

A PEDAGOGY FOR PLAY: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR AN EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE 0–6

PEDAGOGIA DO BRINCAR: CONSIDERAÇÕES E DIRETRIZES PARA A
CONSTRUÇÃO DE PERSPECTIVAS EDUCACIONAIS DE 0 A 6 ANOS

Donatella Savio^{1,*} 

ABSTRACT: In Italy the 0-6 educational institutions have always been characterized as a split system; the 0-6 integrated system was born on a legislative level only recently (Law No. 107/2015; Dlgs. No. 65/2017). To build an educational perspective 0-6 a pedagogy for play is proposed, theoretically founded on the recognition of play as a vital and existential experience for children. In line with this perspective some operational indications are illustrated regarding both the relationship with play as promotion from inside and the construction of educational paths from play itself.

Keywords: Pedagogy for play. Early childhood education and care. Promoting from inside. Working by projects.

RESUMO: Na Itália, as instituições de ensino de 0 a 6 anos sempre foram caracterizadas como um sistema dividido; o sistema integrado 0-6 nasceu em um nível legislativo apenas recentemente (L n.107, 2015; Dlgs n. 65, 2017). Para construir uma perspectiva educacional 0-6 é proposta uma pedagogia do brincar, teoricamente fundada no reconhecimento do brincar como uma experiência vital e existencial para as crianças. Em consonância com essa perspectiva, ilustram-se algumas indicações operacionais a respeito tanto da relação com o brincar como da “promoção interior” e da construção de percursos educativos a partir do próprio brincar.

Palavras-chave: Pedagogia do brincar. Educação e cuidados na primeira infância. Promovendo de dentro. Trabalhando por projetos.

1. Università di Pavia – Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici – Pavia, Italy.

*Correspondence author: donatella.savio@unipv.it

Thematic issue organized by: Rodrigo Saballa de Carvalho, Bianca Salazar Guizzo e Arianna Lazzari

Play and Educational Perspective 0-6

With the Law No. 107 from 13 July 2015 (art. 1 paragraph 181e), the “integrated education and instruction system from birth up to six years” (MIUR, 2015) was established in Italy, the implementation of which was subsequently regulated by Legislative Decree 13 April 2017, No. 65 (MIUR, 2017). If with this passage the 0–6 system becomes a reality on the legislative level, it must be emphasized that a lot of work remains to be done in terms of educational culture. In fact, the Italian reality has so far been characterized by a separation between crèches and educational services, for children from 0 to 3 years, and nursery schools, for children from 3 to 6 years, both in terms of legislation and management body (with reference to local authorities for 0–3 and mainly to the State for 3–6); this separation has often resulted in a distance of pedagogical perspectives, that is, with reference to educational principles and practices. To start the coconstruction of a transversal and common pedagogical perspective, it is necessary in my opinion to proceed on two levels: on the one hand, it is a question of promoting a unitary vision of the child between 0 and 6 years, recognizing the peculiar and transversal ways through which he relates to the world and builds learning, without denying the evolutionary differences that characterize this age group within it; on the other hand, to affirm basic pedagogical principles that respond to this evolutionary peculiarity, declining them in educational practices appropriate to the different developmental stages of children.

Against this background, with my contribution I intend to reaffirm play as a peculiar dimension of the way of relating, expressing, and learning of the small child, to propose it as an essential reference for the construction of a pedagogical perspective 0–6: the pedagogy of 0–6 cannot be anything but playful pedagogy. This is not an innovative proposal or a countertrend, on the contrary: Italian and European guidance document¹ for 0–6 highlight the centrality of play in early childhood education. But putting the play at the centre can take on nuances and orientations that are not always in tune with its full enhancement; it is the case in which playful reality is indicated as a tool to support the learning opportunities that characterize it, thus putting it in the background with respect to such learning and not recognizing it as an intrinsically crucial experience for the life and well-being of children. This was reported by the document *Position paper about the role of play in early childhood education and care* (2017)—henceforth, *Position Paper*²—, which highlights that in 0–6 educational services there is a tendency not to value playful activity as a basic right and an activity in itself significant, but rather to exploit it in view of the results it would allow to achieve in terms of cognitive learning. To counter this trend, the authors of the document recognize on the one hand the intertwining between play and learning—in play there is always learning and vice versa (PRAMLING SAMUELSSON; ASPLUND CARLSSON, 2008)—, on the other, they underline the importance of support and enhance free play among children; in fact, well-being, learning and the possibility of participation connected to play are guaranteed only if the play is started and controlled entirely by children.

