanding of AI concepts and to build competencies relevant to living and acting in a digital society. They extend previous work on digital transformation in kindergarten (Vogt, Hollenstein & Mueller, 2020) for the primary school context, with a specific focus on AI. First insights from a piloting phase in a primary classroom are presented. Based on multimodal interaction analysis (Goodwin, 2018) of video data, the study explores how

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Panel 9 – Free and outdoor play

Exploring Nature Playfully: A Toolkit for Outdoor Learning and Biodiversity Education (EN)

Greta Persico, University of Milano-Bicocca
Letizia Luini, University of Milano-Bicocca

Outdoor play (Dankiw et al., 2023; Sandseter & Seland, 2016) and exploratory experiences (Guerra, 2019) involve interacting with both natural and artificial elements (Dowdell, Gray & Malone, 2011; Brown & Kaye, 2017). In such settings, children can initiate self-directed learning processes, acting as expert agents of their own development (Antonacci, 2023). Research shows that outdoor environments provide rich opportunities for diverse playful and exploratory paths (Burke et al., 2024). Within the framework of the NBFC (National Biodiversity Future Center), the BEAT research group (Biodiversity Education and Awareness Team) from the University of Milan-Bicocca, in collaboration with IC Pertini primary school in Milan, has experiment a biodiversity education program integrated with the school curriculum (Persico et al., 2024). The approach centers on naturalistic exploration as a playful and participatory learning method. The research group implemented a methodological approach to guide children in exploring diverse outdoor contexts. The approach uses simple, hand-made paper beaks suggesting combinatory possibilities - actions, elements, and positions - which children can randomly select or be guided through by adults. This "game of rules" (Bondioli & Savio, 2018) is supported by usage instructions for educators, encouraging free observation, expression, and integration of tools for documentation. Preliminary findings from a study involving 35 fourth-grade students, conducted since November 2024, suggest that these tools help foster meaningful engagement with outdoor spaces. The random and playful nature of the toolkit elicits enthusiasm, curiosity, and motivation for learning, capturing the sense of wonder essential to discovery.

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Balancing Risk and Safety in Childhood Play: Ethical Dilemmas and Educational Challenges (IT/EN)
Milena Masseretti, University of Bologna

Risky play is an exciting and thrilling form of play that takes place mainly outdoors and does not exclude the dimension of risk and, consequently, the possibility of getting hurt (Kvalnes & Sandseter, 2023). Its benefits are widely recognised in national and international literature: it allows children to explore their limits, develop social and problem-solving skills, and improve their risk management skills (Beaulieu & Beno, 2024; Greenfield, 2004; Sandseter et al., 2020). Furthermore, risky play contributes to physical health, mental well-being and perceptual-motor development (Brussoni et al., 2012; Brussoni et al., 2015).
The research explores the perceptions of teachers and parents of kindergarten children in Italy regarding risky play. Using an exploratory qualitative approach, the study examines the personal, cultural and environmental factors that influence adults' acceptance of risk in play. Preliminary findings highlight a tension between the recognition of risky play as an educational opportunity and the personal and social pressures that limit its practice. Teachers tend to have a more open approach, influenced by the context in which they work and their own training, while parents experience a more acute contrast between memories of their own free childhood and the need to protect their children. Adult supervision is often seen as a strategy for mediating between autonomy and safety, but risk is often rationalised in educational terms, reducing its autotelic value. The school can play a crucial role in balancing these tensions by creating an environment that allows children to have stimulating, inclusive and safe play experiences.

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From Forest Light to Classroom Shadows: Exploring Play in Outdoor and Tinkering-based Science Education (EN)

Michela Schenetti, University of Bologna
Sara Ricciardi, Istituto Nazionale di Astrofisica - OAS Bologna and University of Bologna
Stefano Rini, University of Bologna

This contribution offers a comparative reflection on two pedagogical approaches—outdoor education and tinkering—explored through the lens of play as a generative and epistemic force in children's learning. Drawing on collaborative work with teachers in Italian primary schools, we examine how both natural and constructed environments can support playful, embodied, and expressive forms of scientific inquiry.

