



# UNWALLING SCHOOL

The quality of education in the context  
of the Innovative School Program



**Copyright © 2024**

**Jundiaí City Hall - Education Management Unit**

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced in whole or in part.

**General initiative and organization:**

Prof. Ma. Vastí Ferrari Marques – Municipal Education Manager

**Organizers of the work:**

Prof. Ma. Vastí Ferrari Marques

Prof. Me. Aduino Douglas Parre

Prof. Ma. Adriana Faccioni

Prof. Aline De Oliveira Tsun

Prof. Carolina Copelli Tamassia Ricci

Prof. Ma. Cicera Aparecida Escoura Bueno

Prof. Dr. Marjorie Samira Ferreira Bolognani

Prof. Sílvia Cristina Magalhães

Prof. Thaís Silva Nonô

**Graphic Design:** Marcela Comelato (Farol das Letras Publisher)

**Translation:** Peter Walker

**Proofreading:** Adnan Fachini de Bortolo; Carina de Faria Cassalho

**Cover:** Department of Communication of the Municipality  
of Jundiaí Innovation and Citizen Relationship Management Unit - UGIRC

**Dados Internacionais de Catalogação na Publicação (CIP)**  
**(Câmara Brasileira do Livro, SP, Brasil)**

Unwalling school [livro eletrônico] : the quality of education in the context of the innovative school program / organização Equipe Técnica da Unidade de Gestão de Educação. [translation Peter Walker]. -- Americana, SP : Editora Farol das Letras, 2024. PDF

Vários autores.

Título original: Desemparedamento da escola.

ISBN 978-65-84584-20-4

1. Educação escolar - Brasil 2. Educação - Jundiaí (SP) 3. Políticas educacionais 4. Políticas públicas 5. Programa Escola Inovadora 6. Metodologia 7. Desemparedamento da Escola I. Equipe Técnica da Unidade de Gestão de Educação.

24-212033

CDD-370

**Índices para catálogo sistemático:**

1. Programa Escola Inovadora : Educação 370

**Jundiaí City Hall - Education Management Unit (UGE)**

Municipal Administration of Jundiaí - SP (2021-2024)

Mayor: Luiz Fernando Arantes Machado

**Education Management Unit**

Head of Unit: Prof. Ma. Vastí Ferrari Marques

Deputy Manager of Education: Prof. Tânia Regina Roveri do Amaral Gurgel

Institutional Deputy Manager: Prof. Mário Eugênio Simões Onofre

Director of the Language and Information Technology Center: Prof. Carolina Gasparotto Bertolo de Carvalho

Director of the Department of Food and Nutrition: Maria Angela Oliveira Delgado

Director of the Department of Elementary Education: Prof. Dr. Marjorie Samira Ferreira Bolognani

Director of the Department of Inclusive Education: Prof. Karina Verardo Teodoro de Godoi

Director of the Department of Early Childhood Education: Prof. Thaís Silva Nonô

Director of the Department of Youth and Adult Education: Prof. Carolina Copelli Tamassia Ricci

Director of the Financial Department: Isabel Camilo de Souza

Director of the Department of Reading and Literature Promotion: Prof. Ma. Cícera Aparecida Escoura Bueno

Director of the Training Department: Prof. Sílvia Cristina Magalhães

Director of the Department of School Construction and Maintenance: Jefferson Aparecido Spina

Director of the Department of Planning, Management, and Finance: Prof. Samira Mourad Zenardi





To the boys and girls of Jundiaí (of all ages),  
who motivate and inspire us, for whom we have built so much in the past,  
experience in the present, and plan for the future.



## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

To the educators, ever present and filled with belief in the power of relationships, who, from one student to the next, construct a piece of the future through attentive, active, and sensitive listening. This resolute and amplified listening culminates in autonomy for discovery and the enjoyment of the world — a listening that generates hypotheses, inquiries, and challenges, capable of fostering new knowledge, creating a new culture, a new way of viewing life.

This book is dedicated to you who, day by day, place your trust in those who frequent each school, fostering hope with each new project initiated. This practice, so intense and only possible through your hands, goes beyond the classroom walls and spreads throughout the school's surroundings and the city, demonstrating that the educator's action is embedded in society and vitalizes daily life. To you, therefore, our deepest respect!

Thanks are also due to the scholars and researchers who participated and propelled reflections and practices that led to the development of the Unwalling School methodology implemented in the Jundiaí Municipal Education Network and are grounded in this work.



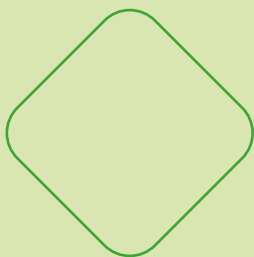
## **SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Amidst the myriad reasons and matters discussed regarding the walling in of children, one reaches a conclusion that being outdoors is not merely a definition or an educational mandate, but a choice of each teacher or adult responsible for the children (TIRIBA, 2005, p. 204)<sup>1</sup>.

To Léa Tiriba, who, by coining the term “Unwalling”, casts a stone upon the calm waters of a river, creating ripples of change, destabilization, possibility, reconceptualization, astonishment, enchantment, discovery. Ripples that resonate continuously and steadfastly within the everyday school environment and beyond its walls, awakening us to view childhood and education with profound respect and consideration.

---

<sup>1</sup> TIRIBA, Léa. Crianças, natureza e educação infantil. Doctoral thesis – Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, Department of Education. Advisor: Leandro Konder. Department of Education, Rio de Janeiro, 2005. Available at: [link]. Accessed on 08/10/2023.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Mayor - <b>Luiz Fernando Machado</b> IN JUNDIAÍ, CHILDREN ARE THE PRIORITY! ..... 13	Chapter 6 - <b>Eliane Reame e Walter Spinelli</b> UNWALLING SCHOOL IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION – FIRST YEARS..... 93
Preface - <b>Gandhy Piorski</b> CHILDREN, THINGS, AND THE ENVIRONMENT ..... 17	Chapter 7 - <b>Valther Maestro</b> UNWALLING SCHOOL AND ADULT AND YOUTH EDUCATION – PATHS TO MEANINGFUL EDUCATION ..... 107
Chapter 1 - <b>Vastí Ferrari Marques</b> WHEN THE SCHOOLYARD IS LARGER THAN THE WORLD ..... 27	Chapter 8 - <b>Fernando Trevisani</b> A PROPOSAL INVOLVING BLENDED LEARNING AND UNWALLING SCHOOL ..... 119
Chapter 2 - <b>Levindo Diniz Carvalho</b> CHILDHOOD, CHILDREN, AND EDUCATION IN THE CITY..... 39	Chapter 9 - <b>Karine Ramos</b> EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS – NEW LEARNING SCENARIOS..... 133
Chapter 3 - <b>Paula Mendonça</b> EDUCATING AND LEADING OUT ..... 51	Chapter 10 - <b>UGE Technical Team</b> UNWALLING SCHOOL – PROPOSITIONS FOR TEACHING PRACTICES ..... 147
Chapter 4 - <b>Ana Carol Thomé</b> BEING A CHILD IS NATURAL..... 65	Afterword - <b>Severino Antônio (Moreira Barbosa)</b> DAWNING TIMES..... 161
Chapter 5 - <b>Beatriz Ferraz</b> UNWALLING SCHOOL IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION - CITY AND SCHOOLS FOSTERING EXPERIENCES, LEARNING, AND CONNECTIONS WITH NATURE ..... 77	





## IN JUNDIAÍ, CHILDREN ARE THE PRIORITY!

Since 2017, Jundiaí has embarked on a long and steadfast journey to become, in effect, a city for children. Such responsibility and audacity call for meticulous planning. Our working methodology reinforces the commitment to care for our children right from gestation — ensuring a minimum of seven prenatal check-ups — and continuing this care through every stage of their development. This journey is a shared endeavor across the entire city administration through integrated and intersectoral early childhood programs. Consequently, all areas of the City Hall prioritize children in their initiatives.

The construction of this framework for favoring early childhood blossomed with the establishment of the Municipal Policy for Children, which provided the principal guidelines to steer urban planning, projects, and actions in different sectors towards healthy and safe development. With this, we advocate for the safe use of public spaces, contact with nature, mobility, accessibility, and entertainment.

Back in 2017, we established our first partnership with the Alana Institute through the “Child and Nature” program and took on the commitment to create favorable conditions for children, especially

those living in urban areas, to grow and develop in direct contact with natural environments.

In 2018, significant achievements bolstered our project. Jundiaí became the first city in the State of São Paulo to join the Latin American Network – City of Children and we committed to carry out actions centered around the participation of children and their perspectives. It was a great success, which allowed us to make further advancements.

In aligning with the Network, Jundiaí embraced precise guidelines and directives, including facilitating dialogues with children to grasp their perceptions, insights, and input towards the city’s development. The objective is to “reclaim” the city for our children, ensuring they possess the freedom to navigate and inhabit spaces that are rightfully theirs.

In that same year, we established the “Child in the City” Working Group, comprising representatives from various sectors of the administration, dedicated to forging intersectoral public policies for children.

On October 15th, 2018, Municipal Decree No. 27,780 established the Jundiaí Children’s Committee. This body formalized the involvement of our city’s children in shaping its future, allowing

their suggestions to inform various aspects of urban planning, which we proudly observe in municipal administration.

The proposals put forth by this group underscore our commitment to meeting the needs of the population, such as installing playground equipment for children with disabilities in parks, enhancing the greenery of streets and public spaces, refurbishing park furnishings, and improving the routes and surroundings of schools. There was even a call for health initiatives. The Committee appealed to the community to vaccinate and thus prevent illnesses that could be avoided if vaccination schedules were up to date for all residents.

In 2019, Law No. 9321/2019 introduced the city's first Master Plan with a chapter dedicated exclusively to child-focused policies within the city. In the same year, the Children's Committee submitted a special request for the construction of "a large public park with free access featuring playground equipment (including water features) for children of all ages." This request was fulfilled within that year with the commencement of the Children's World project, which was delivered on December 14th, 2020, inaugurated as a pioneering space for blending play, learning, and engagement with nature.

The establishment of the Children's World stands as the most significant response to the Children's Committee's demands. Located within a preserved area of the reservoir that supplies the city of Jundiaí, it represents the tangible manifestation of our city's

evolving perspectives on childhood, grounded in research on children and international experiences concerning urban environment relations and public policy planning.

Innovative and enchanting, Children's World is a space where fun is guaranteed, and the connection with nature, play, and experience is fostered. Boys and girls are challenged at various play stations, including climbing walls, fourteen sports courts, skateparks, green areas for leisure, cultural activities, and learning, as well as interactive water features and trails. Like other naturalized parks in the municipality, Children's World has been developed with natural elements that encourage interaction with and within nature, bolstering playtime, socialization, creativity, and learning. It's truly an outdoor school.

The year 2020 also brought international opportunities. Jundiaí was one of eleven Brazilian cities selected by the Dutch Bernard van Leer Foundation, through the Sustainable Cities Institute, to join the Urban95 Network in Brazil.

The network consists of 27 municipalities from 15 Brazilian states and is a global initiative focused on urban planning from the perspective of children up to 95 centimeters tall, the average height of a child up to three years old. Outcomes of this partnership include interventions from the campaigns Pé de Infância (Childhood Footsteps), Pé de Ouvido (Childhood Ear), and Pé de Árvore (Childhood Tree), and programs from Free Play such as Arzinho e Arzão (Little Air and Big Air), as well as educational

videos, customization of a large canvas with family drawings, and the distribution of discovery and play kits. The list also encompasses various intersectoral activities, such as promoting visits and activities for families served by the Happy Child program to municipal public facilities like Children's World, the Japy Factory of Childhoods, and the International Center for Childhood Studies, Memories, and Research (CIEMPI).

With participation in the Urban95 Network, new possibilities have emerged for the municipality to learn from successful experiences in other countries and partnerships, as well as from participation in national and international meetings. Jundiaí strengthens its commitment to public policies for children, showcases its projects, and learns about other models that may also be applied within the municipality.

In March 2023, the city of Jundiaí hosted the 1st Brazilian Meeting of The City of Children and the International Childhood Forum. This event featured distinguished guests such as the Italian educator and founder of the International Network of The City of Children, Francesco Tonucci, as well as Lorena Morachima, the coordinator of the Latin American Network, and Paula Querido, the coordinator of the Argentine Network. The discussions included representatives from municipalities across the country and abroad, bringing many contributions and fostering the exchange of experiences.

The event also marked the announcement of Jundiaí as the host city for the Brazilian Network

of City of Children, further solidifying its role since joining the Latin American Network in 2018.

The municipality strides confidently in implementing enduring public policies focused on childhood. The Jundiaí City of Children Program is already an international benchmark, drawing increasing interest from those eager to witness this successful endeavor with our girls and boys. In Jundiaí's daily life, the program sparks initiatives that invigorate our children, opening new horizons and readying this generation for even higher achievements.

The development of Early Childhood public policies presents internal challenges for the municipal administration as well. All city departments engage in initiatives and projects to meet these demands. The construction of an educational facility, for example, is not just a conversation among the public works and education sectors but includes health, urban mobility, and others, to holistically meet the population's needs, thus yielding better outcomes.

And one cannot speak of the city, children, and respect for their rights without addressing educational schooling. We must emphasize that the Innovative School Program is a cornerstone of Jundiaí's educational policies, offering comprehensive education centered on students taking the leading role, prioritizing the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values they will carry through life.

This foregrounds the necessity for the redefinition of educational practices for children linked to the city

and focused on their rights. In this view, the Education Management Unit contributes by adding another layer to our public policies for childhood, developing, through training and reflections on educators' practices, the Unwalling School methodology.

Outlined in this publication, the methodology embraces the multiple dimensions of the human being: intellectual, physical, cultural, social, and emotional, all inseparable and equally important, fostering comprehensive and civic education for children and students, while upholding principles of equity, sustainability, and inclusion. In this way, a world of possibilities expands for our schools, encouraging creativity and curiosity, culminating in inquiries, research, and learning.

We could clearly see this “world of possibilities” at the third Jundiaí Students’ Scientific and Cultural Fair held in September 2023 at Children’s World. With the theme “What’s in there? An experience to learn in the world, the things of school!” we witnessed the contagious joy of students, school teams, and families experiencing together, in an enjoyable and meaningful way, the wealth of the developed works and our students as the lead actors.

Looking back at this journey and towards the future unfolding before us, there is no doubt that Jundiaí is, more than ever, the City of Children!

**Luiz Fernando Machado**  
Mayor of Jundiaí

**PREFACE**



**CHILDREN,  
THINGS, AND THE  
ENVIRONMENT**

Gandhy Piorski



*EMEB Pref. Manoel Aníbal Marcondes collection*



## CHILDREN, THINGS, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Gandhy Piorski <sup>1</sup>

There is a place where images are born, a realm distinct from the matter that shapes things and the soul of living beings and their psyche. This particular world of imagery, the realm of the tangible (the original locus of experience and dreams), is not aligned with the realm of tangible objects — the physical reality — nor does it align with the realm inhabited by cognitive beings.

*Emanuele Coccia*

---

<sup>1</sup> A visual artist and researcher focused on children's interactions, he holds qualifications in Theology and a master's in religious sciences. His research spans cultural dynamics, symbolic creation, imaginary anthropology, and imaginative philosophies. In the sphere of visual studies, he delves into the storytelling of childhood and its material culture, encompassing toys and expressive forms, orchestrating exhibitions, curating distinctive collections, and crafting purposeful interventions.





The tame bird was in a cage, the free bird was in the forest.  
They met when the time came, it was a decree of fate.  
The free bird cries, "O my love, let us fly to the wood."  
The cage bird whispers, "Come hither, let us both live in the cage."  
Says the free bird, "Among bars, where is there room to spread one's wings?"  
"Alas," cries the caged bird, "I should not know where to sit perched in the sky."

The free bird cries, "My darling, sing the songs of the woodlands."  
The cage bird sings, "Sit by my side, I'll teach you the speech of the learned."  
The forest bird cries, "No, ah no! Songs can never be taught."  
The cage bird says, "Alas for me, I know not the songs of the woodlands!"

Their love is intense with longing, but they never can fly wing to wing.  
Through the bars of the cage they look, and vain is their wish to know each other.  
They flutter their wings in yearning, and sing, "Come closer, my love!"  
The free bird cries, "It cannot be, I fear the closed doors of the cage."  
The cage bird whispers, "Alas, my wings are powerless and dead."

*(Rabindranath Tagore)*



The spaces of homes, cities, and the environments where a child lives and learns, the schools they traverse, are not a given reality, readily perceivable. Space is not consciously and comfortably inhabited by educational thought. It seems that pedagogical practices have a restlessness with space, seldom making it a dwelling or cultivating well-being, leaving the sense of inhabitation impoverished.

The most important spatial experience for a child's development is their home — the walls, ceiling, yard, windows, floors, colors, kitchen, bath, bed, sheets, doors, and drawers. The home is the first physical space. The initial sensations of self-perception occur within the home environment.

And space is a certain quantity of extension. Each measure of extension composes forms. Forms are made up of lines, curves, straights, angles, geometric solids. It could be the shape of an ant or the layout of a room. All shapes together, or in perspective, create an ambiance in space. They cast a halo in space; they create a sentiment of space.

Upon entering a space, it's the arrangement of furniture, the hues on the walls, the array of books, potted plants, the ambient lighting, windows, the texture of the floor and rugs, the assortment of items on a table that coalesce to form an impression, experiences to be absorbed, the ambiance of that place. The essence of objects, the vibrancy of colors, the tapestry of sounds, and the palette of aromas shape how we engage with and imprint upon the space, the way we dwell in it, and how it, in turn, dwells within us.

However, such events of marking and being marked, of dwelling and being dwelled, do not initially occur in physical space nor in the child. There is an intermediary place, a band of existence, an ambiance between the physical space and the child. There is a quality of space between the physical space and the child.

Between the house, the furniture, the toys, the body of their mother, and the children themselves, there exists a very peculiar, intense space brimming with life. It is in this space where the feeling of the place converses with the children's sentiment. Everything has its boundary. The body of each thing, its skin, is a boundary. The children's imagination may probe what is inside, even penetrating the object, but it does so through the relationship established at the boundary, between it and the object. There, on the outside, where the skin of the object begins, where one can closely see the shape of the other, children — in the first instance — alight. There, before the other begins, at the threshold of the other, children position themselves. They step out of themselves and seek the frontier. A dialogue begins here, images are born here, and in this in-between, formulations about the object commence.

In this in-between space, what emerges is neither solely the child nor the object. Something new arises from this encounter. The object and the child enter a realm of novelty, shedding their former selves, speculating a beginning. This is the domain of the sensible. It is an experience lived within the space, in a realm that becomes sensitive.

When a child plays with a plastic horse on the floor, making it gallop, what occurs is not merely the physical reality of the horse on the ground, nor the psychological reality of the child assigning emotions to the horse. The child shifts their perceptual intention to the life of the horse, and the horse in turn projects its own essence through its shape, texture, and color. This meeting gives birth to a third entity, a dynamic horse in an imaginative space, a rider, movement, extension, expansion of space, growth of the play environment. It creates a sensitive territory.

This initial encounter is nearly pristine, a profound instance of awareness, replete with an empathy that fully resonates with the other's characteristics, creating a halo that becomes enshrined in memory. What will endure in the child's memory is borne of this first moment. After this terrain of sensitivity is created, the child's personality adds to the play, personal touches adhere to the game. There also emerges what the toy brings in terms of intentionality. However, it is not the psychological aspects that predominate in our memory of play. It's not the pains and joys of childhood that linger in our memory of playing. What lasts is the intense space, the dreamlike environment established between the child and the toy. So much so that when, as adults, we encounter a type of toy we used in childhood, what first springs to our recollection is its aura, the enchanting luminosity that once stretched the fabric of time and space, the smells from the kitchen, and the dialogue of grown-ups.

There is a profound connection between children and their environments. This connection arises from an additional ambiance that emerges between them and the space they inhabit. It is an ambiance that is not a product of their psychological state but is rather evoked by the objects around them, the architectural space, the toys, the materials, nature, and the tones imparted by each educator. Every space becomes a place of learning when it becomes attuned to sensitivity. Such a space has the power to invite the children to venture beyond their own limits, calling to them softly, ensuring they are not uprooted from themselves, nor alienated from their essence. It invites them to forge stronger ties to the symbiotic intimacy of relationships and explorations, to discover, to grasp, to integrate with humanity through the fine craft of creating interspaces, domains of genuine dialogue, potent spaces, habitable territories, and realms ripe with potential.

A strong space for children is not simply a landscape filled with nature which, undoubtedly, carries its own vigor. For the aura of nature spontaneously forms an in-between. However, if not recognized, this in-between can easily be weakened and lose its radiance. Observation and (re)pose are necessary. Hence, the strength of environments, their binding quality, their invitation to be present and explore, their readiness for dialogue, dwell in a contemplative invisibility we presumptuously tend to quantify: time.

The energy of time upholds the vibrant space, the space of life, the cosmic mass between children

and the world. Time is always abundant, yet it seems perpetually scarce in our activities with children. Perhaps because children know how to expand time, while we only know how to compress it. Children dilate time by not wishing to fill it with things; we shorten it because we seek to ascribe function to it, cramming it with yearnings. Our time is heavy, howling, combative. Children's time – when we don't taint it – is open, aimless, undirected, without dictum, without conclusion, with hardly anything to prove.

Our pedagogical practices are timed rationalities. We rush everything because we have well-defined goals, and so we put life on a simmer, as we hurry children along to reach some presumed truth, some supposed good, a supposed learning goal, a very serious parameter of cognitive skills. In contrast, children's pedagogical intuition does not delay life but instead paces the dream. They slow it down, even as they run and sweat and play within that time. They know how to work, how to dream in such a way that time lingers. They embody the desire for an endless inception when they ask for another round, when they repeatedly relish a joke, when they shout with glee, "again!".

Are we truly convinced to stay within our obsessive pedagogical structuring of time? Don't we suffer from it? Aren't our practices tortured when we allow time to corrode them with the endless queue of subjects to cover and never-ending tasks? Perhaps a pedagogical practice that opens, that desires horizons, that acknowledges the blue, that

transcends physical space barriers, that surpasses the confines of the body, and that leads children on walks, urgently needs to see itself as simpler, more nomadic, less tied to an end and more involved in weaving slowly through life.

Could "unwalling" be less of an act (to free from walls) and more of a state? A state born from the sincere acknowledgment that the space opened for children will only become vast (dreamlike, cultural, environmental, political, communal) if it adheres to the greatest quality of time, to its teaching force, its slowness. "Unwalling" as a state is to experience the intense space that lives between the physical space (unwalled) and the child. Such a space allows the emergence of nature (the continuous act of creation) in time and permits children's contact with what is vital and its unique way of revealing itself. It allows children to engage with the archetypal form of developing knowledge. What operates in the in-between are the natural forces, the intelligible aspects of nature.

But time is not the only component weaving the texture of the in-between. Another underlying intensity of the in-between, contributing to its composition, is intuition. This faculty springs from the accumulated experiences of the human species — a sort of unconscious of cumulated knowledge, accessible to all. Its knowledge embodied by humanity, inherent to our constitution, latent, ready to manifest as a powerful sapiential synthesis. A collective wisdom is available.

Children, far more often than we assume, especially within expansive time and welcoming spaces, share complicity with intuitive life in their play. Their access to this primordial knowledge flows through the mythemes conjured in play. There is nothing mysterious here, for the children's actions, when genuinely engaged with material, are deeply fused with the very substance of their creation (the material of the toy, the body of the community, the images of their audiovisual city documentation, the maps of their journeys, the sciences of nature, the forums of civic exercise).

Intuition is no different; it is entirely rooted in the depth of the thing itself, the fact in itself, the gesture itself, an artistic tradition, a technological language, a cultural corpus of taste, flavors, and food. Hence, for this enchanting faculty of space to be a tool in our practices with children, for it to be a lamp for the birth of creative images, for it to bring cosmicity to pedagogical action, it requires that we know how to lay authenticity in the pursuit of knowledge.

It requires that we know how to utilize the territory, research the plastic arts, employ tools of study, work the language, venture towards mathematical abstraction, aware that there is philosophical support, a theological remnant, an artistic substrate, a symbolic wellspring that has always supported our knowledge-building journey. Therefore, there is a vital root, stemming from the love of knowledge, long conceived by metaphorical reflection, by the pantheons of mythologies, by

the arts of peoples, by the studies of biological and cosmological nature. This spiritual root (from the spirit of the quest for knowledge) has brought us this far and, therefore, it needs to be reactivated in children's lives, recognized in our actions as educators. Thus, children will feel secure and wholly supported in the sensitive territory of the in-between, this true space of knowledge, this spatial potency that shelters us and refines our humanity.

It is with this spirit that we can best appreciate the chapters of this book, with various authors in specific areas of research and work, organized based on practices and experiences building knowledge in Jundiaí, a city in the state of São Paulo. Each chapter, with its thematic specificity, draws us to the vital peculiarity of space, to the place where children play the leading role, to an expansion of relationships with the community, to foundations of legal backing for greater freedom of work, to the sensitivity of contact with the natural world, to the reimagining of technological tools, to the care in the preparation of environments, to documentation, to curricular organicity, to hybridism in learning, to family integration as an anchor for deeper transformations, to active dialogue with the urban territory and its potential for affective topography.

The reflections presented here offer actionable guidance, advocating for a reexamination of educational practices and a shift in perspective towards children. They emphasize understanding the whole body as an intrinsic part of nature, the seat of

sensory functions, and the foundation of cognition. The advocated approaches aim to dismantle confining educational structures, envision spaces that are both natural and nurturing, and expand our recognition of children's basic rights, including their active role in shaping policy. These strategies promote living harmoniously with one's surroundings, cultural engagement, experiential outdoor education, inclusivity in practice, openness in curricular design for youth and adult education, and thoughtful knowledge application that honors the continuum of childhood throughout primary education. They prescribe a mixed-method epistemology enabled by collaborative projects, enhancing educational experiences beyond the classroom, and interweaving academic understanding with community, culture, and social participation.

Amidst the tender resonance between children and the universe, in the nurturing cradle of the sensorial realm where images and subtle interactions flourish, may we harness the opportunities these insights offer. Let's cultivate in children a heartfelt quest for discovery, recognizing that true knowledge isn't found in the mere application of prescriptive advice. Instead, it blooms through our attuned engagement with each child, guided by an innate understanding, the deep substance of their explorations, the fullness of their experiences, and their gradual encounters within the expansive fabric of time.

Even if it requires us to deconstruct ourselves for a time, to wander in search of an inner thread guiding

our work as educators, such wandering is valuable. The profusion of uncertainties and the ambiguous path are all justified, provided they unfold gradually, with an attentive ear to echoes of deeper meaning, earnestly humane, delving inward, drawing lessons from the relentless engagement with the sensory world, as experienced by children.

Let us not forget that aesthetics, beauty, the sense of order, the rhythm of external activities and the cyclic nature of children, the joyous and collaborative conduct of tasks, the celebrations, the rites of meeting and parting, a body that can celebrate and feel freedom, the knowledge arising from metaphors and rich imagery — these are all, in themselves, guiding forces. They already steer our vessel through often unpredictable water.

Above all, it is essential to hone skills to navigate new waters. The epochs of planet Earth, the trajectory of humanity, the choices with colossal consequences that have brought us to this moment, have already gestated the present. It is what we have. Within this installed social and political chaos, this unprecedented spiritual crisis, many signs of great danger are evident. Yet, it is also strikingly clear that we must urgently reclaim our humility, return to being humus, human, fertile earth, a space teeming with life, a sensitive territory.

The hypertrophied educational efforts toward cerebralization, the efforts of the most schooled nations of the world and those striving to more broadly educate their populations, have for decades

bequeathed generations of consumers, anxious beings, plunderers of natural treasures, indebted appropriators of the common good, existentially and psychologically sick, frail, and impotent before the challenges of dealing with a vast network of depredation entrenched in the arteries of globalization. Hypercerebralization has bequeathed cognitively colonized societies with a startling lack of discernment; it has bequeathed what we are today as a human community.

Our task with children involves reorienting ourselves, working on ourselves — even in disorientation — to discern where, in the learning process, the vital ties that bind us have become frayed. Where do these fissures find refuge in our approach to imparting knowledge? At what points do these rifts stealthily intrude upon the essence of our educational philosophy? Since when have our superficial practices begun to clog the rich banks of children's development?

The educator's task is not only to fulfill quantitative schooling parameters and goals but to reach the conviction that we are human and part of a biospheric, cosmospheric community. Our foremost task is to reconcile and make peace with this community. Our task is to honor humanity at the start of its worldly journey, to awaken it to its innate collaborative sense, its inherent participative desire, its vitalizing impulse to forge concrete symbiosis (cum crescere, growing together), bonds of growth and fraternity with the living world.

May this study be perused with a deeply rooted purpose, in line with our dedication. May it enhance our continuous, everyday exploration of both us and the child, this eminent expression of the human essence, the cradle of our shared humanity, the sanctuary of our most unadorned dreams, a constant beacon of regeneration, and an earnest longing for meticulous stewardship and protection.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

COCCIA, E. **A vida sensível**. Tradutor: Diego Cervelin. Florianópolis: Cultura e Barbárie. 2010. 96 p.

TAGORE, G. Tagore. **Obras selecionadas: o jardineiro, a lua crescente, Gitanjali, o cisne**. Tradução: Raul Xavier. 2.ed. Rio de Janeiro: Livros do Mundo Inteiro.1974. 283 p.

## CHAPTER 1



# **WHEN THE SCHOOLYARD IS LARGER THAN THE WORLD**

Vastí Ferrari Marques





EMEB Aparecida Merino Elias collection



## WHEN THE SCHOOLYARD IS LARGER THAN THE WORLD

Vastí Ferrari Marques<sup>1</sup>

Some schools are cages, while others are wings.

The purpose of schools that serve as cages is to make birds unlearn the art of flying. Caged birds are under control. Once caged, their keeper can take them wherever they wish. Caged birds always have an owner. They have ceased to be true birds, for the essence of a bird lies in its flight.

On the other hand, schools that are wings do not cherish the caged bird.

They revel in the sight of birds soaring. Their aim is to embolden birds to take flight. They cannot teach flying, as the ability to fly is innate within each bird. Flight cannot be taught; it can only be encouraged.

*Rubem Alves*

---

*1 Involved with education coordination in Jundiaí since October 2017, she brings extensive experience in teaching and managing schools within the municipal network, where she has worked for 36 years as a public servant. She served as the Director of the Department of Elementary Education at the Jundiaí City Hall from 2009 to 2012. She holds a degree in Pedagogy from UniAnchieta, with a specialization in Geography from USP/SP, a specialization in Hearing Impairment from FMU/SP, a postgraduate degree in Teaching Methodologies and Philosophy from the Claretian Colleges in Batatais/SP, and a master's degree from UNICAMP/Campinas, specializing in Political Research, Planning, Management, and Evaluation of basic education.*

I write this chapter with the most genuine intention to inspire the practice of educators in the municipal education network, sharing the experience of one of the schools I had the honor of contributing to with my work, which, without a doubt, became wings in the lives of the boys and girls who attended it.