Starting from these assumptions, with my contribution I will first of all try to clarify the terms of my proposal, that is to say what reality I am referring to when talking about play and why this reality is central to building 0–6 on a cultural level.

I will then go on to illustrate how this centrality can be translated into the practices of those who work in 0–6, proposing some basic guidelines with respect to both the intervention of the adult in the children’s play, and how to refer to childhood playful events to develop educational paths.

Authentic play: Existential Experience and Voice of Children

Play is a reality that escapes univocal and definitive definitions. However, if we want to place it at the centre of the pedagogical construction of 0–6, we must first try to clarify what kind of reality we are referring

to. As has already been highlighted, the *Position Paper* emphasizes the importance of free play: this is the reality to be safeguarded and promoted within services and schools to promote well-being and learning in children. The dimension of freedom viewed as a characteristic of authentic nature of play is developed by Caillois (1967). According to the French intellectual, playing is an activity: free and voluntary, therefore it cannot be imposed, but only activated spontaneously by the subject; unproductive, and done for the mere pleasure of doing it; separated from ordinary life and crossed by a sense of unreality that keeps it distinct from what happens *for real*; uncertain, in the sense that, while referring to rules to which the subject freely chooses to submit, it is never possible to know in advance how it will develop. In this perspective, taking up the thread of our discourse, it becomes clear that the proposals of play for learning numbers, or colours, or new words, etc. have nothing to do with authentic play; rather they are proposals of preordained learning activities guided by adults in a fun way, without having for children those traits of spontaneity, freedom of choice, definalisation, regulatory self-determination and uncertainty of development that characterize the nature of play. Therefore, it is this idea of free play that I propose as a fundamental dimension for the construction of a 0–6 pedagogical culture.

At this point, it is necessary to clarify the reasons why play should be considered an essential transversal reference for infants and early childhood education.

The psychopedagogical literature on the importance of play for the growth and well-being of the child, from birth to 6 years but also beyond, is very rich;³ below I will limit myself to giving a synthetic account of some theoretical positions that highlight its role in terms of the quality of the existential experience of children and on that of their ability to express their *voice* and participate. These aspects I believe are particularly relevant for the authentic enhancement of the play in relation to fundamental principles for the pedagogy of the 0–6 educational system.

Regarding the first aspect, play can and must be considered as an experience that has an intrinsic value for the child. In this sense, Bettelheim (1987, p. 214) affirms that “The importance of play lies first of all, therefore, in the immediate and direct enjoyment that the child derives from it, and which extends and translates into enjoyment for the fact of being alive.” So, playing allows you to experience the pleasure of living, in which you can give yourself the opportunity to grasp the very meaning of existence. According to Winnicott (1971, p. 119), in fact, “Only creative apperception, of which play is the first manifestation, gives the individual the meaning that life is worth living.” In this perspective, the nature of play emerges as a powerful experience on an existential level, which restores the joy of living and a sense of existence, therefore well-being. Also, taking up Caillois’s description, the defined nature of the play, namely the fact that you play to play and not to produce something external to the play itself, gives the possibility to children, but also to adult players, to fully experience the *here and now*; thus, they can emancipate themselves from the productivity boost that in reality asks the mind to look ahead, to the results it can achieve in the future by acting on the present. The philosopher Eugen Fink (2008) deepens this perspective by identifying in the playful reality an oasis of happiness, a dimension of existence that brings well-being, self-knowledge, rest from futuristic tensions and therefore resources for facing the world *out there*. In this sense play is a peculiarly human form of *taking care of yourself*.

Seen in this perspective, play evidently reveals its intrinsic pedagogical significance.

Regarding the relationship between play and the possibility for children to express their *voice*, it is above all psychoanalytic studies that highlight how playful manifestations are the mirror of childhood thoughts and experiences, especially in a phase in which verbal language it is not yet fully developed. Bettelheim (1987) insists on this point, emphasizing how playful activity in childhood makes it possible to cope with problems of a different nature, namely philosophical, emotional and understanding issues relating to physical and social world.

