

PEA

Pedagogy Ecology and the Arts conference

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



“power”

PEA Pedagogy Ecology and the Arts conference

Euphur Euregio Platform on Human Dignity and Human Rights
University of Trento | Free University of Bolzano Bozen | University of Innsbruck

Accademia di Merano | Akademie Meran
Accademia di studi italo-tedeschi | Akademie Deutsch-Italienischer Studien

CRATere piccola rassegna di teatro, arti e umanità
Teatro Pratiko associazione culturale

University of Vienna | Universität Wien
Centre for Teacher Education and Faculty of Philosophy and Education



PROGRAM

'power'

THURSDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 2025

WELCOME DESK 14.00-15.00

Academy of Italian-German Studies, Innerhofer Street 1
Coffee and Registration

GREETINGS & INTRODUCTION 15.00

Institutional Greetings

Sabina Langer, Evi Agostini, Denis Francesconi & Nazario Zambaldi. *Framing PEA conference*

KEYNOTE SPEAKER 15.30-16.30

Peter Mayo (University of Malta). *Lifelong/Education and Power for Sustainable Development*

PARALLEL SESSIONS

PANEL A (in German) 17.00-18.30

Academy of Italian-German Studies, Innerhofer Street 1
Chair: Sabina Langer

Sandra Matschnigg-Peer & Tamara Peer (University College of Teacher Education Vienna, A). *Conceptualizing Power in Urban Educational Networks. The Case of a Viennese Bildungsgrätzl*

Sezen Çakmak (Technische Universität Berlin, D). *Negotiating Parenthood within Power Relations. Intersectional Analyses of Agency among Muslim-marked Parents in German Schools*

Tamara Peer, Sandra Matschnigg-Peer, Petra Rauschenberger & Katharina Krämer (University College of Teacher Education Vienna, A). *Power/Dynamis. A Relational Perspective on Entering the Primary Teaching Profession*



PANEL B (in Italian) 17.00-18.30

Centre for Culture, Cavour Street 1

Chair: Nazario Zambaldi

Letizia Luini, Greta Persico, Andrea Galimberti & Monica Guerra (University of Milano-Bicocca, I). *Redistributing power in biodiversity education: toward participatory and child-led learning*

Francesca Rota (University of Milano-Bicocca, I). *The power of sustainability. Pedagogical reflections on the role of education for sustainability in promoting children's empowerment*

Giovanna Fontana & Lucia De Marco (Multidisciplinary Center for Teacher Training, Unimore, I). *The Power of Scientific Language. A Civic Education Project to Teach Biotechnology Between Ethics and Reality*

WORKSHOP A (in English) 17.00-18.00

Centre for Culture, Cavour Street 1

Chair: Denis Francesconi

Ulrike Barth, Isabel Schmier & Angelika Wiehl (Alanus University of Arts and Social Sciences). *Empowerment – Self & Social Effectiveness through Artistic Status Work*

LIGHT BUFFET ON THE TERRACE

Centre for culture, Cavour Street 1



FRIDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER 2025

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS 9.15-10.15

Academy of Italian-German Studies, Innerhofer Street 1

Rachele Borghi (transfeminist, pro-palestinian activist, Sorbonne University, F) & **Rahel Sereke** (independent urban policy researcher and queer antiracist activist, I). *Power, margins and communities resistance*

COFFEE BREAK

Academy of Italian-German Studies, Innerhofer Street 1

PARALLEL SESSIONS

PANEL C (in Italian) 11.00-12.30

Academy of Italian-German Studies, Innerhofer Street 1

Chair: Sabina Langer

Maria Cristina Mecenero (PhD, Public Primary School teacher) & **Laura Corbella** (PhD, Public Primary School teacher). *The power of emotions and feelings, between promotion and manipulation. An ethnographic insight from two teachers in dialogue*

Giulia Mirandola, Monica Galiè & Cecilia Cavallo (Finow Grundschule SESB-Staatliche Europa Schule Berlin). *Pioniere. Le donne che hanno fatto l'Europa. A democratic education experience on gender equality and civic engagement in bilingual schools*

Lucia De Marco & Giovanna Fontana (Multidisciplinary Center for Teacher Training, Unimore, I). *Communication and power in gender relations. An educational path against violence*

PANEL D (in English) 11.00-13.00

Centre for Culture, Cavour Street 1

Chair: Denis Francesconi

Brigitta Pia Alioto (Ca' Foscari University of Venice, I). *Feedback and error perception as pedagogical dimensions of growth mindset. A qualitative study in a medium-sized company*

Vassiliki Papadopoulou (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, GR). *Discourse and power in education reform. A critical analysis of the Onassis Schools controversy in Greece*

Francesco V. Ferraro (University of Derby, UK). *Breath, balance, and belonging. Empowering older adults through dance and breathwork*

Karla Stolle (University of Music and Performing Arts, Vienna, A). *"Resonant futures". Glimpses of what matters in the future of music education in Europe*

CONVIVIAL LUNCH & "CHATTING" 13.00

In the garden, Academy of Italian-German Studies, Innerhofer Street 1

KEYNOTE SPEAKER 14.30-15.30

Academy of Italian-German Studies, Innerhofer Street 1



Lorenzo Bernini (University of Verona, I). *We with Freud. Sex, power, the black hole*

PARALLEL SESSIONS

PANEL E (in Italian) **15.45-17.45**

Academy of Italian-German Studies, Innerhofer Street 1

Chair: Nazario Zambaldi

Maria Laura Belisario (University of Milano-Bicocca, I). *From the power of sound to the sound of power. An artistic experience*

Antonina Eugenia Ferruzza Marchetta (independent researcher and artist, I). *Dance-movement therapy workshops, an embodied learning experience to foster the empowerment of primary education science students*

Chiara Massullo (Roma Tre University, I). *From domination to relationality. Reflections on art, nature, and participation through the projects Educazione poetica pubblica, Educazione erotica poetica, and PièdiBoscoLab*

Marco Salvatore (University of Milano-Bicocca, I). *The power of artistic experience of children for sustainability education*

WORKSHOP B (in Italian/German) **15.45-16.45**

Centre for Culture, Cavour Street 1

Chair: Denis Francesconi

Francesco Ciociola (University of Siegen, D), **Antioco Luigi Zurru** (University of Cagliari, I) & **Stefanie Roos** (University of Siegen, D). *Orientation and control in education. A German-Italian comparative study on basic psychological needs and perceptions of power among young people*

WORKSHOP C (in German) **16.45-17.45**

Centre for Culture, Cavour Street 1

Chair: Sabina Langer

Sonja Wodnek (University College of Teacher Education KPH Vienna/Krems, A). *Shared Time - Shared Power. Dialogical and material practices of participation in schools*

THOUGHT RESIDENCY 16-17.30

A parallel discussion space with the keynote and invited speakers leading into the main conference

INVITED SPEAKER 18-19.30

Academy of Italian-German Studies, Innerhofer Street 1

Tiziana Rita Morgante (Teacher, Roma, I). *Danilo Dolci. A life lived intensely*

Guided Tour of the Exhibition (in Italian) <https://www.peaconference.org/danilo-dolci>



CONVIVIAL DINNER IN THE GARDEN 19.30

Academy of Italian-German Studies, Innerhofer Street 1

SATURDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER 2025

PANEL F (in Italian) 9.00-10.30

Centre for Culture, Cavour Street 1

Chair: Sabina Langer

Lavina Bianchi (University of Roma Tre, I). *A decolonial reading of inclusive processes and academic positioning: autoethnography, tokenism and resistance in education*

Cinzia Zadra (Free University of Bolzano/Bozen, I). *Listening to Silences, Reading Gestures, Recognizing Gazes: Power and Relationship in the Classroom*

Giovanna Malusà (Free University of Bolzano/Bozen, I) & **Carlo Tamanini** (MART). *3(En)action. An Enactive Co-Design Approach Between University, School, and Museum in Initial Teacher Education*

WORKSHOP D (in English) 10.30-11.30

Centre for Culture, Cavour Street 1

Chair: Sabina Langer

Elena Bergonzini (Scuola di Pace di Monte Sole). *Loosing control vs losing control*

PANEL G (in English) 9.30-11.30

Centre for Culture, Cavour Street 1

Chair: Denis Francesconi

Paola Crespi (independent researcher, I). *Thumbelina is here to stay – How technology, smartphones, AI and the like revolutionised class-dynamics in lower and upper secondary school. And is it that bad?*

Pietro Caresana (independent researcher, I). *Devices of subjugation, devices of subjectivation: Aesthetic experience as a dimension beyond power in schools and educational institutions*

Pietro Corazza (University of Bologna, I). *How to rethink power in the age of eco-climatic and social collapse?*

Francesca Finestrone, Francesco Pio Savino, Francesca Cangelli & Giusi Antonia Toto (University of Foggia, I). *Managerial Power in the Autonomous School: Models, Challenges, and Educational Perspectives*

REFRAMING POWER.

A SYNTHESIS FROM THE THOUGHT RESIDENCY 11.30-13.00

Final discussion: a synthesis of the ideas, questions, and proposals that emerged, not as conclusions, but as openings for further critical and creative engagement

CONVIVIAL APERITIF & “LET’S STAY IN TOUCH” 13.00

Centre for culture, Cavour Street 1



EXIBITIONS

Danilo Dolci. A life lived intensely

The exhibition, "Danilo Dolci: a life discovered intensely", has been reconstructed from the archives of Sicilian anarchists from the province of Ragusa. The archive was acquired by the Danilo Dolci Committee of Trieste and donated to Tiziana Morgante, author of the book Educate and Disobey: In Dialogue with Danilo Dolci (2024) and invited speaker at the PEA conference "power."

The Light within the Shadow

An exhibition of photographs by Nicola Morandini on the theater project at the Franco Basaglia psychiatric facility. Posters in the city of Merano 2 meters by 2 bring to light what often remains in the shadows.

[PEA Merano](#)

Earthly Communities

The exhibition explores ecological, economic and geopolitical issues in respect to the history of relations between Europe and Abya Yala, i.e. Latin America interpreted in a decolonial key, and starting from the South Tyrolean context.

[Kuns Merano Arte](#)

Graffiti

The first museum exhibition in Italy to investigate the art history of spray paint, Graffiti focuses on how the visual vernacular of the city and the street has entered the studio. Above all, the show contends that graffiti is a way of seeing and experiencing urban landscapes.

[Museion Bolzano](#)



Welcome and introduction to the third PEA conference ‘power’

Sabina Langer, Nazario Zambaldi, Evi Agostini, Denis Francesconi
Curators and organizers of the conference

With pleasure and honor we’ll welcome researchers and practitioners from Italy, Austria, Germany, Greece, Malta, France and the United Kingdom as participants in the third edition of the PEA Conference 2025 “power”. PEA stands for Pedagogy, Ecology and the Arts. The goal of our conference is connecting learning and education, ecological thinking and the visual and performing arts to discuss, in an innovative way, the human condition on our planet, from the individual and the social perspective.

In contemporary contexts, power — even in cultural and political narratives — tends increasingly to be an end in itself. Politics, rather than organizing power in the service of rights, often appears as a mechanism for concentrating and reproducing power. Education, situated within this framework, reflects a profound ambivalence: instead of being conceived as a space for emancipation, creativity, and social transformation, schools and learning environments are frequently reduced to instruments of control, adaptation, and discipline. This tension emerges from the historical roots of modern education. The paradigm forged within liberal democracies of the Enlightenment, and subsequently reshaped by the nationalistic impulses of Romanticism, is now experiencing a deep crisis. The decline of Eurocentric perspectives coincides with both the resurgence of global imperialisms and the affirmation of regional and local powers.