My journey started in 2011, during the process of reassigning school principals, and I selected the EMEB Aparecida Merino Elias as my assignment. This school, nestled in a lush expanse of more than 20,000 square meters, catered to early childhood and elementary education children. At that time, I was away from the school, serving the Municipal Secretary of Education and Sports (SMEE) as the Principal of the Department of Elementary Education since 2009. The school was overseen by an acting principal and a management team I had appointed, consisting of an assistant principal and two pedagogical coordinators, throughout the years of 2011 and 2012.

In 2011, the school's management focused on addressing the learning difficulties faced by the children. The school was performing below the municipal average in external evaluations, particularly in Mathematics, with an average score of 5.8 in the latest Ideb (Basic Education Development Index).

Adhering to the latest Curriculum Guidelines for early childhood and elementary education set by the SMEE, the school managed to improve its

performance in external assessments, with the Ideb score rising to 6.2 in 2011. Despite this progress, students continued to encounter learning challenges that required attention, indicating a need for more effective pedagogical strategies to further improve our efforts.

In 2012, the school shifted to full-day programming, providing boys and girls with cultural and recreational activities alongside enhanced learning opportunities and experiences. This approach aimed at fostering holistic education, not just extending the hours students spent at school.

As outlined in an official document (JUNDIAÍ, 2012), the initiative had several goals, including keeping students engaged in school to comprehensively meet their educational needs, boosting chances for social interaction, providing diverse options in the culture, sports, social, and technological fields, and strengthening the connection between the school and the community, thereby fostering community participation in the educational journey.

Within the educational framework, beyond the basic curriculum, there were curricular workshops consisting of artistic and cultural activities, sports and physical development, and social integration exercises.

Schools had the freedom to offer specialized workshops addressing their unique needs, as long as these were approved and monitored by the SMEE's educational oversight, ensuring both the

effectiveness of the programs as well as student learning achievements.

That year, EMEB Merino had just two workshops, conducted in a small room, because the educators were still getting used to utilizing the entire space and organizing a full-day program effectively.

In 2013, I officially took over as the principal of the school. Aiming to promote the comprehensive development of both boys and girls, encompassing the full spectrum of human aspects: cultural, emotional, physical, intellectual, and social, I suggested the school staff contemplate an approach to education that is deeply rooted in nature and the core essence of humanity. To accomplish this, we approached academic content not merely as an end goal, but as a conduit for engaging with knowledge that holds lifelong relevance.

It went beyond the routine evaluation of the previous year's learning to identify areas for improvement and potential for growth. It was crucial to familiarize ourselves with the team, understanding their hopes, desires, and how they functioned as a whole, particularly in their engagement with our students.

Hence, fostering a sense of belonging to this space became unavoidable. Embracing innovative thinking, teamwork, and creating opportunities for individuals to recognize their own uniqueness while sharing insights was pivotal. This approach posed a challenge for the educators, requiring the redesign

of spaces, unlocking doors, distributing games and school resources, rearranging furniture, essentially creating strategies to make the most of Merino's resource-rich environment.

In this context, we established the Institutional Project "School Space: It's mine, it's yours, it's ours!", focused on taking ownership of the school space.

During study sessions, we conducted training sessions on the theme of belonging to the space. We envisioned its utilization by our students as a learning environment and began tapping into the surrounding area's potential.

Necessary upgrades were made, sometimes with the support of families as well. Among the many spaces we had, the dining hall, greenhouse, animal pens, reading room, and arts area stood out as sites of significant transformation.

We extensively discussed the educational nature of school space and time, the concept of comprehensive education as an imminent need, the learning that occurs in educational spaces outside of school, and how to use other social facilities, public or otherwise, to broaden children's experiences.

We concluded that extending school hours only made sense if it offered situations that promoted creative, meaningful, and liberating learning experiences. Merely maintaining the school in adequate physical and organizational conditions wasn't enough; we needed to rethink relationships

within the school environment and build a democratic time-space where every member of the educational community could have their own voice and a channel to express their needs, opinions, and suggestions.

It was necessary to share responsibilities and practice progressive autonomy, promoting meaningful learning with proposals that fostered creative thinking, not just for the future or adult life but for the present moment, including the school environment, which is a living space. Creative and meaningful learning needs to exist for both children and adults.

When the organization of the school is confined to classroom spaces, with non-interactive groups and inflexible schedules, it fails to connect with the way we learn and is not the recommended model for developing creative thought. Ensuring access and retention alone does not suffice for the school to meet its societal obligations from a holistic education standpoint.

Teaching isolated content no longer made sense unless it was contextualized or highlighted within projects.

Faced with this initial challenge, we proposed that each teacher create their own “passion project,” developed from a personal interest in research and exploration with the children.

So, what were these passion projects? We introduced the teachers to a new way of viewing

the construction of an educational project. The central question was: How do we fall in love with the subjects, seek out new discoveries, and captivate the senses?

With deliberate intention, planning, and evaluations throughout the development process, we found that relevant content was a good fit with the themes chosen by the teachers. As the group’s engagement deepened, the positive outcomes became unmistakably clear.

There was significant interest from the group, and we made progress with the proposal. Participation, engagement, attentiveness, and the commitment of the teacher and student groups manifested in improved pedagogical practices and in the Ideb, which jumped from 6.2 to 7.3 that year. The satisfaction among the children and the team was clear!

This interest in learning was corroborated by Resnick (2020) when he introduced the four Ps - Projects, Passion, Peers, and Play - as guiding principles developed by his research group at MIT<sup>1</sup> to encourage and support creative learning experiences. One of the author’s premises, in explaining the principle of passion, is that “when people work on projects that they really care about, they are willing to work longer and harder (p.16).

---

<sup>1</sup> Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Over the subsequent years, the initiative not only persisted but also evolved and gained prominence. The passion project served as a springboard for additional projects, with a keen focus on the children's interests. This approach contributed to the professional development and growth of the entire school community.

Through the passion projects and the ongoing institutional project "School Space: It's mine, it's yours, it's ours!", the school environments were actively explored and utilized by the children, enriching the learning experience. This facilitated an environment of shared materials, experiences, ideas, and values. The process of reevaluating actions, giving precedence to the most relevant, and revisiting that were truly necessary, became crucial for the effective assessment and monitoring of learning achievements.

In 2014, our shift from the Full-Time School Project to the More Education Program, initiated by the Ministry of Education, significantly altered the structure of our workshops and projects. These were now scheduled for the afternoon, while the foundational subjects were covered in the morning. We revamped our processes and realigned our scheduling and use of space to optimize educational performance within this overhauled framework.

However, by the following year, we observed a decline in educational metrics, with the Ideb score slipping from 7.3 to 6.6. In response, we innovated by having the foundational subject teachers also

conduct workshops in areas like mathematical games, theater, text production, and supplementary tutoring, integrating these as significant complementary experiences to the morning academic sessions. Therefore, beyond the morning sessions, teachers dedicated two afternoons to their students, collaborating with workshop leaders.

Upon reflecting on 2015, we recognized the need for a strategy that would enhance student involvement. Consequently, in 2016, we broadened the scope of our workshops, categorizing them by themes to encourage interaction among various age groups that wasn't just limited to meals and break times. This allowed children to exercise their autonomy by selecting a new workshop every two months, based on the options presented by their teachers.

In essence, every two months, students were able to choose a different workshop, exploring four distinct themes over the course of the year. These were: Library and Reading; Music; Sports; Vegetable Gardening; Flower Gardening; Popular Art 1: Brazilian Folklore; Popular Art 2: Handicrafts; Jundiaí Culture; World Cultures; Entrepreneurship. Each project was clearly outlined with detailed descriptions, ensuring children understood their options.

Spaces were redesigned to be used as learning environments. This transformation included families in efforts to improve the school, such as painting buildings, constructing animal habitats, advancing the development of a welcoming plaza for families, revitalizing gardens, woodlands, and orchards,

adding a reading area next to the school and a bicycle path, installing swings and ropes in the trees, renovating the wooden play area, creating hammock zones throughout the campus, and introducing a science laboratory and a kitchen for experimental cooking. These improvements were driven by listening carefully to the children's feedback.

The passion project was revamped, moving beyond the sole responsibility of the classroom teacher to include a collaborative effort with a workshop teacher, selecting the themes together. This approach deepened the connection between teachers and improved their interactions with the students. Joint decisions between adults and children transformed the school's projects into more inclusive and engaging activities.

Even affecting how free time was structured between core lessons and workshops. Teachers and students would be deployed to different spaces according to a flexible weekly schedule. This was a time when students had the freedom to pick their activities and companions, while educators could watch, assist, mediate, and join in the fun. These activities unfolded in diverse settings such as the sports field, the forest, the playground, their favorite sliding hill, the grassy area behind the classrooms, and the central garden.

The team adeptly handled any incidents, conflicts, or disputes that occurred. When everyday challenges emerged, the group would come together to discuss and find effective solutions.

## **The practical implementation of the thematic workshops**

Based on the children's selections, they attended workshops that took place on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday afternoons.

Allowing the children to choose which workshop they wanted to join was crucial; it made them feel like they were at the helm of creating a genuinely democratic school environment, one where they were viewed as autonomous, capable, and able to learn through interaction with peers of different ages.

As Moran (2015) suggests,

Methodologies must align with the intended goals. If we aim for students to be proactive, we need to employ methodologies where students engage in increasingly complex activities, where they must make decisions and evaluate outcomes, supported by relevant materials. If our goal is to foster creativity, they must be given countless opportunities to explore new possibilities of demonstrating their initiative (p. 34).

The workshops were integrated with the standard curriculum, and increasingly, activities took place in outdoor settings. The impact on literacy was striking; the repertoire for text production expanded with new experiences, logical reasoning became more agile, and music permeated the school. Everyone learned a few chords!

Specific examples bring the school's experience to life and provide context for what has been discussed so far. In the cooking workshop, which

used produce harvested from the children's vegetable garden, mathematics was a constant presence through discussions about quantities, methods of calculation and measurement, and problem-solving scenarios encountered in practice. It also offered an opportunity to explore the genre of "recipes" or conduct scientific inquiries into fermentation, fungi, and decomposers. For example, the children began to notice fungi in the woods during their leisure time, talking about them and connecting them with topics discussed earlier. This blending of content areas across disciplines brought deeper meaning for both the children and their teachers.

It's essential to highlight that the groups were mixed, and the selection of subjects didn't depend on the age of the students, which enriched the learning experience and broadened our approach to a seamless curriculum. The projects added relevance to what the students were exploring. The experiences were incredibly rich!

Yet, families initially struggled to accept their children interacting across different age groups. They did not understand how valuable the experience of older children caring for the younger ones could be, and how they could serve as role models in the younger children's learning.

We decided to bring the community into the school, to explain, engage, and even invite families to study with us and experience the intense moments in the workshops with the children, so they could understand the intended objectives. We

believe that whenever we open the school doors to the community, results are achieved more easily and quickly.

The community started to get involved, participate in school life, and witness their children's growth firsthand! Our extensive outdoor experiences contributed to learnings that significantly impacted the school's Ideb score, which soared to an average of 7.8 in 2017, proving that teaching proposals based on practice and experience, linking pedagogical content with real life, and providing meaningful learning opportunities, truly work!

### **Final thoughts**

The processes are complex, yet the journey undertaken by EMEB Aparecida Merino Elias from 2013 to 2016 demonstrates that through dedicated study, purposeful action, deep interactions, and the engagement of the entire school community, remarkable outcomes are achievable.

We have observed that children learn best through varied experiences, intergenerational relationships, investigative explorations, prototyping, playing, games, and more. Moreover, sitting in rows, with a teacher as the sole source of knowledge at the front, and being limited to a traditional, transmission-based educational model does not encourage meaningful learning.

Our projects and workshops, designed with a focus on utilizing spaces beyond the classroom

to enhance learning and developed through the lens of holistic and civic education, have inspired proposals and initiated actions toward Unwalling Schools.

Thorough assessment, the introduction of innovative projects, the adoption of groundbreaking methodologies, the improvement of teaching strategies, and purposeful planning were essential elements enabling the school to innovate for the sake of better learning processes.

While schools vary in physical structure, it's crucial for teams to discover methods to enhance environments, thereby offering a diverse range of proposals. These spaces, transformed into dynamic learning environments through intense, mediated projects, will play a pivotal role in shaping a school committed to holistic education. Solutions vary for each case. Considering the surrounding educational territory offers additional possibilities. However, in all instances, bringing the community closer to the school, igniting educators' passion, and empowering children as active participants in the process are essential.

I recognize the challenges involved in these actions and their coordination, yet the Unwalling School methodology showcased in this publication is designed to demonstrate the viability of an educational strategy that can be implemented and expanded throughout all our facilities, across every level and form of education.

Having devoted nearly eighty years to the municipal education of Jundiaí and its youth, we have made history through the efforts of countless individuals committed to achieving social change through education. We find ourselves at a distinctive juncture, celebrating the network's evolution, the contributions of its professionals, and the accomplishments and triumphs amassed throughout all these years.

Our students are entitled to changes that align with the enhancement of their quality of life. Therefore, together, we view the Unwalling School methodology as a path to embark upon, with steps to guide us. This approach directs our pedagogical actions towards considering the humanities through opportunities for fostering creativity, teamwork, knowledge sharing, integrating technology for problem-solving, and applying content that will help us in our everyday activities to live better lives!

Drawing from the collective insights in this chapter, intimately connected to the Innovative School Program, we can observe the foundational elements of school atmosphere, educator development, and the caliber of teaching in the Unwalling School process initiated in 2013 at this cherished institution. The success of consistent projects hinges on faith in their value. Today, I confidently share an endeavor that has left a lasting impact on everyone involved.

It's gratifying to see how the educational strategies of this school have driven a key public initiative for



Jundiaí — The Innovative School Program — now further emphasized through the Unwalling School approach, gaining recognition both nationally and abroad.

To all the educators from EMEB Aparecida Merino Elias who joined us on this intense, vibrant, dynamic journey overflowing with learning, my respect and gratitude.

To all who have boldly strived for excellence in Jundiaí's education and embraced unwalling school practices to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, my deepest admiration!

RESNICK, Mitchel. **Jardim de infância para a vida toda**: por uma aprendizagem criativa, mão na massa e relevante para todos. Tradução: Mariana Casetto Cruz e Livia Rulli Sobral. Porto Alegre: Penso, 2020.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

ALVES, Rubem. **O melhor de Rubem Alves** / coordenação (org.) Samuel Ramos Lago. 3ª ed. Curitiba: Editora Nossa Cultura, 2014.

JUNDIAÍ. Secretaria Municipal de Educação. **A escola de tempo integral**. Jundiaí, SP: SMEE, 2012.

\_\_\_\_\_. **Projeto Político Pedagógico**. Escola Municipal de Educação Básica Aparecida Merino Elias. Jundiaí, SP, 2013.

MORAN, José Manuel. Educação Híbrida: um conceito-chave para a educação, hoje. In: **Ensino Híbrido**: personalização e tecnologia na educação. BACICH, L.; NETO, A. T.; TREVISANI, F. M. (orgs.). 2. ed. Porto Alegre: Penso, 2015.



## CHAPTER 2



# **CHILDHOOD, CHILDREN, AND EDUCATION IN THE CITY**

Levindo Diniz Carvalho



*PMJ Children's World collection*

## CHILDHOOD, CHILDREN, AND EDUCATION IN THE CITY

Levindo Diniz Carvalho<sup>1</sup>

---

*1 Associate Professor at the Faculty of Education and the Graduate Program in Education at UFMG. He has experience as a researcher and teacher in the fields of education and childhood, especially on the topics: childhood, city, and territory; citizenship in childhood; education and city. In these areas, he has worked as a consultant for public authorities and international organizations. He was a visiting researcher at the Complutense University of Madrid. Currently, he is a member of the TEIA group - Territories, Comprehensive Education, and Citizenship, and NEPEI - Research Center on Childhood and Early Childhood Education, both at the Faculty of Education at UFMG. He is an assistant editor for the journals: Education in Review (UFMG) and Society and Childhood (UC Madrid).*

## Introduction

What should a city be like for children? This question has been at the forefront for Jundiaí City Hall, notably for the education professionals within the municipality, as they strive to respond and bring to life by enacting child-focused policies. These initiatives are deeply rooted in the territory, prioritizing the needs and rights of children.

I was delighted by the invitation from the Jundiaí Department of Education Management to write this text. Firstly, because the municipality's experience stands out within the Brazilian context for placing childhood at the core of the public agenda with an approach anchored by two central dimensions: Unwalling School and child participation. Secondly, because the municipality embraces conceptual and ethical choices that pioneer logical ways of thinking and practicing education based on the principles of equity, sustainability, and inclusion.

The inspiring concept of “Unwalling School for children,” by Léa Tiriba (2005), is considered a reference point in Jundiaí. The author, discussing the relationship between children and nature, highlights the respect for children in their biophilic condition and for education “as the right to happiness,” even amidst a capitalist logic that generates environmental imbalance and social inequality. Therefore, recognizing childhood and education in the context of their territories and developing initiatives that enable children to engage with the natural and social world represents

a method to uphold rights and commit to an education that is both humanizing and liberating.

In this context, the approach that has been implemented in Jundiaí over recent years has been instrumental in fostering children's involvement in the development of public policies that directly affect them. Drawing on Francesco Tonucci's work (1996), which introduces the concept of a “City of Children,” Jundiaí actively listens to its children not only through formal channels like Student Councils but also directly in the classroom through teaching practices. This approach employs participatory teaching methods that are attuned to the languages and cultures of childhood. Thus, the city's experience challenges adult-centric views and acknowledges that childhood is not merely a preparatory phase for adulthood but a distinct period of life with its own ways of understanding reality. It also affirms that children are citizens with their own rights and active participants in shaping society.

In this chapter, I intend to offer a succinct and reflective exploration of certain conceptual elements related to childhood and education, which, in various ways, mirror those present in the city and schools of Jundiaí.

## Childhood and rights

Although children have always existed, the concept of childhood as we understand it today has not always been recognized. The recognition that childhood differs from adulthood, in the sense



that it is a phase of life with its own unique and distinct characteristics, has been constructed over time. Similarly, the understanding that childhood constitutes a diverse social group, shaped by social markers of difference such as social class, ethnicity, and gender, as well as by the biopsychic traits of age and development, has been historically established.

Over the last two decades, research within the fields of Social Sciences and Humanities has brought us closer to understanding children's cultures and languages, viewing the child as a social actor and emphasizing their ways of socializing and understanding the world. These studies contribute to the creation of a transdisciplinary body of work regarding childhood and foster the emergence of research that positions children as active individuals in social life. Individuals deserving recognition for their unique characteristics and as creators of their own culture, the "children's cultures," which comprise a collection of forms, meanings, objects, and artifacts that endow children with distinct symbolic ways of understanding the world.

*During childhood, the world takes on meaning through symbolic experiences, shaped by interactions among children and between children and adults. Through these interactions, children make sense of the world, feel their emotions, and formulate their experiences, learning and interpreting as they go.*

*Imagination is a crucial part of how a child builds their understanding of the world and serves as a distinctive method of learning. While playing, children seamlessly intertwine imaginary scenarios with tangible decisions and circumstances. This imaginative transposition of situations, people, objects, or events aids children in interpreting and understanding the world, while also helping them to form concrete thoughts. "Make-believe" also plays a key role in the resilience children show when dealing with different circumstances.*

*The need for collective action is another strong characteristic of children's behavior. During their interactions and in group play, children set rules, agreements, and punishments that can foster self-control. For instance, they might be required to adjust their own actions to those of a peer during a game, or in negotiations, to listen to another's opinion, and to construct agreements that take into account the ideas and interests of the entire group. In interactions with siblings, adults, and especially peers, a child internalizes actions, behaviors, and knowledge, particularly in situations involving things they do not yet know.*

*In this regard, envisioning a school for childhood means acknowledging the need to understand children and their ways of grasping the world. The challenge before us is to develop a teaching methodology that supports children through every stage of this phase of life, not just in Early Childhood Education but also in Elementary Education. Thus, the school would be a meeting place between children and adults, a space to play, hypothesizing about the world, questioning and researching it, a place for learning and experiencing citizenship.*

Children are social actors, and this idea places us in opposition to a conception of children as passive objects of socialization driven by institutions or social agents, or as a blank slate upon which we, as adults, could write whatever we wanted. This way, dominant traditional conceptions that define children as immature or incompetent beings, or that see childhood exclusively as a phase of preparation for adult life, are overcome.

In another key analysis, it is essential to consider that historical, social, economic, and cultural aspects shape childhood in different ways. Being a child varies significantly depending on the time, location, whether in a group or alone and the family context. In this sense, different children, while sharing common

traits and recurring characteristics, have their own identities or multiple identities, stemming from their social interactions. Therefore, believing in the notion of a universal and homogeneous childhood fails to recognize the varied and unequal experiences of children's lives. In other words, childhood must be precisely situated within its unique contexts.

The Universal Declaration of the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) and the Statute of Children and Adolescents (Brazil, 2002), in line with scientific development, grant children the status of full-fledged citizens with complete rights. Therefore, it's crucial to recognize situations where rights are infringed upon and the dire living and social conditions faced by numerous Brazilian children.

An image of a child at school or on the street, struggling for survival, facing violence, or even being involved in trafficking can represent a tragic reality. In the face of such situations, neither compassionate social policies nor neutral educational methods are adequate responses. And, even less so, authoritarian attitudes of condemnation. Confronted with the cruelty experienced by children and adolescents from ordinary backgrounds, our initial reaction should be to recognize in their plight a reflection of societal barbarity. Childhood reveals the limits of being human in an economy that has become inhumane (ARROYO, 2004, p. 119).

Childhood is the life cycle most affected by conditions of poverty and social inequality, which is why public education policies must be coordinated with other social policies. Reflecting on what Paulo Freire (1987) termed "childhoods stolen in their humanity," the deepest meaning of education lies



in asserting the need for comprehensive human development, always linked to distributive justice. Hence, schools are challenged to focus on the complete development of children, particularly those whose childhoods are unfairly marginalized by society.

### **Holistic childhood education**

Frequently, the idea of *Holistic Education* is linked to lengthening the school day and, as a result, extending the time children are institutionalized within the school setting. However, this extension of time, which is both a trend and a right for Brazilian children, can be based on different conceptions, leading to a range of distinct possibilities.

One must differentiate the notion of *Holistic Education*, which entails the right of a child to grow in their multiple human aspects and across diverse social settings, from that of a *full-time school*, defined as an institution caring for children for over 7.5 hours a day (LDB 9394/96). A full-time school may or may not operate from the perspective of Holistic Education.

Believing that the school should solely undertake the child's *Holistic Education* is an arbitrary notion, given that this development does not occur exclusively within the educational institution. On the contrary, as the famous proverb illustrates: "It takes a whole village to educate a child."

Within this context, the concept of holistic education encompasses a transformative potential

for schools, prompting them to establish a more empathetic connection with children and to interact with other spheres of learning and socialization, including the family, community, and urban environment. Consequently, the school invests in educational areas that have traditionally been undervalued, contributing to children's development in dimensions such as human preparation, the appreciation of their identities, and the exercise of their autonomy.

Studies also show that certain Holistic Education initiatives center on delivering a less authoritarian, inflexible, or punitive form of education. That is, an education that allows children to have more say and places them "at the center" of the pedagogical relationship, fostering changes, including in our understanding of what constitutes the "role of a child" and the "role of a student." Thus, alternative approaches to the pedagogical relationship with children can overcome a conception of childhood that emphasizes the role of children based on what they do not know or cannot do, solely legitimizing the status of being a student. Children develop their unique processes for socialization and for shaping their identities and life stories. In this context, the role of a child also encompasses the experience of autonomy.

If we acknowledge that the school is not exempt from any of the dimensions that shape a child's life, such as social condition, gender, and ethnic and cultural belonging, moving beyond the idealized image of the student and towards a school that

recognizes children as individuals are challenges in building a Holistic Education.

From another analytical perspective, the complexity of contemporary childhood further confirms the need for education within the broad scope of social policies. The connection between education, social welfare, culture, and sports, along with other public policies, stands out as a key measure for social protection. It plays a crucial role in preventing child rights violations and enhancing academic achievement, ensuring children remain in school, particularly in areas facing vulnerabilities. According to Jaqueline Moll (2010), “Holistic Education is related to the democratic and republican commitment of a school for all, a place to confront social inequalities” (p.2).

Therefore, quality public education faces the challenge of evolving based on the fundamental right of citizenship. In other words, managing a school is based on the premise of a societal project committed to childhood, which requires an understanding of who the children are, how they live, and what opportunities they have in their territories.

From this perspective, the idea of the school as a central hub in a network of social protection for children is strengthened. At the same time, numerous initiatives have successfully leveraged various social infrastructures (public or not), including social centers, plazas, parks, museums, community libraries, and backyards, aiming to create what might be described as an “educating city.”

## **A city for the children**

Why consider the relationships among children, education, and the city? Given the increasing urbanization of contemporary society, the city has become the context of life for most of the children in the world. Over 50% of the planet’s population, which includes more than a billion children, now lives in medium and large cities. In Brazil, 85% of the population lives in urban centers (IPEA, 2016).

This situation brings a set of issues that impact the living conditions of children, such as housing, basic sanitation, mobility, education, recreation, culture, and safety. In various parts of the world, infrastructure and basic services are not expanding at the same pace as urban growth. It is also noteworthy that, in our country, six out of ten children and adolescents live below the poverty line (UNICEF, 2021).

Within this context, children residing in urban areas are often the most affected by socio-spatial segregation. This leads to varying degrees of marginalization, confinement, or excessive surveillance, contingent upon the specific group of children involved. The restriction and privatization of children’s circulation spaces, especially in Brazilian metropolises, indicate an impoverishment of children’s social experience. Studies indicate that the situation deteriorated during the COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbating socio-territorial disparities and their impact on the living conditions of children (SILVA; LUZ; CARVALHO, 2021).

Drawing from Lefebvre's work (2001), the right to the city concept was introduced in 1968 to counter the alienation experienced by workers due to their living conditions in regulated and fragmented spaces. The philosopher criticizes public managers and urban planners and proposes reversing capitalist logic. He suggested envisioning cities as hubs of sociability, joy, and interaction, thus prioritizing their utility over their commercial value.

Echoing these thoughts four decades later, Harvey (2008, p. 48) challenged the neoliberal framework and its contribution to political and economic dominance, underscoring the resulting fragmentation and division within cities. Advocating for recognizing the city as a collective right, Harvey envisioned a “dialectical utopia” for urban environments, advocating for a city based on a relational perspective: “By constructing the city we reconstruct ourselves”.

This vision underscores the hurdles, overlooked aspects, and restrictions faced by children and their childhood experiences. Nevertheless, the city emerges as a crucible for social interaction and learning, a place brimming with shared knowledge and emotions.

The discussion around children's rights to the city often references Tonucci's work (1996) in Italy, which became paradigmatic by proposing a city for children. This approach advocates for urban policies to prioritize the needs of children above all. Some cities, in different countries around the world,

have taken inspiration from the ideas of children, initiating projects that enhance the involvement of young ones or redesigned public areas from their viewpoints<sup>1</sup>. Simultaneously, other urban management experiences focused on children have formed networks, notably the so-called *Educating Cities*, an international movement encompassing various cities worldwide. This movement views the city as a focal point for children's education and promotes the merging of sectors such as education, health, culture, and recreation. It aims to organize different urban spaces based on their educational potential and encourages discussion on what has been termed *urban pedagogy* (CARVALHO; GOUVEA, 2019).

If children are being denied the right to the city, it's also due to a lack of opportunities to explore and experience public spaces. Schools, as integral parts of a “system of relations and communications embedded within the broader social system” (RINALDI, 1999, p. 113), play a crucial role in linking the real-life experiences of children and their educators with socially produced knowledge and wisdom. Therefore, the strengthening of connections between school and city should incorporate a dual perspective into the curriculum. On the one hand,

---

<sup>1</sup> In the European context, the cities of Fano in Italy and Pontevedra in Spain can be cited as examples where mechanisms for children's participation in urban planning decisions were established (TONUCCI, 2016). In South America, the cities of Rosario in Argentina and Jundiá in Brazil have seen initiatives where listening to children through councils leads to the transformation of urban spaces, such as the creation and renovation of parks and plazas.

by encouraging children's greater engagement with cultural and natural spaces, their opportunities expand across various fields of experience and knowledge. On the other hand, by welcoming the community into schools, it's the experiences of the children that transform how the city interacts with and perceives childhood.

As they move through their neighborhoods, children take ownership of these spaces, experiencing a sense of social and community belonging. Furthermore, it's worth considering how children reconfigure and reconstruct this territory and how the appropriation of new spaces facilitates the experience of acquiring and generating knowledge.

### Final thoughts

The reflections proposed here point out significant elements regarding our perspective on childhood. Viewing a school as a space for life, development, learning, and participation means considering the political dimensions related to revitalizing public schools as educational spaces and promoters of citizenship.

Every child has the right to learn, to have their identity recognized and appreciated, and to access a diverse range of educational opportunities through engagement with multiple languages, resources, spaces, knowledge, and actors. To uphold this principle of *equity*, it is essential that networks and schools organize themselves as spaces where relationships can address and transform the deep

social inequalities that define contemporary society, starting with children's identities as the basis for engaging with diversity and building fair, democratic, and supportive communities and societies.

Lastly, I reiterate the duality strongly advocated by the field of Early Childhood Education, an approach that is applicable across all stages of Basic Education: *To Educate and to Care*. It is the school's role to adopt a caring perspective towards children, with sensitivity and responsibility for the future of humanity and the planet. It is within this framework that educators in Jundiaí have been working, and thus, I celebrate the chance to engage in conversation with the city through this brief text.

### BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

ARROYO, Miguel Gonzalez. **Imagens quebradas:** trajetórias e tempos de alunos e mestres. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2004.

BRASIL. **Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente:** Lei federal nº 8069, de 13 de julho de 1990. Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Oficial, 2002.

CARVALHO, Levindo Diniz; GOUVEA, Maria Cristina Soares. **Infância urbana, políticas e poéticas:** diálogos sobre a experiência de Rosário/Argentina. Cadernos de Pesquisa em Educação, n. 49, p. 151-170, 2019.

FREIRE, P. **Pedagogia do oprimido**. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1987.

HARVEY, David. Utopias dialécticas. In: **Educação e vida urbana**: 20 anos de Cidades Educadoras. Barcelona: UNESCO, 2008, p. 43-49.

JUNDIAÍ. Prefeitura Municipal. Comitê das Crianças 2022. In: **Cidade das crianças**, 2022. Available at: <https://cidadedascrianças.jundiai.sp.gov.br/comite-das-criancas-2022/>. Accessed on: 12 set. 2023.

IPEA Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada. **Desafios da Mobilidade Urbana no Brasil** - Brasília: Rio de Janeiro: Ipea 2016.

JUNDIAÍ. Prefeitura Municipal. Mundo das Crianças. O mundo. In: **Mundo das crianças** [s.d]. Available at: <https://mundodascriançasjundiai.com.br/o-parque/>. Accessed on: 12 set. 2023.

