

Artigo

The integration of expressive languages for childhood education

La integración de los lenguajes expresivos para la educación infantil

A integração de linguagens expressivas para a educação infantil

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Abstract:

The recovery of the importance of school, after the suspension due to the covid emergency, sees at the centre of the training activities those that make children active subjects, capable of interacting concretely and creatively. The object of this paper is to describe some elements of how the integration of artistic languages, such as dance-movement, narration, and pictorial-plastic production, represents a significant contribution in this direction as a “left hand pedagogy” centred on imagination and creativity. At the basis of every expressive production there is the creative process that concerns and makes possible the development of our inner world and the increasingly awareness of the perception of the uniqueness of one's own being. These processes are enhanced and implemented by the suitably proposed integration of different languages. In this paper, the above synthetically outlined, I will be discussing a specific method of dance-movement-therapy proposed with a pedagogical method, defined in Italy as symbolic-anthropological. It is an approach tested in different contexts and schools of all levels, in which the different expressive possibilities are proposed in a fluid way in relation to a symbolic theme and to an educational objective. In the workshops in which the positivity of these activities was assessed, it emerged how those activities were particularly appropriate to children's needs. For kindergarten children, the immersive activities of movement, dance, drawing and storytelling, interactively integrated with each other, support: the process of inhabiting the body, perceptive discrimination, the possibility of putting order in one's emotions, the processes connected to the symbolic function and the gradual adaptation to reality. Furthermore, with primary school children, the activities satisfy, among other things, the need to give shape to one's internal world, as well as the need for competence and emotional channelling.

Resumo

A recuperação da importância da escola, após a suspensão devido à emergência da covid, vê no centro das atividades de ensino aquelas que tornam as crianças sujeitos ativos, capazes de interagir de forma concreta e criativa. O objetivo deste artigo é descrever alguns elementos de como a integração de linguagens artísticas, como a dança-movimento, a narração e a produção pictórico-plástica, representa uma contribuição significativa nessa direção como uma “pedagogia da mão esquerda” centrada na imaginação e na criatividade. Na base de toda produção expressiva está o

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processo criativo, que diz respeito e possibilita o desenvolvimento de nosso mundo interior e a crescente conscientização da percepção da singularidade de nosso próprio ser. Esses processos são aprimorados e implementados pelo processo de desenvolvimento da imaginação. Esses processos são aprimorados e implementados pela integração adequadamente proposta de diferentes linguagens. Neste artigo, sinteticamente delineado acima, discutirei um método específico de dança-movimento-terapia proposto com um método pedagógico, definido na Itália como simbólico-antropológico. Trata-se de uma abordagem testada em diferentes contextos e escolas de todos os níveis, na qual as diferentes possibilidades expressivas são propostas de forma fluida em relação a um tema simbólico e a um objetivo educacional. Para as crianças da Educação Infantil, as atividades imersivas de movimento, dança, desenho e narração de histórias, integradas interativamente umas às outras, apoiam: o processo de habitar o corpo, a discriminação perceptiva, a possibilidade de colocar ordem nas emoções, os processos ligados à função simbólica e a adaptação gradual à realidade. Além disso, com crianças do ensino fundamental, as atividades satisfazem, entre outras coisas, a necessidade de dar forma ao seu mundo interno, bem como a necessidade de competência e canalização emocional

Resumen:

La recuperación de la importancia de la escuela, después de la suspensión debida a la emergencia covídica, ve en el centro de las actividades formativas aquellas que hacen de los niños sujetos activos, capaces de interactuar concreta y creativamente. El objeto de este trabajo es describir algunos elementos de cómo la integración de lenguajes artísticos, como la danza-movimiento, la narración y la producción pictórico-plástica, representa una contribución significativa en esta dirección como «pedagogía de la mano izquierda» centrada en la imaginación y la creatividad. En la base de toda producción expresiva está el proceso creativo que concierne y hace posible el desarrollo de nuestro mundo interior y la toma de conciencia cada vez mayor de la percepción de la unicidad del propio ser. Estos procesos se potencian y llevan a la práctica mediante la integración convenientemente propuesta de diferentes lenguajes. En este trabajo, esbozado sintéticamente lo anterior, trataré un método específico de danza-movimiento-terapia propuesto con un método pedagógico, definido en Italia como simbólico-antropológico. Se trata de un enfoque probado en diferentes contextos y escuelas de todos los niveles, en el que las diferentes posibilidades expresivas se proponen de manera fluida en relación con un tema simbólico y con un objetivo educativo. En los talleres en los que se evaluó la positividad de estas actividades, se puso de manifiesto cómo éstas se adecuaban especialmente a las necesidades de los niños. Para los niños de preescolar, las actividades inmersivas de movimiento, danza, dibujo y narración, integradas interactivamente entre sí, apoyan: el proceso de habitar el cuerpo, la discriminación perceptiva, la posibilidad de poner orden en las propias emociones, los procesos relacionados con la función simbólica y la adaptación gradual a la realidad. Además, con los niños de primaria, las actividades satisfacen, entre otras cosas, la necesidad de dar forma al propio mundo interno, así como la necesidad de competencia y canalización emocional.