Theoretical traditions provide crucial insights into these dynamics. Michel Foucault highlights the pervasiveness of power, manifesting through knowledge, discourse, and institutions — what he defined as “power-knowledge systems.” Within this view, schools function as disciplinary apparatuses, regulating behavior and bodies. In contrast, Hannah Arendt’s assertion that “no one has the right to obey,” echoed by Don Lorenzo Milani’s claim that “obedience is no longer a virtue,” underlines the need to reimagine education beyond conformity. Paulo Freire positions pedagogy as a practice of liberation, while Antonio Gramsci insists on the inseparability of politics and knowledge.

Alternative frameworks enrich this debate. Ubuntu philosophy conceives power as relational and communal, grounded in interdependence and the common good. Decolonial thinkers such as Franz Fanon and Gloria Anzaldúa call for the recognition of multiple, marginalized epistemologies and practices. Feminist perspectives (Judith Butler, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Luce Irigaray, Verónica Gago) shift the focus from “power over” to “power with/for,” understood as agency, empowerment, and collective transformation.

These perspectives open critical questions: Is power domination or shared potential? In educational contexts, is it a means or an end? Should it be resisted, dismantled, or transformed? Can power ever be just?

The PEA 2025 Conference takes these questions as its starting point, proposing an ecological approach to power in education. Here, the arts provide an inspiring model: pedagogy as a textile-like practice, weaving relationships and creative experiences. As Michelangelo Pistoletto suggests, this may lead toward a “demopractic” horizon — where praxis replaces power, and the people organize not vertically but horizontally.

We sincerely thank our keynote and invited speakers – **Peter Mayo** (University of Malta), **Rachele Borghi** (Sorbonne University), **Rahel Sereke** (independent urban policy researcher from Milan), **Lorenzo Bernini** (University of Verona), **Tiziana Morgante** (Teacher and independent researcher in Rome) – for helping us deepen our understanding of power.



This year's edition introduces the **Thought Residency**, a space for reflection and exchange designed for keynote and invited speakers. Running alongside the main conference, it fosters cross-disciplinary dialogue. Participants contribute to shared reflections that shape the conference's outcomes.

We would like to thank all the people who contributed to the preparatory and accompanying events of the conference:

In February 2025, pianist **Michael Abramovich** performed at the Academy for Italian-German Studies on the occasion of the presentation of the Call for Papers for the PEA 2025 Conference. His visit to South Tyrol also coincided with the awarding of the 2024 Alexander Langer International Prize to two nonviolent peace organizations active in the West Bank: *Youth of Sumud* (Palestinian) and *Ta'ayush* (Israeli).

In May 2025, **Gabriele Del Grande** took part in the CRA Tere "Time" festival with the performance *Il secolo è mobile – A Century on the Move*, a multimedia monologue inspired by his book *Il Secolo Mobile*, which reimagines a century of European migration through archival photos and videos.

In June 2025, PEA collaborated in the preparation for the **Südtirol Pride**, the first Pride ever held in the city of Bolzano, co-organizing two events: **Sara Fabbri** - feminist, illustrator and invited guest of PEA 2024 - presented the fanzine *Smack!* and **Lorenzo Bernini** - keynote speaker this year - delivered a lecture on *The Place of Queerness in the Present*.

In August 2025 the invited speaker **Federico Faloppa** (University of Reading, UK) explored in an online lecture for PEA2025 how the study of language and power can reveal both systemic and everyday mechanisms of dominance and resistance, highlighting the need for educational approaches that foster critical, self-reflexive, and transformative awareness of linguistic practices.

On September 3–4, at Bolzano's **Pascoli High School**, the teacher training program *Gender Pathways from an Intersectional Perspective* introduced the PEA theme of "power," with contributions from Sabina Langer, Rachele Borghi, Rahel Sereke, Lorenzo Bernini, and tutor Nazario Zambaldi.

Tiziana Morgante curates the exhibition *Danilo Dolci: A Life Discovered Intensely* hosted at the Academy for Italian-German Studies in Merano, the exhibition includes a guided tour during the conference.

On the road to World Mental Health Day (October 10, 2025), the photographic exhibition *The Light Within the Shadow* by **Nicola Morandini** is presented in Merano in collaboration with OUT RAUS FUORI. Spread across the city, it documents the theatrical work of Nazario Zambaldi and Teatro Pratico at the Franco Basaglia House.

We invite you to enjoy the third PEA conference in the spirit of dialogue, respect, openness, and conviviality!



KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Peter Mayo (University of Malta). *Lifelong/Education and power for sustainable development*

Rachele Borghi (Sorbonne University) & **Rahel Sereke** (independent urban policy researcher and queer antiracist activist). *Power, margins and communities' resistance*

Lorenzo Bernini (University of Verona). *We with Freud. Sex, power, the black hole*

Federico Faloppa (University of Reading, UK). *From the Language of Power to the Power of Language. Some Reflections on Method and Substance*

Thought Residency



Lifelong/Education and power for sustainable development

Peter Mayo (University of Malta)

Keywords

Lifelong Education/Learning, Hegemony, Gramsci, Economism, Relational Beings

This presentation will focus on the tendency in Europe and elsewhere to regard both Education and Learning as lifelong concerns. It traces the concepts' development in the earlier UNESCO days as Lifelong Education, expansive in scope, leftist in its underlying politics and comprising a broad array of educational provision, including nonformal education, more suitable to the realities of the Geographical Global 'South'. I see 'North' and 'South' as relative markers, just like 'East' and 'West'. This brand of Lifelong Education allowed scope for popular education. It struck parallels with Gramsci's notion of every relationship of hegemony being a pedagogical relationship. A Gramscian view of power based on educational relations comes close to the idea of that learning society at the core of the all-embracing UNESCO conceptualisation of Lifelong Education.

Alas, it had little effect on actual policies until it was revived under economic blocs such as the OECD and the EU and transmuted into Lifelong Learning, not an innocent discursive shift to suit the demands of a Neoliberal competitiveness scenario. It became more 'Western'-oriented and geared towards production and consumption and individualistic in tenor, predicated on responsabilisation. It was insidious in its 'innocent' apparel—I would argue "the serpent underneath the innocent flower" (Shakespeare's Macbeth). UNESCO re-entered the fray with its Sustainable Development Goals which implies the greening of Lifelong Learning. I would argue that for Lifelong Learning, to truly fulfill this purpose, it must be rid of its 1990s economic baggage, renegotiate the hegemonic relations involved, reframe education as being concerned with ending the Global 'North'-'South' divide and educate to problematise the current hegemonic purpose of learning for production: how we produce, at what natural rhythms, what we produce and for whom? These are some key questions to be raised, in a process of renegotiating hegemonic relations, for an alternative Lifelong Education/Learning in the service of Sustainable Development and planetary consciousness. In Gramsci's insight, this might well be a lengthy *interregnum* process when the old can be dying but the new struggles against many forces, entrenched interests, to emerge.

References

- English, L., & Mayo, P. (2021). *Lifelong Learning, Global Social Justice and Sustainability*. Palgrave-Macmillan.
- Mayo, P. (2015). *Hegemony and Education under Neoliberalism. Insights from Gramsci*. Routledge.
- Mayo, P. (2025). *Culture, Power and Education. Representation, Interpretation, Contestation*. Routledge.
- Mayo, P., & Vittoria, P. (2022). *Critical Education in International perspective*. Bloomsbury Academic.
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- Wain, K. (2004). *The Learning Society in a Postmodern World. The Education Crisis*. Peter Lang.



Power, margins and communities' resistance

Rachele Borghi (Sorbonne University) & Rahel Sereke (independent urban policy researcher and queer antiracist activist)

Keywords

Decoloniality, Margins, Community, Positionality

Can the margins of the centre be considered as spaces where the production of radicalism can be used to construct new worlds?

Thanks to bell hooks, we have learned how to recognize the traditional, hierarchical authority structures, such as the margins, as a place of knowledge production. We all know that knowledge is power, then we need to question the exercise of power if we share the purpose not to perpetuate domination through violence and oppression.

Starting from their recent and collective experiences, Rachele Borghi (Sorbonne University) with “Universitaires avec Gaza” and Rahel Sereke with Cambio Passo association in Milan, the two intellectuals and activists will question the role of power in the processes of resource mobilization and community resistance aimed at changing the status quo.

References

- Borghi, R. (2020). *Decolonialità e privilegio. Pratiche femministe e critica al sistema-mondo*. Meltemi Editore.
- Grimaldi, G. (2022). *Fuorigioco. Figli di migranti e italianità. Un'etnografia tra Milano, Addis Abeba e Londra*. Ombre Corte.
- hooks, b. (1984). *Feminist theory: from margin to center*. South and Press.
- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. Routledge.
- Laboratorio La torre di Babele (2018). *La porta del mare. Socioanalisi narrativa dei dispositivi di gestione neocoloniale dei migranti*. Sensibili alle foglie.
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We with Freud. Sex, power, the black hole

Lorenzo Bernini (University of Verona)

Keywords

Psychoanalysis and Politics, Antisocial Queer Theory, Sexual Drive

Today, the World Health Organization no longer considers homosexuality or gender incongruence pathological. Many countries now guarantee equality between women and men, legalize abortion and gender affirmation, recognize family rights for same-sex couples, and enforce anti-discrimination laws to protect sexual minorities. Meanwhile, customs have changed everywhere: in families, schools, workplaces, media, and social networks. Sex is no longer taboo; on the contrary, it is omnipresent—no longer forbidden but encouraged. The internet saturates everyday life with pornography. The contraceptive pill, anxiolytics, antidepressants, Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis and Post-Exposure Prophylaxis for HIV, hormone therapies to delay menopause and those for gender affirmation, puberty blockers for gender-diverse youth, therapies and practices of assisted reproduction, Cialis and Viagra for assisted erection, cocaine, methamphetamines, GHB, the whole range of chemsex drugs...—this whole chemical arsenal now saturates our sexualized bodies. Some even claim prostitution is “work like any other”, even in countries—such as Italy—where, legally speaking, it is not. And for large parts of the population, so-called sex-positive thinking has now become mainstream: we tell ourselves, essentially, that today sex is no longer a political problem. That it no longer has anything scandalous, negative, or traumatic, that it is all positive, healthy, even therapeutic, and empowering. Is this what the sexual liberation movements of the 1970s had envisioned? The anti-capitalist revolution clearly failed: after the collapse of the USSR, neoliberalism triumphed across the globe. Yet can we say that the sexual revolution has succeeded—within capitalism, though, and not beyond it? Is neoliberal society the civilization of fulfilled sexual freedom? Has the relation between sex and power been finally resolved? Donald Trump’s executive order banning the concept of gender and declaring that there are only two sexes, male and female, defined by the reproductive cells and body produces—eggs or sperm—keeps the issue open. What is sex? What is power? What relation ties one to the other? Keeping in the background the neo-fascist moment that global politics is currently experiencing, this talk will not answer but rather explode these questions into many other questions. Whether listeners are Trumpian reactionaries, progressive liberals, or cynical nihilists, they will be sadistically guided on an empty tour, as if on an orbit around a black hole, in the company of Sigmund Freud—until they are sucked into the abyss of the drive.

References

- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble. Feminism and The Subversion of Identity*. Routledge.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1. An Introduction*. Pantheon Books.
- Freud, S. (1953). *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, in *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. VII). Hogarth Press.
- Freud, S. (1961). *Civilizations and Its Discontents*, in *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. XXI). Hogarth Press.
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- Mieli, M. (2018). *Towards a Gay Communism. Elements of a Homosexual Critique*. Pluto Press.



From the language of power to the power of language. Some reflections on method and substance

Federico Faloppa (University of Reading, UK)

How can the relationship between language and power be studied through linguistic analysis? And what educational and pedagogical tools can be developed to foster awareness of this relationship, the challenges it entails, and the perspectives it opens?