LEFEBVRE, Henri. **O direito à cidade**. 2. ed. São Paulo: Moraes, 2001.

MOLL, Jaqueline. Escola de tempo integral. In: **DICIONÁRIO**: trabalho, profissão e condição docente. OLIVEIRA, D. A.; DUARTE, A. M. C.; VIEIRA, L. M. F. Belo Horizonte: UFMG/Faculdade de Educação, 2010

ORGANIZAÇÃO DAS NAÇÕES UNIDAS. **Convenção sobre os Direitos da Criança de 1989**. Available at: <https://www.unric.org/html/portuguese/humanrights/Crianca.pdf> Accessed on: 20 fev. 2019.

RINALDI, Carla. O currículo emergente e o construtivismo social. In: **As cem linguagens da criança**. EDWARDS, Carolyn; FGANDINI, Lella; FORMAN, George (Org.). Porto Alegre: Artmed, 1999. v. 1. p. x-x.in

SILVA, Isabel; LUZ, Iza; CARVALHO, Levindo Diniz. **Infância e pandemia na Região Metropolitana de Belo Horizonte**: primeiras análises. Belo Horizonte: NEPEI/FaE/UFMG, 2021.

TIRIBA, Léa. **Crianças, natureza e educação infantil**. Tese de Doutorado, Departamento de Educação, PUC-RIO, 2005.

TONUCCI, Francesco. **La ciudad de los niños**: un modo nuevo de pensar la ciudad. Buenos Aires: Losada; UNICEF, 1996.

UNICEF. **Situação mundial da infância 2019**: Crianças, alimentação e nutrição – crescendo saudável em um mundo em transformação. 2019. Available at: [https://www.unicef.org/brazil/media/5566/file/Situacao\\_Mundial\\_da\\_Infancia\\_2019\\_ResumoExecutivo.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/brazil/media/5566/file/Situacao_Mundial_da_Infancia_2019_ResumoExecutivo.pdf). Accessed on: 12 jul. 2021.



## **CHAPTER 3**



# **EDUCATING AND LEADING OUT**

**Paula Mendonça**





*EMEB Profa Maria Thereza Almeida Pontes e Nogueira collection*





## EDUCATING AND LEADING OUT

Paula Mendonça<sup>1</sup>

---

*1 Master's degree in Education from the University of São Paulo, with research on education, territory, and childhoods. Co-director of the short film "Waapa," about the play activities of indigenous children from the Yudja people, a co-production of Território do Brincar and Instituto Alana. Focuses on experiences in the fields of education, childhood, nature, and cities. Formerly a teacher in early childhood and elementary education. Currently coordinates the areas of city and education for the Child and Nature Program at Instituto Alana.*

## Introduction

The etymology of the word “educate” originates from the Latin “educare”, or “educacere”, which can be translated as “to lead out”. The Latin term “educare” is formed by the union of the prefix “ex”, meaning “out”, and “ducere”, which means “to lead” or “take”<sup>1</sup>. This could be a valuable proposition for us to consider the *unwalling* of both childhood and schooling.

We can reflect on the many meanings of how *educating* is related to a process of leading out: it can be a process of *leading out* of oneself and knowing how to live in society; another aspect it could encompass the quest for autonomy, enabling one to depart from their familial or original home to independently support their existence; at the same time, we can also attribute a meaning of learning to relate autonomously with the world outside, the city, and/or nature, and the diversity of life existing in the world. Generally, we can conclude that there is a relational aspect between one’s own self and another’s self, and between one that is inside and one that is outside that thoroughly infuses the educational journey.

Paradoxically, traditional schooling methods have long deviated from the original essence of “educate,” confining teaching and learning to classroom interiors and school premises. This approach views education primarily as the

transmission of content, where knowledge is transferred from within the teacher, the bearer of knowledge, to within the student.

This understanding of traditional teaching, focused primarily on the development of cognitive, intellectual, and vocational aspects, steered by a Western view of the world and a European historical perspective established since the country’s colonization, where the classroom is the learning epicenter, has dominated Brazil’s educational history.

However, the history of the world and education itself is ever evolving. Since the mid-20th century, Brazilian thinkers such as Anísio Teixeira, Darcy Ribeiro, Paulo Freire, along with many other educators, have been reimagining education and schooling, advocating for a more meaningful approach that aligns with the realities of Brazil and the contemporary world.

Holistic education, seen as the development of all human facets: physical, emotional, intellectual, cognitive, and social, conceived against the backdrop of current climate or planetary emergencies, demands a critical reevaluation of educational practices to connect with the world’s rich social, cultural, and natural diversity outside the classroom walls.

*Unwalling School* as an educational proposal of the municipal education network of Jundiaí, rooted in the innovative educational concept formulated by the current administration, stands as a crucial example of this movement towards redefining

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dicionarioetimologico.com.br/educar/>.  
Accessed on 09/08/2023

educational practices as public policy. This article will share insights into the partnership between Instituto Alana, through its Child and Nature program, and Jundiaí City Hall in conceiving and developing this work.

### **The disconnect with nature and the planetary crisis.**

The report “Making Peace with Nature,”<sup>2</sup> released at the United Nations Environment Assembly in 2021, highlights the significant challenges we face globally in achieving sustainable development. It identifies three socio-environmental crises - pollution, climate change, and the loss of biodiversity – rooted in a profound disconnect between humans and nature, economic production modes, and the planet’s dwindling capacity to support the well-being of both human and non-human life. According to data presented in the report:

Over the last 50 years, the global economy has grown nearly fivefold, due largely to a tripling in extraction of natural resources and energy that has fueled growth in production and consumption. The world population has increased by a factor of two, to 7.8 billion people, and though on average prosperity has also double, about 1.3 billion people remain poor and some 700 million are hungry (ONU, 2021, p. 10).<sup>3</sup>

The report reminds us that human well-being critically depends on Earth’s natural systems, and

human prosperity relies on the intelligent use of the planet’s finite space and remaining resources, as well as the protection and restoration of its life-support processes and its capacity to absorb waste.

We are facing a planetary crisis, with the three environmental crises particularly impacting the various stages of childhood, which account for about 28% of the world’s population. According to a UNICEF report, the most severe consequences of changes in temperature, the quality of the air and the water, and available means for nutrition will most directly affect the development, well-being, and health of children and adolescents. Children in early life, whose physiology and immune systems are still underdeveloped, suffer more intensely from the effects of stress related to climate change (UNICEF, 2021).<sup>4</sup>

Based on the Children’s Climate Risk Index study (UNICEF, 2021), more than two billion children worldwide are exposed to multiple risks, shocks, or climate/environmental stresses. In Brazil alone, over 40 million children and adolescents are exposed to more than one risk identified in the study, which amounts to almost 60% of the nation’s young population. For example, over 8.6 million Brazilian children face the threat of lack of water, while more than 7.3 million are vulnerable to the dangers posed by river flooding.

<sup>2</sup>[https://wedocs.unep.org/xmlui/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/34949/MPN\\_ESEN.pdf](https://wedocs.unep.org/xmlui/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/34949/MPN_ESEN.pdf). Accessed on 09/10/2023.

<sup>3</sup> Translated by deepl.tradutor.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/brazil/relatorios/criancas-adolescentes-e-mudancas-climaticas-no-brasil-2022>. Accessed on 10/09/2023.

Particularly at risk are children living in socio-economic and environmental vulnerability, finding themselves disproportionately impacted in every aspect of these crises. Concurrently, children are grappling with a largely overlooked and underestimated crisis - *nature deficit disorder*<sup>5</sup>, especially prevalent in urban settings. This leads to an increasing disconnect from nature, adversely affecting the health and well-being of both children and the planet.

In Brazil today, the majority of the population resides in urban areas, and the lifestyles of many children have become confined to indoor spaces. This reality is shaped by multiple factors, including the effects of urbanization, the reduction of natural areas, environmental pollution, the lack of safety and quality in public outdoor spaces, inadequate urban planning, rapid urban densification, and real estate speculation, coupled with the dominance of cars in urban mobility, among others. This has led to the disappearance of both designated green spaces (such as squares, parks, gardens, and roadside greenery) and undeveloped areas (like vacant lots, playing fields, and large open, unused spaces), as well as the presence of children and adolescents in cities and their free spaces.

---

5 Term coined by the American journalist Richard Louv to describe the absence of nature in children's daily lives, which has multiple consequences for the health and well-being of the planet. See book: Last Child in the Woods: <https://criancaenatureza.org.br/pt/acervo/last-child-in-the-woods/>

We are witnessing an increasing scenario of childhood confinement or *walling-in*, as coined by Léa Tiriba, reflected in limited opportunities for children to enjoy outdoor spaces and natural environments, with significant consequences for their holistic and healthy development.

Studies and research indicate that among the consequences of this deprivation are increased sedentary behavior, obesity, and reduced motor skills - including lack of balance, agility, and physical ability - and even myopia<sup>6</sup>. Concurrently, numerous studies in recent years have shown that exposure to nature during childhood and adolescence can prevent chronic diseases such as diabetes, asthma, and obesity. It also supports neuropsychomotor development, contributes to mental well-being, balances vitamin D levels, and strengthens the immune system.

Contact with nature also helps foster creativity, initiative, self-confidence, the ability to choose, make decisions, and solve problems, which, in turn, contributes to improved psychomotor coordination and the development of multiple forms of expression. Not to mention the benefits associated with socio-emotional development, such as empathy, learning to care for oneself, others, and the environment, as well as a sense of belonging and interdependence.

---

6 [https://criancaenatureza.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/manual\\_orientacao\\_sbp\\_cen.pdf](https://criancaenatureza.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/manual_orientacao_sbp_cen.pdf). Accessed on 09/10/2023.

Given this backdrop, education plays a crucial role in promoting children's rights to contact with nature and a healthy environment. Establishing a connection with nature from the start of life is essential for the healthy development of both children and the planet. Richard Louv (2019), in his article "Outdoor Access for Everyone,"<sup>7</sup> champions access to nature as a human right.

He places this discussion within an international movement based on biologist Edward O. Wilson's biophilia hypothesis - which suggests that humans are genetically programmed to have an affinity with the rest of nature - and grounded in ideals of justice and equity.

If Wilson is right, and if the research holds true, connecting with nature is more than just a pleasant pursuit, a hobby, or a privilege. It's a necessity. In the words of David Orr, a leader in environmental education and green urban design, the human connection to a healthy natural environment is "the ultimate human right, upon which all other rights depend." (LOUV, 2019, p. 4)

Louv particularly highlights the importance of this right during childhood, noting that neurological research indicates that while the human brain features remarkable "plasticity" – that is, the ability to grow new neural pathways throughout a person's life – these neural adaptations occur most intensely

during specific windows of opportunity, which are predominantly in childhood and adolescence, often triggered by extraordinary experiences.

This movement resonates in Brazil and has spurred initiatives that view schools as places for encountering nature - not just as a backdrop but as an environment integral to a child's experiential learning process. It advocates for an environmental education perspective that is grounded in the child's connection with nature and acknowledges human existence as integrated and interdependent with the whole. In this light, outdoor school spaces should be considered part of the curriculum, and promoting a nature-rich environment is seen as a strategy to enhance learning opportunities and make these spaces more resilient to climate change.

Discussions on theories of knowledge<sup>8</sup> have shown that the construction of culture and knowledge results from human interaction with their surroundings, whether through the environment or relationships with other human and non-human beings. It is through an individual's experiences with everything around them that a child formulates hypotheses and understands the world. A nature-rich environment at school, combined with ample opportunities in the school routine for children to be outside the classroom, broadens the scope for learning through their own engagement with space and brings well-being to the entire school community.

---

7 Article published in the May/June 2019 issue with the headline "Outdoor Access for Everyone," originally in 2009, and was translated by the Child and Nature program. See: <https://criancaenatureza.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Artigo-R.-Louv.docx.pdf>. Accessed on 09/09/2023.

---

8 As examples: Piaget, Vygotsky, Bronfenbrenner, Ingold among others.

Learning requires a significant engagement level of children with their tasks. Exploration and research stand as fundamental approaches to gaining knowledge, essential for human growth, where educators hold a critical role in offering attentive listening, facilitating, and broadening this understanding. Opportunities outside, be they in the school's outdoor areas or the broader community, offer avenues for deeper, more impactful learning and establish the groundwork for fostering a sense of responsibility and care towards oneself, others, and the Earth.

Unwalling school involves rethinking school infrastructure regarding spaces, materials offered, and pedagogical practices. It acknowledges that nature is, according to Tiriba (2010), life itself, the creator of all beings that constitute the Universe. As Marilena Chauí (2001, p. 209) puts it, Nature is “the active principle that animates and moves beings. [...] a spontaneous force capable of generating and caring for all beings it has created and set in motion.”

Therefore, nature is life expressing itself in all beings, things, and phenomena. Children express their love for outdoor spaces because these are ways of expressing that same nature (SPINOZA, 1983), as cooperation, the tendency to associate, to establish connections are essential characteristics of living organisms: all forms of life on Earth have evolved together over billions of years, in a coevolutionary movement that is the ongoing dance of life (BOFF, 1999). Valuing this dialogue of creation, it is necessary to reinvent the times, spaces, and routines of Early Childhood Education

institutions, allowing children access to the life that surrounds them, enabling them to maintain and nourish the connections that affirm them as organic beings (TIRIBA, 2010, p.6).<sup>9</sup>

It was this insight that sparked the partnership between the Alana Institute and Jundiaí City Hall, particularly with the education sector, for the Unwalling School initiative and to contribute to policies that promote children's right to connect with nature, as will be briefly outlined below.

### **Children, nature, the school, and the city of Jundiaí**

In 2017 and 2019, the Child and Nature program organized a technical mission to Freiburg, Germany — a benchmark in urban sustainability — to understand the features that make it child-friendly. These study trips included a Brazilian delegation of an interdisciplinary team from universities, civil society, public authorities, and the private sector, among them representatives from Jundiaí's city planning, education, sports, and leisure departments.

This collaboration with the public leaders of Jundiaí led to a fruitful partnership between the Alana Institute and City Hall. The partnership was aimed at creating educational initiatives to nurture socio-environmental policies that would pave the way for a greener, more child-centric urban landscape for the city's younger population.

The initial stage of this collaboration involved a

<sup>9</sup> <http://portal.mec.gov.br/docman/dezembro-2010-%20pdf/7161-2-9-artigo-mec-criancas-natureza-lea-tiriba/file>. Accessed on 09/10/2023.

series of educational gatherings with representatives from diverse branches of the city's administration. These sessions resulted in the establishment of a task force known as the Child in the City Task Force. This group's mission was to design urban policies in a collaborative manner that would enhance children's integration into urban life and bolster current initiatives such as "Between Home and School," which advocates for safety enhancements and urban developments for school routes. Moreover, it aimed to foster new projects, like incorporating a section dedicated to children in the upcoming revision of the city's Master Plan<sup>10</sup>.

At the same time, the municipal education network embarked on training programs centered around the idea of Unwalling Childhood. This approach aimed to connect children with nature and the urban environment, optimizing and investing in the external areas of schools. Such initiatives led to a reevaluation of school infrastructures and teaching methods as part of the Innovative Jundiaí School Program, which is guided by three foundational principles: i) enhancing the school setting, ii) providing ongoing professional development for educators, and iii) elevating the standard of education.

This evolving initiative proved to be both essential and a strategic response amidst the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. As in-person classes were

suspended, remote education became challenging, and stringent lockdown measures were implemented to control the spread of the virus, the Alana Institute proposed a series of recommendations<sup>11</sup> for the resumption of school activities. Their suggestions emphasized utilizing outdoor spaces both within and outside school grounds as a health precaution, drawing from historical precedents, international practices, and studies that suggested lower transmission rates of the virus in open-air settings.

This situation prompted joint training and planning sessions with the educational management team of Jundiaí to consider ways of utilizing outdoor spaces with the return of in-person classes in the city. As a result of this process, the Outdoor Learning Guide<sup>12</sup> was organized, grounded in a holistic educational approach, the creation of educational territories, and the structuring of naturalized school environments for children. Using prototypes from the city's schools and the suggestion of formative routes, the guide aimed to assist with the training and planning of school units for the use of outdoor spaces in alignment with the Jundiaí Curriculum.

As an integral part of this approach, the education management in collaboration with the city's culture and sports departments, devised initiatives for schools to use public facilities, such as the *Voa Pé* (Fly Foot)

10 <https://jundiai.sp.gov.br/planejamento-e-meio-ambiente/legislacao/leis-urbanisticas/>. Accessed on 09/10/2023.

11 <https://criancaenatureza.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Planejando-a-reabertura-das-escolas.pdf>. Accessed on 09/10/2023.

12 <https://criancaenatureza.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Guia-de-aprendizagem-ao-ar-livre.pdf>. Accessed on 09/10/2023.

program, which encouraged excursions to parks, sports centers, and city squares, among others.

Beyond the efforts made in this partnership, the Unit of Education Management promoted numerous actions and partnerships that enriched the content and development of the Unwalling School proposal. This highlighted the importance of establishing a network of individuals and organizations within and outside City Hall to support and provide resources, ensuring that actions become increasingly robust through continuous and permanent work. From this initiative, valuable lessons have been gleaned, which I will share succinctly below, hoping to aid the continual process of reflection on educational practice.

### **The curriculum as a foundation for Unwalling School**

For outdoor activities to be carried out creatively and autonomously by educators, ongoing exploration of the school curriculum is essential. This ensures that the contents of different knowledge areas and fields of experience relate to aspects and references present in the external and open-air environments. Intentionality should be the starting point for the development of activities outside the classroom.

In early childhood education, for instance, understanding the dimension of free play as a child's language to discover themselves and the world around them is crucial. This understanding helps organize spaces intentionally to provide diverse experiences

and allow children the choice of preferred activities. The school routine and the organization of time need rethinking to accommodate more outdoor moments and a balance between structured activities and those encouraging children's free choice.

In elementary education, subjects like history, geography, and the natural sciences are replete with opportunities for study and experience in and with nature to understand natural phenomena, biomes, and climate change. Similarly, the historical and cultural development of a region can be a topic of discussion with the city's heritage sites and historical places. This encourages critical reflection on the structure of the official narrative and whether there are marginalized voices that need to be explored, fostering research on ethnic-racial relations both within and outside the school.

Research on concepts such as educating cities and educational territories, which acknowledge other agents and urban spaces as part of the curriculum, can bolster the understanding of what happens inside and outside the classroom.

### **Continuous engagement with the school community**

Families often express reservations about school trips or have concerns regarding their children's increased exploration of nature. A reduced sense of security, perhaps due to traffic or urban crime, creates anxiety, and unfamiliarity with nature in city environments may lead to misconceptions of natural



settings as unsafe or unclear.

The perspectives and experiences of individual families deserve to be embraced and discussed within the school framework, with the goal of aligning with the school community's educational intentions. Involving families in creating solutions for potential challenges and building partnerships in action development is essential. Organizing group sessions for dialogue with school staff and families, as well as enjoying outdoor activities together, can enhance the collective recognition and definition of the roles that everyone plays in nurturing the education of infants, children, and adolescents through collaborative proposals and ideas.

### **Children as the absolute priority**

The development of educational territories is grounded in the concept of holistic education that encompasses all human dimensions, with a special emphasis on the civic perspective. For Unwalling School to be part of inclusive education, we must consider the conditions outside the school walls and collaborate with students and responsible entities to solve issues that a city might present.

Challenges such as accessibility and road safety are crucial parts of intersectoral planning to enable the creation of educational territories. They can drive urban policies that embrace all children in the city and, consequently, youth and adults. In this regard, Unwalling Schools can enhance public policies that promote access to public facilities, green areas, and

urban mobility, placing the child as the central focus in urban planning.

### **Change takes time**

Transformations in teaching methods, city planning, and the groundwork for any significant shift are gradual processes. Hence, sustained and ongoing commitment is indispensable.

Examining and sharing best practices and experiences among schools has been a key approach of the UGE (Education Management Unit) to foster collective learning and cooperation across the municipal education system. Continual professional development for educators, facilitated through group initiatives and individual guidance from supervisors at each school, has been crucial.

Investing in both infrastructure and the regular advancement of professional skills is critical to improving educational quality in Jundiaí's schools and to overcoming challenges common to all cities. It is my conviction that the insights and stories conveyed in this book can serve as inspiration and a source for dialogue with other educational initiatives interested in unwalling school.

### **Conclusions**

This summary of the partnership journey with Jundiaí in unwalling school for children aims to share the learnings and insights gained in fostering initiatives that emerged from this collaboration.

The strategy of unwalling institutions walls that inhibit children, adolescents, and adults from engaging fully has found a supportive structure within the framework of the Innovative School Program. This program underpins a variety of initiatives, including outdoor learning, and lays the groundwork for a set of guidelines aimed at a methodological approach to Unwalling School. Equally important was the creation of an interdisciplinary team committed to developing policies for childhood, enhancing the educational process. Moreover, sharing successful practices across the network has become a formative experience for all schools involved.

From the perspective of civil society's role and action, providing technical support in the development of pilot initiatives for Unwalling School was vital, supported by pedagogical and legal aspects, and the principles of naturalized schoolyards to enhance the child's experience and their connection with nature within the context of the school.

The enhancement of collaborative efforts across different sectors has laid the groundwork for a more unified approach to action planning spearheaded by the Education Management Unit. Furthermore, the training of a technical team within the UGE that could disseminate the proposed actions across the municipal network was highly significant. In summary, i) participation in formative sessions to support the pedagogical aspects and the development of intersectorality, ii) monitoring activities and assisting in the production of materials, and iii)

diagnostic and procedural evaluation were the pillars that structured Alana Institute's contributions to the development of public policies in the city.

It is with great joy that we acknowledge the endeavors made by the public education system to enhance the well-being of both students and educators by Unwalling School, thereby facilitating a closer relationship with nature. This contributes to expanding pedagogical opportunities, ensuring the right to learn within the framework of holistic education and the right to live in a healthy environment.

Reflecting on this shared experience, we can see the distinct advantages of unwalling school: i) the commitment to making school environments more natural, aiding their transition in the face of climate change, ii) the boost in students' self-reliance and their engagement with their immediate and urban environments, iii) the reinforcement of a sense of community, civic responsibility, and the fostering of a care ethic towards oneself, all living creatures (humans and non-humans alike), and the planet.

## BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

Louv, Richard. 2019. Serra Club Magazine. **Outdoors for All**. Translated by Children and Nature. <https://criancaenatureza.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Artigo-R.-Louv.docx.pdf>. Accessed on 09/10/2023.

Programa de Meio Ambiente da Organização das Nações Unidas. 2021. **Making peace with Nature**: a scientific blueprint to tackle the climate, biodiversity and pollution emergencies. Executive Summary. [https://wedocs.unep.org/xmlui/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/34949/MPN\\_ESEN.pdf](https://wedocs.unep.org/xmlui/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/34949/MPN_ESEN.pdf). Accessed on 09/10/2023.

TIRIBA, Léa. 2010. Ministério da Educação. **Crianças na Natureza**. <http://portal.mec.gov.br/docman/dezembro-2010-%20pdf/7161-2-9-artigo-mec-criancas-natureza-lea-tiriba/file>. Accessed on 09/10/2023.

UNICEF. 2022. **Crianças e Adolescentes e Mudanças Climáticas no Brasil**. <https://www.unicef.org/brazil/media/21346/file/criancas-adolescentes-e-mudancas-climaticas-brasil-2022.pdf>. Accessed on 09/10/2023.

UNICEF. 2021. **The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis**: Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index. Executive Summary. [https://www.unicef.org/media/105531/file/UNICEF\\_climate%20crisis\\_child\\_rights\\_crisis-summary.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/105531/file/UNICEF_climate%20crisis_child_rights_crisis-summary.pdf). Accessed on 09/10/2023.



## CHAPTER 4



# BEING A CHILD IS NATURAL

Ana Carol Thomé



## BEING A CHILD IS NATURAL

Ana Carol Thomé<sup>1</sup>

---

*<sup>1</sup> Ana Carol Thomé is an educator, specializing in Playful Education, Psychomotricity, and Inclusive Education. As a public school teacher, she has experience in Early Childhood Education, Inclusive Education, and Teacher Training. She is certified by Agored Cymru in Wales for Curriculum-based Outdoor Learning. Ana conceived and has been coordinating the “Being a Child is Natural” program since 2013. Her work experience includes roles in Forest Schools in the UK, and she actively researches initiatives linking Education and Nature in Brazil and worldwide. Ana featured in the documentary “The Beginning of Life 2: Outdoors” and studies childhood culture, child development, and learning processes through experience. In collaboration with the Literary Movement, she created the Forest Library Reading Club. Since 2017, she has orchestrated the “Nature Boxes” play project, which connects children from all over Brazil with their local natural environments. A professional teacher and an educator at heart, Ana has been playful since birth and firmly believes in the power of childhood to improve the world.*



Being a child is natural! It is with this phrase, which titles the program I founded in 2013, that we begin our discussion and name this chapter about childhood, education, and nature from the perspective of Unwalling School.

Have you ever stopped to think about this? Children are nature. We are nature. Members of our species, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, often forget this fact.

We live in a society that imposes countless conditions that distance us from the rhythm of life, from nature, from ourselves. Concrete covers the ground, rivers are channeled and altered in shape, towering buildings obscure the sky and horizon, and our days are spent in indoor, sealed, climate-controlled spaces. Children habitually find pleasure in spaces filled with synthetic elements: artificial turf, rubberized flooring, plastic toys, and screens. This lifestyle impacts the development of children in various ways. American journalist Richard Louv published the book *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* in 2005, highlighting numerous symptoms that current generations of children exhibit in their health, correlated with a decrease in time and space for free, unstructured play in nature. “*Nature-deficit disorder describes the cost of human alienation from nature, among them: diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses.*” (LOUV, 2016, p. 58).

We find ourselves in a scenario where we are constantly shown the empty half of the glass,

reinforced by research from around the globe. We are acutely aware of the void left by the absence of nature. I advocate for a more optimistic view: let’s focus on the glass half full. What happens when this connection is present? What are the benefits? What unfolds when children and nature grow together? Why is this important? Can a relationship between children and nature exist in large cities? What are the strategies and options? What obstacles do we face, and how can we overcome them? How can we envision this relationship within the context of the school? What should we take into account in our planning to ensure nature is part of children’s daily lives? How can the organization of school spaces extend an inviting atmosphere for the relationship between children and nature? What is the role of adults who accompany children in collective settings? How can we enhance this relationship in practice? Even though many proposals are free to children, are they also free to reference adults?

It is from this context and these numerous questions that we need to reflect on and affirm, in various ways, the nature of children, our own nature.

### **A new world debuts**

“*When I was born, I hadn’t seen anything. Just darkness, a lot of darkness, in my mother’s womb.*” (Martins and Matoso, 2011, p. 5)

With every newborn baby, a new version of planet Earth debuts. The environment and culture that greet us at birth, coupled with the tapestry of experiences



we collect over a lifetime, filter through our senses and impart vast insights about our world. David Le Breton suggests, “*For humans, there is no other way than to experience the world, to be permanently pierced and transformed by it*” (LeBreton, 2016, p. 11). Essentially, we must immerse ourselves in EXPERIENCE. It’s through this very process of experience that we learn, expand, and evolve.

This statement resonates with the conception of the child that permeates the official documents of Brazilian education and is reaffirmed in the Jundiaí Curriculum, considering the child as

[...] a historical being with rights who, through the interactions, relationships, and everyday practices experienced, constructs their personal and collective identity, plays, imagines, fantasizes, desires, learns, observes, experiments, narrates, questions, and constructs meanings about nature and society, thereby producing culture (BRASIL, 2010, p. 12).

Each and every experience in life, especially during childhood, teaches us about living on this planet. Picture a newborn baby experiencing the myriad facets of this world for the first time. Can you imagine the wonder as they feel the breeze on their skin and see it rustling the treetops? What is it like for them to handle a dry leaf, to crumple it and hear the crackling sound it makes? How enchanting must it be to watch the clouds drift across the sky? What discoveries await as they touch stones, soil, or even another hand? What sensations are triggered when smelling the scent of rain-soaked earth? “*When*

*I was born, everything was new. All was yet to be experienced*” (Martins and Matoso, 2011, p. 12).

For babies and toddlers, novelty stands out, but this sense of newness continues through childhood and stays with us throughout life. We must be attentive to the world and find enchantment in it.

What kind of world are children getting to know? We, as educators who work every day to support children’s holistic development, need to ask ourselves this question at all times. As we reflect on the experiences that children have, there comes a reflection on our own role: What enriching opportunities are we offering for children to know the world? From the moment a child arrives at school until they leave: what have they observed? What materials have they touched? Across what surfaces have they walked? What scents have they smelled? What sounds have they heard? What tastes have they savored?

When I was born, I knew very little. Now, at least, I’ve learned one thing. There’s still a whole world out there to discover, millions upon millions of things and places my hands have yet to reach. Millions upon millions of hidden answers, millions upon millions of colors I’ve never seen. And smells, and sounds, and flavors. But one thing is also true. Every day I discover just a little bit more. And that is the most fantastic thing of all! (MARTINS and MATOSO, 2011, p. 26-27).

School should be the place where we learn about life. And what is life? Anthropologist Tim Ingold (2015) tells us that life is everything that moves. We

are on a planet in motion, in a universe in motion. And life is also what we refer to as nature. However, amid the constant efforts to distance ourselves, the term has come to denote natural areas, plants, animals, fungi, and more. Learning about life is learning about our own existence, the life of all beings, the life of the planet, the life of the universe. It's the life found in all relationships, interactions, creations, and imaginations.

This classic notion of nature as a matrix is also mirrored in the etymology of the word. In Latin, 'natura' originates from the verb 'nasci', meaning to be born. From this root, we derive words like natal, native, natural, and even nation. It's fascinating to note that, etymologically, nature isn't static but the outcome of an organic, vital process that gives us a sense of belonging — a sense of belonging that dates back to the very beginning of our existence (HUESO, 2017, p. 12, author's free translation).

What is the life that thrives in your school? Can you discern the movements, the life cycles throughout the year? Is there a visible diversity of species? The more biodiversity there is, the more visible and invisible relationships occur, the more exploration and discovery can unfold.

*"Children need nature for the healthy development of their senses, and therefore for learning and creativity"* (LOUV, 2016, p. 78). Therefore, schools need to be places where nature is an ever-present teacher, offering us countless opportunities to learn with it and about it.

## **Children and nature growing together**

Creating opportunities for enriching experiences with nature is one of the roles of those involved in early childhood education, be it in preschool or elementary education.

It is known that the best opportunities for children to develop holistically are found in their interactions with and within nature. As they play and engage in positive experiences with nature, children develop their motor skills, creativity, speech, logical reasoning, emotional intelligence, sense of belonging, competence, and autonomy. They learn to work in groups, to communicate, to take care of themselves and others, to coexist with other beings, and to read the world.

Amid numerous relationships and learning experiences in the present, they lay important foundations for the abstract content with which they will soon engage. The well-known statement by Paulo Freire (2017), "Reading the world precedes reading words," needs to be lived as much as it is quoted. Children must have many meaningful experiences with the world; they need to learn to read it so that their learning is imbued with significance that transcends theory.