One case study involves Komorebi, an outdoor exploration of dappled light inspired by Bob Miller's Light Walk, where children physically engage with fleeting light phenomena and raise questions about light between leaves. A second example centres on a pinhole activity in the classroom, where children observe the inverted projection of an asymmetrical light source—such as an arrow or number—through a small aperture, uncovering fundamental principles of light propagation. Play becomes a space where not knowing is welcomed and transformed into a research question. In this framework, tinkering is not a substitute for outdoor learning, but a complementary practice that brings the open-endedness of exploration indoors. It allows educators to extend and deepen children's questions, which are nurtured by their ongoing relationship with the world.

Both approaches invite children to trust their own questions, to use their bodies and materials as thinking tools, and to construct knowledge through active, situated engagement. In both cases, play fuels not only cognitive engagement but also emotional involvement, offering space to fail, adjust, imagine, and rediscover. We argue that fostering continuity between outdoor and indoor practices—anchored in play—can support a holistic, inclusive, and embodied science education rooted in children's experiences.

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Play and children. A research project in the Molise Region (EN)

Livia Petti, University of Molise
Paolo Lucattini, University of Molise

Playful activity promotes the unitary development of human personality, thought and child creativity (Bucci, 1990). Playing means first and foremost having fun, discovering and learning, sometimes even taking some risks. During play activities, discoveries and learning can become infinite whereas these can also be suffocated in the presence of particularly protective and fearful adults (Farné, 2024; De Koven, 2019; Gray, 2013).

As emerged in the latest edition of the International Play Association Triennial World Conference (McKendrick, 2023a; 2023b), the motor experience of family members as well as local or national policies and projects, strongly influence children's play opportunities, both in private environments and in public spaces. Both at national and international level, in institutional documents that monitor the qualitative and quantitative state of the art of motor activities in developmental age, "playing" is often replaced with "doing sports" (ISTAT, 2022), making it sometimes difficult to identify data on the management of children's free time.

Considering this framework, the paper presents a first analysis of the data collected (about 800 participants including teachers and family members) within a research project that aims to map the presence of play in the daily dimension of children (6–11 years) living in the Molise Region. The project seeks to increase, including through training days, teachers' and parents' awareness of the value of play as a beneficial factor in overall personal development, in terms of learning, creativity, and opportunity.

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11.00-13.00: Parallel Panels

Panel 10 – Play in Non formal education contexts

„Conclusions for civic education learning based on a study to perception and organization of citizen participation in German municipalities" (EN)

Gernot Herzer, IKPE Erfurt

The topic civic engagement refers to the topics deliberation, empowerment and democratic learning. In addition, it is currently a rapidly growing task of local authorities in decision making processes. Based on the model of political competence (cf. Weißeno, 2023, Learning through Political Participation, p. 216ff). The connection between the willingness to participate and one's own experiences with civic engagement applies not only to the political education of children, young people, and adults in particular, and in a broader sense, to municipalities in general that offer political participation as a participatory process.

In this case, the experiences gained can have either a positive or negative impact on future willingness to participate. With the conclusions from the fount results of the survey, it is possible to provide content, methods and solutions for the school learning regarding to "civic education". These conclusions should be helpful for the development of corresponding skills of pupils against the background of didactic approaches such as "gamification" for imparting the necessary competencies as well as for the development of teacher professionalism. In addition to the findings from the participation study, the presentation will focus on the benefits for school learning resulting from the didactic use of gamification in the field of civic education and beyond. This affects various pedagogical dimensions of learning, such as: Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Flow experience; Self-determination theory; Maslow's hierarchy of needs); Digitalization and digital skills in the context of media literacy and Social learning (rule-based behaviour as element of participatory processes).

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Apprendimento basato sul gioco, tradizione e innovazione educativa: un modello educativo per migliorare la partecipazione nei piccoli centri / Game-based learning, tradition, and educational innovation: an educational model to improve participation in small towns (IT/EN)

Stefania Massaro, University of Bari
Vincenza Albano, University of Bari
Maria Teresa Santacroce, University of Bari

As part of the PNRR Changes project "Active innovation in cultural heritage for a sustainable society," the "Virtual technologies for museums and art collections" strand is dedicated to experimenting with innovative design approaches, such as gamification, serious games, and the integration of digital tools, with the aim of enhancing the experiential and educational potential of cultural heritage.