In linguistics, the most established approach to this topic is, notably, that of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2011; Machin & Mayr, 2012; Wodak & Meyer, 2012), which examines how “discourse” (written, spoken, or visual communication) reflects, reproduces, or challenges power relations, their ideological foundations, and the inequalities they generate. Emerging at the intersection of textual linguistics, sociology, and social theory, Critical Discourse Analysis views language not as a neutral medium but as a form of social practice that both shapes and is shaped by institutional, political, cultural, and historical contexts and actors. Typical objects of CDA include media, political, or legal language and their persuasive or manipulative uses, as well as gendered language and the ways it perpetuates or contests social conventions and power relations. By situating discourse within three concentric levels—the textual level, the level of discursive practices (text production and circulation), and the level of social practices (the conventions and ideological frameworks in which texts are created)—CDA has enabled power relations to be examined contextually, both synchronically and diachronically.

However, three decades after its initial formulation, CDA increasingly tends to frame the relationship between language and power in terms of specific actors, sites, and predefined dynamics, with less attention to the intrinsic mechanisms of language itself and to how every speaker may—consciously or not—exercise dominance over others or resist such dominance. Productive complements to CDA therefore include Barthesian semiotics, which explores the inherent strength and limits of the sign; Uwe Pörksen’s (1988) and Victor Klemperer’s (1996) insights into “plastic words” and the normalization of insidious, passively accepted linguistic clichés; and Raffaella Scarpa’s (2021) stylistic approach to the linguistic forms of familial and interpersonal abuse.

The educational challenge, therefore, is not merely to present language as a tool for building hegemony and consensus—by exposing, for example, the manipulative mechanisms of contemporary political and public communication (including recent developments in the management and use of Artificial Intelligence)—but to show how the functioning of linguistic forms mediates and induces power relations and submission even in our everyday interactions, constrained by social roles and dependent on internalized social and cultural practices. Such reflection thus becomes not only a critique of a system in which we are inevitably implicated but also a self-reflexive examination of one’s own positioning, deeply emancipatory (including in intersectional terms) and therefore genuinely transformative.

References

- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. Longman.
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The Thought Residency

A new feature of this year's edition is the Thought Residency, a curated space of reflection and exchange designed for keynote and invited speakers. The Thought Residency is a parallel, curated space for deep reflection, open dialogue, and shared inquiry, unfolding alongside the PEA Conference – *Pedagogy, Ecology, and the Arts*.

Rooted in the conference's central theme—*power*—the Residency brings together keynote interventions, invited contributions, and collective discussions to explore how power is shaped, distributed, challenged, and imagined across educational, ecological, and artistic practices.

This parallel track runs alongside the main conference and is intended to foster in-depth dialogue and cross-disciplinary reflection. Participants are invited to contribute to a shared reflection that will feed into the synthesis and final debate of the conference, helping to shape its outcomes and open pathways for future developments. The Thought Residency begins with a video dialogue featuring Federico Faloppa, linguist at the University of Reading (UK), focusing on the relationship between language and power.

The final restitution, *Reframing Power: A Synthesis from the Thought Residency*, on Saturday, offers a synthesis of the ideas, questions, and proposals that emerged, not as conclusions, but as openings for further critical and creative engagement.

A new feature of this year's edition is the Thought Residency, a curated space of reflection and exchange designed for keynote and invited speakers.



PANEL A (in German) **17.00-18.30**

Academy of Italian-German Studies, Innerhofer Street 1

Chair: Sabina Langer

Sandra Matschnigg-Peer & Tamara Peer (University College of Teacher Education Vienna, A). *Conceptualizing Power in Urban Educational Networks. The Case of a Viennese Bildungsgrätzl*

Sezen Çakmak (Technische Universität Berlin, D). *Negotiating Parenthood within Power Relations. Intersectional Analyses of Agency among Muslim-marked Parents in German Schools*

Tamara Peer, Sandra Matschnigg-Peer, Petra Rauschenberger & Katharina Krämer (University College of Teacher Education Vienna, A). *Power/Dynamis. A Relational Perspective on Entering the Primary Teaching Profession*

Jeanette Hoffmann & Elisabeth von Leon (Free University of Bolzano/Bozen, I). *Empowerment through Children's Literature in Pedagogical Contexts*



Conceptualizing power in urban educational networks. The case of a Viennese Bildungsgrätzl

Sandra Matschnigg-Peer & Tamara Peer (University College of Teacher Education Vienna)

Keywords

Bildungsgrätzl, Collaboration, Performance, Transformation

Power can be misused as a means of control and suppression, but it can also be used for (further) development and promotion to initiate change. Based on Hannah Arendt (1975), this presentation focuses on an understanding of power that emphasizes a consensual ability to act within a group:

„Macht entspricht der menschlichen Fähigkeit, nicht nur zu handeln oder etwas zu tun, sondern sich mit anderen zusammenzuschließen und im Einvernehmen mit ihnen zu handeln.“ (Arendt, 1975, p. 45 [1]) Arendt specifies that power never emanates from individuals, but always manifests itself in the union of groups pursuing a common goal: „Über Macht verfügt niemals ein Einzelner; sie ist im Besitz einer Gruppe und bleibt nur solange existent, als die Gruppe zusammenhält.“ (Arendt, 1975, p. 45 [2])

This article is embedded in the FWF project EQoL [3] – Teaching the good life. The aim is to examine the Viennese initiative Bildungsgrätzl as a consensual association (Arendt, 1975, p. 45) – as power. The determination to act or the desire to act of the actors and groups of the Bildungsgrätzl will be analysed, and the confidence that they can change things by their own efforts will be focused on (Arendt, 1970). The central question guiding this study is how power manifests itself in the sense of joint action in one Bildungsgrätzl in Vienna. Expert interviews (Döringer, 2021) with directors, teachers and pupils, with elementary educators as well as with directors and employees of music schools and Wiener Wohnen of a Viennese Bildungsgrätzl are interpreted (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2022) and expanded by reading phenomenological vignettes (Agostini, 2016; Schratz et al., 2012) in order to shed light on the topic of power in a Viennese Bildungsgrätzl.

[1] “Power corresponds to the human ability not only to act or to do something, but to join with others and to act in agreement with them.” (Arendt, 1975, p. 45)

[2] “Power is never possessed by an individual; it is held by a group and remains in existence only as long as the group holds together.” (Arendt, 1975, p. 45)

[3] Project «EQoL – Teaching the Good Life. Theory, Policy and Practice in Education to Promote Quality of Life in the 21st Century»: The project is funded by the FWF under grant number 5101523 and runs from December 2023 to November 2026.

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Negotiating parenthood within power relations. Intersectional analyses of agency among muslim-marked parents in German schools

Sezen Çakmak (Technische Universität Berlin)

Keywords

Parenthood, Family, School, Anti-Muslim Racism, Belonging

Parenthood and family persist as deeply normative social constructs, whose associated imaginaries profoundly shape subject positions and structures of social belonging (Schondelmayer, Riegel & Fitz-Klausner, 2020). Within educational contexts, these familial ascriptions are not only constructed and negotiated, but also systematically subjected to processes of normalization and regulation (e.g., Kollender, 2020; Ivanova-Chessex, 2020). Schools, therefore, are not merely sites of knowledge transmission. Rather, they function as powerful arenas of subjectivation and social control, wherein both parents and students are positioned in relation to hegemonic orders of belonging and normative expectations (Chamakalayil et al., 2022).

Drawing on insights from my PhD research project, this paper examines how Muslim-marked parents at Berlin secondary schools navigate these educational spaces, where their parenting practices are routinely observed, assessed, and regulated. Central to the analysis is the question of how parental agency is produced, constrained, or expanded within institutional and societal power relations. The project adopts an intersectional, anti-racist research perspective and is situated within a praxeological and social-constructivist framework of “doing” and “displaying” family (Jurczyk, 2014; Finch, 2007). Methodologically, it is grounded in the principles of Grounded Theory and feminist qualitative research. Using selected excerpts from biographical-narrative interviews, the paper reconstructs parental strategies within the tensions between adaptation, negotiation, and resistance.

Aligned with the conference theme of “Power”, this paper conceptualizes the school as an inherently ambivalent space: one that is simultaneously a site of control and normalization, yet also offers opportunities for empowerment, agency, and collective transformation through education. The analysis foregrounds how educational power structures—particularly within monolingual, middle-class-oriented school systems—produce and regulate orders of difference, delineate boundaries of belonging, and frequently position marginalized parents as objects of pedagogical governance. At the same time, the paper demonstrates how Muslim-marked parents actively navigate, appropriate, and contest these institutional spaces, thereby generating new possibilities for agency and transformative engagement.

This paper advocates for an anti-racist pedagogical approach that recognizes parents as active participants and co-constructors of schools. It underscores the necessity of reimagining power in educational contexts and directly engages with the core question posed by the conference: How can power within educational institutions be redistributed, reconfigured, and practiced differently?

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Power/Dynamis. A relational perspective on entering the Primary Teaching Profession

Tamara Peer, Sandra Matschnigg-Peer, Petra Rauschenberger & Katharina Krämer
(University College of Teacher Education Vienna)

Keywords

Teacher Induction, Novice Teachers, Relational Power (Dynamis), Agency and Vulnerability

Klaus Schneider (2021, p. 110) provides an insight into how novice teachers experience the transition into the teaching profession. He characterizes the initial phase of their professional practice as being defined by “shock, a leap into cold water, work overload, lack of routine, finding one’s role within the system, gaining acceptance from students, worst-case scenarios such as failure, learning through personal experience, and self-reflection.” These aspects implicitly point to power relations that act upon novice teachers:

Aristotle defines dynamis/power as the origin of change either in oneself or in others – as well as the capacity to be changed by others or to resist such change. This includes “not only the possibility of acting, but also the capacity to experience (suffer),” and always involves “suffering (experience) in some form [...] – either causing another to suffer or suffering oneself” (Röttgers, 2002, p. 58). For Aristotle, dynamis/power is relational and process oriented. It encompasses both the potential to act (*potentia activae*) and the capacity to suffer or experience something (*potentia passivae*). This describes a modality of possibility, or “an asymmetrical relation of power between two entities” (Röttgers, 2002, p. 59).

This paper, embedded within the University College of Teacher Education Vienna’s research project “Lebenswelten des Alltags von Berufseinsteigerinnen der Primarstufe” [1] investigates the following central question: In what ways is power – understood as dynamis – reflected in the context of entering the teaching profession at the primary level?

The analysis focuses on the potential to act and the capacity to experience/suffer among novice teachers who are still in training [2]. Drawing on a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1996) and based on nine expert interviews (Döringer, 2021), the study examines how power, in the form of dynamis, is perceived and enacted during the transition into professional life. Particular attention is given to situations in which participants perceived scope for action is either restricted or expanded – moments when they experience themselves as either agentic or powerless.

The study aims to reveal the dynamics of power – the processes through which novice teachers enact change (*potentia activae*) or undergo change (*potentia passivae*). Based on this, the study provides preliminary insights into power processes, which are understood as transformations within oneself and in others, that constitute the experience of entering the teaching profession. The findings aim to explain implications for teacher education, professional development, and school practice.

[1] <https://www.forschungslandkarte.at/lebenswelten-des-alltags-von-berufseinsteigerinnen-der-primarstufe/>

[2] The novice teachers are still in the process of completing their bachelor’s degree in Primary Education.

