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Italy

Founding of the Center for Metaphor and Narrative in Science at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia (Unimore) in Northern Italy

By Annamaria Contini, Federico Corni, Hans Fuchs

On December 2-3, 2016, the Fourth Conference on “Innovation in Science Education in Primary School and Kindergarten: At the Crossroads of Science and Humanities” was held at the Department of Education and Humanities at Unimore in Reggio Emilia. The conference was devoted to the theme of metaphor and narrative in science education. The conference gave us the opportunity to celebrate the founding of the Center for Metaphor and Narrative in Science, which is hosted by the Department of Education and Humanities of Unimore. Its mission is to promote multi and inter-disciplinary research relating to the role of metaphor and narrative in science communication, science education, and mathematics. At the center, we wish to explore metaphor and storytelling as fundamental devices of imaginative rationality, especially as they are used in science education.

In collaboration with Hans U. Fuchs and Elisabeth Dumont (Zürich University of Applied Sciences at Winterthur, Switzerland), the center, MANIS, was conceived and founded by Annamaria Contini (who is its current director) and Federico Corni (who chairs the Scientific Committee). It brings together international experts from a wide range of fields: physics, geology, biology, and mathematics; aesthetics, pedagogy, philosophy, psychology, linguistics, and literature. Among the members of the Scientific Committee are Kieran Egan (Simon Fraser University, Canada); Zoltan Kövecses (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest), and Tamer Amin (American University, Beirut), and Jörg Zabel (University of Leipzig, Germany).

We have been busy since the founding of MANIS. The center’s website will be available soon at www.manis.unimore.it. We hope it will serve as a forum for communication and dissemination as well as a focus and locus of (virtual) international cooperation. We are planning seminars and workshops on some key issues such as the role of metaphor in scientific explanation and discovery, metaphorical competence of children, use of digital storytelling in science education, etc. Finally, we have started developing some of the international projects that were discussed last December during the Conference.

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