Key words: Art activities, Movement education, Visual arts, Narration.

Palavras-chave: Atividades artísticas, Educação para o movimento, Artes visuais, Narração

Palabras clave: Actividades artísticas, Educación del movimiento, Artes visuales, Narración



1. For a “left hand” pedagogy.

The integration of artistic languages, such as dance-movement, narration, and musical and/or pictorial-plastic production, represents a significant contribution to recover the importance of the school, as the main place for children's education. After the suspension due to the covid emergency, the training activities that make children active subjects, capable of interacting concretely and creatively, using their hands on the materials, are more and more important to help them to develop and perceive their own uniqueness.

Since ancient times, art in its various forms has had educational functions. In archaic civilisations, rituals, carried out through the use of dance, music, but also of colours and different languages (which today we would define as plastic-pictorial or body techniques), made it possible to teach and pass on the mythical narratives of the community, i.e. the system of beliefs, values and the identity of the culture to which one belongs. The shaman used the power of music, movement, visual art together with other expressive devices, in healing and educational rituals (Naccari, 2004).

Even in ancient Greece, the Epos, as a complex of tales that narrated in mythical form the exploits and deeds of legendary heroes, was declaimed in rhythmic form, and sung by bards and rhapsodes to excite and arouse the desire for imitation in young listeners.

Furthermore, dance, *χορεία*, included within itself poetry and music it was something harmonically united which was precisely movement, dance, poetry and music, and was a cornerstone of the education of young people. Dance was at the centre of ceremonies, both sacred and profane (Egri, 1987, p. 15).

Over time the connection between the arts has mostly been lost... each one has evolved into specific forms and techniques. The search for formal and stylistic perfection relegated the value and sense of integration between the arts and their important educational function to the background. The various languages, in the 'separate' search for their own expressive objectives, have ended up being considered "entertainment" or a form of "culture" not always relevant to the life of those in the development phase...

Yet, art, in its various forms, as Cassirer claims, is one of the realities determining the human universe as a symbolic one. The different artistic languages are among the threads that constitute the symbolic tissue, the tangled web of human experience (1944); the human being, in fact, continually gives meanings, interprets, and produces meanings through symbolic forms. Human civilization is interwoven with culture made of symbols, sounds, words, signs, images; becoming human, and therefore being educated as such, it cannot ignore artistic education as training to the cultural world which is a symbolic world!

A practice that in the contemporary world has recovered the symbolic value of the arts, together with their educational and therapeutic value, is the art-therapeutic one. Therapy, *Θεραπεία*, recovers, here, the ancient meaning of *care* in the sense of attention to the needs of the person in a general sense, not therapy in a specifically clinical sense therefore, but service to the person as a whole. In art therapies, reference is made to theatre, dance, pictorial production, and music; but these arts, in fact, are considered, more than in their performative opportunity, in the service and care they can provide for the person. The intention, therefore, is not to teach a technique, but to support the person in their evolution thanks to the creative process that expressive languages make possible.

The attention is, in fact, directed more to the congruence of the form with the internal experience than to the finished product and its aesthetic significance (Canton, 2012a, p.56), because the focus is the quality of the subjective experience. One of the fundamental purposes is to develop the creative and expressive potential of the person, to support it in giving shape to his/her internal world, identifying the most suitable symbols, activating his/her resources, and contacting and thus manifesting this person's uniqueness and authenticity.

At the basis of the different forms of art therapy there is therefore the creative process, which combines primary and secondary processes, as identified by Freud, the first concerns the psyche linked to its unconscious components, connected to the pleasure principle, the second concerns the alert and rational mind, connected to the reality principle. As Arieti claims, the combination of the two processes occurs precisely thanks to the artistic process, which gives rise to what he defines as a tertiary process, which integrates the rational with the irrational, that is more archaic with the logical processes, creating a sort of *magical synthesis* from which the new, the unexpected, the desirable emerges (1976) and in which the person can perceive his own unspeakable wholeness.