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Empowerment through Children's Literature in Pedagogical Contexts

Jeanette Hoffmann & Elisabeth von Leon (Free University of Bozen/Bolzano)

Keywords

Narration, Imagination, Empowerment, Children, Literature

Children's literature is of great importance in children's socialisation (Breitmoser, 2022). It tells stories that strengthen children, encourage them and allow them to imagine their own and other concepts of the self and the world (Wieler, 2024). Especially for children in particularly challenging living conditions and situations, it offers opportunities for imaginative participation in the stories of others, their encounters and experiences, problems and fears, dreams and longings. These can be linked to their own life worlds and ideas (Beier, 2021) and can evoke transformations in processes of narrative resonance (Rosa, 2020). Children's literature is important for the child's construction of identity (Daly, 2022; Ulich & Ulich, 1994) and can contribute to the promotion of resilience (Wustmann, 2005) and empowerment (Herriger, 2022). In educational contexts such as kindergarten and primary school, picturebooks and children's literature can accompany children and develop a 'positive power' (Kain, 2006).

This contribution presents current titles of contemporary children's literature for different age groups, ranging from picture books, first readers and children's novels to comics. They tell stories about living together in diversity and community: *Die Gurkentruppe* (Niemöller & Oser, 2024), of depression and resilience in a friendship: *Emma und der traurige Hund* (Rufener, 2024), of women's rights and democratic participation: *Der Tag, als die Frauen streikten* (Ólafsdóttir, 2024), of death and life in a mother-daughter relationship: *Der Vogel in mir fliegt, wohin er will* (Lundberg, 2024), of longing and belonging in family matters: *Von hier aus kann man die ganze Welt sehen* (Koens, 2024) and of war and trauma in the culture of memory: *Anna: Was die Zeit nicht heilt* (Laube & Zaeri, 2024). They have in common that they have all been published in German (some translated from English, Swedish and Dutch) and were nominated for the 2025 German Young Adult Literature Award (Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis) in the picture book, children's book and non-fictional categories.

Against the background of theoretical considerations on narrative resonance (Rosa, 2020) and empirical research on empowerment through children's literature in educational contexts (Sundström Sjödin, 2022), the questions are as follows: Which polyphonic life stories are told in the selected books? How are they structured narratively and visually? What form does the motif of resilience (Kruse & Terhorst, 2020) take in them? Finally, an outlook is given on didactic possibilities for integrating this literature into the educational contexts of kindergarten and primary school.

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PANEL B (in Italian) **17.00-18.30**
Centre for Culture, Cavour Street 1
Chair: Nazario Zambaldi

Letizia Luini, Greta Persico, Andrea Galimberti & Monica Guerra (University of Milano-Bicocca, I). *Redistributing power in biodiversity education: toward participatory and child-led learning*

Francesca Rota (University of Milano-Bicocca, I). *The power of sustainability: pedagogical reflections on the role of education for sustainability in promoting children's empowerment*

Giovanna Fontana & Lucia De Marco (Multidisciplinary Center for Teacher Training, Unimore, I). *The power of scientific language. A civic education project to teach biotechnology between ethics and reality*





Redistributing power in biodiversity education: toward participatory and child-led learning

Letizia Luini, Greta Persico, Andrea Galimberti & Monica Guerra (University of Milano-Bicocca, Department of Human Sciences "Riccardo Massa")

Keywords

Biodiversity Education, Experiential Learning, Children's Agency, Participatory Learning Processes

Biodiversity education within traditional school-based models often takes place through transmissive, one-way, teacher-centered dynamics (Persico, 2024; Guerra, 2019), in which adults retain and deliver knowledge that is passively received by students, resulting in unbalanced power dynamics in the construction of knowledge. In contrast, international literature emphasizes the need for educational processes to be more connected to real-life contexts, underscoring the value of exploratory and experiential dimensions in learning (Guerra, 2024; Matos et al., 2022). Furthermore, it highlights the importance of anchoring learning in local environmental issues faced by specific communities, through interdisciplinary approaches that foster a deeper understanding of ecological challenges. Finally, affective experiences—mediated by sensory engagement with nature, emotional relationships with living beings, and personal connections to the natural world—are seen as essential to cultivating awareness and understanding of biodiversity (Beery & Jørgensen, 2018).

In response to these needs, this contribution presents the work of the interdisciplinary research group BEAT (Biodiversity Education and Awareness Team), part of the National Biodiversity Future Centre (NBFC), which has developed an innovative experiential, immersive, and place-based educational approach to biodiversity. As a key component of this approach, the group has designed a methodological toolkit: a set of playful, paper-based "becks" created to mediate outdoor biodiversity learning experiences with children, youth, and adults.

This toolkit supports a process of subjective and inquiry-based exploration, enabling each participant to begin from personal questions and hypotheses that emerge from direct observation. These inquiries are then documented in field notebooks, which serve as artistic, scientific, and reflective tools. Through a diversity of expressive languages—such as narratives, drawings, photographs, and maps—participants track their evolving observations, ideas, and relationships with the natural world.

The approach encourages active, participatory knowledge-building, especially when adults take a step back to let children explore based on their own curiosities, rather than following predefined, rigid learning paths. This openness increases motivation, strengthens children's sense of agency, and promotes a more democratic redistribution of roles, responsibilities, and power in the learning process.

Ultimately, this work proposes an alternative model of biodiversity education. In line with an ecological perspective (Mortari, 2020), rather than simply delivering alarmist, pre-packaged information about the environmental crisis, it aims to foster meaningful, situated encounters between people and places. This means offering immersive experiences in nature that cultivate emotional engagement and a sense of care and responsibility, and allowing for educational paths driven by children's interests. In this way, biodiversity education becomes a relational, participatory process rooted in direct experience, rather than a top-down transmission of knowledge.



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The power of sustainability: pedagogical reflections on the role of education for sustainability in promoting children's empowerment

Francesca Rota (University of Milano-Bicocca)

Keywords

Education for Sustainability, Early Childhood, Empowerment, Power, Competent Citizens

This contribution is part of the MUSA project (*Multilayered Urban Sustainability Action*), specifically within the line of action called “MUSA Societies”, which involves the implementation of an open-air laboratory by the *Open-Air Lab* research group of the Milano-Bicocca University to promote a culture of sustainability.

The most widely accepted definition of sustainable development, proposed in the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987), highlights the principles of intergenerational and intragenerational equity. Still, nowadays, not all people are equally responsible for the exploitation of the Earth’s resources, as some generations, communities and social classes have exploited the planet more than others (Ferrante, 2022). It can also be recognised that the consequences of the distinctive phenomena of the Anthropocene do not manifest uniformly for everyone: those who are most vulnerable, with fewer resources and capabilities, are disproportionately affected by inequalities and power imbalances (Calvano, 2022).

The literature identifies children as the most vulnerable to the unsustainability that characterises contemporary society (Davis et al., 2024) and as often marginalised in decision-making processes (Rota & Luini, 2023). Within this framework, this contribution aims to reflect on the role of education for sustainability in promoting children's empowerment. For a long time sustainability issues were considered too complex and inadequate for children, but recent studies have highlighted a vision of children as competent citizens capable of interacting with the environmental, social and economic issues that increasingly affect their lives from an early age. To face the challenges of the future, children need to have decision-making power and feel capable in the present, realising that their ideas matter and can lead to tangible change that has an impact on the environment in which they live (Reunamo & Suomela, 2013). It is therefore necessary to move from education *about* sustainability, where adults have the power to transmit knowledge, to education *for* sustainability that, through participatory approaches, promotes the development of skills to change current patterns of behaviour, such as creativity, critical thinking and collaboration.

In conclusion, if we want education to stop perpetuating the unsustainable logic of today’s society, it is essential that everyone, starting with children, feels empowered to make a difference. In this sense, education for sustainability in early childhood—where the preposition *for* underscores the importance of promoting approaches and skills that enable children to see themselves as active agents of change—carries the political ambition of fostering the empowerment of the youngest members of society.

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The power of scientific language. A civic education project to teach biotechnology between ethics and reality

Fontana Giovanna & De Marco Lucia (Multidisciplinary Center for Teacher Training, Unimore, I)

Keywords

Civic Education, Biotechnologies, Scientific Language, Research, Dissemination

The cultivation of scientific language in schools is part of a broader linguistic education, defined as the cross-curricular educational axis, to which each subject can consciously contribute (Lavinio, 2022). The educational experience presented stems from a reflection on the formative power of scientific language in schools and is part of the “*Research Language*” project promoted by scientists of the National research Council of Italy (CNR)—Research Area of Bologna (Torreggiani et al., 2021). The project aims to let students become active participants in scientific communication, capable of transforming specialized knowledge into shared understanding through the conscious use of scientific lexis, creativity and bilingualism (Italian and English).

The activity was carried out in a fourth-year class of a technical high school in the province of Modena, in the North of Italy, through several phases:

–**decoding scientific language:** students were guided to actively elaborate the definition of biotechnology, fostering what Bruner (1966) defines as “meaningful learning”, rooted in understanding rather than learning by heart. The critical analysis of scientific articles allowed them to compare common and specialized language, highlighting some characteristics of scientific language such as monosemy, objectivity and formal style (Piazzi, 2010). Through this approach, students directly experienced the epistemic power of scientific language and its ability to rigorously create and share knowledge;

–**discussion:** in a seminar led by Dr. Cavallini, biotechnology was connected to socially impactful topics such as GMOs, genetic engineering and sustainability. For the students, this meant not only acquiring content but also developing critical thinking by questioning our relationship with nature and the responsibilities that arise from human intervention upon it;

–**creative reworking:** finally, students were asked to translate what they had learned into other forms of expression. Working in mixed ability groups, they created challenging and accessible educational videos on biotechnologies, making scientific language understandable and within everyone’s reach.

The entire training path had strong educational value: it developed soft skills in line with European key competences (Council of the European Union, 2018), but above all, it showed students that scientific language is not merely a tool for conveying notions: it is a powerful booster to build citizenship, exercise critical thinking and actively take part in the knowledge.

In conclusion, learning to “deal with” science creatively does not mean simplifying knowledge, but rather making it even more powerful because it becomes accessible, understandable and capable of generating deep and lasting awareness.



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WORKSHOP A (in English) **17.00-18.00**

Centre for Culture, Cavour Street 1

Chair: Denis Francesconi

Ulrike Barth, Isabel Schmier & Angelika Wiehl (Alanus University of Arts and Social Sciences). *Empowerment – Self & social effectiveness through artistic status work*





Empowerment – Self & social effectiveness through artistic status work

Ulrike Barth, Isabel Schmier & Angelika Wiehl (Alanus University of Arts and Social Sciences – Institute for Waldorf Education, Inclusion and Interculturalism)

Keywords

Status Work, Empowerment, Pedagogical Relationship, Professional Attitude

We generally understand status as our position in society, which is conferred by financial, political or social power. In contrast, improv theatre understands status as an attitude that is acted out in body, voice and language and that is negotiated independently of social position. Keith Johnstone (1981) distinguishes between high and low status, which people use to position themselves in relation to each other. So-called status experts can consciously switch between high and low status and thus react appropriately to different situations.

A professional pedagogical attitude is also expressed in forms of status. Educators should become aware of their own status behaviour to support their pedagogical work. Physically experiencing and artistically practising the various forms of status in the context of pedagogical practice promotes self-efficacy and social effectiveness in the sense of professional empowerment.

Today, empowerment is an umbrella term for approaches in psychosocial practice that encourage people to discover their own strengths and offer them support in achieving self-determination and life autonomy. Empowerment practice supports people to act in a self-determined way in their life and professional practice and to realise themselves autonomously. Strengthening people, promoting resources and developing civil society's ability to act are the central concerns of the empowerment concept, which has become a 'fixed star' of socio-political and psychosocial discourse in recent years (Herriger, 2014). Herriger names three current fields of discourse on empowerment that can be groundbreaking for the development of pedagogical attitudes and relationships:

- Empowerment and subjective identity work,
- Empowerment and new psychosocial professionalism,
- Empowerment, destigmatisation and the anti-discrimination movement (ibid.)