For the relationship between children and nature to occur, there is a series of challenges that extend beyond the physical spaces of schools. This includes sensitizing and providing theoretical and practical training for adults, organizing time, available

materials, internal and external space arrangements, engaging with the territory, community involvement, and fostering relationships of listening and trust between adults and children.

Before delving into reflections on some of these challenges and possibilities, it is important to highlight that:

- Purposefulness is vital in educators' efforts for all actions they carry out. Each aspect of children's daily routines serves as a lesson, imparting knowledge. Nothing can be left to chance; every element must be deliberately planned to enrich the child's experiences. In the context of outdoor spaces, surrounded by nature, being purposeful is absolutely essential.

- Planning is essential for organizing the approach to inhabiting outdoor spaces; it cannot be overlooked. The aim is not to dictate what children will do, but to design the times, spaces, materials, and the educator's role. This is a crucial way for educators to feel confident, and in turn, create opportunities to listen to and observe the children. Children need the freedom to play, and educators need to be equipped to explore what sparks the children's interest and inquiries.

Moving forward, I present physical spaces as the first challenge, as they are the most visible and perhaps the most frequently mentioned. We recognize that the contexts and realities of schools vary widely, from grounds rich in natural areas to smaller, more concrete-dominated spaces.

I have visited schools with vast natural areas that were scarcely used by children. On another occasion, upon my arrival at a school, the staff eagerly shared the myriad of possibilities that the outdoor spaces offered. As they described them, I envisioned a large and biodiverse area. However, when I saw the space, it was just a small backyard with grass and a few trees.

The greatest barrier to fostering the relationship between children and nature is not the space itself but the cultural barriers characteristic of adults. The association of outdoor spaces with dirt, disorder, unpredictability, and "doing nothing" is common. "Being outside makes us feel more alive, more present, more ourselves" (HUESO, 2017, p. 59, author's free translation).

One needs to become familiar with the space. To grow acquainted with every nook and cranny. What opportunities for discovery lie within? The richer the biodiversity, the more potential for connections. Immersion in a variety of species provides a wealth of information and invitations. A burst of colors, textures, shapes, sounds, sizes, movements, interactions, life. A rich ground for research, discoveries, and learning that involves the entire body.

And if this rich and abundant natural area exists, then it must be inhabited. It's entirely feasible that activities traditionally conducted indoors can be seamlessly transitioned to the outdoors, with even more options.

But what if the space isn't that large? What can we do?

Regardless of the size of the space, it's important to get to know it and explore every corner for possibilities. Familiarize yourself with the trees and plants that are there: What are the flowers, leaves, fruits, trunks, and roots like? Always use the species' name when mentioning it. And what about fungi, mushrooms: have they appeared anywhere? Where do mosses grow? What birds live nearby? Which insects have been spotted? How does the sun announce its presence in the area? Which parts of the space does it kiss in the morning? What path does it take throughout the day? What shadows are cast in its light? And the wind: what paths does it take through the outdoor and indoor spaces? What does it move? Is there a time, season of the year, or place where it's stronger? When it rains, what possibilities arise? Where does the water flow? Where do puddles form? Is it possible to play with or in the rain? How does nature invite me to play?

Getting to know the spaces in their intricacies and paying attention to the elements that make them up is a crucial practice for educators, aiming to refine planning and broaden the opportunities created for children and nature to meet and interact. It's by intimately knowing the space we inhabit every day that we can present a little more of the world to the children with each passing day.

Simply connecting with the space outside of schools wasn't enough; it was necessary to create

a new internal landscape, to design new spatial arrangements that would free the body and promote the unfettered flow of energy, of impassioned actions and ideas. (TIRIBA, 2018, p. 22)

Rethinking the internal spaces is just as important as rethinking the external ones. Unwalling a school goes beyond breaking down architectural barriers and spending time with children outside. We need to reconsider the environments to improve peer interactions, movements, interests, and life itself. How can indoor spaces become more vibrant and embrace life in the best way? How do investigations that begin in outdoor areas unfold indoors, and vice versa? How do internal and external spaces converse and intertwine?

Moreover, it's beneficial to broaden our scope to consider the territories as dynamic spaces ripe for experiences and learning. We can wander through neighborhoods, revel in the playfulness of squares and parks, delve into community gardens, savor the greenery of gardens, and frequent markets and museums. With purposefulness, thoughtful planning, and robust teamwork within the school framework, a multitude of initiatives become feasible.

Continuing from this perspective, it is also crucial to highlight the concept of nature as encompassing more than just living beings and natural areas. We are nature, and so are the relationships we establish with the planet. Broadening this understanding opens up more opportunities for children to experience the relationship between children and nature.

To uncover numerous possibilities, we need educators with keen eyes and active senses. It's worth noting that the group of educators includes all professionals working in schools: principals, pedagogical coordinators, teachers, early childhood educators, supervisors, cooks, operational staff, and administrative assistants (Jundiaí, 2022).

Considering all school staff as educators is a catalyst for deepening the actions of the Pedagogical Political Project. Often, it is only the teaching staff that take ownership of these documents and the values embedded in them. The school is a living organism, and each educator, in their role, contributes to the sustenance of its life. If the relationship between child and nature is a fundamental value, each person's actions within the school can be guided by the question, "How do I, through my school duties, contribute to fostering the relationship between child and nature?"

From this perspective, the ongoing professional development of educators is foundational for strengthening education that is outdoors and intertwined with nature.

Since 2021, I have been privileged to lead a series of formative workshops for educators within the Jundiaí municipal education system, contributing to the rollout of the Unwalling School approach. These have included lectures, hands-on sessions, digital training courses, and integrative workshops that weave together theory, practice, and lived experiences, targeting a diverse audience including

early childhood education principals, teachers, pedagogical coordinators, English instructors, and early childhood educators. The goal has always been to heighten understanding of the importance of the child-nature bond and to catalyze a multitude of inspired initiatives.

We must be aware of the advantages of outdoor and nature-centered education to maintain purposefulness in these teaching methods and to enrich activities for an active curriculum. Embracing outdoor spaces more fully and fostering a deeper bond with nature demands meticulous coordination and consistency with the educational guidelines of the municipality. By engaging with these foundational documents, we gain the ability to monitor the progression of learning that unfolds through the children's experiences.

Beyond consistent study, it is necessary to register your experiences, document the learning processes, and communicate them to the school community. When the curriculum is vibrant and alive in every experience, it cannot be confined to a folder filled with activities on sheets of paper. It requires the use of audiovisual resources, written accounts, and more. Regardless of the chosen method of documentation, it's vital that it is undertaken with a keen and well-grounded perspective.

What are children investigating as they move through the space, with different containers, filling them with water at the faucet and carrying them to the sandpit? Larger and smaller pots. Some require

careful balance to prevent water from splashing out along the way. Others are heavy and need more peers to help reach the destination. And when we fill a sieve at the tap and two steps later: “Oops, where did the water go?” Sand that saturates, floods, forms puddles. Jumping, splashing mud in all directions, observing the relationship between body and matter.

When situations like these occur at school, educators need to recognize the learning that is taking place. To make these processes visible, it is necessary to register and document what the children are experiencing.

The impact of these records is amplified when shared, communicating to the entire school community a living pedagogical political project that acknowledges the leading role of children and educators and showcases the children’s learning and development processes.

Educators often report that families question and complain about the games and experiences that children have with and in nature.

The school needs to communicate how the children’s learning processes unfold as part of the development of the school community. This is how families become more familiar with how their children develop, what they learn, reinforcing the values that support the pedagogical political project, and validating the professionalism of the school team.

When families understand how learning occurs and support the work at school, we have a starting

point for a partnership that extends beyond merely avoiding complaints. It’s when the values of the Pedagogical Political Project (PPP) are embraced by the school community that collaborative endeavors grow, fostering the relationship between children and nature. Within this endeavor, engagement can span diverse avenues, ranging from supplying materials to spearheading changes within the school environment.

Educator training broadens perspectives on the possibilities of weather-independent experiences. The Scandinavian region is known for conducting outdoor activities come rain or shine, whether at 30°C above or below zero. They have a saying that goes, “There’s no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing.” Here in Brazil, we may not reach such extreme temperatures, but our relationship with the weather is still a challenge.

How does a sunny day invite us to play outside? And when it’s cloudy? Is it possible to play outdoors when it’s raining? Every day can be an excellent opportunity for a lot of play if we’re prepared to interact with the world as it is.

### **Education and nature: the school of today**

To enact a pedagogical practice grounded in the relationship with nature is an urgent call to action for our times. Basing education on this relationship also means considering the leading role, sense of belonging, and autonomy of children.

This challenge is immediate, pressing for action

today: to evolve our present approach to education, empowering us to envision and forge alternate realities. As Gabriela Mistral (2002, p. 63) said: “The future of the children is always today. Tomorrow will be too late.”

We need to recognize the vitality in outdoor environments, ensure frequent activities in nature, and strengthen the child-nature bond now.

In his book “Ancestral Future” (2022), Ailton Krenak highlights the importance of reflecting on present education rather than the future. Numerous discussions revolve around the kind of education we desire for the times ahead. Krenak urges us to consider the present and the non-existence of the future. The present is what we have. The future is an idea.

The freedom I had in childhood to experience a connection with everything we recognize as nature gave me the understanding that I am also a part of it. So, the first gift I received from this freedom was the ability to merge with nature in a broad sense, to see myself as an extension of everything, and to have this experience of the collective self. It is about feeling life in other beings, in a tree, a mountain, a fish, a bird, and becoming involved. The presence of other beings doesn't just add to the landscape of the place I inhabit; it transforms the world. This power to perceive oneself as belonging to the whole and being capable of changing the world could be a great idea for education. Not for an imaginary time and place, but for where we stand right now. (KRENAK, 2022, p.102)

Living and learning with the world today, deeply engaged in a direct and sensitive relationship with nature, is essential for contemporary education.

## BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BRASIL. Ministério da Educação. Secretaria de Educação Básica. **Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para a Educação Infantil**. Brasília: MEC/SEB, 2010.

FREIRE, Paulo. **A importância do ato de ler**: em três artigos que se completam. São Paulo: Cortez, 2017, (versão eletrônica).

HUESO, Katia. **Somos natureza**: una viaje a nuestra esencia. Barcelona: Plataforma editorial, 2017 (versão eletrônica).

INGOLD, Tim. **Estar vivo**: ensaios sobre movimento, conhecimento e descrição. Petrópolis: Editora Vozes, 2015.

JUNDIAÍ. Unidade de Gestão de Educação. **Currículo Jundiaense**. Available at: <<https://educacao.jundiai.sp.gov.br/documentos/curriculo-jundiaense/>> Accessed on 12/09/2023. Jundiaí: UGE, 2022.

KRENAK, Ailton. **Futuro ancestral**. São Paulo: Companhia das letras, 2022.

LE BRETON, David. **Antropologia dos sentidos**. Petrópolis: Editora Vozes, 2016.

LOUV, Richard. A última criança na natureza: resgatando nossas crianças do transtorno de déficit de natureza. São Paulo: Editora Aquariana, 2016.

MARTINS, Isabel Minhós e MATOSO, Madalena.

**Quando eu nasci**. São Paulo: Tordesilhinhas, 2011.

MISTRAL, Gabriela. La Tierra: Los jardines. In: **Recopilación de la obra mistraliana 1902-1922**. Consejo Nacional de Fomento del Libro y la Lectura. Chile: RIL Editores, 2002.

TIRIBA. Lea. **Educação infantil como direito a alegria**: em busca de pedagogias ecológicas, populares e libertárias. Rio de Janeiro/São Paulo: Paz e terra, 2018.



## CHAPTER 5



# **UNWALLING SCHOOL IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION - CITY AND SCHOOLS FOSTERING EXPERIENCES, LEARNING, AND CONNECTIONS WITH NATURE**

Beatriz Ferraz



*EMEB Profa Clotilde Copelli de Miranda collection*

## **UNWALLING SCHOOL IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION - CITY AND SCHOOLS FOSTERING EXPERIENCES, LEARNING, AND CONNECTIONS WITH NATURE**

**Beatriz Ferraz<sup>1</sup>**

---

*1 Doctorate in Education from the University of São Paulo - USP, with specialization in Leadership in Early Childhood Policies from Harvard University (Boston/United States), Introduction to Piklerian Pedagogy from the Lóczy Foundation for Children (Budapest/Hungary), and “Daily Life in the Schools of Reggio Emilia” from the Loris Malaguzzi International Centre (Reggio Emilia, Italy). She is the founder and Executive Director of the School of Educators, a training space offering consultancy and knowledge production in education, specializing in Early Childhood Education, and she is the Vice President of Education at Lekto, an educational program focusing on socio-emotional learning. She is also an associate member of the “Todos Pela Educação” Movement, the “Movimento pela Base Nacional Comum Curricular,” and a member of the Technical-Pedagogical Advisory Commission of Education at INEP, National Institute for Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira.*

Jundiaí is a city entwined with my childhood memories, and its network of early childhood schools has shaped my professional path. My childhood recollections are rooted in my grandparents' home, a place of warmth in a city that embraced us: the scent of the earth, a magical garden that offered me the chance to explore and learn from nature, teaching me that there is no separation between the Earth, nature, and ourselves. In that garden, I formed affectionate bonds with animals and plants, learning the joy of nurturing and being nurtured by nature and its enchanting elements.

In 2002, I embarked on my initial partnership with the early childhood education network of Jundiaí's municipal schools. The network was dedicated to enhancing the educational quality for its institutions catering to the 0 to 3-year age group, a focus that was quite uncommon at the time and underscored the city's dedication to its youngest citizens and their families. In more recent times, I have had the privilege of accompanying the management teams, coordinators, and teachers within this early childhood sector as they carried out exceptional work during the pandemic, engaging in the systematic training and roll-out of a new educational curriculum. It's from this latest chapter of experiences and insights alongside the network and its professionals that I draw the contents shared with you in this chapter.

## **Curricular revision: documenting Jundiaí's children and their childhood**

The curricular review process in Jundiaí's municipal network marked a significant milestone for the city, which chose a democratic education policy by implementing a pedagogical approach dedicated to the holistic development of children, their health, and the health of the planet. This approach emphasized educational practices aimed at reestablishing nurturing relationships between humans and the natural world.

This shift in educational paradigms, encompassing the pedagogical concept of Unwalling School, a concept introduced by Professor Léa Tiriba (2010), was part of a process of reflection and choice in response to the fundamental questions and inputs from educators, families, and most importantly, the children. It was a process that involved rethinking the school as a place of experiences and learning, integrating into this concept the city, interdependence with nature, and the understanding of the child as an individual with rights. The process also included the establishment of the International Centre for Childhood Studies, Memories, and Research (CIEMPI), which, according to the Education Manager of the municipality, Vastí Ferrari Marques (2021), emerged from

the understanding that public administration must uphold its commitment to childhood... conceived as a public space for study, research, and acceptance, capable of directing actions and thoughts in favor of childhood and children's education (p. 3)

For these decisions and pledges to effectively bring about change in educational attitudes and practices, it's critical that every stakeholder is actively and collaboratively involved in the decision-making process, in devising solutions, and in securing the necessary conditions for autonomy in their practices, as part of an ongoing cycle of contemplation and learning. This collaborative approach was embraced by Jundiaí's public network, ensuring that the city's curriculum review process was conducted through an integrated approach of study, thoughtful consideration, and proposals, all deeply rooted in a commitment to the welfare of the child, social justice, peace, and sustainability.

According to the National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education in Brazil (2010), the curriculum is:

A suite of practices designed to connect children's experiences and insights with the knowledge that is part of our cultural, artistic, environmental, scientific, and technological heritage, thereby fostering the comprehensive development of children from birth to five years of age (p. 12)."

Bearing this curricular definition in mind, I had the chance to observe the educators in the city of Jundiaí as they reflected on and systematized their choices to ensure a curriculum that respects and guarantees the essential rights to learning and development for their children. Among these rights is the ability to forge a meaningful relationship with nature, valuing sustainable attitudes and relationships of interdependence.

In the subsequent sections of this chapter, I express my profound appreciation and admiration for the educational journey these professionals have embarked on. Their dedication is aimed at transforming schools, teaching methods, and the urban landscape into realms rich with experiences and learning that align with the rights of children.

### **Redefining the role of the school**

Dewey (1859-1952) saw the school as a place for the child to learn to live life, arguing that its purpose should be to teach children how to live in the world. He understood the educational experience as reflective, believing that reflection and action must always be interconnected through situations where children can regularly engage in activities of their interest, involving problems to solve, at the same time ensuring they have the knowledge to act on the situation. This allows them numerous opportunities to test their ideas and build new knowledge.

Building on Dewey's ideas, Tonucci (2006) highlights that our constructions that evolve into experiences are etched into our memory, becoming part of our known world, and turning into active behavior. Therefore, school is a cultural moment in human experience, and experience is a source of knowledge capable of giving meaning to, transforming, and enriching theoretical knowledge. In it, we conduct research and build culture.

Reflecting on and valuing the role of experience in the learning and development of children marked



a significant revision of the Jundiaí curriculum. This revision fostered a fresh perspective on the function of schools, their everyday activities, and relationships, while ensuring learning environments that view children as beings brimming with potential, curiosity, and a natural ability to learn. These environments promote learning from both practical experiences and intentional, educator-mediated opportunities that encourage children to reflect on these experiences.

In the Jundiaí network, educators strive to create opportunities for children to experience and learn both inside and outside of school, emphasizing the interdependence between children and nature and acknowledging them as complete individuals, capable of communicating with nature itself. They learn to converse with plants, animals, and the wind, attributing life and feelings to natural beings and crafting narratives with them.

### **Rights, experiences, everyday activities, and educational practices that ensure learning**

The curriculum, everyday life, and pedagogical practices of municipal schools are guided by the rights to learning and development to ensure respect for the unique ways children express themselves and learn in childhood.

The areas of experience, in turn, have supported professionals in shifting their focus from teaching to learning, from knowledge to the unique experiences of each child. Curricular planning based on these

rights, areas of experience, and learning and development objectives was highlighted as a principle for daily life, practices, and experiences that consider each child's individuality — their interests, learning needs, and varied developmental paces. Guiding questions were taken into account to learn about each child and their families. The planning process was valued as an essential condition for encouraging educators to reflect intentionally on everyday life, pedagogical practices, experiences, and learning support strategies as drivers of contexts conducive to learning and development.

### **Learning and development-enhancing contexts: reflecting on experiences**

In Jundiaí's municipal Early Childhood Education settings, environments are crafted to nurture learning and growth, encompassing experiences that involve interaction, play, the development of physical awareness, and the cultivation of nurturing relationships with oneself, others, the natural world, and its inhabitants.

We reflected on the importance of experience based on concepts from Dewey (2007) and Tonucci (2006), as previously mentioned. We incorporated contributions from the philosopher Larrosa Bondía (2002), who encourages us to view experience as a journey of constructing meaning that each child undertakes, carrying with them insights gained from chances to connect with themselves, others, and the wider world. We recognized that certain fundamental experiences are imperative to provide

during this critical phase of childhood, including:

- Having their needs met, developing a sense of self and learning to trust others so that they can explore the world around them, relate to adults outside their family circle, and form connections with other children.
- Engaging in behaviors that foster autonomy without endangering themselves, constructing a sense of identity as independent beings capable of making choices and decisions, and acquiring the courage to venture into new situations, materials, and relationships.
- Viewing themselves as competent and capable individuals, taking initiative and completing tasks, scrutinizing situations, making informed decisions, and acting on their observations with purposefulness and confidence in their choices.
- Demonstrating empathy for others by understanding and relating to the feelings of others, showing their concern in diverse ways to expand their emotional ties with other children and adults and to feel part of a community.
- Experiencing supportive contexts where success is attainable, reinforcing their belief in their own competence to accomplish and contribute positively to

society, and equipping them to face life's inherent challenges and conflicts.

- Maintaining regular, meaningful, and positive interactions with nature, nurturing affectionate bonds that encourage creativity, a sense of security, self-esteem, and transformative actions that have an immediate impact while considering the future they desire.

Dewey (2007) taught us that we don't learn from experience; we learn by reflecting on experience. Reflecting upon experience was a fundamental focus for the Jundiaí Curriculum to assert the importance of the teacher's purposefulness and the value of educational documentation.

Considering learning as a journey of exploration and constructing significance, which arises from a child's innate drive to make sense of their environment and form connections and self-concepts, involves acknowledging that children inventively apply their understanding and experiences to think critically, tackle challenges, and assimilate new data across diverse settings.

### **Learning processes based on investigations with and in nature**

We have reflected extensively on learning processes based on investigations. We understand that inquiry-based learning is triggered by genuine questions, problems, or ideas from children, and its unfolding involves engaging them in the planning



and conducting of investigations, proposing explanations and solutions, and communicating their understanding of concepts in various ways.

We recognize that throughout their inquiries, we need to create contexts where children have opportunities to observe, raise questions, and reflect on their experiences. In this process, we, as educators, need to foster collaboration and create experiences that promote transdisciplinary learning.

We have come to appreciate and marvel at the reality that children's genuine learning springs from what they already know and wonder about, and that their questions are poetic and touch upon great themes of humanity.

We value outdoor spaces as rich and diverse universes of possibilities, with the potential to create opportunities for natural physical challenges due to their very composition. We understand that being with nature promotes experiences of engagement with life, its flows, cycles, and transformations, experiencing changes in climate, landscapes, noises, songs, and encounters with creatures, shadows, winds, smells, colors, and various sensations.

We acknowledge that the sensations stirred by playing in and interacting with nature — such as with dirt, sand, and mud — spark an array of emotions including calm, apprehension, delight, awe, and aversion, setting the stage for learning that emerges from playful engagement, collaborative encounters, and exploratory investigations.

## **The educator's role in children's investigations**

We have learned that our role as educators is not to provide answers to children's questions, but rather to let them ponder the complexities and support their learning through questions/provocations based on their own curiosities, by providing tools and contexts that bolster their hypotheses, relationships, and discoveries. We have grown to appreciate and learn from the educational documentation a teacher<sup>1</sup> presented in one of our training sessions, which captured the children's intrigue at finding an enormous hole in the woods where they played. Their discovery of echoing sounds while probing whether it was inhabited spurred further interest, particularly influenced by the teacher's curiosity about what it would be like to live in that large hole.

We discovered that an investigative approach thoughtfully and imaginatively engages with curriculum content, tailored to the children's interests and educational requirements. It fosters environments that broaden and deepen their knowledge through ongoing and diverse experiences. The teacher's documentation, informed by attentive listening to the children's ideas and musings, chronicled their intricate investigation into the sounds produced by various natural elements when cast into the large hole, classifying the sounds as either "big noises" or "little noises."

---

<sup>1</sup> Documentation sent in 2021 by professor Illenia Peixoto Negrini, from group 3C at EMEB Brígida Gatto Rodrigues.

We understand that the focus is not to rush the construction of precise concepts and knowledge, but rather, to create conditions for conceptual development over various periods and in indirect ways, allowing time for deep conversations and reflections that draw on the existing understandings of children, as well as diverse experiences and interactions with their peers, teachers, diversity, and nature. Educators have come to understand that the progression of learning can involve steps backward, spirals of learning, creativity, emotions, and imagination rather than a straightforward logical sequence.

We learned from Carla Rinaldi (2014) that:

For both the adult and the child, understanding means being able to develop an “interpretative theory,” a narrative that makes sense of the events and things of the world. A provisional theory, a satisfactory explanation that can be continually reworked, but which is more than an idea or a set of ideas: it must please and convince us, be useful, and capable of satisfying our intellectual, affective, and aesthetic demands (the aesthetics of knowledge)... Theories, when shared, allow us to transform a world that is not intrinsically ours into something shared (p. 81).

Throughout this journey, we have increasingly recognized the importance of children’s questions and their exchange of ideas. We have come to see our questions to them as catalysts that bolster, focus their attention, and ignite their imagination, prompting them to contribute their knowledge and strengthen connections. Additionally, we have learned to intentionally explore the meanings children assign,

acknowledging the educator’s role in creating interpretive thought through careful listening, and investigating the narratives children share with us. What are their beliefs? What are their assumptions? What are their theories? What do they reveal to us? How to continue based on the interests and learning needs of the children?

Once again, the fact is impressed upon us that the role of the educator is not to give answers but to help children trust in their capacity to know, creating contexts in which their questions find provisional answers.

We understand that educators need to know both the content of the subject area and the pedagogical strategies that support learning through investigation, recognizing their role in giving voice to the group and knowing how to listen, mediating, offering tools and contexts, observing, documenting, analyzing, interpreting, reformulating and relaunching, systematizing and revisiting, documenting with the intention of helping to direct the didactic course they projected and the learning processes that the children are constructing.

We redefined the educator’s role to appreciate and foster dynamics between individuality and the group, understanding that personal knowledge is co-constructed through interactions. In experiences where children’s knowledge, skills, and strategies can be modified, challenged, affirmed, refined, and connected, the intentional support of the teacher facilitates sharing situations where children are

encouraged to think about what they do, how they do it, and why they do it.

Curriculum planning is crucial to ensure that teaching and learning are aligned with documentation and assessment. Planning the assessment process ensures clarity and alignment between what is taught, learned, assessed, and reported. We discovered that plans need ongoing revision to guide subsequent planning, enhance learning support strategies, and refine assessment procedures. In this process, we discovered the transformative potential of pedagogical documentation, which helps us build a pedagogical mindset and contributes to the coherence between our constructed pedagogical knowledge and our daily practice with children.

### **Pedagogical documentation as an ethical principle**

Throughout the training process we experienced, we came to understand documentation as an ethical, political, pedagogical, and cultural testimony. We began to appreciate the support it offers in making our educational practices and objectives intentional and part of the public discourse and awareness. We realize that documentation can help materialize and display to society the rationale behind our educational choices for our children: it can assist in mobilizing society to understand and value the culture of children and childhood, give voice to and make visible the strengths and ways of thinking about the world that are typical of childhood, and

to reveal the work of Jundiaí's schools as spaces where adults support and bear witness to learning processes that are much talked or written about but seldom documented.

How can pedagogical documentation be used to monitor, assess, and communicate children's learning?

Once we understood that what is assessed must be directly linked to what children have had the opportunity to learn, we asked ourselves how children's learning processes should be communicated. We perceived that what is reported to families/guardians must align with what was facilitated, documented, and assessed based on the teacher's planning. Our emphasis was that assessment should be viewed as a continuous and integral part of the teaching and learning process, providing evidence for making judgments, avoiding biases, and monitoring learning progress. To ensure that children can reach the full potential of their learning, we need to use the evidence from documentation and ongoing assessment to adjust our planning.

We engaged in exercises to analyze the documentation educators were producing, thinking collectively about how we could maximize the potential of this tool. We worked with a proposal for reflection using instruments that would help us consider the children's learning process intertwined with the educator's planning and intent.

We recommended that in their records, educators should aim to craft detailed descriptions (without interpretation) of the learning processes, which are complemented by photographs to bolster the narrative, thereby elucidating the connection between the text and the context that the documentation elucidates.

We proposed the practice of reflecting on these records to identify actions, speech, attitudes, and expressions of the children that reveal their learning in action. And we invited educators to consider what comes next: what new contexts and situations could foster the expansion and deepening of these learnings. This time, the pedagogical documentation from another teacher<sup>2</sup> provided invaluable input for us in this exercise, as you can see in Figure 1.

We reflected on the evaluation process, considering the importance of providing an informal diagnosis of prior learning and its ongoing monitoring and tracking (process evaluation) with the aim of supporting continuous learning and selecting pedagogical practices and learning support strategies. We recognize that, before starting a series of planned activities, educators need to observe and ask questions to children in situations where they are engaged and can utilize their skills, attitudes, values, and knowledge. This approach facilitates the identification of their curiosities and interests.

---

<sup>2</sup> Documentation submitted in 2022 by teacher Roseli Aparecida de Melo Reis, from group 1B of EMEB Hilda Alves Paschoalotto.

The next step involved reflecting on: after diagnosing, what should we do? We understood the importance of identifying practices and strategies that help children progress in their attitudes, skills, and knowledge.

We continued with the question: After identifying practices and strategies, what next? The reflection invited educators into cycles of observation, monitoring, documenting, and ongoing evaluation of children's learning.

We extended an invitation for them to use their records to reflect on creating good contexts for continuity and as a means of monitoring. Such reflection on documentation was to ensure that all children reached their full potential and to fine-tune learning support strategies based on the children's demonstrated needs.

And we proceeded with the question: after observing, monitoring, documenting, and continuously assessing children's learning, what next? We reflected on the importance of regularly reporting children's progress to their families and to the children themselves. We understood that we need to employ strategies that involve observing, listening, and asking probing questions, with the intention of monitoring, tracking, and enhancing learning. In this process, we observed that there are numerous variables that can influence a child's performance in different situations, reiterating the educators' role in monitoring learning continuously within the context of daily experiences at school, in

nature, and in the city, using a variety of strategies and tools.

We concluded this process by inviting educators to reflect on how to involve children and families in this continuous cycle of pedagogical documentation. We suggested the experience of planning with children through “brainstorming sessions”: when observing a budding interest, consider multiple approaches to thoroughly investigate this curiosity by utilizing the concept of webbing as a means to chronicle potential learning trajectories.

When teachers notice an emerging interest, they might brainstorm ways to explore that interest deeply using the concept of webbing as a tool to document learning opportunities. The webbing concept is a valuable planning tool because it’s flexible, open-ended, and can accommodate a plethora of possibilities to support the interests of the children. When teachers plan with children using a conceptual web, the children get the chance to contribute ideas and see them recorded. Documenting children’s ideas helps to reinforce their sense of ownership and involvement in decision-making. (HARGRAVES, 2019, n.p)

We began to think of documentation as a dialogue tool and envisioned ways to engage families in this process, as shown in Figure 2:

### What does it reveal about learning?

Learning and development objectives	Learning Evidence
Explore the environment, showing curiosity and interest in plants and everything around them.	When visiting the park, Maria Helena chooses to explore and investigate the natural elements she finds.
Explore and discover the properties of objects and materials (color, textures).	Among different elements, Maria Helena makes choices to guide her explorations based on one attribute: color.
Explore and describe similarities and differences in the characteristics and properties of objects (texture).	Upon finding different seeds, she starts a new research, feeling the texture in the palm of her hand, comparing it with the previous seed, and deciding to separate it from another element that was red. This time, she chooses the black and rough seeds.
Explore the environment through action and observation, manipulating, experimenting, and making discoveries.	Returning to the park, Maria Helena remembers her investigations and with self-initiative continues her explorations.

### What might come next?

Learning and development objectives	The teacher's ideas
Explore the environment, showing curiosity and interest in plants and everything around them.	Maria Helena showed me how much the outdoors and nature are filled with research possibilities for children. For this reason, I will provide other experiences with different seeds such as jatobá, annatto, pods, and others
Explore and discover the properties of objects and materials (color, textures).	
Explore and describe similarities and differences in the characteristics and properties of objects (texture).	
Explore the environment through action and observation, manipulating, experimenting, and making discoveries	

Figure 1 - Screenshot of a slide used in training.