Creativity generates a deep sense of pleasure and unity. Doing coincides profoundly with being (Canton, 2012a, p.178), which is particularly true in dance where creation and creator are fused together.

In Bruner's theory in the development of creative potential, there is a co-essentiality between "right hand" and "left hand", the first is the metaphor of logical and rational processes, and the other of lateral and divergent thinking. The right hand represents the doer, the left hand the dreamer. The right is connected to order and legality, to geometry and rigid connections. Seeking knowledge with the right hand is science. Yet, saying only this about science means neglecting some of its sources, since the great hypotheses of science are gifts that come from the left hand (Bruner, 1979)

Creativity therefore has to do with the integration of different functions, it is the result of a complex and complete approach to reality, in which imagination plays an important role. It is a transversal activity and a dynamic result of different aspects of the person.

We can, therefore, share what Nietzsche claimed that *God gave us art so as not to die of truth...* An exclusively rational approach to reality risks impoverishing it, the artistic and cultural production of humans, in narratives (from mythical to theatrical ones), in poetry, in dance, in pictorial plastic production, speaks of realities and dimensions that are not only visible ones, since they also concern emotions, attitudes, meanings, values, dimensions as ineffable as they are necessary to live as human beings!

Art represents, therefore, a condensation of experiences, it is a synthesis of what is agitated or simply moves in the human soul, and allows us to perceive ourselves as "one", since artistic enjoyment and production integrate within themselves different fields of experience (Bruner, 1979) and perceptions that come from different senses. The integration between the different artistic languages can, therefore, implement this sense of unity as a sort of "left hand pedagogy" (Naccari, 2006, pp.170-175), which has the important task of rebalancing the logocentric vocation of the West, excessively centred on the rational and analytical activities of the "right hand".

2. The symbolic-anthropological method as artistic education in schools.

In the specificity of the symbolic-anthropological bodily and expressive mediation methodology (Naccari, 2004, 2006, 2012, 2018,) that I intend to talk about here, the artistic languages involved are predominantly dance and movement (which also include elements of theatre), music and musical production, pictorial plastic production and narration.

Among the different dance movement therapy approaches, the symbolic-anthropological (DMT SA) one enhances the symbolic dimension of arts. Through the symbol, danced, drawn, sung, imagined, or some of these expressive possibilities put together, you can experience and learn meanings, attitudes, values ... Each meeting is proposed in relation to a symbolic theme and to a story, a myth or fairy tale, which is considered interesting for the development of those people involved in the movement, so that the narrative dimension is also present and involves and activates specific experiences based on what it communicates.

The artistic languages are involved in such a way that almost no gap is perceived between one and the other, they are proposed in a fluid manner in relation to the theme and objective of each meeting. The introductory part of each of them is a warm-up conceived not only as physical activation, but also an emotional, imaginative, relational and spiritual one. One dimension or another will be enhanced more depending on the specific objective... The central part of the meeting facilitates personal exploration of the chosen and narrated theme and is often supported using sound materials and/or sound productions, which enhance involvement and identification through movement. The final part, defined as integration, has the aim of allowing the in-depth analysis and also the sedimentation of the discoveries-learnings made; in this phase it is possible to use the most disparate artistic techniques, from drawing to written production (in poetry and/or in prose or other), to the development of individual, couple or group choreographies, the production of works with natural or recycled materials the type of integration is chosen based on the learning that must be stored in memory. For example, if it is an activity on the perception of the body schema, body shaping can be proposed, i.e. one lets a partner draw the shape of one's body while he/she is lying in a freely chosen position, the owner of the shape will then be free to colour and draw inside his/her own shape depending on how he/she perceived the various parts of the body in movement and dance activities.

In this approach the different intelligences (Gardner, 1983) are contacted in the development of their interaction. Bodily intelligence, visual-spatial intelligence, interpersonal, intrapersonal, sound-musical, narrative intelligence etc. are activated not only in relation to themselves, but insofar as they can each activate the others. As already anticipated, for example, in the musical world by Dalcroze (1965), the musical sound experience is destined to educate and connect the entire psycho-corporeal reality. But thanks to the appropriate pedagogical-didactic intentionality, each intelligence can, especially in the integration between some of them, activate and form the entire world of the personality of the human being.

