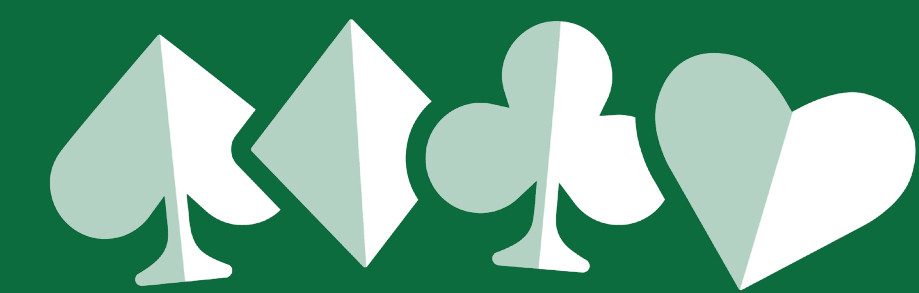


Bridge in Schools: Developing Social and Cognitive Skills Through Mindsport Education



Bridge: A MindSport For All
Connects People, Challenges Minds

What is Bridge?

Bridge is a classic card game played by four people in two partnerships, offering a unique blend of strategic thinking, communication, and collaboration.

As a form of 'serious leisure' (Stebbins 2020) and game-based learning, bridge can foster students' cognitive and social development whilst contributing to schoolteachers' agency and professional development.



"The game teaches you good arithmetic skills."

Introduction

The mindsport bridge enhances wellbeing, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal skills across diverse populations (McDonnell et al. 2017; Punch & Snellgrove 2021). Children are responsive to game-based learning environments (Cheng et al, 2014), and mathematical games can improve academic achievement (Kebritchi et al. 2010).

Bridge, with its emphasis on logic, memory, and teamwork, represents an underutilised educational tool with the potential to enrich traditional curricula and support holistic development.

"The school loves bridge because it requires the children to concentrate, to count, to work together."

Approach

Bridge: A MindSport for All (BAMSA) researches the benefits and challenges of school bridge in Scotland, England, Norway and the USA. Schatzki's (2002) practice theory considers how teaching and advocacy practices are shaped by material and social arrangements. In the classroom, bridge-playing becomes a pedagogical tool, where cognitive, emotional, and interpersonal learning unfolds through shared activity.

Semi-structured interviews with thirty-five bridge teachers reveal the complex interplay of institutional support and pedagogical strategies that influence programme success. We examined the structural factors (resources, policies) and social factors (doings, sayings, values, goals) that enable and constrain the sustained integration of bridge initiatives in schools.

"Bridge has that element of negotiation and communication."

Key Findings

- 1. Historical Patterns:** Past initiatives revealed both effective models and challenges in sustaining long-term engagement.
- 2. Teaching Methodologies:** Age-appropriate, interactive approaches are most effective in maintaining interest and participation.
- 3. Educational Transitions:** Shifts between school stages can disrupt continuity, highlighting the need for structured support.
- 4. Internal Champions and Administrative Buy-In:** Successful programmes rely on passionate advocates and supportive school leadership.
- 5. Marketing and Perception Management:** Overcoming outdated stereotypes about bridge is essential for student engagement.
- 6. Youth Benefits:** Students are perceived to gain cognitive skills (e.g. memory, logic), emotional resilience, and improved social interaction.

"Bridge teaches you how to think rationally, how to solve problems using logic."



Conclusions

- Bridge education in schools can be **transformative** when implemented thoughtfully.
- Success factors:** early exposure to card play, strategic partnerships between schools and bridge organisations, and sustained support through educational transitions.
- Challenges:** limited resources, competing academic priorities, cultural misconceptions and targeted engagement strategies.
- This study contributes to broader discussions on integrating leisure into formal education. It suggests that mindsports like bridge can play a vital role in developing **well-rounded, socially connected learners**.

"A workout for the brain".

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in Bridge: A MindSport for All
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Learn to Play Bridge!



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