### What about at home? What can we perceive in relation to their learning?

Learning and development objectives	Learning Evidence
Explore the environment, showing curiosity and interest in plants and everything around them.	
Explore and discover the properties of objects and materials (color, textures).	
Explore and describe similarities and differences in the characteristics and properties of objects (texture).	
Explore the environment through action and observation, manipulating, experimenting, and making discoveries.	

### Ideas for Continuity?

Learning and development objectives	Family/Caregivers' Ideas
Explore the environment, showing curiosity and interest in plants and everything around them.	
Explore and discover the properties of objects and materials (color, textures).	
Explore and describe similarities and differences in the characteristics and properties of objects (texture).	
Explore the environment through action and observation, manipulating, experimenting, and making discoveries.	

Figure 2 - Screenshot of a slide used in training.

## Final considerations

Our training process concluded in 2022, yet I know the inquiries continue, the dialogues grow richer, schools persist in the unwalling process, and the children of Jundiaí increasingly encounter the conditions rightfully theirs: to be respected for their wisdom, their experiences, developing in diverse contexts where ethics in social relationships and with nature prevail, both in and beyond the school.

Listening responsively to children is the opportunity we have as a society to build the future we desire now. Writing this text on the educational journey of Jundiaí took me back to Paulo Freire (1992) and his discussions on the pedagogy of hope, which reveals and infuses us with his belief that human history always speaks of possibilities. It also brought to mind the words of Tonucci (2010, p. 157) from his book “When Children Say: Enough!”. The author asks, “What could we do if we listened to children?” And then he goes on to answer this question himself:

We could simply do everything possible to make cities what children expect, wish for, and request because their wishes also represent the ‘wishes’ of the city. Doing what children ask is essentially about defending the very being of the city, preserving its nature, its vocation to be a place of meetings and exchanges for all citizens (Tonucci, 2010, p. 157, free translation by author).

In the introduction to Tonucci’s book (2010), written by Romano Prodi, President of the European

Commission, there is a reflection on why adults need to listen to children:

Their questions can help adults to look for different solutions. They help, first and foremost, to think of a future (even a distant one), enduring any effort or concession today that allows for a healthier life in a better society tomorrow. They help to build a ‘child-sized city’, which becomes a space where it is easier for everyone to live. A city where living with one’s companions teaches us daily lessons of solidarity with all those around us (p.10, free translation by author).

This is how I see the present and future of the schools and the city of Jundiaí: filled with professionals who listen to children, who respect their interests, and who spare no effort to ensure their rights to full development, committed to life on the planet, to social justice, and peace.

## BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BRASIL. **Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para a Educação Infantil**. Ministério da Educação. Secretaria de Educação Básica, Brasília: MEC, SEB, 2010.

BONDÍA, Jorge Larrosa. Notas sobre a experiência e o saber de experiência. In: **Revista Brasileira de Educação, Jan/Fev/Mar/Abr, 2002**. Nº 19. Available at: <https://www.scielo.br/j/rbedu/a/Ycc5QDzZKcY-VspCNspZVDxC/?format=pdf&lang=pt>. Accessed on: 17/10/2023.



DEWEY, John. **Democracia e educação**: capítulos essenciais. São Paulo: Ática 2007.

FREIRE, Paulo. **Pedagogia da esperança**: Um reencontro com a pedagogia do oprimido. Ed. Paz e Terra: Rio de Janeiro, 1992. Available at: <https://pibid.unespar.edu.br/noticias/paulo-freire-1992-pedagogia-da-esperanca.pdf/view>. Accessed on: 17/10/2023.

HARGRAVES, Vicki. **Working theories**. The education hub, 2019. Available at: <https://theeducationhub.org.nz/working-theories/>. Accessed on: 17/10/2023.

MARQUES, Vastí Ferrari. **Centro Internacional de Estudos, Memórias e Pesquisas da Infância [recurso eletrônico]**: uma proposta de política pública para continuidade das ações educacionais da Rede Municipal de Jundiaí. Dissertação. Campinas, SP: [s.n.], 2021. Available at: <https://repositorio.unicamp.br/acervo/detalhe/1167259>. Accessed on: 17/10/2023.

RINALDI, Carla. Documentação e avaliação: qual a relação? In: **Tornando visível a aprendizagem**: crianças que aprendem individualmente e em grupo/ Reggio Children. Ed. Phorte: São Paulo, 2014.

TIRIBA, Lea. Crianças da Natureza. In: **Anais do I seminário nacional**: currículo em movimento – perspectivas atuais. Belo Horizonte, 2010. Available at: [http://portal.mec.gov.br/docman/dezembro-2010-%20pdf/7161-2-9-artigo-mec-](http://portal.mec.gov.br/docman/dezembro-2010-%20pdf/7161-2-9-artigo-mec-criancas-natureza-lea-tiriba/file)

[criancas-natureza-lea-tiriba/file](http://portal.mec.gov.br/docman/dezembro-2010-%20pdf/7161-2-9-artigo-mec-criancas-natureza-lea-tiriba/file). Accessed on: 17/10/2023.

TONUCCI, Francesco. **Aos três anos se investiga**. Editora Losada: Buenos Aires, 2006.

\_\_\_\_\_, Francesco. **Cuando los niños dicen: Basta!** Editora Losada: Buenos Aires, 2010.



**CHAPTER 6**



**UNWALLING SCHOOL  
IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION – FIRST YEARS**

Eliane Reame

Walter Spinelli





## **UNWALLING SCHOOL IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION – FIRST YEARS**

Eliane Reame<sup>1</sup>

Walter Spinelli<sup>2</sup>

---

*1 Holding a Ph.D. in Education in the area of Science and Mathematics Teaching and Master's in Didactics, both from the Faculty of Education at the University of São Paulo (FE/USP), she has been shaping the pedagogical landscape as a mathematics teaching consultant and educator trainer within Jundiaí's municipal education network since 2010. In addition to her extensive experience, she is actively engaged in advancing the Unwalling School initiative through her consultancy and educator training programs in the Education Management Unit of Jundiaí.*

*2 Holding a Ph.D. and Master's in Education in the area of Science and Mathematics Teaching from the Faculty of Education at the University of São Paulo (FE/USP), he is a pivotal figure in educator training, steering the adoption of the Unwalling School concept and methodology under the auspices of Jundiaí's Education Management Unit.*



The Prologue of this work concisely outlines the journey undertaken by Jundiaí's municipal education network to foster holistic education. The establishment of the Innovative School Program in 2018 as an educational public policy validated the educators' mission to consider the multifaceted aspects of personal development, offering an integrated approach from the earliest years of childhood to the stages of adult life<sup>1</sup>.

Each pillar of the Innovative School Program<sup>2</sup> — School Ambience, Educator Training, and Teaching Quality — presents specific areas of analysis and intervention, yet they are interconnected and interdependent. Together, they chart the course and provide resources for the development of school initiatives focused on experiences in various environments and the continued professional development of educators aimed at improving the quality of teaching.

One of the initiatives of the Innovative School Program was the implementation of a methodological approach termed Unwalling School.

Originally, the phrase was interpreted to mean the exploration of natural spaces, both on school grounds and beyond, to enrich the students' growth

and learning experiences, in harmony with the ideals of holistic education.

In developing the methodology's principles, additional conceptual and theoretical relationships were drawn upon to extend the idea of Unwalling beyond merely the use of natural, outdoor spaces.

The aim of this chapter is to offer a summary of the ideas presented and debated during training sessions with educators, particularly teachers, coordinators, supervisors, and principals of elementary education, thereby enriching the network of meanings surrounding the concept of Unwalling within the educational sphere.

This text will explore facets of the continuous training activities carried out with the network's educators in recent years, focusing on Mathematics. It will discuss how these themes have informed and enhanced the Unwalling School methodology developed by the Education Management Unit (UGE) of the City of Jundiaí.

We begin this chapter by addressing the dimensions of what Unwalling means.

A cursory search in the dictionary reveals denotative or literal meanings ascribed to the verb 'to wall': to place between walls, to confine within walls or boundaries, to seclude, to imprison. Conversely, unwalling suggests the removal of walls, barriers, boundaries; it alludes to freedom.

---

1 The municipal education network of Jundiaí caters to a broad educational spectrum, offering early childhood education for children as young as four months, through to Elementary Level I, and includes programs for Youth and Adult Education (EJA).

2 Learn more at <https://educacao.jundiai.sp.gov.br/documentos/ebook-escola-inovadora-2/>.

At the same time, and complementarily, connotative or figurative meanings draw comparisons and relationships based on the situation and the context in which words are used. In the educational context, meanings given to the term unwalling are intrinsically linked to the concepts of fragmentation and integration. In this sense, unwalling means to break down barriers that isolate and fragment notions and actions still present in the educational process. Consequently, unwalling implies integration, connecting the various elements of this process.

Understanding and applying the concept of Unwalling in education entails considering and examining the complexity of factors that encompass the functions of the school and the characteristics of educational training, with the student as the focal point; the relationships between the school and the community it is part of; the connections between the school and different environments that foster the construction of knowledge, attitudes, values; the relationships between the curriculum and the processes of teaching, learning, and evaluation, among other aspects.

Since 2018, the year of the first edition of the Pedagogical Update Week (SAP)<sup>3</sup>, significant and decisive efforts and actions by all parties involved

---

<sup>3</sup> The Pedagogical Update Week (SAP) is a training event hosted by the Education Management Unit (UGE) that takes place at the start of each academic year, offering a variety of educational activities for all educators in the school network, such as lectures, workshops, and experiential learning sessions. Since 2018, this event has been a cornerstone of the UGE's ongoing training program, aiming to enhance the quality of education across all teaching segments: early childhood education, elementary education, and youth and adult education (EJA).

in municipal education have been directed towards building theoretical and methodological foundations on comprehensive education and the concept of Unwalling.

In the lecture at the 4th Annual Pedagogical Update Week, titled “Integration of Knowledge in Various Learning Environments<sup>4</sup>,” we examined and reflected upon various aspects of these themes. The foundational concepts of education and the holistic development of learners can be succinctly expressed as follows.

Educational actions should aim for a more humane training, and more responsive to individual and collective needs, so that everyone can consider their own interests and needs while also recognizing their part in a community where interests and actions must be shared and negotiated.

Education should enable students to navigate environments that promote their complete development and meaningful learning experiences, with a sense of agency, autonomy, and most importantly, a feeling of belonging to the places where they live and interact with. At the same time, an education grounded in ethical and moral values without which survival in this world, marred by violence of every kind, is untenable.

A more systemic education that can highlight the myriad connections between different kinds

---

<sup>4</sup> Lecture given at the 4th SAP in February 2021, by Professor Eliane Reame.



of knowledge — conceptual, attitudinal, and procedural.

An education that values the participation of the community in which the school is situated.

An education that fosters conditions for students to act competently in a variety of unexpected, novel, and unforeseen situations they encounter, so they are capable of utilizing personal resources and environmental resources in diverse circumstances in their personal and professional lives (REAME, 2010).

Considering these principles about the roles of schools and the attributes of holistic foundational education, it's crucial to define how the concept of Unwalling aligns with the Political Pedagogical Project (PPP) and the broader educational curriculum.

Unwalling and integrating schools require the conception and creation of a PPP and a curriculum that acknowledges the complexity of relationships among children, youths, and adults; their interactions with other stakeholders in the educational project; and their connections with various environments, both scholastic and non-scholastic, as well as relationships among different fields of knowledge.

A curriculum that embraces complexity, unpredictability, uncertainties, and the imponderability of situations we encounter in life. It should also favor meaningful learning, enabling students to build upon their knowledge, expand

it, and reconfigure it in a continuous process of individual and collective construction of meaning and understanding (MOREIRA, 1982).

Subject matter and knowledge domains are pivotal in discerning and grasping the dynamics that shape a curriculum tailored for holistic education. Subjects structure academic content in educational settings and, much like maps, steer the course of learning. The curriculum components or knowledge units function as elements of these maps, acting as pointers, tools, or assets for the students' educational journey (MACHADO, 2016).

Yet, to bring this vision of the role of subjects within the curriculum to fruition, it's imperative to dismantle the barriers within and among them. Opening up the curriculum requires us to regard the knowledge units with a lens that seeks relationships and interconnections, spotting links between thoughts from diverse fields within each subject, between different subjects, and throughout the subjects. Hence, intra-subject, inter-subject, and cross-subject approaches ought to dominate when formulating a curriculum.

In the lectures<sup>5</sup> titled “Mathematics in the Basic School Curriculum towards Meaningful Learning” and “An Integrative Approach to the Mathematics Curriculum in the Early Years,” the concept of meaningful learning as per Ausubel (in MOREIRA,

---

5 Lectures delivered at the second SAP in February 2019 and at the third SAP in February 2020 by Professor Eliane Reame.

1982) and the ideas of networks and maps as metaphors to characterize knowledge, curriculum, and disciplines or knowledge areas were presented and discussed, based on the ideas of Machado (2016).

These ideas related to the notion of competence in the educational context suggest pathways to break the fragmentation that still pervades schoolwork. Throughout the lectures, educators explored integrative approaches in developing the mathematics curriculum and teaching practices, particularly in elementary education.

In Jundiaí, the community of educators dedicated themselves to collaboratively redesigning the curriculum of the Jundiaí School Network. They adopted an approach that was both systemic and holistic, one that recognized the value of knowledge from various fields. This ambitious endeavor started in 2019, culminating in the formal release of the curriculum in 2022.

Reexamining the core principles of holistic education, and particularly the school environment aspect of the Innovative School Program, one can see the clear links between the notion of Unwalling and the strategic use and exploration of physical environments, both scholastic and non-scholastic. Such an approach facilitates activities that bolster the growth and education of individuals at all stages — children, teens, and adults — in a cohesive and systematic way.

Increasingly and with ever-increasing urgency,

the planet is clamoring for awareness and respect for the environment, and for the conscious and responsible use of natural resources. Stepping out of the classroom to explore spaces both inside and outside the school involves living and experiencing natural settings such as garden beds, green parks, botanical gardens, forests, rivers, waterfalls, reserves, beaches, and more.

Advocating for educational practices that enhance growth and learning through nature addresses the widespread disconnection many students and individuals have from the natural world and the various consequences it brings, notably in terms of physical and mental well-being. The “Jundiaí Outdoor Learning Guide,” published in 2021, elucidates this and further reasons, underscoring the importance of educational methods that encourage discovery of the natural environment and interaction with it.

Outside the school, the streets, museums, cultural centers, art venues, historic buildings, and commercial establishments are examples of physical spaces and environments that invite investigations into the history of human knowledge; regional culture; and economic production of a locality, fostering the construction and establishment of relationships between knowledge areas. These explorations are crucial in understanding the unique ways in which the inhabitants of each region live, interact, and contribute to their community.

Experiencing different environments, both within and outside of school, enables dealing with

unforeseen and novel situations so that skills in communication, collaboration, imagination, creativity, critical thinking, among others, can be exercised in understanding an event or solving a problem, for example. In an integrated manner, the practice of autonomous, responsible, empathetic, respectful, inclusive attitudes is also a characteristic and goal of ‘unwalled’ practices.

Throughout the development of the Unwalling School methodology, educators were engaged in reflective planning and the implementation of practices across all educational segments and modalities. They deliberated on the potentialities and challenges of pedagogical work throughout the network, for each school, and for every teacher. Within this framework, actualizing ‘unwalled’ activities by the educators themselves became a primary goal of the UGE’s Continuing Education Program. Enabling the hands-on experience of these activities for teachers, coordinators, and principals from all school units was crucial for them to observe, engage with, and learn from the environment.

In this context, the ‘unwalled’ activities conducted by the educators emerged as a central objective of the UGE’s Ongoing Education Program. Enabling teachers, coordinators, and principals across all educational facilities to experiment with these activities was essential. It allowed them to perceive, feel, and engage with different spaces, and learn in each one, with each one, and from the experiences themselves.

In October 2020, an in-person training session was conducted with coordinators from every elementary school unit<sup>6</sup>.

During a hands-on activity at the Argos Complex square, educators, working in small groups, delved into Mathematical and Natural Science concepts, specifically focusing on spatial reasoning, positioning, mobility, and the representation of space, as well as measurement techniques. They constructed a scale model of the solar system, accurately maintaining the proportional distances between the planets and the Sun as specified in a chart. This practical task facilitated the examination and discussion of data interpretation, fostering communication and collaborative problem-solving as the educators debated which measurement units and scales to use — standardized or not — to best depict the planets’ relative distances within the confines of the available area.

Conducting the activity in an open, expansive setting enabled multiple revisions of the choices of length measurement units, such as feet, steps, centimeters, and meters, as well as the scales used, considering the available area for depicting the distances. For instance, one group of educators initially found that representing the position of some

---

<sup>6</sup> The activities proposed to educators on the theme ‘Mathematics outside the classroom: some experiences’ were developed and coordinated by teachers Eliane Reame and Walter Spinelli, as part of the ongoing training program of the UGE in Jundiá. The Mathematics and Natural Science content explored in the activity was selected from the Jundiá Curriculum, Elementary School I.

planets, according to their distance relative to the Sun, would extend beyond the Argos Complex premises.

In essence, experiencing and experimenting with spaces of varying dimensions greatly enhances the development of spatial understanding through skills of location, movement, and representation in a playful, investigative, and collaborative manner.

At the end of the experience, discussions with the coordinators sparked inquiries about identifying and utilizing spaces that enable student development and learning within the context of Unwalling School:

- Which physical spaces outside the classroom, both inside and outside the school, and in the surrounding neighborhood and city, allow for experiences through direct contact with elements of nature, thus contributing to students' development and learning?

- Which physical spaces outside the school can be explored to construct cultural, scientific, social, and artistic knowledge, among others, thereby facilitating meaningful learning about the local population's way of life?

- Which environments outside the school allow for experiences where students can identify relationships between mathematical knowledge objects, the Portuguese language, history, geography, natural sciences, and arts?

In 2021, training sessions targeted elementary school I teachers from all schools in the network,

developed around the theme of teaching and learning mathematics in the context of Unwalling School<sup>7</sup>.

One of the environments experienced during some trainings was the 'World of Children.' The activities facilitated discussions on the potential for exploring various locations, as well as visual elements, maps, totems, and signs with information about the park.

To support the exploration of the 'World of Children,' the UGE compiled an e-book called "School in the World" (2021). The goal is to

[...] provide different perspectives, envisage various actions, and share experiences beyond isolated outdoor activities. It is also a catalyst for ideas to consider organizational forms and work perspectives beyond the classroom (2021, p. 12).

Walking through the park and reading the information on the totems presented in sentences, on the tourist map, in drawings, icons, logos, and via QR code allowed for an analysis of different verbal language resources in communicative situations.

The teachers' experiences included climbing the ramp to enter the Treehouse Station, touching the construction materials, identifying the shapes of doors, windows, support columns, discovering the second floor, and estimating the height of the house.

---

<sup>7</sup> Twelve sessions were held with the teachers, amounting to 24 hours of training. The activities suggested were developed and orchestrated by instructors Eliane Reame and Walter Spinelli.

Following the hands-on session, educators examined proposals for student exploration at the Treehouse Station, as a stage in a potential instructional sequence or research project about types and shapes of dwellings, the connection between building materials and local resources, the relationship between building structures and the climate, and average temperature of various locations, among other factors.

In every session and through the lens of the teachers' experiences, the creation of 'unwalled' activities for students was explored and scrutinized.

Defining explicit objectives for students' education, grasping the curriculum, and pinpointing and choosing learning outcomes tied to diverse types of knowledge — cognitive, socio-emotional, behavioral, and physical — is crucial for students to build significantly and comprehensively. The deliberate design of teaching strategies, incorporating a range of instructional organizational styles, and the purposeful appraisal of these methods, stand as fundamental elements for productive educational endeavors.

Likewise, these fundamental requirements are applicable to the development of 'unwalled' activities, embodied in the following considerations:

- Why propose 'unwalled' activities? How to plan lessons outside the classroom and the school? What criteria should be used for selecting spaces? How can these activities contribute to the students'

development? What knowledge can be constructed and shared through experiences in different environments? How to assess and document the students' development process and learning in these activities?

During the training sessions, teachers composed and compiled narratives and photographic records of practices conducted with students, along with articles and instructional sequences, considering the Unwalling School methodology.

In 2022, the lecture Unwalling Mathematics: equity, subject integration, and student roles<sup>8</sup> at the 5th SAP, summarized the entire training process previously carried out with educators in the network on the meanings of the concept of Unwalling in the educational context and, specifically, on the connections between this concept and the teaching and learning of Mathematics.

The principle of equity was dissected from the perspectives of both the learners and the instructors of Mathematics, with various comprehensive overviews being shared.

No one arrives in this world with established beliefs regarding their capacity to grasp mathematics, the simplicity or complexity of its concepts, or an affinity or aversion to the mathematical concepts taught in schools. It is an

---

<sup>8</sup> Lecture delivered by Professor Eliane Reame at the fifth SAP, February 2022.

unequivocal truth that all individuals have the potential to comprehend mathematics; anyone can embrace mathematics and develop a constructive attitude toward its study. Everyone is entitled to learn and utilize mathematics in various contexts, spaces, and for different purposes.

Viewed from the educators' lens, the notion of equity entails forging links between the knowledge and practices of teachers and the recognition of Mathematics' role in the holistic development of individuals — whether they be students, children, adolescents, or adults.

Developing educational practices aimed at mathematical learning in environments outside the classroom, and especially outside the school, encourages cross-curricular exploration of mathematical concepts. This approach naturally integrates them with concepts from different knowledge areas and with community wisdom. It also contributes to the expression of knowledge, attitudes, and values that are not often articulated in school spaces.

From another angle, promoting the Unwalling of Mathematics means respecting and valuing the knowledge each individual possesses, creating channels of communication, and using spaces and environments that foster relationships between each person and their surroundings. It involves actively listening to and fostering the roles of both learners and educators.

In 2022<sup>9</sup>, in accordance with the development plan of the Ongoing Training Program, principals from every school unit were encouraged to collectively reflect upon and discuss the diverse and complementary aspects related to the actions of implementing and monitoring the Unwalling School methodology.

The principals' participation and involvement, through the sharing of different reports, contributed to analyzing the possibilities and challenges of each school. It also helped in identifying and outlining collaborative actions with coordinators, teachers, families, the community, and various sectors of Jundiaí's public sphere to enable the development of 'unwalled' educational practices.

During the encounters, principals were also asked to develop, in small groups, didactic sequences that included 'unwalled' activities in environments outside the classroom, both within and outside the school. These sequences were to involve explorations of knowledge objects from various disciplines and knowledge areas, including mathematics, according to the Jundiaí Curriculum.

The task presentations were interlaced with discussions on the characteristics of different didactic organizational modalities, ways of

---

<sup>9</sup> Nine meetings were held with the principals of elementary and youth and adult education school units, totaling 19 hours of training. The activities proposed were designed and coordinated by professors Eliane Reame and Walter Spinelli.

engaging families in the work developed by schools, and the need for partnerships between the school and various municipal management spheres, such as security, transportation, and health, to carry out activities with students.

One notable aspect of these training sessions was the validation of the teachers' autonomy and role in a process mediated by the co-responsibility of all parties involved in the development, implementation, and monitoring of 'unwalled' practices.

Another initiative involved principals engaging in exploratory activities beyond the confines of the school. With the guiding query, "Where is Mathematics?", pairs of educators strolled through a local neighborhood, part of their training site, pinpointing and documenting various elements connected to mathematical ideas.

The training journey was steered through a spectrum of inquiries, emotional responses, and dispositions, oscillating between uncertainties and affirmations, moments of insecurity and decisive stances, balancing the unexpected with the deliberate, among other pairs of traits intrinsic to the processes of learning and instructing.

The themes of the training sessions invited educators to contemplate questions and possible answers about ways to enable practices and experiences both inside and outside schools, about the challenges to be met, and about the expectations of achievements in implementing the Unwalling School methodology in Jundiaí's education network.

Besides questions addressing general aspects of the Unwalling concept in education, discussions about the curriculum, and the role of school subjects from a holistic and systemic perspective were also examined. Specifically, the training highlighted how Mathematics can be viewed as a vehicle to enhance student development and learning, as a means for comprehensive education.

Gradually and carefully, educators built a learning community regarding the meanings of whole-person education and the Unwalling School methodology. A community characterized by the exchange of ideas during training sessions among professionals from each school, between schools, between schools and UGE teams, and between educators and families.

A wealth of ideas, marked creativity, attitudes of co-responsibility, and explicit intentionality were some of the hallmarks of this training process, which involved all educators in the Jundiaí school network generally, and teachers, coordinators, and directors of elementary, and youth and adult education specifically.



## BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

- INSTITUTO ALANA. **Guia de aprendizagem ao ar livre em Jundiaí**. Rio de Janeiro: Instituto Alana, 2021. Available at: <https://educacao.jundiai.sp.gov.br/documentos/guia-de-aprendizagem-ao-ar-livre-em-jundiai/>. Accessed on 25/09/2023.
- JUNDIAÍ. **A Escola no Mundo** / organização Sílvia Magalhães. Jundiaí, SP, 2021. Available at <https://educacao.jundiai.sp.gov.br/documentos/e-book-a-escola-no-mundo/E-book>. Accessed on 25/09/2023.
- \_\_\_\_\_. **Programa Escola Inovadora** / organização Equipe técnica da Unidade de Gestão de Educação de Jundiaí/SP. Jundiaí: Editora In House, 2022. Available at <https://educacao.jundiai.sp.gov.br/documentos/ebook-escola-inovadora-2/>. Accessed on 25/09/2023.
- KUNREUTHER, Flavio Theodor; FERRAZ, Osvaldo Luiz. **Educação ao ar livre pela aventura: o aprendizado de valores morais em expedições à natureza**. Revista Educação e Pesquisa, São Paulo, v. 38, n. 2, p. 437-452 abr./jun. 2012.
- MACHADO, Nílson José. **Educação: autoridade, competência e qualidade**. São Paulo: Escrituras, 2016.
- MARQUES, Vasti; BUENO, Cecília; SANTOS, Cleane; REAME, Eliane; BOLOGNANI, Marjorie. **Desemparedamento da escola: um percurso do sistema municipal de educação de Jundiaí**. Anais do Congresso Movimentos Docentes- IV SEPAD e II PRATIC. Universidade Federal de São Paulo, 2021.
- MORIN, Edgar. **Introdução ao pensamento complexo**. Lisboa: Instituto Piaget, 2003.
- MOREIRA, M. A., MASINI, E. A. F. S. **Aprendizagem significativa: a teoria de David Ausubel**. São Paulo: Moraes, 1982.
- REAME, Eliane. **Uma reflexão sobre a ideia de competência e seu significado educacional**. Tese de Doutorado. Universidade de São Paulo, Faculdade de Educação, 2010.



## CHAPTER 7



# **UNWALLING SCHOOL AND YOUTH AND ADULT EDUCATION – PATHS TO MEANINGFUL EDUCATION**

Valther Maestro



*Jundiaí City Hall collection - Municipal Youth and Adult Education Centre Prof. Dr. André Franco Montoro*



## **UNWALLING SCHOOL AND YOUTH AND ADULT EDUCATION – PATHS TO MEANINGFUL EDUCATION**

**Valther Maestro<sup>1</sup>**

---

*1 With a 36-year tenure in education, he holds a Master's in Human Geography and is currently studying for a Master's degree at USP, specializing in spatial organization with an emphasis on conflict resolution. He is an expert in the Creation of Projects in Education and in Planning, Implementation, and Management of Projects focused on skill and competency development. He holds a degree in Geography, both as a teacher and a scholar, with a focus on restructuring teaching practices. As the CEO of Maestro Educação, he has authored textbooks and supplementary educational materials. He serves as an educational consultant for curriculum reform in cities and states and is a frequent speaker and researcher in the fields of teaching, basic education curricula, methodologies, and educational assessment.*

Contemporary education champions a didactical method that fosters learning as the leading actor, where students at all levels and modalities can learn by developing the skills and competencies necessary for the transformation of the society we live in. Extensive contemplation surrounds curriculum development, teaching methodologies, evaluative processes, and pedagogical approaches that align with this educational trend.

Redefining teaching and learning presents an ongoing challenge for advocates of an educational system designed to cultivate human potential. It requires the establishment of realistic intervention projects aimed at fostering a comprehensive set of proposals and actions, starting from the learner's knowledge and culminating in the development of applicable skills and competencies for the critical (re) construction of society.

It is a fact that the school is a space for learning, coexistence, political and social action and, therefore, must be attentive to the problems afflicting the educational community, enabling active intervention in social and environmental issues.

Today's students are part of a digital world; they interact with technology in a way that is radically different from the past three decades, as they are increasingly in contact with the global world. We live in the age of information, in a post-industrial society, and we strive to materialize elements that respond to current transformations.

Technology is intertwined with our lives; we are connected with the world. Yet, most schools have not kept pace with the changes and innovations that cater to this reality. Practices involving “Unwalling School,” the reorganization of new methodologies, and the reshaping of learning spaces pave the way for the materialization of new forms of learning, considering holistic education.

Observing, identifying, relating, comparing, understanding, analyzing, evaluating, and proposing are procedures and skills that must transpire in student interactions, both inside and outside the classroom. These are more than pedagogical necessities; they are opportunities for change.

To cultivate an education of profound significance, educators are tasked with forging avenues for students to build their knowledge, hone their skills, and broaden their competencies. Educators, with deliberate pedagogical purpose, must design multifaceted processes and spaces to secure opportunities for students to display creativity, exercise leadership, and engage in dialogue.

In this perspective, breaking away from rigid and fragmented methodologies, offering experiences that go beyond the school's confines, is to amplify the multiple learning exchange processes of students in their territories. This approach to deliberate spatial planning calls for “Unwalling” methods.

This initiative fosters a cross-sectoral melding of education, leisure, culture, and health, aiming for a

renewed framework that emerges from educational efforts intensified by the educator's deliberate actions.

### **Youth and Adult Education students**

Youth and Adult Education (EJA) is an educational pathway designed for individuals over the age of 15 who have not completed primary education and those over 18 who have not finished high school. This education is flexible and adapted to adult life, providing an opportunity for students to complete basic education, which may lead to better job prospects and quality of life. It also has the potential to help reduce social inequalities and cultivate a more skilled workforce.

The Brazilian Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education, under article 22 of statute 9394/96, classifies Youth and Adult Education as a fundamental component of Basic Education. It mandates the State to ensure availability of this educational format for individuals who did not receive schooling at the conventional age. Furthermore, the National Council of Education promotes a tailored pedagogical approach for these learners, which honors and integrates their existing knowledge and life experiences into the educational process.

The organizational structure of this modality seeks to cater to the reality of the students, considering their characteristics, interests, life conditions, and experiences. Flexible pedagogical strategies with decentralized activities allow for the circulation, intervention, and mediation of knowledge, thereby

favoring learning. For this to occur purposefully and meaningfully, educators must develop plans with clear and defined objectives.

The pedagogical practices of EJA educators should provide students with broader learning opportunities, fostering the development of specific skills and competencies that resonate with their life experiences.