In agreement with various theorists of child development (J.Bruner, J.Piaget, M.Montessori), this approach considers how intelligence is strongly rooted in the sensorimotor dimension, as an active possibility of knowledge of the world, which in the training activity I'm talking about here is conspicuously involved; subsequently the children access the representation mediated by the

image, i.e. an iconic type of knowledge, and then (but the timing is not so binding) increasingly access the symbolic representation. Bruner underlines, as I have already mentioned before, the importance of integrating the intuitive, more lateral and divergent approach, with the analytical, more rational and symbolic one. All these processes find correspondence in the different activities, motor, iconic and narrative, integrated in the DMT SA laboratories... facilitating not only the structuring of the different forms of representation of reality, but also the dynamic integration between them to transversally contact the different functions and dimensions of the person. This 'global' methodology is well suited to the educational methods designed for nursery school, in which priority is given to interventions that aim to involve all sensorial and expressive channels, to meet the specific ways of perception of reality of children among the 3 and 6 years old, who are particularly synesthetic and 'holistic'.

This approach, among other things, allows an education not only centred on the value of the body as an expression of the personality and a communicative, expressive and operational condition, but also a socio-affective, emotional and ethical education. All these are pedagogical dimensions which in the contemporary world are increasingly identified as an essential mission of educational institutions, specifically from childhood to adolescence.

It should also be underlined that this type of activity, in addition to corresponding to the specific educational needs of children in nursery and primary schools, also allows for a great power of change for the school institution itself (Mignosi, 2012, pp. 231-248). Knowing how to give value to experiences, imagination, listening, integration between languages, are skills that are required not only from the expert who is able to carry out these interventions in the school, but also from the classroom teachers themselves, who are always important to involve in various roles in the activities. It may be that the class teacher is also an art therapist or dance movement therapist and can therefore integrate specific art therapy activities into his/her curricular activities, but if he/she is not, it is important to ensure that the curricular teacher can interact and participate in order to support the main educator and stimulate the students with his/her presence, but above all, acquire new possibilities for listening and relational skills. Here, therefore, I think from an "ecological" perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), i.e. I consider that one's art-therapeutic intervention is always destined to have an impact on the organization and on the various subjects involved in various roles in the training of the children we care for. It must be remembered that the context in which one operates is never a simple container, but becomes part of the psycho-pedagogical processes in progress; it is therefore always a social place where interactions directly or indirectly influence learning processes (Bateson, 1972). The complexity of the interaction between expressive languages calls into question a complexity that is also of disciplines and of people and contexts called to weave relationships with each other, to communicate and share for a more significant and complete experience (i.e. education) of students, trainers and contexts themselves.

In considering, therefore, the school organization as an organization that learns and changes thanks to the relationships and interactions that take place internally, but also externally, it is evident that an intervention centred precisely on relationships, the integration of languages and of expressive opportunities, can have a notable impact on the development and change of the educational context itself. In order for all this to actually happen, it is important to adopt an

authentically ecological perspective, which, intentionally, can and knows how to design, taking into account and enhancing group dynamics, communicative and expressive interactions, the integration of languages as a metaphor for context integration, in which we listen, communicate, change, empathize, imagine, learn new ways of relating, and build understanding and knowledge together.

3. Immersive experience of art and education in childhood

Bodily and expressive mediation as a playful educational dimension constitutes an opportunity for growth throughout the person's life, from childhood to advanced adulthood it can satisfy the different developmental tasks of each life cycle. In early childhood, however, as I mentioned before, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence is particularly important for contacting and allowing the development of other areas of the person. For Piaget the sensorimotor period is the basis on which the subsequent possibilities of the intelligence of the human being are built, for Maria Montessori *the hand is the grasping organ of intelligence* ("la mano è l'organo di prensione dell'intelligenza"), thanks to movement the personality of the child, in its uniqueness, with all its characteristics, can *embody* ("incarnare") itself and come to live under the skin, opening his/her eyes to the world and starting the process of adaptation to visible reality. Furthermore, the different expressive forms allow us to give space and flourish what Hillman defines "the poetic basis of mind" (1983), that is, the ability to relate, read and give meaning to reality and ourselves through the imagination, i.e. through ancient narratives and the archetypes with which they are woven, and therefore through the varied world of cultural symbols.

During nursery school age, 3-6 years, the complete acquisition and re-elaboration of basic body schemas occurs, together with a first elementary structuring of the body image. These acquisitions allow the exploration of the world, supporting and satisfying the need for autonomy and initiative.