In this context, a participatory research-training project was developed involving students from the Primary Education Sciences degree course at the University of Bari, attending the "Game-based Methodology" laboratory. The aim of the project was to create game-based methodological tools for primary school pupils in Aliano (MT), a town in Basilicata affected by depopulation. The project was organized in phases in which students were involved in the design and creation of teaching materials focused on the cultural heritage of Aliano, both in traditional format and through digital technologies, using innovative tools for game-based learning such as Panquiz, Mentimeter, Kamishibai, and crossword puzzles.

The experience also led to the creation of a virtual museum of the Aliano Art Gallery, developed by the students with the aim of making cultural heritage accessible in an innovative and engaging way through the inclusion of some specially designed digital games. The results demonstrated the effectiveness of game-based methodologies in encouraging student engagement, stimulating creativity, and promoting active participation, thus strengthening the link with the local community. The proposed model, which is replicable and adaptable, offers an interesting perspective for educational innovation and cultural sustainability in small towns.

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Community music with primary school children: Supporting and subverting learning settings (EN)

Udo Dengel, Free University of Bolzano/Bozen
Carlo Nardi, Free University of Bolzano/Bozen

This presentation draws on ethnographic data collected during weekly workshops with primary school children and involving singing and low-threshold instrument playing. More specifically, the project 'Zusammen musizieren' is aimed at fostering inclusive and collaborative music practice in three primary schools in the Vahrn school district in South Tyrol, Italy.

As such, it is inspired by community music whereby a facilitator promotes non-hierarchical, participative and engaging music activities, encouraging self-expression and supporting democratic learning environments and respect for others (e.g. Higgins & Willingham, 2017; Vougioukalou et al., 2019). It also allies with musical pedagogy approaches, and pedagogical approaches at large, that aim to address inequalities and actively pursue social action, especially among disempowered groups such as children with a migrant background (e.g. Baker, 2021; 2023; Vissing, 2025).

During the analysis, results highlight negotiation processes within the workshops – both between children with different backgrounds and between children and workshop facilitators (Poferl & Schröer, 2022). Categories emerging from the current analysis include solidarity and creativity, for example: (i) children are encouraged to be creative (Sangiorgio, 2020). They are provided with 'tools' such as percussion sticks to accompany a given song with movements. In doing so, they invent their own signs, sometimes even subversive ones. (ii) the children show solidarity not only with each other, but also with the facilitators, particularly by keeping their peers focused when they stray from the group spirit. Some children may physically or bodily intervene to stabilize the group. In their playful intervention emerges the manifestation of role taking.

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Panel 11 – History and Heritage

Encounters with historical culture among children of compulsory school age (EN)
Johannes Brzobohaty, University College of Teacher Education (KPH) Vienna/Lower Austria

As part of the 'School as a Playful Space 2025' conference, a study was presented that examines where and how children and young people aged between six and 15 encounter history and political education and what historical cultural images are conveyed to them in the process. The article presents the results of a recent survey conducted in collaboration with teacher training students in the summer semester of 2025 for the primary study. Around 520 pupils at primary and secondary schools in Vienna and Lower Austria were asked about their previous experiences and influences with regard to historical awareness and historical and political knowledge. In addition, their encounters with extracurricular learning locations and their experiences with historical and cultural products were surveyed. The respondents presented a divergent picture, which can be attributed primarily to their respective places of residence and schooling, i.e. whether the children and young people live in Vienna or outside the city, e.g. in a small town in Lower Austria. Interest in history is relatively high among the participants: just under 79% of the pupils answered 'yes' to the corresponding question. The situation is different when it comes to interest in political education, however: only 54% answered 'yes' here. The reasons for this are certainly manifold. One important factor is the limited opportunities for people without Austrian citizenship to participate in politics. When asked about the historical topics that interest them, the children and young people mentioned above all the lives of people in the past, but also the history of technology and the history of their parents' or grandparents' countries of origin. The internet and films were cited as sources of information on history and political education. The internet, films, documentaries and print media were cited as sources of information on history and politics, with those in rural areas reading newspapers and magazines and watching news programmes on public television with their parents.