The learning experiences of students in this modality can be enhanced when they move beyond the rigid and fragmented contexts of the classroom. The “Unwalling School” approach facilitates this shift in setting by enabling students to learn in various spaces and territories, broadening their perspectives and experiences of the city. These experiences afford more contextualized and meaningful learning and contribute to the comprehensive development of the students.

Moreover, practices shaped by the Unwalling the School methodology facilitate engagement with nature and diverse social, economic, and cultural realities. Such immersion is pivotal for fostering an education system that honors and cherishes diversity, nurtures democratic interaction, and endorses tolerance. By engaging with these initiatives, students are also provided with opportunities to hone social skills, such as teamwork, problem-solving, decision-making, and effective communication. These competencies are crucial for personal and professional growth, equipping students to meet the challenges of societal life.



Practices involving the Unwalling of the School should be meticulously crafted, taking into account educational objectives, student characteristics, and their aspirations. Moreover, educator purposefulness and intervention are essential to ensure student achievement and alignment with the school curriculum.

### **The Unwalling School methodology and its connection with school excursions**

Primary school teacher Célestin Freinet was a seminal educator and a key influence in his time, with his educational propositions still resonating strongly today. He established an in-class experience that led to a contemporary pedagogical practice, the class excursion.

The class excursion requires collective organization; it is an activity meant to provide opportunities for expression, communication, creation, research, and experimental probing. Freinet used the term “experimental probing” to refer to the ability to conduct research through reflection, formulate hypotheses, attempt verification, and thereby comprehend increasingly complex information (SAMPALIO, 1996).

When considering Youth and Adult Education (EJA) students, the excursion class enables the crystallization of knowledge gained throughout life, the affective memories of city spaces, and their experiences of interpersonal and environmental interactions. This crystallization is evident in the

way they articulate their understanding through the verbalization of their current experiences.

The excursion class is a pedagogical method aimed at nurturing student autonomy and facilitating an interactive engagement with their environment, thereby unraveling the intricacies of the urban setting. The practice comprises four deliberate stages: preparation, action, extension, and communication. Freinet’s excursion class is also known as the class of discoveries, as it encourages students to observe and reflect on the subject of their inquiry.

When grounded in a tangible goal, the excursion class becomes a journey of discovery. Sampaio (1996, p. 179) notes that this practice allows the student to achieve three important objectives:

- Greater autonomy by engaging in real-life situations, taking on new responsibilities, and discovering their own abilities in unfamiliar settings;
- Expansion of investigative horizons, leading to multiple, unexpected, and intriguing discoveries;
- A unique interaction with others, distinct from everyday school encounters.

The inception of the ‘class of discoveries’ begins with motivation; any event can become a stimulus. Célestin Freinet’s techniques remain highly relevant, widely reflected in official educational guiding documents, and harmonize with the Unwalling School methodology. Moreover, it is evident that the excursion class, or ‘class of discoveries,’ is a vital

strategy for shaping the student as a citizen since it enables engagement with emancipatory themes and an understanding of reality through study and investigation.

### Study of the environment

Professor Nidia Nacib Pontuschka<sup>1</sup> asserts in her writings that understanding the environment is also built through the development of projects linked to investigative activities. The Study of the Environment offers students experiential learning involving problem-solving, which is beneficial for life both within and outside of school.

This triggers a highly meticulous process of systematizing all the material gathered and recorded in drawings, photographs, poems, notes, and the words of the residents. The multiple forms of knowledge, now enriched

by the varied experiences and understanding gained in the field, are brought back into the classroom (PONTUSCHKA, 2004, p. 13).

Activities like these enhance the acquisition of knowledge, study methods, and cognitive strategies, in addition to fostering cooperative work, attitudes, and habits. This will all lead to competencies in knowing, knowing how to do things, knowing how to live together, and knowing how to “be”.

[...] without biases or preconceptions, liberate the senses that are often mechanized by societal norms: the act of looking, smelling, listening, touching, and tasting. This liberation facilitates an emotive interpretation that unfolds in two contrasting dynamics — rejecting alienation, structure, monotony, systemic rigidity, and bias, while embracing the warmth and individuality of community and self. (PONTUSCHKA, 2006, p. 12).

The aim, therefore, is to incorporate into the school curriculum an initiative that transcends the confines of school walls. It is essential for educators to collaborate as a team and demonstrate to students the complexities of the world we inhabit.

Although each conducted field study may have more specific purposes based on the interests of its organizers and the nature of the space to be studied, its broader objectives can be outlined, according to Pontuschka, Paganelli, and Cacete (2007), as follows:

- establishing an interdisciplinary teaching method known as the field study, in which research and teaching interact;

---

<sup>1</sup> Professor Nidia Nacib Pontuschka holds a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Geography from the University of São Paulo (USP), having completed her undergraduate studies in 1962 and her master's in Human Geography in 1978. She earned her Doctorate in Education from USP in 1994. She is actively involved in the Graduate Programs at the Faculty of Education of USP (FEUSP) and the Human Geography Department of the Faculty of Philosophy, Letters, and Human Sciences at USP (FFLCH-USP). Her primary focus is on themes related to Geography, Teacher Education, Local Studies, the History of Geography Discipline, and Environmental Education. She coordinated the Local Studies and Teacher Training Project for the Municipal Education Departments of Guarulhos-SP from 2006 to 2008 and Suzano-SP from 2010 to 2011. She served as the deputy coordinator of the Participative and Sustainable Waste Management Project in partnership with USP and the University of Victoria, CA. She was the Chair of the Undergraduate Commission of FEUSP and a member of the Undergraduate Council of the University of São Paulo (COG) from 2005 to 2007. She is a reviewer for the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP), and a member of the Editorial Council of several Geography journals which include texts on Geography Teaching and Learning: Geousp, Mercator, “Revista Geografia e Ensino,” and “Olhar de Professor” (UEPG).

- observing evidence of different times and spaces: transformations and continuities;
- identifying social actors to be approached for interviews;
- conducting observations at various listed sites for producing sources and documents: written notes, drawings, photographs, and films;
- sharing diverse perspectives within the fieldwork through the varied visions of the social actors involved in the project;
- collecting data and specific information about the place, its regular visitors, and their connections with other areas;
- bringing to the surface curricular content from various disciplines to be included in the planning;
- developing evaluative tools through participative efforts;
- creating educational resources based on the collected records;
- disseminating the processes and outcomes.

It is important to note that the selection of themes and locations for research in the field study should be determined collectively by teachers and students, who are the leading actors in the teaching and learning processes, in light of the contexts and experiences they share. Hence, it is through common problems and by examining the context in which a

particular community is situated that the objectives of this educational endeavor should be shaped.

By planning field study activities following the Unwalling School methodology, we enable students to break free from the conventional classroom setting, as the methodology guarantees the procedures students will embody based on their prior knowledge, their understanding of the real world, the formation of hypotheses, and the expansion of their repertoire, thereby reconstructing knowledge and experiences.

### **Unwalling School**

The term “Unwalling” was coined by Professor Léa Tiriba in 2005 while discussing the relationship between children and nature. She and other researchers have shown that the reduction of green areas, coupled with the loss of autonomy and freedom for students in cities, leads to them spending increasingly more time confined, often in front of screens.

In this context, “unwalling” literally translates to “stepping beyond the walls,” utilizing spaces beyond the classroom, both on school grounds and in the wider community, while crafting teaching methods that encourage transcending traditional educational boundaries.

Tiriba's<sup>2</sup> (2005) contributions have sparked reflections among educators in Jundiaí's municipal network on the need to promote "outside" practices. The Education Management Unit has advanced this concept, linking outdoor practices to curricular content, culminating in the Unwalling School methodology.

Thus, unwalling is more than just taking the student out of the classroom. It means including time in school routines to enable new ways of teaching that encompass not only the intellectual dimension but also the physical, social, cultural, and emotional aspects.

Integrating the concept of "Unwalling the School" with the curriculum of Youth and Adult Education (EJA) is crucial to ensure the inclusion and educational success of these students. As

---

2 Associate Professor at the Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO), participant in the Undergraduate Course (School of Education) and in the Postgraduate Program in Education at this same University (Masters/PPGEdu/UNIRIO). Graduated in Communication from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro/UFRJ (1974), Master in Education from Fundação Getúlio Vargas/RJ (1988), PhD in Education from the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro/PUC-Rio (2005); post-doctorate in Education, Contemporary Contexts and Popular Demands (PPGEdu/Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro/UFRJ). Lead coordinator of the Research Group 'Childhoods, Ancestral Traditions and Environmental Culture (GiTaKa) and the Childhood, Nature and Arts Center / NiNA / UNIRIO. Environmentalist educator, works in the field of Early Childhood Education, in interface with Environmental Education and Popular Education. It focuses on the challenges of producing decolonial-theoretical-playful training methodologies, which articulate processes of theoretical appropriation, proximity to nature, political empowerment, bodily and aesthetic experiences. Member of the Articulação Infâncias Movement, the Brazilian Environmental Education Network / REBEA, the Permanent Forum for Early Childhood Education / RJ and the MIEIB. Coordinator of the Association of Educators of Latin America and the Caribbean.

previously mentioned, they carry a treasury of life experiences rich in knowledge and skills, which can and should be leveraged in these practices and throughout the educational process. Recognizing and utilizing these experiences, educators deliver an education that is not only significant but also attuned to the real world. Moreover, it's essential to promote the integration of these students with the school community and society at large. This can be accomplished through cross-subject projects, visits to cultural and educational sites, and a variety of events and activities that encourage knowledge exchange and foster meaningful interactions between the students and the wider community.

The training process we are conducting with educators working in CMEJA aligns with this direction. Training teachers for diversity and the use of innovative and inclusive methodologies, such as Unwalling School, also continues to guide our approach.

### **The role of educators and their training**

Educators are essential in boosting the student's role as the main actor throughout the learning journey. Within this interaction, it is imperative to weave together comprehension, expression, and fervor deliberately, in search of meaning and relevance in the world, all the while honoring and drawing lessons from our diverse experiences.

Accordingly, educators thoughtfully design their instructional strategies to acknowledge and build

upon students' experiences and existing knowledge, thus enhancing this knowledge base through a continuous process of exchange.

The concept of the student as the protagonist is founded on the belief that they should be the primary architects of their own learning journey, actively engaging in the educational process and building their knowledge autonomously and critically. In this framework, the educator's role is that of an enabler, creating opportunities for students to explore and discover the world around them, and to develop their skills, competencies, and values.

From this perspective, learning should be meaningful and contextualized, reflecting the students' interests and needs, and appreciating their prior experiences and knowledge. This approach involves presenting subjects in an integrated and intertwined manner, through activities that encourage reflection, problem-solving, and ignite creativity and active participation. Such activities import real-world contexts into the educational setting and vice versa. Everyday experiences are valued and harnessed to extend and deepen understanding, which is then systematized through the educator's proposed framework.

Furthermore, the approach of students as protagonists also emphasizes participation and collaboration among students, aiming to develop social and emotional skills such as empathy, solidarity, mutual respect, and responsibility. In this way, they learn not only the concept but also values

and competencies that are crucial for their holistic development as citizens.

It should be emphasized that an approach that appreciates students as protagonists does not diminish the educators' role; it doesn't mean that their importance is lessened, but rather that they assume a new role as mediators and stimulators. They aid students in constructing their own knowledge and skills and in becoming active participants in their educational journey.

To this end, educators must understand the students' interests and needs to plan activities that encourage reflection and problem-solving, as well as creativity and the active involvement of all participants in the learning process. In this setting, every learning environment, within and outside the school, should challenge the students, allowing them to develop the ability to think critically, make choices, make decisions, and bear responsibilities.

Thus, educators ought to honor the experiences and knowledge that students bring, aiming to integrate them into the planned learning contexts. This approach makes the learning process more immersive and significant, fostering participation and cooperation among all those engaged in the school activities and beyond, facilitating group work, idea sharing, and collective knowledge building.

The concept of Unwalling School breaks away from the rigid framework of traditional classes that

focus on content delivery through presentations made solely by educators. In other words, the educator is not merely a conveyor of knowledge but a mediator who encourages students to construct their own understanding and skills, becoming active agents in their learning journey. To facilitate this, educators must provide resources and guidance to help students develop their abilities autonomously and critically.

In my role as an educational consultant for the CMEJA educator training program, I strive to guide the development of pedagogical plans that are purposeful, targeting the removal of classroom walls and encouraging students' active engagement in understanding and shaping their urban environment.

Unwalling School is increasingly pertinent in contemporary education, including adult education. This involves fostering learning beyond the classroom and harnessing the educational potential within the urban space.

My efforts are rooted in raising educators' awareness of the importance of Unwalling School and developing processes based on skill-building outlined in the Jundiaí Curriculum for adult education. It's critical to discuss concepts, share successful experiences, and stimulate reflections on education's role in shaping individuals. With this foundation, we work alongside educators to craft their pedagogical plans.

Pedagogical purposefulness is a critical

component in this process, involving setting clear and precise goals, which are approached through the lens of Unwalling School. This means identifying which competencies, skills, and concepts need to be fostered in students, as well as the strategies and resources to be utilized.

By creating learning situations that allow students to engage with their local realities and understand their territories and challenges, we strengthen their citizenship and construct more meaningful education.

Therefore, our current endeavors aim to enhance the formulation of educational strategies that integrate the Unwalling School methodology. This approach is essential as it involves everyone, especially the students, in the knowledge-building process, empowering students as central figures in their educational journey, allowing them to actively shape their urban landscape, and enabling active participation in society.

## BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BRASIL. **Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional**, LDB. 9394/1996.

PONTUSCHKA, N. N.; PAGANELLI, T. I.; CACETE, N. H. **Para ensinar e aprender geografia**. São Paulo: Cortez, 2007.

\_\_\_\_\_. Estudo do meio e ação pedagógica. In: **Encontro Nacional de Geógrafos, 14, 2006, Rio Branco**, AC. Anais... Rio Branco, AC, 2006.

\_\_\_\_\_. Estudo do meio, interdisciplinaridade, ação pedagógica. In: **Encontro Nacional de Geógrafos, 13.**, 2004 Goiânia. Anais... Goiânia, GO, 2004.

SAMPAIO, Rosa Maria Whitaker F. A aula passeio transformando-se em aula de descobertas. In: **Pedagogia Freinet: teoria e prática**. ELIAS, Marisa D. C.(org). Campinas, SP, Papirus, 1996.

TIRIBA, Léa. **Crianças, natureza e educação infantil**. Tese de Doutorado, Departamento de Educação, PUC-RIO, 2005.



## CHAPTER 8



# **A PROPOSAL INVOLVING BLENDED LEARNING AND UNWALLING SCHOOL**

Fernando Trevisani



*EMEB Prof. Fábio Rodrigues Mendes collection*

## A PROPOSAL INVOLVING BLENDED LEARNING AND UNWALLING SCHOOL

Fernando Trevisani<sup>1</sup>

---

*1 Fernando Trevisani is a doctoral candidate specializing in Active Methodologies and holds a master's degree in digital technologies and education from UNESP. He also possesses a postgraduate qualification in Innovative Education from the Singularities Institute, and a degree in Mathematics from USP. Serving as one of the coordinators for the Group on Hybrid Teaching Experimentation, he is also the editor of the book "Hybrid Teaching: Personalization and Technology in Education." He works as a teacher, a teacher of teachers, and a consultant in active methodologies for schools and universities across various regions of Brazil. Moreover, he has created an online course on Active Methodologies aimed at connecting teachers throughout Brazil who are implementing active model classes, including Blended Teaching.*

## **Introduction and contextualization of the chapter**

So far, much has been discussed and said about Holistic Education, Educational Territories, Educating Cities, Meaningful Learning, among other topics, all interconnected with the Unwalling School concept proposed in this book. All these themes are crucial when we aim to discuss building quality education for our students, an education that, according to Paulo Freire (2013), is forged by popular, democratic, and emancipatory schooling. This type of education seeks to fully develop citizens who possess critical awareness, engage with social issues, and strive to drive societal transformation.

In “Pedagogy of the Oppressed,” Freire (2013) emphasizes that dialogue fostered by educators must authentically probe into core themes and the substantive content of an educational approach that ignites a renewed way for students to engage with their learning and the subject matter. This engagement is deepened by experiential encounters and a recognition of their existing knowledge within a methodology that stimulates awareness.

In this work, he refers to the widely recognized term among educators, “banking education,” which critiques an instructional model that simply imparts knowledge to students who receive it without active engagement. Contrary to this, Freire champions the idea of students being collaborative partners in their education, interacting with teachers throughout the unfolding educational journey. According to him,

education should be a reciprocal exploration where students actively pursue knowledge, and educators learn alongside them, capturing the essence that “in teaching, the teacher also learns from the students” (FREIRE, 2013, p. 96).

## **The Blended Learning Concept and its relationship with the teaching model adopted by schools in Jundiaí.**

Continuing the discussion on themes aimed at building quality education accessible to all students, this chapter introduces the concept of Blended Learning. This educational approach blends and integrates various strategies, knowledge, and spaces to create rich learning experiences. In this regard, Moran (2015, p. 28),

In education, a variety of mixtures occur, known as blended or hybrid education: of knowledge and values, when integrating various areas of knowledge (whether within a subject-based model or not); a blend of methodologies, with challenges, activities, projects, games, group and individual tasks, both collaborative and personalized. We also talk about hybrid technologies, which integrate classroom activities with digital ones, face-to-face with virtual. Blended or hybrid can also mean a more flexible curriculum that plans what is basic and fundamental for everyone while allowing, at the same time, personalized pathways to meet the needs of each student. The terms can also mean the articulation of more formal processes of teaching and learning with informal ones, open and networked education. Blended or hybrid implies mixing and integrating different areas, different professionals, and different students, in different spaces and times.

Blended Learning thus incorporates elements aligned with the already established and introduced concepts, with educators and administrators striving for an education that integrates the intellectual, physical, emotional, social, and cultural development of the student. This responsibility is collective, encompassing not just the children, but also their families, the entire school staff, administrators, and the local community in which the school resides. This concept aims to create learning moments that promote and awaken the connection of a new idea with the student's prior knowledge, utilizing new materials and resources that encourage collaboration and the collective construction of solutions to unsolved problems, considering the contexts and situations occurring in the student's environment. Through an approach that may also involve playing and the use of spaces outside the classroom, it seeks to fully awaken the learner's potential to learn.

Considering all these mentioned characteristics, one must adopt a teaching methodology that keeps pace with and considers such elements in teaching practice (MORAN, 2015). According to the author,

“Methodologies need to follow the intended objectives. If we want students to be proactive, we need to adopt methodologies in which students engage in increasingly complex activities, where they must make decisions and evaluate results, supported by relevant materials. If we want them to be creative, they need to try numerous new possibilities to show their initiative.” (p. 34)

Therefore, an educational process should enable the

construction of creative, collective, autonomous, and open solutions to the problems presented by teachers, also fostering the autonomy of students. According to the same author, “to prepare for autonomy, we need a different kind of school, much lighter, open, flexible, student-centered, with meaningful activities, active methodologies, and intensive use of digital technologies” (MORAN, 2017, p. 67).

In this sense, hybrid teaching models align with the educational framework being constructed in the municipal schools of Jundiaí and, as such, have also become part of the pedagogical reference framework for teaching practices. The term blended learning has its roots in the concept of blended education because it postulates that there is not just one way to learn and considers learning a continuous process, occurring in various forms, across different learning spaces.

According to Horn and Staker (2015), blended learning “is a formal education program in which a group learns through online instruction, with some student control over time, place, method, and/or pace of study, and also through face-to-face instruction at school.” Blended learning models promote the student's autonomous and leading role in the learning process; propose learning moments that can be individual or collective; can be carried out inside or outside the classroom; may or may not involve more open-ended tasks that allow students to use creativity in solving the proposed challenges; enable collective construction and discussion

among a group of students or between them and the teacher; can use digital resources that generate data about students' learning, which can be used by the teacher to personalize instruction, without the need for each individual to have a digital device to themselves; allow the teacher to consider the time and manner in which each student learns when planning an activity for their class. According to Trevisani and Corrêa (2020),

In blended learning models, students take a more active and participative stance in knowledge construction. The teacher, on the other hand, guides them through this process, assuming the role of a mediator or a consultant. Various places can be used for these interactions, from the physical classroom to a social network or digital learning platform. Students can control the pace, time, place, and manner in which they learn content, thus enabling a deeper comprehension of the material studied (HORN, STAKER, 2015). Furthermore, they become more autonomous in the process, as they can build knowledge about the concepts studied through research and collaborative group activities, rather than solely from a teacher's explanation as in traditional lectures. Thus, through these diverse options, they can actively analyze and construct their knowledge, developing critical thinking about the process, the content under study, and their own learning, since their approach as learners has likely been transformed by the adoption of varied teaching strategies that require their participation.

All these components that are being considered as the definition of Blended Learning can be developed in some of the models implemented in the classes of Jundiaí's schools. We will now provide a more detailed description of each of the

implemented models.

### **The blended learning models adopted by the schools of Jundiaí**

In Jundiaí, Blended Learning models have been classified into two categories: 'sustained' models mirror traditional Brazilian school structures, maintaining class divisions, physical classrooms, curricula, and established student learning approaches, with educators serving as the guiding force; on the other hand, 'disruptive' models challenge these traditional formats, fostering cross-class student collaboration in joint learning experiences and prompting a reevaluation of curricular frameworks, thereby encouraging student-directed learning and other innovative features.

Bacich, Neto, and Trevisani (2015) recommend starting the implementation process of Blended Learning models with the sustained models, as they are closer to the realities of Brazilian schools. Therefore, these were the models chosen for teachers to begin implementing in the network, also known as rotation models: station rotation, rotational lab, and flipped classroom. In all these models, according to Trevisani and Corrêa (2020, p. 52),

[...] in addition to the classroom, other spaces can be utilized for activities; however, it's essential that at least one activity incorporates online elements or digital technology to collect data from the students' tasks for the teacher's subsequent analysis and instruction customization. Customization is a hallmark of Blended Learning, distinguishing it from practices that merely use digital technology as a



tool to enhance learning. Customization enables the teacher to promote improved learning throughout the process by gathering, analyzing, and acting upon student data, facilitating more effective learning by addressing individual uncertainties and providing tailored support to advance each student's progress.

Therefore, hybrid teaching models can be characterized as learning moments that integrate digital resources into different parts of a lesson, aiming to produce information about the students' own learning. This approach guides and stimulates students through interactivity and visual resources, engages them, and enables collective learning in a moment mediated by digital tools. With this information (data on student learning), teachers can assess who has progressed and better understood a particular concept and who still has doubts about the content addressed with the help of digital resources. Thus, educators can decide how to act in favor of the student's learning, personalizing the teaching process. This personalization process may involve a dialogue with the student about their learning, outlining new paths to be followed with the student's active participation; selecting a specific activity for the student to reinforce what they have not yet learned; determining another way for the student to learn the taught material; or making any pertinent decision to assist the student in learning what they have not yet grasped, as identified by the teacher, with the potential aid of digital resources.

Below are the names and brief descriptions of

the rotational models used with administrators and teachers from the municipal schools of Jundiaí. Further details about these models can be found in Bacich, Neto, and Trevisani (2015).

- **Station Rotation:** Students are divided into groups, with each group undertaking a unique task designed by the teacher with independent objectives. These tasks form what is known as stations, and the teacher may create as many as desired. Each group spends an equal amount of time on a task at each station. After the allocated time for each activity, the students rotate between stations. By the end of the class, they should have passed through all the stations, completing the necessary rotations. Each station should present the same concept but explored differently. The teacher can employ various resources for the activities, such as written tasks, open problems, manipulatives (like golden beads), reusable materials, online response forms, digital games, board games, interactive screens, videos, or any other desired resource.

- **Rotational Lab:** Students are split into just two groups (two stations), with one group staying with the teacher for any chosen activity in any desired space, even outside the classroom; the other group works on a task in a space designated by the teacher, which may be the same or a different location deemed more suitable for the planned task. The duration of both tasks should be the same, and upon completion, the groups switch places. At least one of the groups should integrate a digital resource into the activity,



though not necessarily one per student. The activities must be independently planned by the teacher so they can be started and completed as intended.

- **Flipped Classroom:** The very name of this model conveys its core proposition: reversing the typical classroom process. Prior to the class session, the teacher designs and assigns an activity for students to complete, ideally producing some form of material/record that will be utilized during the subsequent face-to-face meeting at school. Pre-class activities might include watching a video, reading from the textbook, conducting preliminary research on a given topic, or answering questions on a digital form, among others. The key aspect of this phase is to ensure that every student has a productive task related to the lesson's theme. Simply watching a video is not enough; it is advisable for students to engage in a related productive activity, such as watching a specific video and distinguishing the main points compared to other texts. It is crucial to activate students before the in-person class meeting. In class, the teacher uses the outcomes of these activities to develop the lesson: if the students analyzed a topic, it would fuel a discussion; if they created a table comparing two subjects, it could lead to collective or small-group discussions; if they constructed a mind map of a concept, they might debate it in whichever way the teacher finds most beneficial. After reviewing the initial planning, the teacher can decide whether to revisit or delve deeper into the subject matter.

It's important to emphasize that blended learning

models do not rely on digital resources or internet access for implementation. In other words, the lack or temporary absence of either, or the number of digital devices not meeting the needs of all students, does not prevent the implementation of any of the blended learning models described above.

### **The Training Trajectory in Jundiaí's Municipal Network**

Since the beginning of 2022, the Training Department of the Education Management Unit (UGE) organized both in-person and online training sessions on blended learning for teachers and management teams from municipal elementary and adult education schools in Jundiaí. In-person sessions were conducted with pedagogical coordinators at the Argos Educational Complex, equipping them to handle the content in on-site training sessions. All trainings were included in the network professionals' formative cycles within the teaching plan.

In summary, the training trajectory for the implementation of Blended Learning in the municipal network of Jundiaí during the years 2022 and 2023 included:

- Online training (synchronous and asynchronous) for all educators;
- Encouraging self-training of the entire school team through the COURSERA platform, with support for pedagogical coordinators in face-to-face meetings;
- In-person training for pedagogical coordinators,

supporting them in the planning and organization of training for HTPC (Time for Collective Pedagogical Work) sessions;

- On-site monitoring by the UGE technical team and this trainer, during the process of implementing Blended Learning models in municipal network schools;

- Immediate feedback to educators on their methods during visits;

- Support in constructing lesson plans, including training sessions for notes and interventions aimed at optimizing them, with suggestions for possible enhancements to be made by the teacher to the initially prepared plan;

- Observation and filming of classes for subsequent reflection with the network teachers;

- Thematization of practices, using the video of the filmed class, during asynchronous training sessions.

It is important to emphasize that both the schools and the teachers observed during the school visits had previously authorized the filming and sharing of videos of the implemented practices. Everything was developed with the educators' consent throughout the project.

Moran (2017) underscores the importance of both initial and ongoing teacher training to use active methodologies in schools, as well as the sharing of

experiences among teachers and administrators. He proposes that teachers implement activities that make students the main characters and participants in the class, whether in individual or group settings, autonomously or with teacher mediation. Therefore, teacher training is essential because “the world becomes more complex and evolves rapidly towards solutions we had never imagined, requiring constant updating” (MORAN, 2017, p. 66).

The concept of active methodology mentioned in the previous paragraph is also worth highlighting. According to Moran (2017, p. 74), “active methodologies are teaching strategies centered on the effective participation of students in building the learning process, a process that is flexible, interconnected, and hybrid.”

This teacher training process in Jundiaí's network was constructed and designed with the goal of establishing what Levy (1993) calls a knowledge community, in which teachers and administrators organize themselves to study, learn, and put into practice what cannot be known or executed alone, without the help of others, including with media and digital tools, aiming to perform such actions collectively. Knowledge communities are maintained through mutual production and the reciprocal exchange of information, seeking to share everything that is investigated, learned, and created about a particular object of study. The author maintains that the community makes all relevant knowledge available at any given time accessible to

the collective intellect.

Therefore, the intention of producing videos from practices observed in situ, after providing feedback to teachers who were creating lesson plans by implementing the blended learning models learned in trainings organized by their coordinators, was to share with all the educators in the network the different practices and possibilities for students to learn in classes conducted in any blended learning model.

This supports what Nóvoa (2022) advocates: teacher education needs rethinking, and professional teaching knowledge should be highly valued. He refers to this knowledge as the “third genre of knowledge,” arguing that theoretical and pedagogical knowledge define the curricula of teacher education and that professional teaching knowledge is sometimes overlooked.

Nóvoa (2022, p.82) asserts that

If we do not recognize the existence and importance of this “third knowledge,” we will not be able to affirm the teaching profession as a “knowledge-based profession.” If teachers are solely dependent on knowledge produced ‘outside’ of the profession, either by academic discipline scientists or by educational scientists, it will not be possible to construct a higher-level teacher education.

In this light, it was considered essential for knowledge originating from the teachers of the network to compose the training materials for the teachers of Jundiaí themselves, aiming to qualify

their practice based on studied, constructed, and applied examples in municipal schools.

Regarding the adoption and use of different digital resources by the teachers of this knowledge community, the idea of digital transformation proposed by Rogers (2016) is taken into consideration. He contends that digital transformation is fundamentally about strategy and new ways of thinking, not necessarily about digital technology.

Perkin and Abraham (2017), however, believe that digital transformation follows some premises: it is inevitable and will occur regardless of the particular objectives of someone or an institution/organization; it involves strategy, culture, processes, behaviors, and people, in addition to digital technologies, which are not the most decisive factor; it leads to the reinvention of human activity at its core.

Therefore, considering what the above-mentioned authors advocate, it is understood that the training project described in this chapter promotes the digital transformation of teachers and how they teach. The goal is to train them to implement lessons that seek a new form of education, where the student is active in the construction of knowledge, the teacher is the great architect of the learning experiences (the “strategist”), and digital technology plays an important, but not primary or indispensable role, in the knowledge construction process. Learning can therefore occur with the participation and use of digital technologies, but not solely through them. The most important aspect will be the role that students

will play in the process planned by the teacher, in addition to the elements considered to be part of the designed learning experience, such as the resources used and the chosen school space.

### **A Practical Example: Combining Blended Learning with the Unwalling School Concept**

The practice to be outlined below merges a blended learning model (Rotational Lab) with the unwalling school concept, specifically the Nature-Outdoor Environment modality.

The class in question is a 3rd-grade elementary group. The student activity aims to collectively develop a proposal for acquiring new assets for the school and for revitalizing school spaces to be presented by the class representative at the Student Council meeting. The students would need to compile a list of consumer goods and school spaces that should be prioritized for investment by the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA).

As the rotational lab model suggests, the students would be split into two groups, named A and B for ease of describing the activity here. Both groups would undertake tasks at two stations, with Group A starting at the first station and Group B at the second. At the end of the allotted time for the activities, the groups would switch stations, with A moving to the second and B to the first. Each activity could last for up to 30 minutes.

At the first station, students in pairs would

photograph areas of the school they deemed in need of revitalization, providing reasons and justifications for selecting each space. They would note the photographed locations on paper, along with the rationale conceived by the pair. Here, students would roam freely throughout the school, examining all areas and their respective needs as they made each record.

