

third international conference
of the journal *Scuola Democratica*

education

and/for

social justice

University of Cagliari
June 3-6, 2024

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



3rd International Conference of the journal "Scuola Democratica"
Education and/or Social Justice
UNIVERSITY OF CAGLIARI, ITALY
3-6 JUNE 2024

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

edited by Leonardo Piromalli

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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 (2024). Book of Abstracts of the International Conference of the journal Scuola Democratica. Education and/or Social Justice, Rome, Associazione "Per Scuola Democratica"

Please cite your abstract as follows:

Smith, A., (2024). «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-3/>

ISBN 978-88-944888-4-5

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K.04. Leadership and active student participation: democratic citizenship, well-being and inclusion in the secondary school

The Development of Citizenship Skills in a Multicultural Context: PCTO in the San Siro District (Milan)

Claudia Delia Fredella (University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy)

citizenship education, intercultural skills, student agency, pcto, thematic analysis

Within the research-intervention project, MUSA Spoke 6 Action 3.1.3 “Contrast and prevention of school dropout in disadvantaged urban neighborhoods” were activated 20 PCTO pathways, entitled “Social Cohesion and Urban Sustainability”, that involved students from six different high schools. The research question investigates how participation in a community service-learning activity (Gallop, Guthrie & Asante, 2023), carried out within the ETS network “after-schools” of the San Siro district in Milan, supports the development of key competencies for lifelong-learning (European Council, 2018), particularly multilingual, personal and social skills and the ability to learning to learn, from an agency-based citizenship education perspective (McLaughlin, 1992). The research framework refers to the urban anthropology model of Learning cities (Biagioli et al., 2022) to promote in a multicultural and multiproblematic suburban context, social cohesion and enhancement of the differences (Benhabib, 2006). The path has been monitored in itinere through co-assessment of the learning goals, by several observational tools used by the students (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The contribution presents an initial exploratory analysis of the experience of eight students involved in the after-school program activated in Dolci school (IC Cadorna) and illustrates a thematic reflexive analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) of their diaries, the descriptive self-assessments written at the end and of a focus group in which they were invited to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the project from the point of view of their agency (Manyukhina & Wyse, 2019, Pastori 2022) and to reflect on the process of developing the expected citizenship skills (Santerini, 2010, Zecca, 2018). The results of the data analysis show how all the students became aware of their initial representations and sometimes prejudices regarding a socio-cultural context very distant from their own experience. A diachronic reading of students’ diaries reveals an ongoing assumption of awareness of their role in supporting learning processes of the children they helped with individualised educational tutoring and development of their ability to identify the difficulties students encountered, e.g. ‘memorising’, dealing with textbooks’ vocabulary, that was often incomprehensible to children, in particular those with a migrant background, and maintaining concentration on exercises that were not meaningful to them (Sorzio, 2020). This last aspect points to the theme of the cultural nature of the school curriculum (Sorzio, 2022) and how the link with one’s past and present experience enables the attribution of meaning necessary for learning (De Vecchi & Carmona Magnaldi, 1999). Another fundamental aspect that came out is the potential of the multicultural context, of the encounter and recognition of ‘the other’, and how this affected the development of new skills. On the other hand, also emerged difficulties in dealing with some “problematic” children and the acknowledgment of the need for support from the professionalism of educators and teachers. Also concerning the theme of the relationship with all the actors involved in the context – teachers, educators, researchers – they report how it has fostered the development of their ability – defined by some of them as ‘problem-solving’ – to implement more active and inclusive teaching methods.