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- Rüsen Jörn: Was ist Geschichtskultur? Überlegungen zu einer neuen Art, über Geschichte nachzudenken, in: Historische Faszination. Geschichtskultur heute, ed. by Klaus Füßmann, Heinrich Theodor Grütter and Jörn Rüsen, Köln-Weimar-Wien 1994, p. 2-26.
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Playing with cultural heritage. An experience in primary and secondary schools between tangible and intangible heritage (EN/IT)

Franca Zuccoli, University of Milano-Bicocca
Alessandra De Nicola, University of Milano-Bicocca
Maria Luisa Sbarra, University of Milano-Bicocca

A playful approach has become essential for activating knowledge and skills. This contribution refers to an experience carried out from 2021 to 2025 in the Greco district of Milan. The schools involved participated in two participatory research projects. The first, "MapsMi - Mobility, Environment and Participation in Milan Schools", aimed to raise awareness of pollution. The playful and informal elements of the approach were key to the successful acquisition of scientifically accurate knowledge, which formed the basis for community involvement. The second, "MuBiG Community Museum", was part of the redevelopment of the area, with the participation of the children. The objectives were to spread a culture of proximity and regenerate spaces. In both projects, the use of play was fundamental in activating citizen participation. Play was chosen to bring people closer to the discoveries made, activating metacognitive processes and peer-tutoring actions. An important aspect was the discovery of the neighbourhood, experienced through play, exploration and discovery. The contribution analyses the types of games played, the participation of the children and the impact in terms of socialisation, with the sharing of qualitative and quantitative feedback on the activities carried out. Unlike many other proposals involving digital gamification activities related to heritage, this project involved creating exploratory games in the local area and occupying neighbourhood spaces. This playful approach enabled children to work together and develop a genuine appreciation of the neighbourhood's tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

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Gamification e didattica della storia / Gamification and Teaching History (IT/EN)

Stefania Massaro, University of Bari
Vincenza Albano, University of Bari
Maria Teresa Santacroce, University of Bari

Teaching history in primary school using a traditional approach does not always spark motivated interest in pupils. Innovative approaches, gamification, and storydoing practices (Mariotti, Marotta, 2020) can offer effective support for teaching and a useful tool for engaging pupils in learning, transforming history from a subject "that is listened to and repeated" to a subject "that is done" (Zannini, 2021, p. 108). Alternative tools and languages can complement the formal study of history (Mariotti, Marotta, 2020). The research project on gamification developed at the Laboratory of Game and Animation Methodology at Uniba, applied to the teaching of history, was created to respond to the difficulties encountered by students during their teaching practice in primary schools, where many pupils showed critical issues in the study of the subject. A micro-teaching activity on Egyptian civilization was tested in fifth-grade primary school classes, integrating classroom lessons with playful digital tools such as PanQuiz, LearningApps, and digital books with Book

Creator. Prejudices emerged regarding the use of gamification in everyday classroom practice. However, the experiment highlighted the effectiveness of an alternative teaching model that integrates gamification to support traditional history learning, promoting active student participation through practice (Dettori & Letteri, 2021; Gabbi, Gaggioli & Ranieri, 2023). The use of gamification has fostered more inclusive learning that is adapted to different educational needs (Kalogiannakis et al., 2021). This innovative approach highlights the importance of playful methods to improve the learning experience in history.

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Play in the alpine landscape: voices from "Kids meet Alps" (EN)

Francesca Berti, Free University of Bolzano/Bozen
Franca Zuccoli, University of Milano-Bicocca

The contribution describes an original approach to heritage education through Design for Children (Birks 2018, Camuffo & Dalla Mura 2017), as implemented in the 'Kids Meet Alps' project. Created by designer Chiara Basilico, the project is the result of a collaboration with artists, local community groups and alocal authorities in the Italian Alpine region of Valtellina.

The initiative involves an itinerary of hike and playful activities through mountain paths and hamlets (*contrade*), designed to enable children aged 2–10 to actively engage with materials and temporary participatory art and design installations. Originally proposed in June 2024 and repeated in June 2025 around the Alpine village of Tartano (Sondrio), the initiative has become itinerant and will be hosted in Fosseno (Novara) in September 2025, thus revealing the feasibility of replicating the model on a larger scale.

We investigate "Kids meet Alps" as an example of a playful framework designed to engage children and adults in a discovery itinerary (De Nicola & Zuccoli 2016) that integrates playful experiences within the landscape: natural, cultural tangible and intangible heritage are therefore integral to the setting, and the activities themselves — which are not directed, but are prepared in such a way as to allow children to immerse themselves in the free experimentation with materials (Munari Method) — encourage them to observe and inhabit the landscape, thus becoming aware of it.

