Scuola democratica | il Mulino

2-3-4-5 JUNE 2021

# REINVENTING EDUCATION

second international conference

# BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



2nd International Conference of the journal "Scuola Democratica"

Reinventing Education

2-5 JUNE 2021

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**ASSOCIAZIONE "PER SCUOLA DEMOCRATICA" [Via Francesco Satolli, 30 – 00165 - Rome, Italy]**

**Published by**

**ASSOCIAZIONE "PER SCUOLA DEMOCRATICA"**
**Via Francesco Satolli, 30**
**00165 – Rome**
**Italy**

**Published in Open Access**

APA citation system:

**SCUOLA DEMOCRATICA (2021). Book of Abstracts of the International Conference of the journal Scuola Democratica. Reinventing Education, Rome, Associazione "Per Scuola Democratica"**

Please, cite your abstract as it follows:

**Smith, A., (2021). «Closing the Gender Gap in Education. Symmetrical Practices from a Didactical Laboratory in STEM Fields». In: SCUOLA DEMOCRATICA (Eds.). Book of Abstracts of the International Conference of the journal Scuola Democratica. Reinventing Education, Rome, Associazione "Per Scuola Democratica"**

**This book is digitally available at:**

https://www.scuolademocratica-conference.net/book-of-abstracts-2/

**ISBN 978-88-944888-4-5**

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# D.8. Reading and reading aloud as a means of promoting equity within education processes

## 713 Learning To Read (Aloud) Thanks To Prison Theatre. A Case Study At The 'C. Beccaria' Youth Detention Centre In Milan

Berni, Veronica (University of Milano - Bicocca, Italia)

**Keywords**: Reading and reading aloud, literacy, prison theatre, social inclusion

The paper outlines and discusses selected outcomes of pedagogical research assessing the impact of a theatre laboratory conducted by the association Puntozero inside the "C. Beccaria" Youth Detention Centre in Milan. This case study served to explore the effects of a permanent theatre laboratory on young detainees, and the educational dispositive (Massa, 1987) that generates these impacts, by means of qualitative research instruments including interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation. The data were subjected to Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009), which showed that participating in the theatre project had fostered significant gains in detainees' literacy, reading development, and language competence, particularly in the case of non-Italian youths, who represent the majority of the centre's inmates (Belotti, Maurizio, Moro, 2006). These outcomes are presented in detail, along with the processes underpinning them. In particular, pedagogical analysis is brought to bear on the educational dispositive at work in theatre practice, including the interaction among heterogeneous elements (Ferrante, 2016) that generates the observed learning effects. Indeed, the theatre laboratory was found to offer a "powerful" learning environment due to its capacity to foster participants' desire, motivation, and will to learn, which in turn appears to depend on a combination of factors, including the fact that the Italian language is approached in relation to attaining practical goals associated with an authentic, challenging, and shared task (Marchesi, 2018), such as the staging of a performance, and that the project is implemented in the relational context of a group that includes youths from "outside" the YDC as well as detainees. For example, participant observation suggested that reading the script out loud, with youths from the outside community providing peer-to-peer support (Di Cesare, Giammetta, 2011), in a social and material setting that is affectively dense, with a view to "going on stage" in the future for a performance, is a combination that has a key impact for some youths, even those who may be struggling with or failing at the "traditional" secondary school studies or vocational training courses offered by the YDC. The paper concludes by focusing on the practice of reading and reading aloud during the theatre lab conducted at Beccaria YDC, showing that it plays a crucial role in enhancing literacy, which in turn improves the young detainees' real opportunities for integration and social inclusion.

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