All children, even the most normal and skilled, encounter daily difficulties that in their eyes present themselves as insurmountable life problems. By acting them in the play, one aspect at a time, in his own way, according to his own rhythms, the child can manage to cope step by step with problems of great complexity (BETTELHEIM, 1987, p. 211).

In this sense, the activity of play is the expression of the problems that engage the children's mind at that moment of their life, and the way they play tells of how they see them and try to deal with them. The relevance of play in this regard derives from the fact that in childhood most of the experiences, even those that are completely ordinary from the point of view of the adult, are new, unexpected and therefore raise problems. On the other hand, precisely because it is a way to deal with the issues that matter most, playing is always associated with a sense of mastery that is a source of pleasure.

In the theoretical framework of the sociology of childhood, Corsaro (2003) also tackles the theme of play and highlights in particular its nature as the *voice* of children. The American researcher considers children as members of groups that, when they can interact continuously as happens in the nursery and kindergarten, produce *local cultures*, which are internal but original in respect to the cultures of the adult world (CORSARO, 2003, p. 72). In this context, playful events represent one of the ways in which children coproduce their own culture, reinterpreting the adult culture in which they are immersed: an example is the play of the "travelling cash point" observed by Corsaro himself (p. 23-24), in which the cash point is an element taken from the cultural world of adults that children reinterpret by giving it the ability to move independently. Therefore, the play can be considered a cultural laboratory in which playful meanings are elaborated in terms of themes, plots, rules that feed a repertoire of knowledge coconstructed by a group of children.

Ultimately, for the theoretical references discussed so far, the authentic enhancement of the play requires looking at it in a holistic way, without *breaking it up* into the different learning and skills it allows, in order to highlight the meaning, it can assume from the point of view of children; in this perspective its value as an existential experience, but also as an expression of the most intimate *voice* of children and the manifestation of their cultures, emerges and needs to be amplified.

In harmony with this idea of play as the *voice* of children, it can be said that it represents a way to promote the right of the children to express their point of view and to participate as a protagonist in the construction of educational paths that concern them (SAVIO, 2019a). This is a right that is already stated in the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and which is placed at the centre in the European document *Proposal for Key Principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care* (LAZZARI, 2016).⁴ In the document, among the principles of the reference for educational services 0-6, the right and the ability of children to participate in their own learning paths are affirmed. Referring to recent research on the subject, the relationship between child participation and play is clearly illustrated: it is in free play that children can spontaneously practice and consolidate the ability both to decide independently and to participate in communicative exchanges, since they exercise it under the pressure of their own interests and personal motivation. When space and time are granted within the educational services for free play unconditionally, the autonomy of choice and participation in social confrontation matured in the playful reality are activated by children also outside of it, and in particular towards their learning paths and in the management of daily life. Therefore, free play is proposed as a gymnasium for child participation.

The document also underlines a second way in which play can be a vehicle for child participation in educational contexts 0-6: educational proposals should also be developed starting from the observation of children's free play, to support those skills and the learning that occurs during the play.

For what has been considered so far, the centrality of play must be a transversal reference principle for an integrated 0-6 educational system, because of two reasons: for the value that playful reality possesses

in the existence of the child, in terms of well-being, possibility of expression and learning, but also because of the relevance of play for child's participation, therefore for another fundamental principles of 0–6 education.

In the next paragraphs I will address these aspects on an operational level, briefly illustrating operational approaches for relating to children's free play and developing educational paths starting from its contents; in other words, I will try to outline also in practical terms a pedagogy *for* play, as a useful transversal reference for the comparison between day-care centres and nursery schools and therefore for the cultural construction of 0–6.