For schools with larger and more expansive spaces, students might cover sections of the building or grounds, optimizing the time allocated for each station. The photos could be taken using cell phones, tablets, or even digital cameras. In many cases, digital devices considered outdated for the current generation of students can pique their interest, as suggested here.

At the second station, students would engage in a group dialogue to create a list of recommended purchases for the institution, such as books, toys, and other materials. This activity could take place within the classroom or in another space deemed suitable and timely by the teacher, like the library, playground, gymnasium, or any other communal area. If the teacher sees fit, students could conduct price research on the listed items to inform their proposals.

Once the activities at both stations are completed by groups A and B, the educator can plan the continuation of the proposal. This would involve engaging the entire class in a discussion of the identified needs to set priorities and collaboratively

construct (using an interactive screen, for instance) a presentation. This presentation, organizing the images (photos) and other records, would be used by the class representative during the meeting to outline the proposal.

The practice described above supports the development of the following competencies from the Brazilian National Common Core Curriculum (BRASIL, 2018, p. 9):

5 - Understand, use, and create digital information and communication technologies in a critical, meaningful, reflective, and ethical way in various social practices (including school-based ones) to communicate, access and disseminate information, produce knowledge, solve problems, and exert leadership and authorship in one's personal and collective life.

7 - Argue based on facts, data, and reliable information to formulate, negotiate, and defend ideas, points of view, and common decisions that respect and promote human rights, socio-environmental consciousness, and responsible consumption at local, regional, and global levels, with an ethical stance concerning self-care, care for others, and the planet.

9 - Exercise empathy, dialogue, conflict resolution, and cooperation, asserting oneself and promoting respect for others and human rights, welcoming and valuing the diversity of individuals and social groups, their knowledge, identities, cultures, and potentials, without prejudice of any nature.

10- Act personally and collectively with autonomy, responsibility, flexibility, resilience, and determination, making decisions based on ethical, democratic, inclusive, sustainable, and solidarity principles.

It's vital to highlight that the cultivation of the outlined general competencies ought to unfold continuously across the entirety of basic education. Initiatives such as the one detailed prior enhance this developmental trajectory, reinforcing it as educators curate activities that foster students' initiative and shared accountability for their educational progression. This necessitates orchestrating learning experiences that position students as dynamic and involved contributors to their educational journey.

Regarding the specific skills of each knowledge area, some that can be developed from the above-described practice are listed below:

(EF03LP25) Plan and produce texts to present results of observations and research from information sources, including, where relevant, images, diagrams, and simple charts or tables, considering the communicative situation and the theme/subject of the text.

(EF35LP18) Listen attentively to classmates' presentations, asking pertinent questions about the topic and requesting clarifications whenever necessary.

(EF03CO07) Use different browsers and search tools to research and access information.

It should be noted that skills from the areas of Portuguese language and computing were listed but depending on what the teacher plans for their class based on the idea above, other skills from other areas can also be developed.

The described practice enhances student participation at different learning levels. They

can move through the school autonomously and responsibly, traversing spaces beyond the classroom and recognizing them as learning environments, creating a new perspective on the institution they attend — a public school belonging to everyone, especially (and most importantly) them. Their actions become considered, and their voices heard, contributing to the institution's decisions, such as suggesting spaces to be revitalized. This process contributes to the exercise of citizenship, as they are actively participating in the transformation and construction of a new space, an institution, and their own comprehensive educational journey.

To overcome challenges and facilitate the inclusion of all students in the teaching and learning process, it is necessary to discover and learn teaching strategies and methodologies that enable the participation and learning of all students throughout the process designed by educators, including educational administrators and teachers.

## **Conclusion**

Teacher training is considered key to improving the quality of teaching and learning within an educational institution. As Moran (2015, p. 43) asserts, “We need to change education to change the world, starting with ourselves.”

Initial or ongoing teacher trainings should critically reflect on teaching practices, considering regional and local aspects, as well as the characteristics of the population (students) affected by those practices.

Often, training proposals overlook these aspects due to a disregard for the gap between what teachers study-learn and the context in which this knowledge will be applied.

Building communities of knowledge is vital to bridging this gap, as it enables teachers to collectively construct and exchange information during their personal and collective development process. Nóvoa (2023) made the following oral citation in his lecture at the VI Pedagogical Update Week (VI SAP) of the Jundiaí municipal network:

Clarice Lispector once said in one of her works, “Each one of us is responsible for all humanity,” meaning what each of us does is transformative for all humanity. It is this belief in the potential for transformation that should motivate us, and it motivates me when I tell you: the transformation of education begins with teachers.

The concluding message of this quote justifies and encapsulates the essence of the Education Management Unit's project: to transform education, starting with teachers. This is achieved and built upon each time we conceive, discuss, implement, and analyze any practice aimed at uniting Blended Learning methodologies and the Unwalling School initiative.

## BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BACICH, Lilian; NETO, Adolfo Tanzi; TREVISANI, Fernando Mello (orgs.). **Ensino Híbrido: personalização e tecnologia na educação**. 2. ed. Porto Alegre: Penso, 2015.

BRASIL. Ministério da Educação. **Base Nacional Comum Curricular**. Brasília, 2018.

FREIRE, Paulo. **Pedagogia da autonomia: saberes necessários à prática educativa**. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 2013.

HORN, Michael B.; STAKER, Heather. **Blended: usando a inovação disruptiva para aprimorar a educação**. Porto Alegre: Penso. 2015.

LEVY, Pierre. **As tecnologias da inteligência: o futuro do pensamento na era da informática**. Rio de Janeiro: Editora 34, 1993.

MORAN, José Manuel. Educação Híbrida: um conceito-chave para a educação, hoje. In: **Ensino Híbrido: personalização e tecnologia na educação**. BACICH, L.; NETO, A. T.; TREVISANI, F. M. (orgs.). 2. ed. Porto Alegre: Penso, 2015.

MORAN, José Manuel. **Como transformar nossas escolas**. Educação, v. 3, p. 63-91, 2017.

NÓVOA, A. VI SAP: “**Educador Transformador: do percurso formativo à transposição didática**”. Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/live/uI-](https://www.youtube.com/live/uI-FgibMqL8?si=BXQPORSLEJ8ER1I-)

[FgibMqL8?si=BXQPORSLEJ8ER1I-](https://www.youtube.com/live/uI-FgibMqL8?si=BXQPORSLEJ8ER1I-) . Accessed on: 9 set. 2023.

NÓVOA, A. **Escolas e professores: proteger, transformar e valorizar**. Salvador: SEC/IAT, 2022.

PERKIN, N.; ABRAHAM, P. **Building the agile business through digital transformation**. London: Kogan Page, 2017.

ROGERS, David L. **The digital transformation playbook: rethink your business for the digital age**. New York: Columbia Business School, 2016.

TREVISANI, Fernando. Mello.; CORRÊA, Ygor. **Ensino Híbrido e o Desenvolvimento de Competências Gerais da Base Nacional Comum Curricular**. Revista Práxis, [S.l.], v. 2, p. 43–62, 2020. DOI: 10.25112/rpr.v2i0.2208. Available at: <https://periodicos.feevale.br/seer/index.php/revistapraxis/article/view/2208>. Accessed on: 3 ago. 2023.



## CHAPTER 9



# **EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS – NEW LEARNING SCENARIOS**

Karine Ramos



*International Center for Studies, Memories, and Research of Childhood collection*

## EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS – NEW LEARNING SCENARIOS

Karine Ramos<sup>1</sup>

---

*1 Holding a degree in Pedagogy, specialized in school management, a master's in history and Historiography of Education, and a Doctorate in Education from the Postgraduate Studies Program in Education: Psychology of Education at PUC-SP, Karine conducts teacher training courses in both public and private educational systems. She has served as coordinator for early childhood education centers for ages 0 to 3 and 3 to 6, as well as for the first stage of primary education. She leads study groups as a formative strategy on the Reggio Emilia approach, Emmi Pikler, investigative projects, pedagogical documentation, and School Architecture with a focus on the educational space. She has completed in-depth courses in Italy, Peru, Canada, and Argentina on the Reggio Emilia approach. She is currently the Founding Partner/Director of projects at Ateliê Quero Quero, an inventive carpentry workshop focusing on learning spaces.*

## **Why is the environment envisioned as “educational” culturally limited to a “classroom” rather than the entire school?**

This question has accompanied me since 2012, the year I was pursuing a master’s in history and historiography of education at Udesc - SC, and in the quest for knowledge that could help understand the historical web of my question, I found an Ariadne thread<sup>1</sup> and began to comprehend the “invention of the classroom” through the genealogy of teaching methods.

The classroom, as a learning environment, is historically aligned with a transmissive pedagogy that envisages an environment that shapes a passive subject in their learning process and is therefore limited to a “formatted environment” for such pedagogical activity. In this concept, the classroom as an educational environment is deemed sufficient.

Delving into teaching methods and analyzing national documents from the last decade made me reflect and recognize the urgency of producing new knowledge, elucidating the value of the environment to the learning process. Understanding the “School” as a large learning environment also means acknowledging new Pedagogies that underpin the value of complexity and relationships in the quality of learning.

---

<sup>1</sup> In philosophy, an “Ariadne’s thread” denotes a method of problem-solving for issues where obvious solutions can be found through the application of logic, in which one traces back the path that led to the impasse to find the “knot” of decision and its consequences.

With the aim of bridging theory and practice, I initiated field research in various schools around the world, which declare in their institutional documents the pillars of education for the complexity of relationships, the value of the environment, and the construction of knowledge in a participative and relational proposal.

In this pursuit, I built knowledge and perspectives for common environments, shared spaces, outdoor areas, research spaces, relationship spaces, and many others that can overflow to compose an entire school for children, youths, and adults.

In every country I visited, it was evident that there was a considerable commitment to crafting furniture that was not just functional, but also integral to the pedagogical process. These pieces were thoughtfully designed to resonate with and reflect the educational practices and principles outlined in the curricula.

At this point in the research, new historical data emerged. In Brazil, architects and designers, for the most part, are dedicated to reproducing an aesthetic standard established from the adults’ viewpoint, under a commercial rather than pedagogical perspective, and this has an impact on the products available in the educational institutional market.

New furniture pieces are created, but innovation lies in the structures and in new colors and aesthetic finishes; they do not bring possibilities for pedagogical renewal, in other words, they continue to produce furniture that serves a transmissive

pedagogy (desks, chairs, cabinets, and whiteboards).

Challenged by this scenario of limited possibilities in furniture, materials, and materiality, I embarked on a venture in 2017, amidst my Doctoral research, to convene a group of over 15 educators. Our purpose was to discuss possibilities and to test furniture that inherently encapsulated multifaceted approaches, fostering a meaningful exchange with national educational frameworks and the rights to learning.

The following year, we launched our first collection of furniture and games on the market, thereby expanding the possibilities for creative and inventive furniture in the Brazilian scenario. Thus, *Ateliê Quero Quero* was born, an inventive carpentry that merges the language of the designer with that of Pedagogy.

In 2023, I published a book titled “Yes Spaces: Trust the Play of Babies and Very Young Children” and in the same year we set up the “Yes Spaces Exhibit” in a project in partnership with the Rubem Alves International Center for Studies, Memories, and Research of Childhood (CIEMPI), a place devoted to the training of educators, educational exhibitions, reading projects, research, and the preservation of the memory of public education, linked to the Education Management Unit of Jundiaí City Hall.

The exhibit, visited by educators from the network and open to the public, was part of a training initiative that included in-person meetings, online sessions,

and onsite visits with dialogues led by me. The immersive experience in the learning environments was on display from March 10th to April 12th, 2023. The aesthetic contexts and narratives presented were intended to invite a reflection on the curation of details, contexts, and the furnishings that are part of a collection wholly dedicated to childhood and all the relationships that these environments propose.

Divided into four relational environments, the initiative prompted visitors to pay close attention to details and choices that engage with the playful nature of children and with the pedagogy of relationships. Each space was intentionally prepared to highlight the importance of the educational space/ environment and its relationships in the daily lives of children. The exhibit was essentially conceived to be experienced interactively and participatively. An invitation to observe and recognize the intentions of each detail that composed the environments, as highlighted by Rinaldi (2002):

The physical space can be defined as a language that speaks according to precise cultural conceptions and deep biological roots. Physical space is a constitutive element of thought formation. The child's relationship with space is reciprocal, such that both the individual and the environment are active, and one changes the other (p. 154).

During the period, in dialogue with the visitors, it became evident that the environment needs to be this place of many possibilities and intentions. The curation and organization of materials must provide invitations for children to live out their research and

languages daily.

When we set out to reflect on how we organize and prepare educational environments, it's crucial to first understand the space we're discussing and how children interact within it. This includes comprehending the timings, connections, and languages involved in this interaction. Considering the spaces and environments for playing, learning, and living for boys and girls at school is to think about the educational curriculum, the concept of learning we have and that is present in the everyday life of each institution.

To think about Unwalling, we need to start by reflecting on dismantling our certainties and convictions and breaking defined paradigms about the organization and management of "classrooms."

Unwalling can also mean freeing children and students from individual desks, liberating them from frontal teaching where only the teacher defines actions and limited tasks to be completed, or breaking away from a space that imprisons relationships and molds children into a "shape". In other words, it's about unwalling, within us educators, the restrictive ideas that adhere to a single model of how to use and occupy the available spaces and environments.

Experiencing new ways of managing teaching is also, in some way, about breaking down the invisible walls we have built throughout our professional journey. It is vital to reflect on and live experiences

that place us in a different aesthetic of thought. We had the opportunity to experience this in the "Yes Spaces" Exhibit, with plural environments filled with pedagogical purposefulness and high cognitive demand through the forms of the presented relationships. Experiences in spaces that promoted interaction, invention, research, manipulation, and the right to the body and its movements.

### **Why is a high-quality educational environment a right?**

Today, we understand that our choices and actions can either enrich or diminish our human potential. Education and schools, depending on their characteristics, play a significant role in the construction of society.

Legal frameworks support the investment in the environment to enable the rights outlined in documents such as:

- The Statute of the Child and Adolescent - Law No. 8,069, of July 13th, 1990 (2023);
- The Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education - Law No. 9,396, of December 20th, 1996 (1996);
- National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education (2010);
- National Education Plan - Law No. 13,005 of June 25th, 2014 (2015).

These documents underscore the commitment



to public and high-standard education as mandated by the State and foreseen in the Federal Constitution (1988). They affirm the right of children to be acknowledged as actual and legal citizens, as beings entrenched in socio-historical and cultural contexts, and as active participants in developing a political-pedagogical practice. This practice is designed to fully embrace their physical, emotional, and cognitive aspects, moving away from the once-dominant models that were overly health-focused, unidirectional in knowledge transmission, and welfare-oriented.

Hence, an immediate restructuring of the environment and its setting is imperative to transition rights from paper to practice, ensuring an education that liberates and endeavors to foster opportunities within educational institutions for the democratic construction of knowledge, alongside the creation of spaces that encourage and enhance such connective interactions.

To guarantee the right of everyone — children, youth, and adults — to the educational environment, it is essential to think about principles and criteria in dialogue with legal frameworks and with the concept of learning that is present daily in the spaces and environments of the school.

It is necessary to be clear about who this subject is and what their rights are. A subject capable and competent, eager to learn, who explores the world in a curious and potent manner. Subjects who creatively appropriate their culture and constantly produce it.

Subjects who are interested in the socio-cultural world in which they are inserted.

From this perspective, the teacher prepares, organizes, and sets the entire school to welcome children, youth, and adults, ensuring their rights.

The environment offered in Early Childhood Education needs to be understood as a language that speaks according to the conceptions we have of children and childhood. If we desire an active, creative child capable of engaging intensely, we then offer a space where it is possible to live this. The language of space is powerful and at the same time a conditioning factor because it is analogical; even though its codes are not clear, by living it, it is possible to recognize its limitations in dialogue with the playful nature of children (RAMOS, 2023, p. 13).

Within this context, it is the educator's role to make choices, to prepare the invitations, the territories, the materials, and the substances that will be offered. To curate intentionally, aiming for settings that harmonize with learning and the curricular skills appropriate for each age group. To do so, we must plan and prepare an environment that:

- challenges, questions certainties, and invites children to research, interact, discover, and create;
- enchants, bringing with it the potential for children to take the leading role in their learning, creating settings for the extraordinary within the ordinary;
- summons the imagination, creation, and the highest cognitive demands;



- connects thoughts and complex systems of life, nature, and multisensory experiences;
- facilitates the proving of theories, testing, and validating possibilities;
- welcomes cognition and creation, activating essential skills for development in this phase of life;
- opens possibilities for different languages and diverse soundscapes and aesthetics;
- promotes encounters with the sky, the sun, natural phenomena, flora, insects, and the pulsating life outside;
- complexifies, gradually integrating layers of research and languages in relation to the children's inquiries;
- respects childhood, its timing, and peculiarities.

We need to reflect and understand that the environment is the most visible aspect of work in schools and that it involves educators, students, administrators, public policies, investment, respect for learning rights, among others.

The environment provided will broadcast a clear message: this space has been crafted with careful thought by adults who have placed great emphasis on its quality and its potential to enhance education. The physical space should be welcoming, promoting gatherings, communication, and relationships, as the organization of structures, objects, and activities encourages choices, problem-solving, and discoveries

in the learning process. Attention to detail should be present everywhere, from the color of the walls to access to common spaces, the form and choice of furniture, to the arrangement of simple objects on shelves or tables, as Gandini (2002) points out.

Within the planned spaces, the educator should:

- Adopt positive attitudes towards play, understand, and value the children's freedom of choice and action;
- Recognize that the game itself is the primary value of the space, as it is where learning will occur, especially since the educator has prepared by carefully considering materials, possibilities, and intentions;
- Be an astute observer and have the ability to listen;
- Be an adult who responds to the initiatives and inquiries of the children and students;
- Be an adult who connects with children and students emotionally, intellectually, and playfully;
- Become the adult who plans and designs the space for play, but not the play itself.

### **The environment that educates**

Recent studies on how the brain learns highlight the environment as one of the most crucial aspects of human development. It is in the environment and through the relationships within

it that we activate a network of social, biological, emotional, and intellectual languages. Similarly, a hostile environment can severely hinder child development, sometimes leading to trauma, confinement syndrome, and negative memories for children and students.

Wholeheartedly engaging with the educational setting necessitates a thoughtful and deliberate approach from both management and educators. This involves paying close attention to the cracks, the windows, the trees in the yard, the soil, the mud, and the seeds as valuable materials and substances for the learning process.

The quality of this purposeful offering will make a difference in the experiences of children, youth, and adults, and even more so in building knowledge that stems from a broad and diverse complexity.

Intentionally and continually mapping the spaces of the school is crucial for expanding the offered and facilitated intentions as learning environments that enhance proposals and relationships. This also calls for an extended reflection to answer the questions: Are we succeeding in unwalling our daily practices? Or are we reproducing a standard? Are the spaces and environments we experience considering the qualities and inclusive elements both within and outside the prescribed curriculum?

In creating and preparing learning environments for children, educators and managers are influenced by various educational philosophies

that have been shaped since their own childhoods, with experiences and repertoires from an early childhood school characterized by sterile spaces, welfare-oriented approaches, disciplinarian spaces of extreme control over movements and childlike expressions, spaces often readied and mirrored on traditional elementary education. We understand that creating learning environments is a structural axis of the curriculum and is fundamental to carrying out work aligned with the DCNEIs (National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education) and documents that guide the quality of basic education. Therefore, we must reflect on some guiding principles in this endeavor.

### **Principles for reflection:**

- A learning space needs to be carefully thought out, planned, and designed, with criteria and intentions in mind. It's essential to consider the forms, acoustics, lighting, colors, materials, scents, and the microclimate in relation to the uses and proposals for each space.
- A learning space must have an identity in perspective, that is, features that invite the desired action. It communicates its intentions with the materials and possibilities, which can be an invitation to constructive, investigative, manipulative play, etc. The play area accentuates the beauty and characteristics of the environment that houses it.
- When defining intentionality, the prepared learning space must be placed in the best possible

location: for example, if you are preparing a space for playful, natural play, the chosen materials and devices need to be close to nature and/or connected to it so that it is integrated with the natural surroundings. Ultimately, the created/prepared environment must have the capacity to engage with the context that surrounds it and relate to the whole that is inside and outside the space.

- A learning space has to offer and enable encounters, relationships, and interactions among children. The space speaks for itself; the environment communicates its options clearly.

- The space allows children to play in different ways, offering open-ended possibilities and complexity. The space should be flexible and constantly adapting, allowing children and students to modify it as they are playing or interacting.

- It should be sufficiently neutral so that the actions and colors of the children are the main visual focus. Allow the child to live their identity naturally, meaning the adult culture, stereotyped and/or institutionalized, takes a backseat.

- The space needs to offer various types of physical and cognitive challenges, and its organization should be included in the planning to ensure the conditions and quality of learning.

- The space should evolve in its communicative capacity as children and students produce, document, and leave marks through different languages and

investigative processes.

- Once the above mentioned principles are considered, we must question the quality of the environments offered, seeking to address some fundamental issues as we plan our actions.

Questions to reflect on and assess the quality of the environments provided:

- Does the school offer a varied space that arouses interest because of the arrangement of objects of different sizes, hiding places, diverse constructions, and artworks? Does it unfold as a space that inspires mysteries and stories?

- Does it include challenges related to the physical environment, objects, and furniture that allow for testing the limits of abilities, developing play, and perception through phenomena, be it of light or sound?

- Does it add elements of nature arranged for play and transformation: earth, water, air, and light?

- Does it offer green structures, loose parts, and a varied topography, so various actions can take place among the elements and to construct their own special places and refuges?

- Does it create objects that allow for movements in various forms: walking, leaning, crawling, running, jumping, climbing, sliding, rolling, balancing, etc., such as logs, branches, hills, tunnels, and holes?

- Does it include spaces to manipulate and transform natural and man-made materials? For

example, art materials, kitchen items, arranging and repairing, preparing mixtures and potions, using tools, and having access to parts and pieces of all kinds?

- Does it stimulate the five senses through the perception of sound, places where they can make noise, quiet and tranquil areas, different shades of colors, shapes, and textures, places of light and darkness, contrasts, objects that naturally have smells, drinks, and flavors of various kinds?

- Does it include spaces that allow for the observation of changes in the natural and built environment, like windows to look outside or to follow the transformation of the environment?

- Does it include areas for children and students to engage in gardening?

- Does it create objects and furniture that allow for meetings and social interaction: spaces that allow choosing whether one wants to play/research/study alone or accompanied, enabling negotiation, cooperation, competition, dealing with conflicts?

- Does it incorporate elements to play with identity: looking in the mirror, changing clothes, using different attire, acting, dramatizing, and portraying various roles?

- Does it offer options to experience a wide range of emotions: opportunities to feel powerful and others to feel weak, frightened, to feel comfortable, uncomfortable, loved, and rejected, with and without

control of situations, that is, possibilities to perceive their feelings?

- Can the learning spaces be designed to foster a variety of relationships and learning experiences? Through games, does the space incite a range of activities, for instance: symbolic games, socio-dramatic games, games involving various social roles, theatrical games, creative games, imaginative games, games with physical challenges, exploratory games, games transforming materials, games that manipulate physical phenomena, natural games in nature, collection games, and so on?

### **The Importance of Attentive Observation...**

For a child, space is an experience composed of sensations, visions, and actions. It is a realm of shadows and darkness, of grandeur or snugness. It is the expanse where they can dash or the nook they must quietly inhabit; it is the sanctuary where they gaze, read, and contemplate. Space is that first encounter upon the morning's awakening, when the eyes open and, bathed in light, we reengage with our surroundings (FORNERO apud ZABALZA, 1998, p. 231).

Before we start planning and designing learning environments, it is essential to understand that all spaces are potential playgrounds for children, for play and investigation.

The entire school should be an invitation to create, to explore, offering an open attitude to playful manifestations that spread throughout the school environment. Therefore, there are points to

be considered when planning an environment for learning through games, play, and research:

- Include the perspectives of children and students;
- Provide access to rich and stimulating environments;
- Ensure equality of opportunities for individuals with different abilities;
- Take into account the range of children's abilities;
- Emphasize the importance of risk and challenge;
- Incorporate connection and integration with the local context.

### **Final Considerations**

We wish for active, creative children and students who can engage deeply, so we must offer them a space where this is possible to experience.

A learning space needs to be thoughtfully considered, planned, and crafted with criteria and intentions in mind. It's crucial to address the shapes, acoustics, lighting, colors, materials, scents, and the microclimate based on the uses and propositions for each space.

The environment provided in schools needs to be understood as a language that communicates according to the conceptions held about children and childhood.

The language of space is powerful and at the same time a conditioning factor because it is analogical. Even though its codes may not be clear, living within it enables one to recognize its limitations in dialogue with the playful nature of children. Like any other language, the physical space and its furnishings and devices are constitutive elements in the formation of thought. We perceive space subjectively and yet holistically. We must be conscious of our intentions with the objects we choose to place in the educational environment, keeping in mind that the spaces in which children and students construct their identities and stories profoundly mark the way they relate and learn.

To offer all these possibilities, it is vital for educators to reflect and train with the intention of breaking down walls and transforming the culture and knowledge about preparing environments, devices, and materials, as it is necessary to break away from the certainties and standards that have been accepted so far. By expanding our repertoire as educators, we also expand the possibilities for choices and new formats when considering the environments.

## BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BRASIL. **Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil**. Brasília, DF: Senado Federal: Centro Gráfico, 1988.

\_\_\_\_\_. Lei n. 8.069, de 13 de julho de 1990. **Dispõe sobre o Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente e dá outras providências**. Available at: [https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/leis/l8069.htm](https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/l8069.htm). Accessed on: 24/10/2023.

\_\_\_\_\_. **Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional - Lei nº 9394/96, de 20 de dezembro de 1996**. Brasília, MEC, 1996.

\_\_\_\_\_. Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira. **Plano Nacional de Educação PNE 2014-2024: Linha de Base**. – Brasília, DF: Inep, 2015.

\_\_\_\_\_. **Diretrizes curriculares nacionais para a educação infantil**. Ministério da Educação. Secretaria de Educação Básica. Brasília: MEC, SEB, 2010.

GANDINI, Lella; EDWARDS, Carolyn. **Bambini: uma abordagem italiana à educação infantil**. Porto Alegre: Artmed, 2002.

RAMOS, Karine (Org.). **Espaços do Sim: confie no brincar dos bebês e crianças bem pequenas**. São Carlos, Pedro & João Editores, 2023.

RINALDI, C. Reggio Emilia: a imagem da criança e o ambiente em que ela vive como princípio fundamental. In: **Bambini: a abordagem italiana à**

educação infantil. GANDINI, Lella; EDWARDS, Carolyn. (Org.). Porto Alegre: Artmed, 2002.

ZABALZA, Miguel A. **Qualidade em educação infantil**. Tradução Beatriz Affonso Neves. Porto Alegre, Artmed, 1998.





## CHAPTER 10



# **UNWALLING SCHOOL – PROPOSITIONS FOR TEACHING PRACTICES**

UGE Technical Team



*EMEB Antonio de Pádua Giaretta collection*



## **UNWALLING SCHOOL – PROPOSITIONS FOR TEACHING PRACTICES**

UGE Technical Team<sup>1</sup>

Levindo Diniz Carvalho<sup>2</sup>

---

*1 Autoria do capítulo: Carolina Copelli Tamassia Ricci, diretora do Centro Municipal de Educação de Jovens e Ad Carolina Copelli Tamassia Ricci, director of the Municipal Center for Youth and Adult Education; Cícera Aparecida Escoura Bueno, director of the Department of Reading Promotion, in charge of CIEMPI; Marjorie Samira Ferreira Bolognani, director of the Department of Elementary Education; Sílvia Cristina Magalhães, director of the Department of Training; Thaís Silva Nonô, director of the Department of Early Childhood Education.*

*2 Critical reading of the chapter.*

As presented so far, the Unwalling School methodology is grounded in legal and theoretical frameworks discussed over a course of study and research from 2019 to 2023, which accumulated over 900 hours of training provided by the Education Management Unit to educators in the municipal network.

This initiative has made it possible to broaden the understanding that dismantling goes beyond the mere occupation of outdoor spaces or moving a “classroom” to an open-air environment. It led educators to rethink their practices by integrating curricular knowledge with experiences in spaces surrounded by nature, in the open air, within the territory, using social (public or otherwise) facilities, and through digital technologies, thereby promoting proposals that contribute to the holistic development of students.

Therefore, it can be conclusively stated that this methodology rests on a solid theoretical base and is reinforced by the professional-pedagogical knowledge that was developed throughout its application period from 2021 to 2023.

Unwalling School, from the perspective presented in this publication, invites us to rethink school in the contemporary context, thereby breaking away from transmissive, preparatory, controlling, and exclusionary models, where the teacher instructs, and the student learns. We direct our focus to a school that prioritizes the welcoming of each child and student in their uniqueness and entirety based

on their potential, recognizing them as subjects with rights and social actors, practicing active listening, reaffirming citizenship, providing flexible timing, and encouraging autonomy, participation, and decision-making. Such a school promotes cultural moments, respects diversity, values experiences and research, and, in short, is a school that engages with the world and is committed to its transformation.

From this viewpoint, educators must recognize children and students as citizens and consider that educational processes can stem from sensitive listening, understanding imagination as a means of grasping the world, and respecting a plurality of ideas.

An activity proposal developed from the perspective of the Unwalling School methodology should, when planned, adopt as its premise “a plural, singular, and holistic view of the child, adolescent, young person, and adult — considering them as subjects of learning,” fostering “an education aimed at their inclusion, recognition, and full development, in their uniqueness and diversities” (BRASIL, 2018, p. 14).

Based on this reflection, we present this methodology to the school teams organized in modalities to assist in the planning of pedagogical practices.