We raise questions about how the empowerment of self-determination and participation can succeed through 'status work': How can we practise status and thereby empower ourselves? What can be achieved through a physical form of status in relationships and groups? How can we play with physical expressions in order to use them as a source for developing a professional attitude and as a key to shaping pedagogical relationships?

In this workshop, we introduce the theoretical foundations of status work as a possibility for self and socially effective empowerment. Participants will familiarise themselves with the basic principles of status work according to Keith Johnstone (1981). Using linguistic and gestural exercises, we observe the effect our physical and vocal behaviour has on the other person and the group. Building on this, we will reflect on how these theatre pedagogical exercises affect the development of a professional pedagogical attitude.

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PANEL C (in Italian) 11.00-12.30

Academy of Italian-German Studies, Innerhofer Street 1

Chair: Sabina Langer

Maria Cristina Mecenero (PhD, Public Primary School teacher) & **Laura Corbella** (PhD, Public Primary School teacher). *The power of emotions and feelings, between promotion and manipulation. An ethnographic insight from two teachers in dialogue*

Giulia Mirandola, Monica Galiè & Cecilia Cavallo (Finow Grundschule SESB-Staatliche Europa Schule Berlin). *Pioniere. Le donne che hanno fatto l'Europa. A democratic education experience on gender equality and civic engagement in bilingual schools*

Lucia De Marco & Giovanna Fontana (Multidisciplinary Center for Teacher Training, Unimore, I). *Communication and power in gender relations. An educational path against violence*





The power of emotions and feelings, between promotion and manipulation. An ethnographic insight from two teachers in dialogue

Maria Cristina Mecenero (PhD, Public Primary School teacher) & Laura Corbella (PhD, Public Primary School teacher)

Keywords

Power, Emotions, Resistance, Public School

Two primary school teachers intertwine their gazes to recount what is happening in public schools today, observing power dynamics with an ethnographic approach (Sawyer & Joe, 2012) that privileges embodied experience and relationship with context. Our reflection stems from an urgent need: to recognize the power of emotions in the construction of the institutional and educational climate beyond the rhetoric of “emotional education”, which inhabits programmatic documents and educational proposals, and the democratic imaginary of school communities.

Shared questions emerge in the dialogue: what does one feel, physically and emotionally, walking to and within school (Sclavi, 2003)? What tensions lurk behind buzzwords such as “innovation” and “continuing education”? How does school power express itself today and how does it react to the forms of critical thinking and opposition, even minimal, that are manifested in everyday schooling? What traces do these conflicts leave in the relationships between teachers, staff, and principals?

Our two experiences return different pictures but traversed by common concerns (Bauman, 2008). We observe a progressive marginalization of the reflective, relational and emotional dimension in teacher training and school curriculums, replaced by a technological and pragmatic emphasis (Zuboff, 2023): robotics, artificial intelligence, use of platforms, reduction of group work and space for confrontation in which the diversity of feeling and thinking has value. A training and institutional organization that, far from increasing awareness, risks fueling the dissociation between means and ends, between subjective, collective and ongoing experiences, fostering conformism and professional bewilderment.

But generative trajectories also continue to be kept alive, often hovering between recognition and invisibility. In both our classrooms, trust is built daily through shared paths with children and families: subjective expression, theater, art, spontaneous writing, fluid spaces (classroom, hall, corridor, park) and practices of listening to emotional experiences (Antonacci & Berni, 2024). In this climate, education becomes an experience that integrates body, word, emotion and thought, capable of countering, with active effort and not without contradictory inner drives, the culture of performance and fragmentation.

The contribution therefore aims to offer a cue to rethink the political and human role of those who teach today: not just executors of directives but subjects capable of reading contexts, promoting relationships, and opposing when necessary (Boella, 2018). In a School that increasingly talks about emotions but less and less recognizes and integrates them as a foundational part of the teaching/learning process, our input is meant to be an act of trust and resistance.



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Pioniere. Le donne che hanno fatto l'Europa. A democratic education experience on gender equality and civic Engagement in bilingual schools

Giulia Mirandola, Monica Galiè & Cecilia Cavallo (Finow Grundschule SESB-Staatliche Europa Schule Berlin)

Keywords

Empowerment, Democratic Education Experience, Gender Equality, Global Citizen Education, Critical Thinking

This abstract presents the third edition of the educational network project *Pioniere. Le donne che hanno fatto l'Europa (Pioneers: Women Who Shaped Europe)*, implemented in two Italo-German bilingual primary schools in Berlin – the Finow-Grundschule SESB-Staatliche Europa Schule Berlin and the Herman-Nohl-Schule – and involving approximately 100 sixth-grade students. The workshop is held annually in collaboration with Ufficio Scuole Ambasciata d'Italia Berlino, as part of the Europe Week programme, during which many schools take the Europe Week as an opportunity to deepen their knowledge of Europe.

Designed as a transformative educational initiative, the project fosters democratic education, critical thinking, civic awareness through an interdisciplinary, participatory and multilingual approach.

Fausta Deshormes La Valle, one of the pioneering women featured in this project, once declared: «Europe, an opportunity for women; women, an opportunity for Europe». This statement serves as a powerful entry point to reflect on the theme of *power* through the lens of women's engagement in the European integration process.

Our first point of connection focuses on the presence of women in positions of leadership within European institutions. Without their decisive contribution, we would not have witnessed the recognition of equal pay as a fundamental human right, the establishment of the FEMM Committee in the European Parliament, or the creation of policy instruments aimed at reducing gender inequalities in education, employment, reproductive rights, and the fight against gender-based violence. Nor would the Erasmus Programme, an emblem of European unity and mobility, exist as we know it today.

The workshop draws inspiration from the lives and work of figures such as Anna Siemsen, Sophie Scholl, Ada Rossi, Ursula Hirschmann, Fausta Deshormes La Valle, Simone Veil, Louise Weiss, Fabrizia Baduel Glorioso, Eliane Vogel-Polsky, Sofia Corradi and Jo Cox. Though from different generations, they share a common trait: the transformative power of civic and public engagement, expressed through pacifism, women's labour, the Erasmus programme, and participation in both European constitutional processes and institutions.

The pedagogical process was structured into three phases: Inquiry and Discovery, Analytical Reflection, Creative Production and Simulation.

The strength of the workshop lies in its emphasis on a “contamination” of ideas and experiences, underpinned by a shared research paradigm. It fosters collaboration among students meeting for the first time, guiding them through a journey of mutual discovery, cooperation, and, in some cases, genuine friendship. The power of empathy and the fair distribution of responsibilities further enhance this collective experience.



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Communication and power in gender relations. An educational path against violence

Lucia De Marco & Giovanna Fontana (Multidisciplinary Center for Teacher Training, Unimore)

Keywords

Conflict, Gender Relations, Gender Roles, Power

The concept of power is fundamental to understanding social relationships and institutional structures. Max Weber defines it as the ability of an actor to impose their will despite the opposition of others, highlighting the asymmetrical and conflictual nature of social relations (Weber, 1922). This approach is particularly useful for analyzing gender relations and violence against women, where power manifests not only in physical forms but also through psychological, symbolic, and cultural dynamics that sustain structural inequalities. In this context, power is expressed through social norms, communicative practices, and institutions that reinforce the dominant position of the male gender. Michel Foucault expands on Weber's perspective by proposing a vision of power as a diffuse network, present in every daily interaction and reproduced through discourses and practices. According to this view, power is not possessed but exercised and continuously renegotiated (Foucault, 1975).

Within this theoretical framework, an educational project was developed that, through creative writing and theatre, engaged students in exploring power dynamics, with particular attention to gender relations and conflictual communication. The project was structured in several phases:

1. Following a theoretical introduction to the concept of power and its various forms, students analyzed literary and theatrical texts—both classical and contemporary—that explicitly address themes of conflict, dominance, and inequality;
2. This was followed by a creative writing workshop, where students were guided in producing original monologues and dialogues inspired by real or imagined situations involving power;
3. The texts produced served as the basis for a theatre workshop aimed at staging the works created by the students themselves.

Through acting and group discussion, students not only enhanced their communication and creative skills but also acquired tools to critically recognize and confront situations of domination and inequality. The project concluded with a final presentation open to the school community, during which the students' work was performed. This final moment held high educational and symbolic value, reinforcing the role of the school as a space for civic and cultural growth. Lasting approximately 30 hours, the project constitutes a multidisciplinary educational pathway integrating sociology, civic education, theatre, and writing, contributing to the development of students' critical thinking, empathy, and relational skills.

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PANEL D (in English) **11.00-13.00**

Centre for Culture, Cavour Street 1

Chair: Denis Francesconi

Brigitta Pia Alioto (Ca' Foscari University of Venice, I). *Feedback and error perception as pedagogical dimensions of growth mindset. A qualitative study in a medium-sized company*

Vassiliki Papadopoulou (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, GR). *Discourse and power in education reform. A critical analysis of the Onassis Schools controversy in Greece*

Francesco V. Ferraro (University of Derby, UK). *Breath, balance, and belonging. Empowering older adults through dance and breathwork*

Karla Stolle (University of Music and Performing Arts, Vienna, A). *"Resonant futures". Glimpses of what matters in the future of music education in Europe*





The power of words. Feedback and error perception as pedagogical dimensions of growth mindset. A qualitative study in a medium-sized company

Brigitta Pia Alioto (Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy)

Keywords

Growth Mindset, Feedback, Error Perception, Power, Enactive Approach, Temporal Agency, Adult Learning

In the educational and organizational spheres, power often manifests not only through explicit hierarchies but also through different kinds of communications—in particular, in the way feedback is formulated and delivered. This study investigates how feedback, as a situated and relational act, carries pedagogical power: it can function either as a tool of control or as a means of emancipation. Conducted in a medium-sized company, the research investigates how feedback—through the words chosen—resonates with individuals, influencing not only how they interpret mistakes, but how they act, reflect, and envision their future.

Drawing on Dweck's (2006) growth mindset theory and the notion of temporal agency (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998), the study frames organizations as living systems in which culture and feedback patterns shape individuals' orientation toward learning, failure, and change. Feedback, in this context, is not a neutral transmission of information but a powerful pedagogical act: it can discipline or liberate, close or open future possibilities.

The research employs a qualitative approach based on semi-structured enactive interviews (Maturana & Varela, 1987). Participants were asked to re-enact specific workplace episodes involving feedback, allowing them to explore how feedback was experienced and how it influenced the perception of error and subsequent actions.

The findings reveal a clear dichotomy: feedback that is dialogical, process-oriented, and grounded in mutual trust supports empowerment and fosters a culture of reflective growth. In contrast, judgmental or outcome-driven feedback often leads to self-censorship, disengagement, and the internalization of error as personal inadequacy. These dynamics reflect deeper structural tensions in both educational and societal systems, where the exercise of power can either foster inclusive participation and shared responsibility, or perpetuate hierarchical control and silencing.

Through the lens of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991) and double-loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1974), the study suggests that feedback practices are a crucible for negotiating power in everyday learning: they reveal whether educational spaces—formal or informal—act as mechanisms of adaptation or as sites of emancipation. By promoting a culture of feedback grounded in care, dialogue, and trust, organizations can reimagine power not as domination but as a collective and ethical capacity to grow.