Promoting from Inside

In terms of research, the emergence of play pedagogies (BONDIOLI; SAVIO, 2020) should be noted, that is of educational orientations centred on the enhancement of play as an elective way to support learning in childhood. In this framework, among the themes addressed, there is that of the role of the adult. It is above all Vygotskian studies that underline the importance of adult participation in the playful dynamics of children (BAUMER, 2013; HAKKARAINEN et al., 2013; LINDQVIST, 1995). In this perspective, childhood learning and development are achieved through interaction with more competent partners during cultural activities in a broad sense, that is, characterized by social contents and meanings. Among these cultural activities there is play, especially symbolic play, which can be said to represent the cultural activity par excellence of childhood as it implies the *manipulation* of socially shared meanings: e. g. when a child plays pretending that a plate is a hat, he is manipulating the meanings attributes to these objects in the sociocultural contest to which he belongs. It follows that the participation of the adult in the child's play constitutes an important educational opportunity, with a clarification: to truly maintain the playful character of the experience, such participation must be characterized in a *no directive* manner, that is, it must respect the free and spontaneous nature of the play by remaining within the infantile proposals. Under these conditions, a relationship characterized by a particular reciprocity takes shape:

[...] adults provide a variety of social, emotional, cognitive and communicative resources to enrich and support children's play. Children bring to this joint play their expertise in pretend play and symbolic imagination, which helps adults revitalize their playfulness and improvisational competence. (BAUMER, 2013)

The educational approach developed by Bondioli and Savio takes a similar perspective (see BONDIOLI, 1996, p. 353-401; 2001; BONDIOLI; SAVIO, 2020, ch. 4; SAVIO, 2011, ch. 1 and 7; 2019b). The *promotion from inside* is a style of intervention of the adult in infantile symbolic play that refers to the model of tutoring (WOOD; BRUNER; ROSS, 1976) and to the Vygotskian concept of the Proximal Development Zone (VYGOTSKIJ, 1974). It was tested through empirical research and with many trainings in 0–6 services. In a nutshell, with respect to the free play of children in a group, the characterizing traits of the approach are as follows:

- The adult actively proposes himself as a playmate (“can I play?”);
- The adult solicits, welcomes, appreciates playful initiatives according to the children's play: it is the children who decide the contents of the play and their evolution;
- The adult recognizes the difficulties of children in assuming the most difficult parts of the play and assumes them himself (e.g., the direction of the play, or a *dangerous* role: when a child proposes to his classmates to play *sick children* and they do not accept, the adult intervenes saying “there is a sick child, I am the sick child, who is the doctor?”);

- The adult supports the direction of the play by recalling the rules of the activated fictional scenario (e.g., while playing moving trains, a child wants to get off, the adult says “careful, don’t get off the train while it is moving, you will hurt yourself, come on we’re going and see grandma”);
- The adult connects the individual ideas, to favour complete and coherent playful plots of the group (e.g., playing the train, a girl drags a suitcase and a child pretends to be the conductor, the adult says “conductor, she can’t put up her suitcase, could you help her?”);
- The adult modules the excitement by containing emotions (e.g., during the play of the storm the adult says “how frightening the storm is, lucky we are under cover”);
- Starting from behaviours sketched by the child, the adult activates playful behaviours that are slightly more evolved with a modelling intervention (e.g., the child hints at bringing spoon to his mouth as if he is going to eat, the adult brings the spoon to his mouth pretending to eat and comments “good this food”).

The set of these indications outlines a style according to which the adult is an active partner in the play, while making himself available to accept and follow the contents and developments chosen by the children: if he introduces some playful ideas, it is always internal to the theme proposed by the children themselves and is ready to abandon his ideas if these does not arouse interest. What he acts on concerns the level of processes, both those *for* the play, that is related to the possibility of its enrichment and development, and those intertwined, but more internal, which concern transversal skills activated *with* the play.

With respect to the processes *for* the play, the adult intervenes with an action of consolidation of the regulatory structure (“*if we are on a moving vehicle we cannot get down*”), narrative (“*we are going to see grandma*”) and social (“*the conductor can help the lady with the suitcase*”), carrying out a *delicate* directing function starting from the contents and developments proposed by the children. Not only. Since, as has been said, playful contents are always the expression of the child’s internal world, the evolution of the play can be compromised by the raising of the emotional tonality connected to particularly involving situations (*the storm*) or roles (*the sick children*); therefore, the intervention of the adult also focuses on a function of containment and emotional modulation.