The perception of reality is "synesthetic" (Stern, 1985), it gives rise to a sort of global experience, in which the qualities of things are perceived together all at once and not in an analytical way. The world is one, made of colours that play, sounds that smell, colourful movements, lights that make you move... Mind, body and emotions are integrated. It is also due to this specific way of perceiving the world that art with its languages represents a great educational opportunity for children. In fact, artistic language, precisely because it is a condensation of experience, suits the child's holistic approach, proving to be an effective tool for mediating the relationship with reality.

Particularly, dance and narration, together with nursery rhymes and/or songs, integrated together, allow the child to completely identify him/herself, thanks to this very varied aesthetic experience, in a story, but also to identify him/herself by recognizing something of his/her own in it. The typology of stories may vary based on the needs of the children, but fairy tales, which have been widely investigated (among all Bettelheim, 1976), precisely because they describe universal situations characterized by magical and mysterious aspects, on the one hand allow children to grasp something essential, an idea, an emotion, a value, but also to identify in that trait, in that idea, that is something specific about their own personal story.

In the approach I am talking about here, the story is an integrative narrator background ("sfondo narratore integrativo", Canevaro, 1997), which not only

organizes the dance experience, but determines the experiences through the meanings it conveys; at the end of the danced identification, the children can draw the character or story that struck them most, perhaps because they recognized themselves in it. Moving from the danced story to the drawing allows the child to appropriate the discoveries he/she has just made in a more significant and personal way.

This experience they have just lived remains in a certain sense halfway between the global experience of the child and the reality as adults see it, enabling children to gradually adapt to the latter without giving up their own psychic needs and requests. Imagination, with its expressive symbolic mediators, thus has an adaptive value, it helps to gradually relate to the real world, without dangers, at the same time taking over the communicative and symbolic systems of the adult world (also considering that the symbolic function has just begun to develop). But imagination also has value in itself, in fact it nourishes, as I mentioned before, *the poetic basis of the mind*, the poetic consciousness, the world of the soul and feelings.

This type of artistic experience also facilitates the conquest of the "goodness of the world", which, according to Steiner, in the first seven years of life is crucial for acquiring a sense of trust in oneself and in others. The artistic universe, also thanks to the ethics of the chosen stories, to dance, represent, and draw, ensures that the child perceives the context in which he/she is immersed as an adequate and nurturing social environment.

The second seven years is generally defined as a period with a certain stability (before the storm of adolescence), and children are ready to learn and need to feel capable and be engaged in rewarding activities. The creativity required in the workshops that integrate expressive languages meets this need, good motor control has been achieved and coordination and aesthetic skills have been developed, everything related to movement, dance, choreography and expressive languages in general enables these aspects of development to be expressed, confirmed and developed.

If the development of bodily reality is the fundamental dimension of the first seven years, in the following years the internal world asks to be nourished and formed, the very beauty of the different artistic opportunities here becomes a precious medium, also for identifying one's own beauty, mainly as interior beauty. After having built his/her own "body-house" now they begin to "inhabit" it, thanks to emotions and feelings. Art-mediated activities inevitably activate the emotional world. Movement induces a state of consciousness different from the ordinary one, more oriented towards the pleasure of playing, feeling, imagining and empathizing with people. The choreographic, narrative, or pictorial production activates the pleasure of mirroring one's internal world, which takes shape thanks to aesthetic creation. This also allows for emotional channelling and aesthetic catharsis. Emotions experienced as potentially negative can be sublimated and transformed through the expressive process. In artistic creation, whether choreographic or otherwise, one can in fact distance oneself and contemplate the emotion, transforming it because it is contained in an aesthetic form.

Other activities that are part of the S.A. method, such as Geo-dance (Geodanza; Naccari, 2020) for example, allow you to relate to the elements of nature, imitating their forms, dancing their suggestions, also supported by simple ethnic songs, and/or creating artistic installations with recycled materials between the trees or whatever is present in the chosen place. It is, therefore, a true

education in beauty in a broad sense, which facilitates listening and interaction with nature in a sort of total artistic approach, also educating towards a positive and respectful interaction with the environment!!