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Discourse and power in education reform. A critical analysis of the Onassis Schools controversy in Greece

Vassiliki Papadopoulou (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, GR)

Keywords

Critical Discourse Analysis, Public Debate, Onassis Schools

This study adopts the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly drawing on the approaches of Fairclough (1995) and Wodak & Meyer (2009), to examine the discursive strategies employed in the public debate surrounding the Onassis Schools (ΔΗΜ.Ω.Σ.-DEM.OS). CDA enables us to identify the ideological underpinnings and power relations embedded in language, especially in socio-politically sensitive domains such as education reform. The empirical material consists of six publicly available texts: three articles supportive of the Onassis Schools, published in prominent newspapers and educational portals, emphasizing innovation, meritocracy, and social upliftment, and three critical articles, which raise concerns about social inequality, institutional autonomy, and the privatization of public education. Texts were selected based on the following criteria:

- (a) visibility and reach (print or digital publication in national media),
- (b) explicitly articulated stance on the Onassis Schools,
- (c) thematic relevance to educational policy, public interest, and ideological framing.

Each text was analyzed for: *lexical choices* (e.g., “excellence,” “elitism,” “social mobility”), *argumentation strategies* (e.g., appeal to fairness, fear of inequality), *intertextual references* (e.g., to existing Model or Experimental Schools), and *the positioning of social actors* (e.g., students, teachers, the state, the Onassis Foundation). The contrasting discourses reveal a deeper ideological clash about the purpose and nature of public education in Greece. Proponents frame the initiative as a pragmatic response to inequality, leveraging private resources for public good. Critics, however, stress the neoliberal undertones of competition, standardization, and performance-based accountability (Ball, 2012; Apple, 2006). The Onassis Schools project has triggered a significant public discourse that transcends educational policy, touching upon questions of governance, social justice, and institutional autonomy. This analysis shows how language operates as a site of ideological struggle, where different visions of public education are articulated, legitimized, or contested. Further research could explore how these discourses evolve over time, especially after the schools become operational, and how students, parents, and educators experience and rearticulate these narratives in practice.

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Breath, balance, and belonging. Empowering older adults through dance and breathwork

Francesco V. Ferraro (University of Derby)

Keywords

Respiratory Muscle Training, Art, Dance Therapy, Embodied Pedagogy, Elderly

Falls are one of the most significant health risks facing older adults globally, with over 684,000 deaths annually and disproportionate effects on those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds (World Health Organization, 2024). While multimodal interventions have proven effective in increasing balance and mobility, many lack accessibility, social connection, or creative engagement elements that are crucial to sustaining their impact and promoting personal empowerment (World Health Organization, 2022; National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2020). This interdisciplinary project brings together researchers and practitioners from the arts, sport, and biomedical sciences to explore how embodied practices, specifically dance-based movement and inspiratory muscle training, can redistribute power in public health interventions by centering older adults' agency and belonging. Drawing on embodied pedagogies, we reframed fall prevention from a medicalised deficit model to one of expressive capacity, self-regulation, and collective movement. We designed and implemented an 8-week pilot programme at the University of Derby (UK), open to community-dwelling adults aged 60 and above. Recruitment exceeded expectations with over 30 participants, suggesting a strong latent demand for accessible, arts-integrated interventions. Sessions were held in inclusive spaces, the university's sports hall and dance studio, and delivered through a co-facilitative approach that emphasised autonomy, rhythm, and inspiratory muscle training (Ferraro et al., 2021). Preliminary data, combining functional mobility scores and participant feedback, indicate improved balance, reduced breathlessness, and increased emotional connection to the body and group. Beyond health metrics, the project reveals how shifting the location of power from practitioner to participant can enhance motivation and long-term adherence, particularly when interventions are framed through creativity and inclusion. Our approach challenges dominant narratives around ageing, frailty, and dependence, instead promoting a model of participatory health grounded in the arts and movement. This work has implications for both practice and policy, inviting educators, clinicians, and artists to reimagine public health through the lens of dignity, aesthetics, and empowerment.

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“Resonant Futures”. Glimpses of what matters in the future of music education in Europe

Karla Stolle (University of Music and Performing Arts, Vienna)

Keywords

Innovation, Music Education, International Music Classroom, Future Development, Educational Futures

What does the future in music education in schools sound like—and which themes are beginning to set the tone? This paper examines future-oriented themes in school-based music education across Europe, based on responses to a questionnaire conducted within the TEAM project. The Erasmus+ project TEAM (Teacher Education Academy for Music) unites 13 partners from 10 countries who work together to enhance collaboration, foster mobility, and develop future-oriented approaches in music education and music teacher education across Europe. Focusing on Section 6 (“Future Development”), the study does not claim to capture full national strategies but offers insight into recurring topics that resonate across institutional, local and policy contexts. More than 25 national coordinators and representatives for music education participated in the questionnaire and shared their reflection on the future of music education in their respective countries.

Through the evaluation process, different areas were identified that seem to appear in more than one country. Among the most frequently mentioned were digitalization, the inclusion of students with special needs, curricular reform and governance (Schüle, 2016; Landwehrmann, 2023), and the social and cultural relevance of music education (Kertz-Welzel, 2022). These themes were not always described in detail or embedded in formal strategies, yet their repetition suggests a shared awareness of their urgency and potential. While their manifestations vary by context, their recurrence indicates emerging priorities in shaping the future of music education in schools.

The paper discusses these topics through selected examples that illustrate how some countries have already begun to address them—including Portugal’s Orquestra Geração, Ireland’s Music Generation (Moore, 2019), Finland’s focus on sustainability and democracy (OECD, 2023; ArtsEqual, 2021), and the Netherlands’ emphasis on school autonomy and context-responsive artistic formats (Ball et al., 2012). Each example points to ways in which music education can respond to broader educational challenges without losing its artistic and pedagogical integrity.

Rather than offering conclusive answers, this paper presents glimpses of what is gaining resonance in music education classrooms across Europe. These glimpses reflect both local dynamics and broader structural tensions, showing where music education intersects with emerging forms of pedagogical power—power to include, to transform, and to respond (Biesta, 2011; Kertz-Welzel, 2022).

In doing so, the paper aligns with the PEA conference theme by reimagining education not as an instrument of control, but as a field of resonance—where values, voices, and visions are negotiated across systems and borders.

Disclaimer: Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

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PANEL E (in Italian) **15.45-17.45**

Academy of Italian-German Studies, Innerhofer Street 1

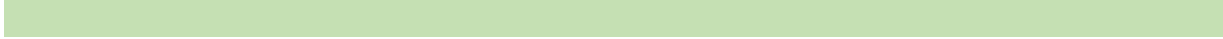
Chair: Nazario Zambaldi

Maria Laura Belisario (University of Milano-Bicocca, I). *From the power of sound to the sound of power. An artistic experience*

Antonina Eugenia Ferruzza Marchetta (independent researcher and artist, I). *Dance-movement therapy workshops, an embodied learning experience to foster the empowerment of primary education science students*

Chiara Massullo (Roma Tre University, I). *From domination to relationality. Reflections on art, nature, and participation through the projects Educazione poetica pubblica, Educazione erotica poetica, and PièdiBoscoLab*

Marco Salvatore (University of Milano-Bicocca, I). *The power of artistic experience of children for sustainability education*





From the power of sound to the sound of power. An artistic experience

Maria Laura Belisario (University of Milano-Bicocca)

Keywords

Art, Nature, Mimesis, Relationship, Empowerment

The word “art” derives from the Latin “ars artis”, which includes among its meanings the notion of a “way of acting”.

Art is therefore also action: an action that leads individuals to represent, that is, to make present in a new way (Antonacci, 2024), moments of daily life as well as the ideas and actions linked to them.

Art, as Riccardo Massa explains, can create a kind of potential space that enables individuals not only to become aware of their own representations of the world, but also to act on them concretely, transforming them. This phenomenon generates an activation of resources that increase empowerment, enhancing the ability to choose and dialogue with oneself, with the world and with others.

This contribution explores the connection between artistic and sound experience and power, understood as self-expression, decision-making ability, and the management of one’s own and others’ space through a proposal that relates music to the natural and social environment of which the individual is an integral part. This is the “Orchestra della Natura”, a sound expression workshop using natural objects, led by music therapist and musical facilitator Daniele Delfino: an experience that, for almost thirty years, has involved participants from childhood to adulthood and that is often proposed in school and academic settings.

This type of experience, which in recent years has been the focus of a doctoral case study, actively involves participants in individual, pair, and group experimentation with sounds and instruments linked to Prehistory.

In this context, two forms of artistic expression are interwoven: music, an integral part of every individual’s life (Madrussan, 2020) and theatre, which invites participants to take on the appearance of true Primitive Humans through the mimetic ability that, as Gilberto Scaramuzzo (2013) explains, goes beyond simple imitation, giving life to a real “as if”.

This artistic experience fosters dialogue with oneself, with others, and with the natural world through the language of the body and of sound representing in the meaning of “making present again” the relational exchanges that are an integral part of everyday life and the power dynamics connected to them: dynamics of which a pedagogical reading is proposed.

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Dance-movement therapy workshops, an embodied learning experience to foster the empowerment of primary education science students

Antonina Eugenia Ferruzza Marchetta (independent researcher and artist)

Keywords

Art and Science, Embodied Learning, Dance-Movement Therapy, Empowerment

In my talk, I will present the results of the dance-movement therapy workshop 'a childhood made of science and art' as an embodied learning experience of theoretical content inherent in the relationship between scientific method and artistic experience (Mignosi & Nuti, 2020). The workshop meetings were offered to the students of the course of Primary Education Science, address early childhood (curriculum 0-3 years), of the University of Palermo, within the subject of "Pedagogy of Nonverbal Communication and Educational Relations". One of the goals of the workshop was to foster students' empowerment through active practice of the course content, as well as to develop a type of learning based on the emotional, sensory and affective dimensions.

Drawing on Foucauldian thought, inherent in the biopolitics of power, students were able to approach the learning environment creatively and expressively, reversing their position as 'acquirers of knowledge' to become active protagonists of their learning (Foucault, 2014). They were also able to experiment, in an embodied setting, with pedagogical practices to be addressed to the children in the kindergarten, through the activation of the body dimension, on the back of dance-movement therapy and somatic techniques.

The workshop takes its cues from John Dewey's teaching in *Art as Experience* (2005), in which all meaningful learning is conceived as a process of an aesthetic-artistic nature, endowed with its own intrinsic completeness. In addition, Paulo Freire's thought (2014) has been a backdrop to such experience because of the ethical-aesthetic emphasis placed on the educational process, as well as its pragmatic implication, based on the concepts of permanent research and systematicity. Finally, the perspective of embodied cognition—connection between movement and cognitive mechanisms—and the intertwining of artistic and scientific thinking, in the commonality of methodologies—including analogical thinking—and purposes—truth-seeking—, serves as a theoretical framework (Wilmer & Zukouskaite, 2016).

This intervention intends to demonstrate how through the artistic medium—dance in the first place and partially drawing—meaningful content for nursery educators can be conveyed in an ecological perspective, capable of promoting not only knowledge but also skills, fostering processes of self-awareness and consequently empowerment. Finally, educational practice mediated through corporeity elicits a fruitful connection between cognitive and emotional dimensions, integrating mind and body and amplifying the depth of knowledge internalization.

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From domination to relationality. Reflections on art, nature, and participation through the projects *Educazione poetica pubblica*, *Educazione erotica poetica*, and *PièdiBoscoLab*

Chiara Massullo (Roma Tre University)

Keywords

Pedagogy of Expression, Mimesis, Art-based Education, Empowerment, Complexity

The presentation explores the potential of the *pedagogy of expression* (Scaramuzzo, 2019) within a paradigm shift from domination to relationality, drawing on the pedagogical implications of Bateson's (1991) concept of 'sacred unity' and Morin's notion of 'being-in-relation'. These perspectives invite us to move beyond a fragmented and objectifying paradigm—grounded in possession, control, opposition and domination—toward one that is relational, systemic, and participatory (Manghi, 2004). Within this shift, the other is not an object to be shaped or dominated, but a subject to be encountered. Power is reconfigured as responsibility and care, while education becomes a space of shared and ethically oriented participation.