As part of the previous edition, adults were invited to complete an online questionnaire with open-ended questions. The objective was to gather statistics about the public, to collect their expectations and opinions, as well as to gain insight into their perception of heritage. Like play, heritage is intuitive and immediate. Yet it is challenging to be described in detail. The exploratory research analysis demonstrates the need to raise awareness of heritage in order to stimulate its valorisation and safeguarding (Berti & Sebastiano 2024, Muscará et Al. 2024).

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Panel 12 – Art and playfulness

Laughing in the classroom. Humor as a performative pedagogical mediator for diversity and inclusion (EN)

Leonardo Menegola, University of Milano-Bicocca

This paper analyses humour's impact as a pedagogical mediator in educational settings, where jokes and witty remarks can operate as multimodal tools for anyone to intersect mainstream communication patterns, introduce alternative viewpoints, present divergent threads, or destabilize dominant discourses and semantic conventions. Humour's targets typically encompass established stereotypes and norms, playing with meanings, subverting expectations, exposing underlying assumptions. Jokes can thus activate lateral thinking, creativity, cognitive flexibility and generativity, fuelling critical reflection and problem solving, encouraging cognitive engagement, favouring social and emotional learning, and enhancing inclusion.

Practicing the educational potential of humour depends on teachers' competence in integrating it as a mediator in didactics and group facilitation, by managing classroom dynamics, maintaining student engagement, navigating institutional expectations and fostering instructional interactions throughout and alongside humour. Teachers should be proficient in translating humour across cultural identities, linguistic boundaries, and individual idiosyncrasies; and in understanding how students and colleagues experience humour, adapting their pedagogical stance to facilitate inclusive and collaborative educational environments. Meanwhile joking traditionally leverages sensory-motor experiences, perceptual frameworks, and enacted aspects such as relational and affective resonance, as a performative and embodied group catalyst, nowadays humour's content and delivery mediums—e.g., memes and viral phenomena—are evolving, necessitating educators to update their literacies for recognizing and interpreting humour within hybrid spaces.

Throughout these dimensions, humour's multifaceted role emerges in promoting diversity and inclusion, critical reflection, methodological flexibility and multimodality, within a pedagogical framework in which laughter proves as a vital symbolic resource to encourage playful and mindful educational practices.

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The PhilosophArt atelier as a festive space for playing, thinking, marking and dreaming (EN/IT)
Sofia Marina Antoniello, University of Padova

The PhilosophArt atelier is the space where the pedagogical idea of teaching creativity at school (Weyland & Galletti, 2018) through PhilosophArt (Antoniello, 2024) takes shape. PhilosophArt is an activity that aims to generate creativity, taking into account its complexity (Lipman, 2003), through philosophical discussions, marked graphically and verbally.The design of this space (Camuffo & Videsott, 2023), created to carry out empirical art-based research in a primary school in Veneto, is the result of the generative and polyphonic contamination between the pedagogical heritage of Reggio Emilia's Malaguzzi atelier (Edwards et al., 2017) and the philo-pedagogical approach that echoes the Lipmanian community of inquiry (Lipman, 2003; Santi, 2005). This dialogue gives rise to a semiotic space (Barenco & Santi, 2023), which is heterogeneous by nature and characterised by chairs arranged in a semicircle with a low, self-built artist's pallet at its centre. In the PhilosophArt atelier, children, as a community of inquiry, philosophise and discuss questions that arouse their wonder. During the discussions, the dance of words, understood as verbal signs, is translated into abstract graphic signs, generating community artworks on the pallet that are open to infinite interpretations (Eco, 1962; Peirce, 1980), which in turn raise further questions and discussions. In the PhilosophArt atelier, the flow of community thought moves from the community to the artwork and vice versa, joyfully releasing the signs of creative thought so that they can interact with each other to dream together what the community itself considers to be a meaningful gift to be cherished.