The last direction of intervention, modelling, more specifically concerns the support of evolutionary processes related to transversal skills activated *with* play, such as for example the ability to decontextualize or decentralize, the narrative thinking, the linguistic monitoring of behaviour, the social negotiation.⁵ This strategy is crucial with respect to the possibility of combining the promotion of free play with the targeted support of evolutionary processes made possible by the play itself. The reference is to the Vygotskijan concept of the proximal zone of development, which can be synthetically defined as the distance between what the child is able to do/understand by himself, activating the level of fully possessed skills (current level of development), and what he manages to do/understand with the help of more competent partners, thanks to which he can activate developing levels of competence (level of potential development). In this perspective, playful modelling consists in repeating play behaviours only sketched out by children, presumably corresponding to levels of competence not yet fully consolidated, to propose them again; in this way is it possible to favour their consolidation, i.e., making the potential levels of competence current and thus support a developmental shift of the boundaries of the proximal zone. This is done in full compliance with the contents and play developments chosen by the children: playful freedom is thus guaranteed, even within an action aimed at enriching the developmental quality of the behaviours activated and therefore, ultimately, of the play itself.⁶

Working by Projects

With respect to how to put the play at the centre of educational paths that develop outside the play itself, an interesting reference is the approach of *working by projects*. The approach was developed by a network of preschools that are part of the Territorial Resource Centre of Fossano.⁷ It is characterized by some basic purposes that are based on precise theoretical references: the support for the authentic play of children, that is, as much as possible chosen and developed on the basis of the free initiative of children; the support of reflective thinking, that is, the ability of children to relate to the world as researchers according to the of Dewey's model of inquiry (1933); the promotion of the social dimension, understood as the ability of children to confront each other through democratic dynamics to cobuild knowledge and define themselves as learning communities, in line also in this case with the thought of Dewey (1903; 1916).⁸

In short, *working by projects* involves a path that unfolds over a school year through three main phases, involving all the children of the school complex. We resume below the presentation of the phases proposed by Savio (2015):

1. [...] In the first months of the year (from September to December) the section-rooms are set up with poor and unstructured materials (boxes, paper, glue, constructions, etc.) and all the school children (except three-year-old children who have just entered), thanks to an organization for open sections, during the morning (about two hours) they are free to decide in which room and with which companions to play. The teachers play a mainly observational role [...] The moments of play are complemented by group discussion meetings. Following these assembly moments, groups of children are gradually defined associated with a playful theme in a fixed way. At the end of this first phase the children are asked to make the final choice and thus the project groups are established; each project has the name of the playful theme it identifies (e.g., “the firemen”, “the time machine” etc.), and is associated with a section space and two teachers.
2. [...] From January to May the project groups alternate: moments of play in the section space; moments of discussion on problems and needs that arose during the play and definition of the hypotheses to address them, also with the development of projects to create useful devices for the continuation of the play (e.g., “fire hydrant”); moments dedicated to the construction of play devices, which are then used for play [...].
3. [...] In the last month of school, each project group returns to the experience made and establishes a code with which to communicate it (graphic representation, verbal, etc.). In this way each path becomes the cultural heritage of the school community, in which future paths can find roots to renew it and continue a common history [...] (SAVIO, 2015, p. 304-305).

Looking at the phases of the approach in relation to the role of the play, the following aspects should be emphasized.

In the first phase, the choice of themes and play groups are freely decided by the children, with the participation of the entire school group. Adults intervene:

- *In play*, providing a setting suitable for the manifestation and development of the free playful initiative of children; interacting with children who play according to *promotion from inside* approach;
- *Out of the play*, i.e., in the moments of assembly by supporting: the democratic confrontation between children to solve problems or develop possibilities encountered during the play (e.g., in the symbolic play with “cops and robbers”; how do you understand if a thief is hit by a guard chasing

him? How can we build the guards' barracks?); the metareflective awareness of "what is the play we play, who we play it with"; the choice of the play and the companions with whom you want to continue playing, in order to define the project groups.

The second phase is basically structured like the first, but *the inside* and *outside of the play* are developing in the individual project groups and in relation to the playful theme that identifies each of them; furthermore, the in-depth activity is strengthened in the moments outside the play, introducing more consistently the construction of installations identified by the children in the assembly as useful for the continuation of the play (for example, the design of a fire station, the finding and the assembly of the materials to build it), and carrying out of research and studies on the subject (e.g., a visit to the fire station, the observation and study of the operation of a hydrant, the design and procurement of material to make it, etc.). Moments of free play continue to alternate with activities outside the play, but always oriented by the play which defines their contents and aimed at enriching play possibilities.