From this epistemological and ethical standpoint, the presentation examines three educational projects rooted in the pedagogy of expression.

Educazione poetica pubblica (Public Poetic Education), led by Dr. Flavia Gallo at the Teatro del Lido in Ostia (Rome), fosters the poetic body, voice, and human relation through shared readings of contemporary dramatic literature and dialogic reflection. It aligns with the vision of a public, participatory theatre as a civic and educational space where artistic practice becomes a site of human and democratic development.

PièdiBoscoLab, led by Valentina Tinelli at the Fontemaggio Camp in Assisi, is an experiential outdoor education project where children engage in free, embodied, and creative expression in nature. Through mimicry, play, movement and emotional relationships, the forest becomes a space of discovery, co-learning and meaningful connection—affirming the centrality of the body and the senses in educational processes.

Educazione erotica poetica (Poetic Erotic Education), a workshop-based course developed by Dr. Chiara Massullo at Roma Tre University, is a poetic and aesthetic approach to sexuality education. Through embodied, reflective, and dialogical practices, it creates a space for authentic expression, empathetic listening, and transformative encounters—promoting personal wellbeing and the quality of interpersonal relationships.

Drawing on insights from these three projects, the presentation highlights how expressive, reflective, dialogical, and artistic practices can foster critical consciousness, empowerment, and an ethic of care (Morin, 2019). It underscores the educational power of mimesis, art and nature (Scaramuzzo, 2022) as catalysts for embodied co-learning, relational awareness, and participatory transformation.

Ultimately, the pedagogy of expression—as a poetic and political practice—supports a shift from a transmissive and authoritarian model of education (*ego-logical*) toward a relational, participatory and intersubjective paradigm (*eco-logical*), rooted in expression, dialogue, and relation as forms of knowledge and care.

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The power of artistic experience of children for sustainability education

Marco Salvatore (University of Milano-Bicocca)

Keywords

Child Empowerment, Aesthetic Expression, Sustainability

This paper explores how art can express children's generative power to transform the world around them. We argue that aesthetic experience can be used to affirm a sense of empowerment in children (Youdell, 2020), leading to new forms of intentional agency (Foster et al., 2018) among them and a new ability to foster participatory decision-making for social change (Skeet, 2022). Art can liberate children to the power of scholastic dispositive, creating a new collective awareness (Noë, 2023) through the enacted expression of their aesthetic experience in relation to the whole group (Ward, 2013; McGuinn & Naylor, 2025). Art can be used to enhance the children's power of change perspective on the reality where they grow up, strengthening their ability to use objects and situations in the world in different ways to create a new and poetic interpretation of reality, that can be used as an instrument to make children's voices stronger and can be useful for describing their goals and needs within society. Art is the most effective way of expressing the needs and the voices of children. Art is the most incisive medium for expressing children's sense of power because, within the artistic experience, they can feel completely at ease. They cannot make any mistakes, and their expression is as inclusive as possible because there is no right or wrong in the artistic experience. A case study involving a kindergarten class will be described, where artistic activity is used to allow children aged 4-5 years old to express their power to create a new imaginative city where natural and social elements coexist in an aesthetic and narrative pretend play. In this case study the use of artistic experience proves the need of a kindergarten curriculum to include aesthetic experience to increase the sense of power of children and their ability to change the reality around them and be the first to create a new and effective experience that can become real and genuinely impact and change the world.

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WORKSHOPS

WORKSHOP B (in Italian/German) **15.45-16.45**

Centre for Culture, Cavour Street 1

Chair: Denis Francesconi

Francesco Ciociola (University of Siegen, D), **Antioco Luigi Zurru** (University of Cagliari, I) & **Stefanie Roos** (University of Siegen, D). *Orientation and control in education. A German-Italian comparative study on basic psychological needs and perceptions of power among young people*

WORKSHOP C (in German) **16.45-17.45**

Centre for Culture, Cavour Street 1

Chair: Sabina Langer



Sonja Wodnek (University College of Teacher Education KPH Vienna/Krems, A).
Shared Time – Shared Power. Dialogical and material practices of participation in schools



Orientation and control in education. A German-Italian comparative study on basic psychological needs and perceptions of power among young people

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

Keywords

Basic Psychological Needs, Orientation/Control, Power, School, Young People

According to Grawe's consistency theory (2004), the four basic psychological needs, orientation/control, pleasure/avoidance of pleasure, attachment and self-esteem enhancement/protection, are essential for psychological well-being, especially in late childhood and adolescence. This developmental phase, characterised by identity formation and growing autonomy, is significantly influenced by the educational environment, which can serve both as a place of self-empowerment and as an instrument of regulation. To date, there are barely any empirically validated survey instruments that capture all four basic psychological needs together in different childhood and adolescent life areas. In addition, the failure to fulfil psychological needs can lead to discomfort, which in turn increases the risk of mental illness (Schmitz, Wolf & Bauch, 2024).

The MYNEEDZ study uses a quantitative questionnaire to examine how children and adolescents from Germany and Italy perceive their basic psychological needs in different living areas. The workshop focuses on the need for orientation and control. The results show a significant difference in the self-perceived satisfaction of the need for orientation/control in the life area school between young people living in Germany and those living in Italy, with young people living in Germany reporting higher levels of satisfaction. The results suggest that power relations in the education sector have a significant influence on how young people position themselves within institutional settings: whether they experience school as a place of relational security and creative development or as a place of pressure and disempowerment.

As an implementation of the results, initial ideas of the PowerBase project will be presented and discussed in the workshop. PowerBase is planned as a game- and movement-based teaching and learning concept currently under development (Mura, Tatulli & Zurru, 2019). It aims to support children and adolescents in recognizing and promoting their psychological needs in their present life areas, without pressure to perform or competitive structures. This is implemented through interactive, experience-oriented methods based on the MGML methodology (Girg, Lichtinger & Müller, 2012) and making partial use of the SeLE materials (Müller, Grieser, Roos & Schmalenbach, 2022; Schmalenbach, Roos, Müller & Grieser, 2019). By integrating experience-oriented and body-oriented pedagogical approaches, PowerBase aims to redesign schools as effective and development-promoting ecosystems: as spaces where well-being and education merge.

In line with PEA 2025, this workshop aims to critically reflect on the function of power in education and invites dialogue on how pedagogical practices can promote both individual development and collective resilience through creatively informed interventions.

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Shared Time – Shared Power. Dialogical and material practices of participation in schools

Sonja Wodnek

Keywords

Participation, Educational Dialogue, Agency, Time

Formal educational conversations often reflect a deep tension between “power over” and “power with”—between control and co-agency, instruction and participation. Is participation in schools genuinely emancipatory, or merely a staged compliance within pre-set adult agendas? This workshop explores that dilemma by drawing on findings from the ethnomethodological doctoral study “Between Being Involved and Participating: Children’s Perspectives on Participation.”

At the core of this inquiry is time—not merely as an administrative tool, but as a contested, political and relational dimension that structures who gets to speak, for how long, and under what conditions. Time emerges as both medium and message, revealing the subtle operations of power in educational contexts.

The research highlights:

- Asymmetries in time allocation: Adults largely determine when, how long, and about what children may speak—thereby shaping and limiting children’s agency.
- Asynchronies in temporal experience: Children often perceive time in school as externally imposed and scarce, which restricts the possibility for co-determined, dialogical participation.
- Digital and organizational systems (e.g., time-limited development talks, standardized platforms) reinforce these asymmetries, subtly shifting participation toward new forms of control.

To challenge this structure, the workshop introduces dialogical and artistic practices that intentionally decelerate interaction and create shared time-spaces for collective meaning-making and agency. Drawing from David Bohm’s dialogical method, participants will engage in a slow, reflective group conversation where judgment is suspended, and listening becomes a co-creative act. This form of dialogue contrasts sharply with the pace and purpose of typical classroom talk, offering a glimpse into what power-with—rather than power-over—can look like.

The second part of the workshop opens into a nonverbal, sensory co-creation using natural materials (e.g., stones, leaves, wood). This practice explores non-hierarchical, embodied modes of participation, where communication unfolds through space, movement, and matter. Participants are invited into a form of meaning-making beyond language, echoing the children’s experience in the study—where not all voices are verbal, and not all agency is spoken.

Together, these dialogical and material practices invite reflection on key questions:

- What does it mean to share time, not merely allocate it?
- How does power operate through tempo, rhythm, and silence?
- Can schools become spaces where agency is negotiated, not granted—and where participation includes moments of stillness, friction, and co-becoming?

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PANEL F (in Italian) **9.00-10.30**

Centre for Culture, Cavour Street 1

Chair: Sabina Langer

Lavina Bianchi (University of Roma Tre, I). *A decolonial reading of inclusive processes and academic positioning: autoethnography, tokenism and resistance in education*

Cinzia Zadra (Free University of Bolzano/Bozen, I). *Listening to Silences, Reading Gestures, Recognizing Gazes: Power and Relationship in the Classroom*

Giovanna Malusà (Free University of Bolzano/Bozen, I) & **Carlo Tamanini** (MART). *3(En)action. An Enactive Co-Design Approach Between University, School, and Museum in Initial Teacher Education*



A decolonial reading of inclusive processes and academic positioning. Autoethnography, tokenism and resistance in education

Lavinia Bianchi

Keywords

Intersectionality, Decoloniality, Critical Pedagogy, Co-research

This contribution examines the tensions between educational practice and academic pedagogy, highlighting how dyscrasias and schismogenesis emerge and solidify within power dynamics. A critical and committed pedagogical vision requires resistance-based practices to facilitate genuine educational interactions, even in conflictual contexts. Through the lenses of gender and difference, the paper engages with themes of intersectionality and semiocapitalism within a framework of critical pedagogy.

This reflection is based on qualitative research investigating the implicit and explicit implications of tokenism in educational relationships, particularly in intercultural contexts. Methodologically, the study integrates constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014; Bianchi, 2019) with co-research practices (Alquati, 2022) to form an iterative process of data analysis and co-construction. Adopting a militant ethnographic stance, the research combines scholarly enquiry with activist commitment to co-generate transformative futures in collaboration with affected communities. Central to this approach is the notion of restitution, achieved not only through textual dissemination, but also through active engagement in the practices of the studied movements.

Ethical and methodological considerations informed this choice: in a context where all participants were committed to improving existing conditions, an extractivist research model was deemed impractical and ethically problematic. This approach facilitated the collection of diverse data, including intensive interviews, ethnographic diaries, photographs, cognitive artefacts, literacy-related documentation and key informant testimonies.

Procedurally, integrating pedagogical supervision and autoethnography enables a critical-clinical analysis of power relations and regulatory mechanisms within and between educational institutions and informal educational settings. These dynamics influence the bodily and symbolic dimensions that shape educational spaces and temporalities.

Conducted within primary education and education sciences programmes, the two-year research process involved triangulating classroom data, autoethnographic memos and supervision materials. This led to the development of dense, recursive interpretative categories centered on interconnected sensitive concepts.

Intersectionality as a problematising syntagm;

Intercultural pedagogy as a space of possibility through critical and decolonial positioning;

Collaborative teaching and workshops as sites of transformation and meta-reflection;

Pedagogical supervision was identified as a meta-reflective, metacognitive and mediating tool;

Tokenism as a derivative of inclusion;

Pinkwashing and e-citizenship washing as symbolic practices;

Semiocapitalism is presented as a form of democratic exclusion.

The central thesis addresses the lack of contemporaneity between educational work and academic pedagogy and the absence of homology between power relations and interpersonal dynamics in pursuit of authentic educational encounters that transcend tokenism and exclusion.