Even the substantial playfulness of the expressive proposals of the S.A. method. facilitates emotional education. The game, if proposed in the appropriate way, is configured as a representation of impulses, feelings or fantasies. Thanks to the creation and experimentation within the activity, the energies are safely contained; they can be propitiated, invoked, confronted, channelled and transformed (Whitmont, 1982). The game is in fact also a way to minimize the consequences of actions and therefore you can learn in a less risky situation... Thanks to the fictitious, invented characteristics of the game, therefore, something represented is always expressed, but at the same time real emotions and real attitudes are contacted, you can thus become more aware, and, if necessary, more competent in them. Playful-artistic activity is thus also a transitional practice (Winnicott, 1971), it activates a change, a passage from one state to another.

Emotional-affective activation also gives us the chance to experience what Reboul (1992) defines as the "material" aspect of value, that is feeling congruent with the judgement inherent in the value; for example, I know that it is right to respect and valorise others (judgment), but to live it "spontaneously" it is important that I "feel" that when I behave in a respectful manner I "feel good and I am happy". In all this the playful dimension has an important part, since it allows to experience the pleasure of respecting the rules of being together, which determine the game itself, but also and above all it determines a positive evolution of one's way of relating to others.

Furthermore, in this period (7-14), the respiratory and circulatory systems reach maturity, both revealing a relational symbolism, we breathe an air that is outside us, returning an exhale that comes from within us; the heart beats a possible rhythm among the multiple rhythms of the universe, expressing one of the many possibilities of existence in interaction with each other. The relational and group dimension is strongly encouraged in bodily and expressive mediation activities, it is possible to propose many couple and group interaction games, which require global listening, not just verbal, such as mirroring games or motor and/or sonorous, pictorial dialogue. Often then in integration they create something together: choreographies, plastic pictorial works, stories, poems, songs. They are thus encouraged to refine a whole series of relational skills: empathy, the ability to identify with others, to play a role that is in harmony with those of others, the ability to guide and follow, to give trust and to trust, to tune in to the other and so on....

Communication and perception of one's identity then merge in the opportunity for mirroring and reciprocation, made possible by aesthetic production. In fact, satisfaction with one's own audio-vocal, motor and graphic trace constitutes a fundamental evolutionary drive in the child (Canton 2012a, p.183) for various reasons. Extending one's form into external space, indeed, is a first act of communication, which becomes a signal of one's presence, a pleased awareness of one's existence (Guerra Lisi, 1987, p.27). It is clear that the integration of languages implements the pleasure of being able to contemplate one's own trace in space... The possibility of translation from one expressive channel to another, from one symbolic language to another, is of great pedagogical significance precisely because of the different opportunities of

expression that articulate and intensify the perception of one's presence in the world.

All this also implements the process of acquiring psycho-corporeal unity, which, despite being a complex process that in some ways concerns the whole of our life, takes on particular relevance in childhood as it is connected to the increasingly complete and complex structuring of the body image. This is dynamic and is formed not only thanks to movement, but also thanks to emotions, relationships, the culture in which one is immersed, and the existential and psychological moment one is experiencing (Naccari, 2006). The activities of reflecting one's own image, both through various artistic productions and through couple and/or group activities, allow, among other things, to move in the direction of self-acceptance, to improve basic trust and self-esteem.

The development of the processes just described gradually promotes the acquisition of identity elements which will find a more complete composition in adolescence and then in young adulthood. In this direction in particular, the use of narration, as a background that facilitates the synthesis of other languages, contributes to the more adequate structuring of the "life script", as an essential basis of one's identity matrix (Baldo, 1996). Each child identifies more with this or that plot, intertwining different elements and themes, and thus starting to weave their own very personal way of being and being in the world...

The methodology thus briefly discussed was proposed in some nursery and primary schools in Italy (Canton, 2012b; Briziarelli; D'Aniello, 2023) and thanks to the qualitative and quantitative data collected, it was possible to evaluate and better understand how the integration of expressive languages is particularly congenial to the peculiar evolutionary characteristics and the educational needs of children of this age.

Specifically, aspects particularly corroborated by the investigations were: the congruence of this methodology with the global and synaesthetic perceptive modality of younger children, as well as the positivity of the symbolic anthropological approach for the formation of the *poetic basis of the mind* in slightly older children. For both ages, integrated expressive activities proved to be particularly effective for emotional literacy and affective education, as well as for the development of imagination and creative potential.

All this is particularly important in our contemporary world, considering that the increasingly conspicuous use of smartphones and tablets (also implemented during the pandemic period) risks 'colonizing' children's imagination, making them increasingly less competent in the ability to fantasize and create, therefore less able to identify with images, roles, situations and subjectively express themselves.

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