The third phase is essentially dedicated to an activity *out of the play*, which consists in the documentation by the project group of the path taken to make it communicable. This activity supports on the one hand, in the project group, the socialized metacognition of the path taken and its expression through a coconstructed symbolic code, on the other the sharing at the school group-community level of what has happened in the different project groups. It is an out-of-play activity which has as its object both what happened inside the play and the out-of-play activities developed in the first two phases starting from the play itself.

Basically, *working by projects* is a curricular approach in which children's play is not a part of the curriculum,⁹ but guides it. This is an approach that is tuned with what is expressed by the aforementioned *Position paper*; indeed, it safeguards both the authenticity of the play, namely its full correspondence to the interests and playful needs of children, as well as the support of the learning aroused from the play itself. This is made possible by a precisely defined path in the structure, with phases oriented by objectives and marked in moments for the activities inside and outside the play, with a clearly defined adult role for both situations. In this way the right to play but also the participation of children in the construction of their own educational paths are guaranteed; indeed, it is the contents and aggregations freely chosen by the children for their play, and therefore their *voice*, to define groups, environments, learning paths.

It should be emphasized that a curricular approach of this kind is a good reference for an educational perspective 0–6: with appropriate adjustments related to the different childhood ages, the idea of guaranteeing protected islands of free play, setting up conditions for their realization and modulating the educational proposal out of the play based on what you hear from the playful *voice* of children, it seems to me a useful operating principle for an educational perspective that aims at the participation of even very young children.

Brief Final Notes

At the time of writing, the process of cultural construction of the educational system or 0–6 in Italy is facing a crucial step. In December 2020, the National Commission for integrated education and instruction system, provided for by Legislative Decree 65 and established by the Ministry of Education, published the Document of the *Pedagogical Lines for the integrated system 0–6*. It is a draft that has been proposed for consultation to various stakeholders, whose suggestions will be accepted to arrive at the definition of the final and participatory version of the document. The draft of the *Pedagogical Lines* contains a paragraph dedicated to play (part III, paragraph 7—see note 1), which is in perfect tune with what has been proposed so far, that is, with a pedagogy *for* play recognized as a fundamental reference for the educational identity of the 0–6 system.

The fact that a national orientation document makes this perspective its own represents a substantial step forward in the direction of a cultural construction of the 0–6 system that is also centred on play.

The next steps will be taken by acting at the level of the training of educators and teachers of 0–6. In this sense, in addition to the study of play in terms of its meaning for the lives of children, I think that the approaches of *promotion from within* and *working for projects* can represent valid references as operational guidelines not only to be known, but above all to be critically tested in situations of reflective confrontation between colleagues. In other words, I think they could be used as strategies to be experimented and then critically consider the outcomes, reflecting as a team on what has been put into practice to bring out and question their own ideas of play, its role in the lives of children and in the educational relationship. In short, I believe that the solid cultural construction of a 0–6 educational perspective centred on play can only pass through a choral and transversal reflective training work, which aims to bring out the latent pedagogies (BECCHI, 2005; BONDIOLI, 1993) on play using theoretical references and precise operational orientations.

Data Availability Statement

Not applicable.

Funding

Not applicable.

Acknowledgements

Not applicable.

Notes

1. Cfr.: For Italy, in particular the basic document Pedagogical Lines for the integrated system 0-6 (Part III The centrality of children, point 7 The importance of play; for European panorama, the Proposal for key principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care (LAZZARI, 2016, pp. 72-73).
2. The document was drawn up by the Special Interest Group (SIG) Rethinking Play, (2017), a group of play researchers belonging to the European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA).
3. For an in-depth analysis in this sense, cfr. Bondioli (1996); Bondioli and Savio (2018, cap. 4).
4. Cfr. Note 1. On the mandate of the European Commission, the Quality framework was drawn up by a group of experts who, on the basis of an analysis of the good practices present in the member countries and of the psychopedagogical literature, outlines in the document 10 principles of educational quality which should refer 0–6 educational services at European level.
5. To deepen these dimensions with their manifestations and their development in symbolic play cfr. Bondioli and Savio (1994).