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Listening to Silences, Reading Gestures, Recognizing Gazes: Power and Relationship in the Classroom

Cinzia Zadra (Free University of Bolzano/Bozen, I)

Keywords

Encounter, Confrontation, Phenomenological Vignettes, Educational Relationship, Critical Pedagogy

This contribution explores power dynamics in the classroom through the analysis of phenomenological vignettes collected in upper secondary schools. These vignettes, short narratives drawn from co-experienced moments, capture encounters and confrontations between teachers and students, shedding light on micro-dynamics of power that often elude both conventional research tools and everyday perception. The focus thus shifts to bodily interactions, silences, pauses, gestures, and other nonverbal expressions (Zadra & Agostini, 2024).

Research on school cultures emphasizes the importance of building trust, reciprocity, and shared responsibility as the foundation of a transformative pedagogy. Methodologically, this calls for innovative tools capable of investigating the subtle power relations that arise between those who speak, those who listen, and those who are recognized within educational interactions (Cook-Sather, 2006).

The theoretical framework combines Freirean pedagogy, understood as education for creativity, transformation, invention, re-invention, and critical engagement with the world (Freire, 2018), with bell hooks' reflections on authentic learning as a dialogic, reciprocal, and role-transforming process (hooks, 2010, 2020).

The analysis of the vignettes shows that power in the classroom is neither univocal nor unidirectional; rather, it takes shape as a relational weave where authority, resistance, and recognition coexist and are continuously redefined.

In this perspective, phenomenological vignettes appear as generative tools for an ecological and conscious pedagogy, capable of illuminating both the visible and invisible knots of educational power. This study contributes to the ongoing debate by offering an inquiry that not only investigates classroom power relations but also promotes an ethics of relationship and a vision of the classroom as a space for possibility, co-creation, and shared transformation.

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3(En)action. An enactive co-design approach between university, school, and museum in Initial Teacher Education

Giovanna Malusà (Free University of Bolzano/Bozen, I) & Carlo Tamanini (MART)

Keywords

Initial Teacher Education, Enactive Didactics, Shared Design University-School-Museum, Aesthetic Educational Pathways

Promoting initial teacher education that fosters project-based competences in aesthetics and applied pedagogy, as well as critical and reflective thinking, within an integrated educational system represents a key challenge for contemporary institutions (UNESCO, 2021; OECD, 2023). Schools, often perceived as spaces of discipline and adaptation, need to be reimagined as environments of emancipation, collective responsibility, and inclusion (Freire, 1970). This reimagining entails a shift in the conception of power in education—from control and transmission to relationship, co-responsibility, and transformation. In this view, power is understood as relational and enacted through interaction, interdependence, and mutual care, as articulated in the Ubuntu philosophy (Otieno, 2020). Such a perspective also foregrounds the pedagogical power of imagination, conceived as a generative force capable of opening alternative horizons, fostering agency, and enabling meaningful and transformative educational experiences.

Building on this theoretical background, the experimental project *3(En)action* was launched in 2024 through a collaboration between the ITA Internship Office of the Master's Programme in Primary Education at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano and the MART – Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Trento and Rovereto. The project proposes an innovative model for initial teacher education, fostering integrated, project-based competences through an enactive didactic approach (Coin, 2013). It actively involves universities, schools, museums, and families in the shared design of aesthetic educational pathways for primary schools (Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 2016).

3(En)action is structured into three key phases developed during the students' internships: (1) In the second year, direct experiential engagement in the MART's laboratories to activate embodied knowledge of museum education and mediation practices (23 hours); (2) In the fourth year, experimentation with an expressive workshop during the Didactics Fair at the university (4 hours); (3) In the fifth year, co-design of aesthetic educational experiences for primary school children (20 hours), implemented during curricular internships and culminating in a final workshop at the museum open to families.

The project involved a total of 49 students during the 2024–25 academic year (36 second-year students, 12 fourth-year students, and 1 fifth-year student).

Preliminary results indicate a significant enhancement of transversal, reflective, and project-based competences among the participants. At the same time, the challenges encountered offer valuable insights for improving the educational model and its implementation in the coming years. *3(En)action* could represent a promising contribution to the advancement of innovative, embodied, and collaborative teaching practices that foster inclusive, participatory, intercultural, inter-institutional, and intergenerational dialogue (UNESCO, 2021).

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WORKSHOP D (in English) **10.30-11.30**

Centre for Culture, Cavour Street 1

Chair: Sabina Langer

Elena Bergonzini (Scuola di Pace di Monte Sole). *Loosing control vs losing control*



Loosing control vs losing control

Elena Bergonzini (Peace School Foundation of Monte Sole)

Keywords

Education, Power, Control, Unstructured Activity

In a variety of situations, learning processes occur in contexts where the position of the actors involved is not symmetrical, as it involves different roles, creating an unbalanced power. This is not only due to the unbalanced knowledge of specific subjects, but also to a concept of control which is assumed to be needed in certain contexts.

A vast vocabulary used in education deals with controlling those who learn, more than the learning process itself.

Even in non-formal education contexts, the need to manage participants is often remarked, often obtained with structured activities where participants are left in the dark; they do not know what is going to happen and they are left to guess what will be next, searching therefore for the right thing to say or to do.

Unstructured activities are often seen as anarchic and pointless because they lead to nowhere, as any educational activity is seen as aiming at some kind of immediate result or production. Producing some kind of object, text, art craft, performance is also often seen as an ideal way to retrieve learnt information and show the results of the learning process.

We dare to challenge this assumption, which we find also compatible with a capitalistic vision of education. Education does not really require a “production” as we mean it traditionally, when we consider it is impossible not to learn all the time.

Education can be an experience, and this happens more frequently when we unstructure our approach without any fear of losing control.

This workshop explores the possibility of sharing control and improving learning opportunities in non-formal education.



PANEL G (in English) **9.30-11.30**

Centre for Culture, Cavour Street 1

Chair: Denis Francesconi

Paola Crespi (independent researcher, I). *Thumbelina is here to stay – How technology, smartphones, AI and the like revolutionised class-dynamics in lower and upper secondary school. And is it that bad?*

Pietro Caresana (University of Milano-Bicocca, I). *Devices of subjugation, devices of subjectivation: Aesthetic experience as a dimension beyond power in schools and educational institutions*

Pietro Corazza (University of Bologna, I). *How to rethink power in the age of eco-climatic and social collapse?*

Francesca Finestrone, Francesco Pio Savino, Francesca Cangelli & Giusi Antonia Toto (University of Foggia, I). *Managerial power in the autonomous school. Models, challenges, and educational perspectives*



Thumbelina is here to stay – How technology, smartphones, AI and the like revolutionised class-dynamics in lower and upper secondary school. And is it that bad?

Paola Crespi

Keywords

Michel Serres; Secondary School; Technology

A visionary philosopher like the late Michel Serres baptised with the name of Thumbelina (Petit Poucette in French, Pollicina in Italian) the girl he virtually follows around at school, at home and practically everywhere in his short book “Thumbelina: The Culture and technology of Millennials” (originally a lecture to the Academie Francaise in 2011 and published in French in 2012). Here he states: “For several decades now, I realise that we are living in a period comparable to the dawn of paideia.....and similar to the Renaissance”, in that there is a new human type among us, that, thanks to technological developments, does not think or behave like us, and surely does not learn or think like us. This is evident to any teacher in a classroom. And yet, the School struggles to change, bans on the usage of mobile phones clash with widespread utilisation of AI by students on other devices – are we more afraid of hardware or software?

Serres missed out on the latest technological developments, including generative AI, and so his positive claims about access to knowledge on the internet freeing up space for inventiveness need to be reconsidered. However, he was probably right in claiming that Thumbelina reorganises power dynamics in the classroom – but will the School listen to her and how will power be redistributed (see Foucault)? As a provocation I want to propose to read my own personal experience as a school teacher here in South-Tyrol through the lenses of Serres’ thoughts on power and education in the age of Thumbelina.

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Devices of subjugation, devices of subjectivation. Aesthetic experience as a dimension beyond power in schools and educational institutions

Pietro Caresana (University of Milano-Bicocca)

Keywords

School, Device, Aesthetic, Subjectivation, Education

This contribution is based both on everyday experience as educator and on the research *Una ricerca interdisciplinare sui dispositivi di elaborazione dell'adolescenza nei servizi educativi. Corpi, affetti e mediatori estetici* conducted by a research group lead by prof. Orsenigo and prof. Ulivieri Stiozzi in the pedagogy department of Università Milano-Bicocca.

Our present confronts us with a kind of power that, as on a global and explicitly violent level as in everyday life, subjugates rather than subjectifies individuals (Foucault, 1977). The school context, especially from an educator's perspective, is a privileged observatory of this dynamic: not only the architecture of the building and classrooms (Vaccaro, 2011), but also the (non)relationship that is increasingly instructive and content-driven rather than educational alienates children from a vital school that nurtures their desire for growth (Dewey, 1916).

The question that arises then, with the understanding that power is not something given once and for all and static, is whether it is possible in the school experience (just as other care services) to create alternative spaces and times through which subjective "escape paths" can be traced. In other words, the question is whether there are devices that, through action that perhaps could be called "edge" (hooks, 1998), open up the possibility of subjectification even in those contexts whose institutional routines seem to deny it.

The proposal is that the aesthetic dimension can be suitable to create these subjectifying spaces. In addition to constituting a language other and with its own rules than speech (Derrida, 2020), one can think of the aesthetic object as something that fosters an encounter between educator and educand that escapes at least partially from the power dynamics within the institution. Educational work then, rather than as a mere proposal of activities, is configured as the ability to set up, stand in and eventually pause in spaces that are empty but full of potential.

As highlighted by the previously mentioned study, art then becomes an object of reflection as a device that, in contrast to the institutional one, contributes to the creation of these marginal spaces and times which are formative (Pareyson, 1954). That is, they are transcendental, they create the possibility of encounter and reflection on oneself and the educational relationship that is being experienced.

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Managerial power in the autonomous school. Models, challenges, and educational perspectives

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Keywords

School; Power; Ethics; Leadership

This contribution examines the evolution of managerial power in Italian schools following the introduction of school autonomy through Presidential Decree 275/1999 (DPR 275/1999). This reform significantly redefined the role of the school principal (Luisi, 2012), shifting from a primarily administrative function to that of an educational leader responsible for integrating managerial, pedagogical, and ethical dimensions. The study aims to reconstruct the theoretical and regulatory framework that supported this transformation, highlighting its implications for contemporary school leadership.

Located within the field of educational sciences, the research adopts a qualitative approach based on a review of the existing literature. The analysis draws on both key national legislative sources that have shaped the profile and functions of school principals over time and theoretical and empirical studies on educational leadership, identified through international academic databases and authoritative institutional references.

The investigation develops along three main lines: the legal and institutional context that guided the evolution of the principal's role; the ethics of educational power, understood as a critical reflection on the principal's responsibility toward the school community; and school leadership models (Amanchukwu, Stanley & Ololube, 2015), with particular focus on the relational (Gómez-Leal, 2022), managerial, and symbolic dimensions of leadership practice.

The analysis shows that exercising managerial authority in autonomous schools requires a set of competencies rooted in transparency, legality, and educational responsibility. A key issue that emerges is the increasing tension between systemic accountability requirements and the need for participatory, shared leadership—an issue also highlighted by recent OECD findings (OCSE, 2008).

Ethical considerations arising from the theoretical analysis underscore the urgency of establishing clear and widely shared ethical frameworks to guide principals' actions toward the common good and the overall well-being of the school community.

In conclusion, the study highlights the growing complexity of the school principal's role within the Italian context and the need for further empirical research on effective leadership models. The goal is to support a vision of school governance that is equitable, ethical, and consistent with the school's educational mission.

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