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The *Play of Painting* in Schools: The *Closlieu* as a Space for Free and Playful Expression (EN)
Alessia Trivigno, University of Milano-Bicocca

Arno Stern conceived the *Closlieu* as a carefully structured space enabling free and spontaneous expression through the Play of Painting, an activity devoid of judgment, competition, or communicative intent (cfr. Stern, 1956/1966; 1958/1966; 1959/1966; 1966/1968; 1970/1973; 2003; 2011/2013). Central to this vision is the belief that freedom in expression arises within a secure, ordered environment. The *Praticien*, also described as the "servant" to the needs of the participants, plays a supportive and discreet role within the *Closlieu* and maintains an atmosphere of trust without interfering in the child's process.

Unlike traditional art education focused on output or technique, the *Closlieu* prioritizes process and intrinsic pleasure in engagement with color and form, while rejecting the labelling of children's productions as art.

Despite Stern's skepticism toward formal education, some schools have adopted the *Closlieu*, such as the Montessori public school Balilla Paganelli in Cinisello Balsamo (MI). Here, the Play of Painting is integrated into daily life, offering a protected space where children—many with migratory backgrounds or special needs—can explore their creativity. This model underlines the educational value of structured, playful expression in promoting emotional well-being, concentration, and non-competitive attitudes (Golomb, 2002/2004; Rose & Jolley, 2020; Rose, Jolley & Burkitt, 2006). Although originally outside educational frameworks, the Closlieu proves to be a powerful pedagogical tool. This reflection is part of the doctoral research project Children's Drawing and the Heritagization of Childhood Cultures, which explores the significance of children's creative expression and the adult's role in safeguarding such cultural heritage.

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Colorfit: a new board game for the early detection of color blindness in primary school children (EN/IT)
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Elsa Manzini, University of Modena-Reggio Emilia
Alessandro Rizzi, University of Milano
Liliana Silva, University of Modena-Reggio Emilia

The aim of this research is to improve accessibility for CVD children in early education through ColorFit, a competitive board game based on color matching and color perception. Color vision deficiency (CVD) affects

approximately 8.5% of the population (Maffia et al., 2022), yet it often remains undiagnosed in early childhood due to cortical compensation mechanisms (Eschbach et al., 2014; Rizzi et al., 2014). The early identification of CVD is essential for ensuring equitable access to educational resources and inclusive pedagogical practices from the earliest stages of schooling. Within the framework of the PRIN-funded research project Game4CED – Gamification for Color Blindness Early Detection, we have developed ColorFit, a board game aimed at supporting the early detection of CVD in children aged 5 to 10 years through structured gameplay based on color perception and matching. Using a mixed methods approach (Baldacci & Frabboni, 2013), data collection includes teacher questionnaires, systematic observations, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups with educators and parents. The study involves a sample of 1112 children (568 male; 544 female). Early findings indicate that 85% of the children present difficulties in maintaining sustained attention throughout gameplay. Game duration varies significantly, from as little as 30 seconds to a maximum of 7 minutes. In the shortest sessions, gameplay is often characterized by random placement of pieces and a disregard for the rules, potentially compromising the diagnostic reliability of the activity. Furthermore, the visual design of the board influences attentional focus: concrete and highly figurative stimuli (e.g., animal shapes) appear to distract children from the color-based task, whereas abstract geometrical forms foster greater cognitive engagement (Fisher et al., 2014; Choi et al., 2018). In response to these observations, we have revised the game structure by introducing an individual (solo) gameplay mode in addition to the competitive one. This adjustment aims to isolate potential perceptual deficits by eliminating external influences such as peer cooperation, which may lead to false negatives when another child unintentionally supports a peer's decisions. Moreover, the solo mode mitigates motivational issues that arise during repeated sessions: in subsequent rounds, children frequently exhibit signs of boredom and reduced engagement, increasing the likelihood of false positives because of indiscriminate or non-purposeful actions. The integration of this individual modality thus enhances both the diagnostic precision and the pedagogical appropriateness of the tool for the targeted age group. Ongoing revisions to the game include the enlargement of abstract color panels to improve visual clarity and maintain attention. All data collection procedures adhere to ethical standards, including informed parental consent, anonymized data management via coded identifiers, and continuous monitoring to safeguard child welfare. The findings of this study aim to inform the development of inclusive pre-diagnostic practices in early childhood education and contribute to the creation of scalable, playful tools for CVD screening. Final results will be available in December 2025 and are expected to support both educational professionals and policymakers in promoting equitable learning environments from the earliest educational stages.

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