6. For example, if the child hints at pretending to drink using a piece of wood as a glass, or to write using a stone as a pencil, the adult will repeat and fully complete these behaviours by playing with the child; these are behaviours that in relation to the ability to decontextualise (acting increasingly independent of the perceived context) represent a higher level (substitute object) than, respectively, pretending to drink from a real glass or to write with a real pencil (prototype object). For further information see Bondioli and Savio (2020).
7. In 2001, following the advent in Italy of the autonomy of educational institutions (DPR 275 of 08/03/1999), the Territorial Resource Centre was born in Fossano (province of Cuneo); it is a network of preschools aimed to promote training, support and pedagogical comparison for local teachers.
8. The approach is presented, both in its theoretical references and with experiences carried out in different schools, in Savio (2000); a particular aspect of the approach, namely its relevance in terms of citizenship education, is addressed in Savio (2015). Cfr. also, Galaverna, Giubergia and Reynaudo (2019).
9. The curriculum here generically refers to an educational path oriented by basic aims and specific objectives, structured in activities designed to achieve these aims/objectives and accompanied by tools/strategies for verification. For more information on the specificities of a curriculum for 0–6 education, see Bondioli and Savio (2018).

REFERENCES

- BAUMER, S. Play pedagogy and playworlds. *In*: TREMBLAY, R. E.; BOIVIN, M.; PETERS, R. D. (Orgs.). **Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development**. Quebec: CEECD, 2013. Available at: <https://www.child-encyclopedia.com/play/according-experts/play-pedagogy-and-playworlds>. Access on: 13 July 2021.
- BECCHI, E. **Pedagogie latenti**: Una nota. Quaderni della didattica della scrittura, n. 3, p. 105-113, 2005.
- BETTELHEIM, B. **Un genitore quasi perfetto**. Milan: Feltrinelli, 1987.
- BONDIOLI, A. Uno strumento per l'analisi della giornata alla scuola materna. *In*: INSEGNAMENTI PEDAGOGICI DEL DIPARTIMENTO DI FILOSOFIA DELL'UNIVERSITÀ DI PAVIA (Org.). **La giornata educativa nella scuola dell'infanzia**. Bergamo: Junior, 1993, p. 1-16.
- BONDIOLI, A. **Gioco e educazione**. Milan: Franco Angeli, 1996.
- BONDIOLI, A. The adult as a tutor in fostering children's symbolic play. *In*: GÖNCÜ, A.; KLEIN, E. (Orgs.). **Children in play, story and school**. New York: Guilford, 2001. p. 107-131.
- BONDIOLI, A.; SAVIO, D. **Osservare il gioco di finzione**: Una scala di valutazione delle abilità ludico-simboliche infantili (SVALSI). Bergamo: Junior, 1994. p. 157-235.
- BONDIOLI, A., SAVIO, D. **Educare l'infanzia**. Rome: Carocci, 2018.
- BONDIOLI, A., SAVIO, D. Pedagogie per il gioco: L'adulto nel gioco dei bambini. *In*: SAVIO, D. (Org.). **Bambini e gioco**: Prospettive multidisciplinari per una pedagogia ludica. Bergamo: Junior, 2020. p. 157-184.

- CAILLOIS, R. (1967). **Il gioco e gli uomini**: La maschera e la vertigine. Milan: Bompiani, 2007.
- CORSARO, W. A. **Le culture dei bambini**. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003.
- COMMISSIONE PER IL SISTEMA INTEGRATO 0–6. **Linee Pedagogiche 0–6**. Available at: <https://www.istruzione.it/sistema-integrato-06/linee-pedagogiche.html>. Access on: 15 June 2021.
- DEWEY, J. **Ethical principles underlying education**. Chicago: The University of Chicago Prss, Available at: 1903. <https://archive.org/details/ethicalprincipl00dewegoog>. Access on: 17 July 2021.
- DEWEY, J. (1916). **Democrazia e educazione**. Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1974.
- DEWEY, J. (1933). **Come pensiamo**. Milan: Raffaello Cortina, 2019.
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION. **Proposal for key principles of a quality framework for early childhood education and care**. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/education/policy/strategic-framework/archive/documents/ecec-quality-framework_en.pdf. Access on: 10 June 2021.
- FINK, E. **Oasi del gioco**. Milan: Raffaello Cortina, 2008.
- GALAVERNA, C., GIUBERGIA, A., REYNAUDO C. Giocare e lavorare per progetti: L'approccio delle scuole dell'infanzia di Fossano. In: SAVIO, D.; MORO, C. (Orgs.). **Giocare per costruire mondi**: Prospettive e esperienze per l'educazione infantile, tra Italia e Brasile. Milan: Franco Angeli, 2019.
- HAKKARAINEN, P. et al. Adult play guidance and children's play development in a narrative play-world. **European Early Childhood Education Research Journal**, v. 21, n. 2, p. 213-225, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2013.789189>
- LAZZARI, A. (Org.). **Un quadro europeo per la qualità dei servizi educativi e di cura per l'infanzia**: Proposta di principi chiave. San Paolo d'Argon: Zeroseiup, 2016.
- LINDQVIST, G. **The aesthetics of play**: A didactic study of play and culture in preschools. Göteborg: Coronet Books, 1995.
- ITALY. **Legge 13 luglio 2015 n. 107**. Riforma del sistema nazionale di istruzione e formazione e delega per il riordino delle disposizioni legislative vigenti. (15G00122) (GU Serie Generale n.162 del 15-07-2015). Available at: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2015/07/15/15G00122/sg>. Access on: 15 July 2021.
- ITALY. **Decreto legislativo 13 aprile 2017 n. 65**. Istituzione del sistema integrato di educazione e di istruzione dalla nascita sino a sei anni, a norma dell'articolo 1, commi 180 e 181, lettera e), della legge 13 luglio 2015, n. 107. (17G00073) (GU Serie Generale n.112 del 16-05-2017 - Suppl. Ordinario n. 23). Available at: <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/2017/05/16/17G00073/sg>. Access on: 17 July 2021.
- UNITED NATIONS. **Convention on the Rights of the Child**. Geneva, 1989. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>. Access on: 16 June 2021.

PRAMLING SAMUELSSON, I., ASPLUND CARLSSON, M. The playing learning child: Towards a pedagogy of early childhood. **Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research**, v. 52, n. 6, p. 623-641, 2008. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313830802497265>

SAVIO, D. Jhon Dewey e il “lavorare per progetti”: Una connessione possibile. *In*: SAVIO, D. (Org.). **La relazione educativa come processo d’indagine**: Intenzionale, aperto, sistematico, controllato. Bergamo: Junior, 2000. p. 9-20.

SAVIO, D. **Il gioco e l’identità educativa del nido d’infanzia**: Un percorso di valutazione formativa partecipata nei nidi di Modena. Bergamo: Junior, 2011.

SAVIO, D. Educare alla cittadinanza democratica: Analisi di un’esperienza in una scuola dell’infanzia. **RELAdEI. Revista Latinoamericana de Educación Infantil**, Santiago de Compostela, v. 4, n. 2, p. 297-315, 2015.

SAVIO, D. Il gioco, la “voce” resistente del bambino. *In*: BOBBIO, A., BONDIOLI, A. (Orgs.). **Gioco e infanzia**. Rome: Carocci, 2019a. p. 81-102.

SAVIO, D. Il gioco al centro: Criticità e opportunità per una prospettiva educativa 0-6. *In*: ELIA, G., POLENGHI, S., ROSSINI, V. (Orgs.). **La scuola tra saperi e valori etico-sociali**: Politiche culturali e pratiche educative. Lecce: Pensa Multimedia, 2019b. p. 945-956.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP (SIG) “RETHINKING PLAY”. **Position paper about the role of play in early childhood education and care, 2017**. Available at: <http://www.eecera.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/POSITION-PAPER-SIG-RETHINKING-PLAY.pdf>. Access on: 11 July 2021.

VYGOTSKIJ, L. S. **Storia delle funzioni psichiche superiori**. Florence: Giunti-Barbera, 1974.

WINNICOTT, D. W. **Gioco e realtà**. Rome: Armando, 1971.

WOOD, D., BRUNER, J. S., ROSS, G. The role of tutoring in problem solving. **Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry**, n. 17, p. 89-100, 1976.

Received: 17 Sept. 2021

Approved: 25 Mar. 2022

Associated Editors:

Alessandra Arce Hai and Juan Manuel Sánchez