The Unwalling School modalities are organized as depicted in Figure 1:

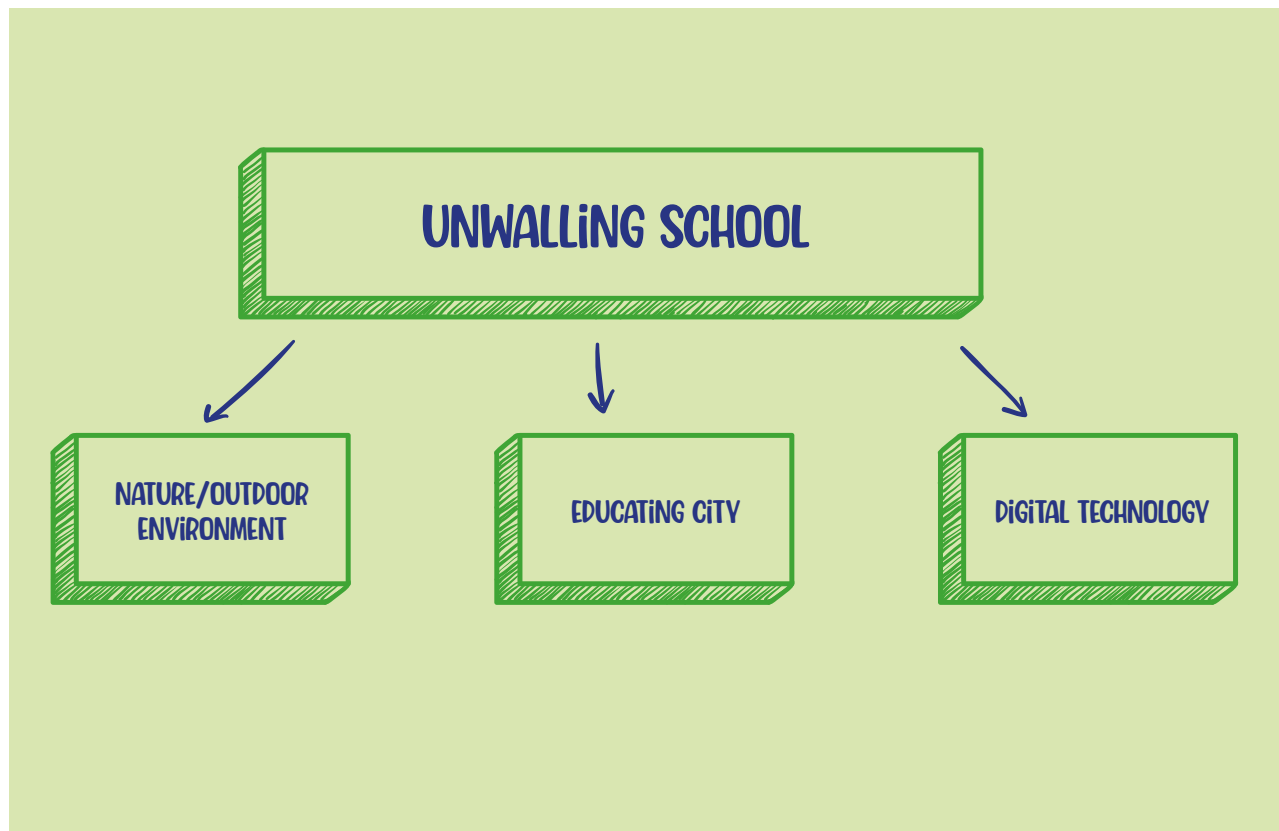


Figure 1 – Unwalling School Modalities

It is essential to understand that there is no prescribed order for choosing the modalities; they may be employed separately or in a combination with each other in a cohesive approach.

### **Unwalling School and Nature - Outdoor Environment**

It is widely acknowledged that the history of pedagogy, through educators such as Froebel<sup>1</sup>, Freinet<sup>2</sup>, Montessori<sup>3</sup>, Malaguzzi<sup>4</sup>, and others, has emphasized the importance of outdoor spaces and the students' connection with the natural world.

However, in this modality of the methodology, we present the need to reflect on the relationship between nature and citizenship, as well as on the equitable right of children, youth, and adults to frequent natural spaces, open places, and free areas.

---

1 Friedrich Wilhelm August Fröbel was a German educator and educationist with roots in the Pestalozzi school system. He was the founder of the first kindergarten.

2 In France, Célestin Freinet originated the modern school movement and the concept of “class trips,” which open new learning spaces beyond traditional methodologies that confine students within the classroom walls.

3 Maria Tecla Artemisia Montessori was an Italian educator, physician, and pedagogue renowned for her educational method based on “independent activity”. This approach advocates that children need to explore the world around them with their own hands, engaging deeply through touch and discovery, to fully develop.

4 Loris Malaguzzi was an educator who made pioneering contributions to the educational project of Reggio Emilia. This project embraces an approach that integrates several principles, such as promoting children's active participation, practicing the pedagogy of listening, fostering critical thinking, engaging in art and documentation, and valuing the process as much as the outcome.

The frequency and permanence in these spaces will provide students with a connection to their territories and cities, contributing to their holistic development as they come to understand the critical issue of the human disconnect with nature and the severity of the planetary crisis. In this context, for example, it is expected that they would act by thinking about projects that aim for the naturalization of school spaces, promoting their adaptation to a context of climate change.

Envisioning the city as an extension of the school, such that questions of planetary sustainability are both contemplated and experienced, cannot be postponed. It is urgent to promote “the participation and co-responsibility of all its inhabitants in adopting fair, resilient, and sustainable lifestyles and consumption patterns, under the principles of sufficiency, distribution, and justice”; and to take “the necessary precautions to protect common goods that ensure a dignified survival for present and future generations” (CHARTER...<sup>5</sup>, 2020, p.15).

Engagement with natural spaces, therefore, enables the cultivation of conscious and responsible citizens. By understanding the impact of their choices on the environment, individuals become active agents in promoting sustainable practices, thus contributing to a more equitable and healthy future for all.

---

5 ASSOCIAÇÃO INTERNACIONAL DE CIDADES EDUCADORAS. Carta das Cidades Educadoras. Available at <https://www.edcities.org/pt/carta-das-cidades-educadoras/> Accessed on 11/21/23.

According to the Alana Institute (2021), outdoor learning is an educational proposal grounded in two fundamental pillars, each offering a wealth of experiences and learning opportunities. The first pillar is the concept of “learning from nature”. In this context, nature itself becomes the central subject, the theme to be explored. This involves immersing oneself in the natural world, allowing students to discover, for instance, the secrets of plant physiology, understand the processes of photosynthesis, and delve into many other concepts related to the natural sciences.

The experience of learning from nature not only provides a deeper understanding of natural phenomena but also fosters a sense of wonder and respect for the biodiversity that surrounds us. It is an invitation to curiosity, to keen observation, and to connecting with the natural environment.

In this sense, it moves beyond an education where humans may learn but do not necessarily connect scientific knowledge and procedures with everyday problems and situations. It is crucial to emphasize that learning from nature transcends mere systematization of conceptual content; it enables more meaningful experiences.

The second pillar of outdoor learning is “learning in nature” (ALANA INSTITUTE, 2021). Here, spaces are utilized as rich and inspiring environments, offering advantages in the teaching and learning processes. Fresh air and contact with nature have the power to inspire the learning process, making it more engaging and significant,

while also fostering the connection between children and nature and appreciating its benefits for the life of all living beings.

Outdoor learning provides a holistic and enriching approach to education. It not only expands learning opportunities but also fosters a deep appreciation for nature and offers a stimulating environment for the growth and development of children, youth, and adults.

Finally, this modality aims to focus on something also highlighted by Ana Carol Thomé in the fourth chapter of this publication: “ We need to recognize the vitality in outdoor environments, ensure frequent activities in nature, and strengthen the child-nature bond now.” The awareness of the urgency of our actions and the pivotal role that education plays in promoting genuine socio-environmental transformation is a determining factor.

#### Learning WITH Nature:

When facilitating a learning situation with nature, it is vital for children, youth, and adults to experience different perceptions through their senses, being in direct contact with natural elements intentionally. One can experience the external space of the school and its surroundings, garden or vegetable patch, squares, parks, and woodlands, encouraging exploration, investigation, classification, naming, and understanding of the properties of one or various plants, for example, by identifying colors and shades, textures, shapes, temperatures, and smells.



It is the educators' role to observe the children and students' investigations, contributing appropriate vocabulary to name the elements, proposing in-depth inquiries that captivate the group's attention more, using different resources (magnifying glass, endoscopic camera), and adding other elements like water, soil, and the like, identifying possible transformations and ensuring the continuity of investigations and relaunching of proposals.

Understanding living beings and their adaptations, water, soil, plants, the seasons, and the climate, among many other contents related to the exploration of nature, aids the comprehension of environmental conservation and preservation, providing the means for socio-environmental transformation, with more inclusive and sustainable cities, in view of the urgency to direct attention to the 2030 Agenda and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>6</sup>.

#### Learning IN nature:

To better illustrate situations involving this modality, we propose a reflection: is enjoying a pleasurable read under the canopy of trees a good example of Unwalling School in Nature?

The answer lies in the educator's conscious action in leading children and students to learning. This action is called pedagogical intentionality. As already

evidenced by Ana Carol Thomé in the chapter, "Each aspect of children's daily routines serves as a lesson, imparting knowledge." That is, if, beyond the intent to promote a context involving literary reading and its competencies, the educator aims to strengthen the relationship between the child and nature and to value its benefits for the life of all living beings, then the answer is "yes," this is a context in which the educator planned based on the modality "Unwalling School and Nature – Outdoor Environments," which can be developed with children, youth, and adults.

#### Learning in Outdoor Environments

Learning in outdoor or external environments extends beyond learning from and in nature. Throughout the training process mentioned in this publication, numerous transformations have been made to the outdoor spaces of schools, which we refer to as learning environments. We once more emphasize that such environments and the proposals developed within them must always be aligned with the Jundiaí Curriculum and that the educator's purposefulness is a focal point for achieving the learning objectives and developing the children's and students' abilities.

From observing the school's external spaces, it's possible to identify, within the environment, opportunities for investigation from a perspective that knowledge is triggered by a problem-situation, inquiries, and is concluded through reflection on the problem's resolution, the responses formulated. Conducting investigative action "requires a

<sup>6</sup> Agenda 2030 para o Desenvolvimento Sustentável. Available at: <https://brasil.un.org/pt-br/91863-agenda-2030-para-o-desenvolvimento-sustent%C3%A1vel>. Accessed on 11/23/2023.

systematized attitude that involves problematizing, investigating, and concluding, thus differentiating it from mere definition or demonstration” (TIBALLI, 2006, p. 5). The reflective experience, which corresponds to logic, is considered an element of Dewey’s theory of knowledge.

For Dewey, this active process of the living being is the matrix of logical behavior, meaning that the search, the inquiry is not something that happens in the mind or organism in isolation, but a real situation of action-reaction between the organism and the environment. This proposition eliminates the psychological subjectivism that attributes to the mental act itself the entire explanation of the investigative process, explaining it as logical investigation that demands constant revision and readjustment of its results, based on experience (TIBALLI, 2006, p. 6).

The process of investigation in outdoor environments can take place on the two levels proposed by Dewey: “that of common sense and that of scientific inquiry”. As described by Tiballi (2006, p. 7), both levels require an “indeterminate situation (problem); localization of the problem; suggestion of a solution; trial (experimentation); solution (satisfaction) or determination of the situation”. The difference is that the object to be investigated, at the level of common sense, is linked to “vital, everyday problems” and the study is conducted through “a practical system, not theoretical or abstract”. The object at the level of scientific investigation originates in common sense, being “the logical inquiry that transforms it into objects of investigation”, in “theoretical truth” as a principle, and seeks from

the meanings and relationships of the objects, “to discover the systematic laws that regulate them”. Thus, the results of scientific investigation “constitute a mediation between scientific knowledge and its practical application” (TIBALLI, 2006, p. 7).

For instance, in examining the rights of individuals with disabilities, an evaluation can be made regarding the school’s adherence to accessibility standards. Upon identifying the need for action, students can report these deficiencies to the school leadership, situating the inquiry within the realm of practical application.

With the intention of reaching scientific-level inquiry, students might be tasked with devising solutions for the improvement and qualification of environments, such as reorganizing the parking lot. This would require an on-site study of the area, researching guidelines for marking priority parking spaces, selecting the most appropriate instruments and tools for the task, measuring the area, perimeter, and angles to accommodate the vehicles of the entire school team. Following the planning and definition of actions, partnerships should be sought to execute the project. Hence, it is expected that within the module “Unwalling School and Nature - Outdoor Environments,” the proposals achieve this level of depth.

### **Unwalling School and the Educating City**

The concept of the educating city was

internationalized at a convention in Barcelona<sup>7</sup> in 1990, with principles based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other conventions and declarations. It is underpinned by the understanding that the city holds educational potential within its facilities and public spaces.

It is a city which invests in education as a tool for social transformation, mobilizing and coordinating as many educational agents as possible that influence the territory. We are discussing lifelong education that permeates the various spheres of a citizen's life. Being an Educating City implies placing education at the core of the city's project. This involves recognizing that the different policies and actions proposed and implemented by the various municipal bodies and services (such as urban planning, environment, mobility, culture, sports, health, etc.) convey knowledge and educate, intentionally or not, by means of certain values and attitudes. The Educating City should be understood as a city project that involves networked management, based on dialogue and collaboration between municipal government and civil society, as well as with other cities worldwide (MOTOS, 2019, p. 9, free translation).

In contemporary times, there is an urgent need to rethink educational public policies from a perspective that transcends the physical boundaries of the school. The concept of “educating cities” or the city as an educational project underscores the importance of integrating education into the community context. This notion acknowledges that

education should not be confined within the walls of the school but should instead extend and take root in the dynamics of urban life.

Furthermore, it is essential to emphasize the need to break away from viewing the school as an isolated institution, indifferent to the interests and needs of the community it serves. By opening the doors of the school to the community, the aim is to foster an education that is relevant, participatory, and that prepares citizens for an active role in society. To achieve this, children and students need to be present in public spaces and learn within them. Understanding how children relate to urban spaces can even change the urban behavior of adults.

There is an urgency to reconsider educational policies from the broad perspective of education, envisioned beyond the confines of the “school institution”. The ongoing discussions about what is termed educating cities (or the city as an educational project) fuel this aim. It represents a new educational concept intended to offer an alternative for overcoming the historic social exclusion suffered by the neediest segments of the population, which persists to this day in different regions of the world. Moreover, such proposals seek to break away from the self-contained school (which reproduces a culture alien to the community it is meant to serve), to enable an education oriented towards citizenship and social emancipation (ZITKOKI, 2005, p. 183).

In summary, rethinking educational policies from the perspective of educating cities presupposes acknowledging their territories and educational

---

<sup>7</sup> De la Lectura de la Carta a la Consolidación de una Ciudad Educadora - Guía Metodológica. Available in: [https://www.edcities.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ES\\_Consolidacio2021.pdf](https://www.edcities.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ES_Consolidacio2021.pdf).

agents and their intrinsic connection with educational processes for promoting inclusion, autonomy, and citizenship. It is vital that the school becomes an integrated and active part of community life, as it holds a transformative force for social change.

The “Unwalling School and the Educating City” modality will be considered from two principles: the territories and the social facilities.

### Learning in the Territories

Starting with the premise that educational territories extend far beyond school walls and that there is an urgency in making pedagogical proposals that consider them as spaces for significant learning by integrating them into their practices, educators can promote the active participation of children, youths, and adults in the creation of public policies that affect their lives. This approach fosters a sense of civic responsibility and empowers students by showing them that their voices and actions have a real impact on the community.

Knowledge embodies the customs and practices unique to each territory, serving as a mirror to the culture of a place and the context in which a community is embedded. These are socially constructed understandings, present in all territories, though not always recognized as such. Local knowledge leads to recognition: noticing and conceiving practices of daily life, such as habits, values, memories, and stories of those who reside within the territory (INSTITUTO ALANA, 2021, p. 42).

It is important to reiterate that by considering educational territories in pedagogical planning,

the school becomes an agent of transformation and active participation in the community, while simultaneously enriching itself with the contributions and experiences of the environment in which it is situated. This vision not only enriches learning but also strengthens the relationship between the school, the community, and the development of public policies that meet their needs.

When undertaking expeditions within the school’s territory, it is crucial to adopt purposefulness, with a view towards the recognition and appreciation of the surroundings and the sense of belonging. To achieve this, one can propose detailed observation of the paths traveled in the neighborhood, the elements contained within, identifying and recognizing local businesses, neighborhood characteristics, the conditions of public roads, sidewalks and public signage, street tree planting, among others.

During these activities, good questions will enhance students’ observation of details and allow for reflections capable of guiding projects, directing changes in the surroundings, and even promoting the search for intersectoral actions for improvements of the observed conditions.

### Learning in Social Facilities

As already agreed upon in the pages of this publication, we learn through interaction with the world around us, and nature plays a fundamental role in this process as we explore and interact with

the natural environment.

However, this concept goes beyond the natural environment. Social facilities (public or otherwise), such as museums, theaters, health units, commercial establishments, sports arenas, for example, offer valuable opportunities for learning, allowing students to develop skills and knowledge, as well as a valuable experience of belonging.

Children are in a constant state of learning, absorbing knowledge from every space they encounter. In this regard, it is not just nature that instigates a learning relationship within a particular setting; a variety of environments, including museums, botanical gardens, and more, can also be seen as educational spaces that contribute to this ongoing process of learning. (INSTITUTO ALANA, 2021, p. 28).

It's necessary to emphasize that if we seek comprehensive education founded on the practice of citizenship, we must ensure children and students their right to cities and their facilities, not merely as places to visit but to own. Services and equipment make up an educational network in the city, in addition to a social protection network.

Developing educational proposals in a museum, for instance, can trigger learning situations that involve various fields of experience and knowledge domains. Through interaction with aspects of history and collections of documents, photographs, images, and more, students can be led to meaningful reflections and life experiences by relating them to their everyday lives, valuing and

utilizing the knowledge historically constructed to understand and explain reality and to make choices aligned with the exercise of citizenship, with freedom, autonomy, critical awareness, and responsibility.

### **Unwalling School and Digital Technology**

The fifth general competency of the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) underscores the importance of “understanding, using, and creating digital information and communication technologies in a critical, meaningful, reflective, and ethical way in various social practices (including school-related ones)” (BRASIL, 2018, p. 9). In this context, digital technologies, especially virtual reality (VR) and 360° virtual tours, offer the possibility to expand comprehensive and civic education in situations where it is not possible to be physically present in places like museums, historical monuments, and other sites of cultural and historical relevance.

Virtual reality provides an immersive experience that transcends the limitations of space and time, allowing for the exploration of remote and inaccessible places. With virtual reality goggles, for example, we can virtually visit museums, archaeological sites, and historical monuments, experiencing something akin to an in-person visit.

The 360° virtual tour, on the other hand, offers a more accessible and interactive approach, as it provides navigation through a virtual environment

where one can choose their own path and explore specific details according to personal interests. This interactivity not only stimulates creativity but also promotes critical thinking as we decide which elements we wish to examine more thoroughly.

The planned proposals from the “Unwalling School and Digital Technology” modality can be executed through group explorations into virtual environments, thus promoting discussion of discoveries and knowledge sharing, which supports the collective construction of knowledge.

Moreover, it’s worth noting that the use of both technologies enhances accessibility, as they can be adapted to meet the needs of diverse audiences, including students with disabilities, making learning more inclusive and equitable.

It can be considered, therefore, that digital technologies, such as virtual reality and 360° virtual tours, play a pivotal role in promoting holistic and civic education, because when integrated into the educational environment, physical barriers are crossed, and endless possibilities for teaching and learning scenarios are presented in an immersive, inclusive, interactive, and collaborative manner, broadening learning horizons and enriching the learner’s comprehension of the world.

As an abbreviated example of the “Unwalling School and Digital Technology” approach, a project is proposed where a teacher can work on Art History, including a phase that suggests researching the

collection of the artist Leonardo da Vinci. On a 360° virtual tour of the Louvre Museum in Paris, students will engage interactively with the collection and gain a vibrant, multidisciplinary perspective of the exhibition space.

It should be noted that this mode of Unwalling School should only be considered when the spaces and knowledge to be shared with students cannot be accessed in person.

### **Final Considerations on the Methodology and Its Implications**

The Unwalling School methodology acknowledges that education extends beyond classroom walls and requires a joint effort to address the multiple dimensions of human development in the pursuit of holistic and civic education. It is a complex challenge that demands intersectoral actions in public administration, as its application demands collaboration among different government sectors, such as education, health, culture, social assistance, urban mobility, security, and public services, to create an environment conducive to the full development of children, youth, and adults.

This intersectoral and transversal vision of public policies also allows for the creation of support networks that involve not only the government but also civil society organizations and the community at large. This fosters a sense of belonging and collaboration within the community, promoting a safer, more inclusive, and participatory environment.

Another element that deserves emphasis is the importance of a more sustainable city, as holistic education is also aligned with the concept of sustainable cities, where economic, social, and environmental development go hand in hand.

In summary, intersectoral actions of public administration play a fundamental role in the promotion of holistic education within an Educating City. These actions, coupled with a holistic approach, affirm that education is not an isolated process but is intrinsically linked to other aspects of the lives of children, youth, and adults. Collaboration among different sectors and actors is crucial to create an environment conducive to full development and the construction of more educational, inclusive, and sustainable cities.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

ASSOCIAÇÃO INTERNACIONAL DE CIDADES EDUCADORAS. **Carta das Cidades Educadoras**. Editora AICE. Barcelona. Available at: <https://www.edcities.org/pt/carta-das-cidades-educadoras/>. Accessed on 21/11/23.

BRASIL. **Ministério da Educação**. Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC). Brasília: MEC. 2018. Available at: [http://basenacionalcomum.mec.gov.br/images/BNCC\\_EI\\_EF\\_110518\\_versaofinal\\_site.pdf](http://basenacionalcomum.mec.gov.br/images/BNCC_EI_EF_110518_versaofinal_site.pdf). Accessed on 25/10/2023.

INSTITUTO ALANA. **Guia de aprendizagem ao ar livre em Jundiaí**. Rio de Janeiro: Instituto Alana, 2021. Available at: <https://educacao.jundiai.sp.gov.br/documentos/guia-de-aprendizagem-ao-ar-livre-em-jundiai/>. Accessed on 25/10/2023.

MOTOS, Sheila González. **De la Lectura de la Carta a la Consolidación de una Ciudad Educadora** - Guía Metodológica. Asociación Internacional de Ciudades Educadoras (AICE): Barcelona, 2019. Available at: [https://www.edcities.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ES\\_Consolidacio2021.pdf](https://www.edcities.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ES_Consolidacio2021.pdf). Accessed on 13/11/2023.

TIBALLI, E. F. A. Sobre a concepção pragmatista de experiência. In: **Pensamento Educacional**. Goiânia. Ed. da UCG, 2006. Available at: <http://www.anped.org.br/reunioes/26/tpgt04.html>. Accessed on 23/11/2023.

ZITKOKI, Jaime José. **Cidade educadora e emancipação social: o desafio da educação fundamentada numa razão dialógica**. São Leopoldo. Brasil, 2005. Available at: <https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/4496/449644420010.pdf>. Accessed on 25/10/2023.



## **AFTERWORD**



## **DAWNING TIMES**

**Severino Antônio**



EMEB Profa Judith Almeida Curado Arruda collection



## DAWNING TIMES

Severino Antônio<sup>1</sup>

---

*1 Professor and writer for fifty years, with a Doctorate in Education from Unicamp. He engages in listening to childhood and in the ongoing development/training of teachers, alongside Katia Tavares, with whom he has published various works ('The Poetics of Childhood'; 'The Flight of Those Who Teach and Learn'; 'A Poetical Pedagogy for Children'; 'Lin Lun and the Backyard of Stars'; 'The Interpreter and the Unexpected', among others). He has also published short stories ('Some Almost Silenced Enchanted Tales'), poems ('The Beloved Matter'; 'Springs'; 'The Silence and the Sense') and, more recently, the stories from the 'Reenchantment of the World' trilogy ('Art in Nights of Fireflies'; 'The Constellation-Filled Night Moved'; 'Lines to Cross the Abyss').*

It is essential to awaken in children a love for knowledge and learning. (...) Most often a method so harsh was used, that schools are generally considered the terror of children, or as torture chambers of the intellect.

COMENIUS

To live is the craft I want to teach you. To live is not to breathe but to act. It is to make use of our organs, our senses, our faculties, of all the parts of ourselves which give us the sentiment of our existence.

ROUSSEAU

A perfect education is symbolized to me by a tree planted near nourishing waters. (...) It is not the educator who gives man new powers and faculties, but who provides him with inspiration and life.

PESTALOZZI

As the plays of childhood are the germinal leaves of all later life.

FROEBELL

Children need movement, air, the right light. And even more. A look into space, the feeling of freedom — an open window.

KORCZAK

There exists, in the soul of a child, an impenetrable secret that gradually reveals itself as it develops. Human consciousness comes into the world as an incandescent ball of imagination.

MONTESSORI

The child, in an enlivened environment, in conditions to express their life, their play and their work, their thoughts and their dreams. (...) Infinite possibilities opened before us, for we had found life.

FREINET

Education can help us become better, perhaps happier, and to embrace both the practical and the poetic dimensions of our existence.

MORIN

Those who teach, learn by teaching; those who learn, teach by learning.

PAULO FREIRE

The art of thinking is about being perpetually amazed at the wonder of the world, asking questions in the face of the unknown, not being afraid of making mistakes, because knowledge is always found after many errors.

RUBEM ALVES

Pedagogy must avoid the constraints of over-certainty, instead maintaining an awareness of the relative nature of its influence and the complexities involved in putting its ideals into action.

MALAGUZZI

Recess: a tree loaded with friends.

RODRIGO, 5 years old

Children: with bones, with eyes, and they play.

LUIS FELIPE, 5 years old

The main thing a child can be is themselves.

ANA JÚLIA, 8 years old

These varied epigraphs, gathered like a small constellation at the beginning of this afterword, evoke some of the many theoretical and practical inspirations pulsating through the lines and between the lines of this book on the Unwalling School methodology, which are present, directly or indirectly, in this fruitful and innovative experience developed in recent years in Jundiaí, a city whose public education has become a reference of quality throughout Brazil. Inspirations, some of which are centuries old, and others more recent or even contemporary, that shine as beacons in the long struggle to transform education into genuine and comprehensive development of human beings, subjects among subjects, capable of - together - further humanizing history and recreating the relationship with nature.

At this moment, I think of three examples, among many others that would be possible.

I think of Comenius and his proposition that children be educated to read the book of nature, learning this reading through direct contact with natural elements – with observations, discoveries, questions, hypotheses – and not through abstract discourses, often confusing, verbose, and tedious, which had to be memorized by rote.

I think of the great tree that still stands today in Yverdon, under which Pestalozzi often gathered students from his Institute for lessons of teaching and learning in the open air, with nature and in nature, lessons and pedagogical concepts that resonated

deeply in many movements to transform education, such as the concept and practice of kindergartens, by Froebel, a student and disciple of Pestalozzi.

I think of Korczak, who was invited to write the first Manifesto of the Rights of the Child, soon after the end of the First World War. I recall that Korczak's conceptions and proposals are significant sources of the contemporary concept of the child as a subject and inspired our Citizen Constitution of '88, especially the beautiful Article 227, also being a reference in the drafting of the ECA.

I think of the voices of the children – Rodrigo, Luis Felipe, Ana Júlia – who express the essence of childhood: children as children, playing freely, along with nature.

These recollections, along with countless others, underscore the significance of the Unwalling School methodology, its deep historical foundations, and its role in nurturing a multitude of educational developments for both present and future generations.

An afterword is a piece written after all other texts. Thus, I contemplated offering a retrospective glance, a brief journey through the chapters of this book *Unwalling School: the quality of teaching in the contexts of the Innovative School Program*, weaving dialogues with the various texts of the work, intertwining voices and meanings: on one hand, seeking to recognize some specificities of each text, some traits of the singularity of their contribution, in



terms of theoretical references, imagery, and logical-expository organization; and on the other hand, aiming to make even more visible the similarities, complementarities, and resonances, as well as the unity in their diversity.

Primarily, my goal is to accentuate their instrumental role in shaping the Unwalling School methodology, an approach born from years of diligent work and prolific innovation. This methodology has emerged as a method with historic significance, contributing not only to Jundiaí's municipal education but to the broader scope of educational practices across Brazil.

This book is organized like a kaleidoscope, with various chapters discussing different dimensions of the Unwalling School methodology: offering reflections on theoretical foundations; presenting organizational structures, as well as interactions with projects and partner entities; recounting expressive experiences, including interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary ones.

Beginning with the opening letter — *In Jundiaí, Children are a Priority* — and extending to the preface — *Children, Things, and the Environment* — the variety of contributions and the signs of unity amid this diversity become apparent. Essential ideas and foundational practices thread through the various chapters, infusing the texts with themes of recursive and recurring movements that underscore the cohesive nature of the book.

Among these key references, we can highlight: the concept of the child as a subject, who needs to be recognized, welcomed, and heard; the need for the child to play the lead role in their learning, especially in learning through interactions among children, with and in nature; fostering curiosity, joy, and the desire to learn; building multiple educative environments and numerous possibilities for learning and teaching; the importance of environmental education; the pursuit of sensitive and conscious use of new technologies as aids in educational activities; the school as an enabler for children's initiation into citizenship; engaging in dialogues with families and the broader community and fostering an openness that extends beyond and within the school's physical and social environments also serve to nurture a sense of citizenship. Furthermore, the ongoing professional growth and educational development of teachers and all individuals engaged in the field of education, who are, in this sense, educators as well, are paramount.

This vast array of references, in constant interactive and retroactive relationships, highlights the richness of the Unwalling School methodology and the concrete experiences already developed in its accomplishment, as well as the richness of the experiences that can and should be developed throughout the continuity of the work.

This continuity is crucial, not only for confronting limitations and difficulties, conflicts and contradictions that are present in all fields of human



reality, but also for the conception of new projects and new challenges, new realms of possibility.

I now invite the readers of this afterword to embark on a brief retrospective journey through the chapters, recognizing themes, ideas, accounts, inquiries, theoretical references, and also discerning signs of authorship, the stylistic marks of the writers, characteristic words, the tone of their writing, certain images and lines of thought. This recognition ought to be paired with attentiveness to the distinct voices that have woven together this kaleidoscopic book, as evidenced by the brief quotations throughout.

CHAPTER 1 presents the principles of the Unwalling School methodology. Principles are understood not just in the sense of origin or beginning, but also as fundamentals, the very rationale. Thus, both literally and symbolically, it is a seminal text. The author narrates the history of her years of work as the principal of a school - EMEB Aparecida Merino Elias - where the first seeds of what would blossom into the Unwalling School methodology were sown.

A dialogue with humanist pedagogies permeates the entire narrative, which from the outset reveals itself as a text disseminating ideas and shared practices, arising from work in the school space, conceived as a living space. Many passages are evoked in the text, interlaced by the threads of affective and reflective memory. In this way, with the tone of testimony and simultaneously with analysis and questioning, the text is composed of many

exemplifications. One example: early in her tenure as principal, she invited teachers to develop their “passion projects,” which evolved, interconnected, and were recreated. These projects prove to be fundamental in their shared experiences. Other examples include the institutional project “School Space: It’s mine, it’s yours, it’s ours,” a starting point and culmination of multiple experiences; the opening of the school to families and the community, and the various contributions of this coexistence, from the enhancement of specifically educational work to the significant improvement of student assessment indices in the Ideb; the theme-based workshops, which were essential in the maturation of ideas and activities, rich inter and transdisciplinary experiences; projects that enabled new perspectives and new listening opportunities; the initial theoretical and practical illuminations of the methodology.

The text highlights the recognition of experienced challenges, learning from encountered limitations and vulnerabilities, challenges to implementing necessary changes in activity organization, such as when the Full-Time School Project transitioned to the More Education Program, which had to be ingeniously recontextualized. This acknowledgment of difficulties and struggles is invaluable, both to dispel illusions of ease in creating pathways and to cultivate lucid and precise hopes.

The concluding remarks of the chapter reflect on the productive years at the school described as

a nurturing ground and anticipate the significant evolution of the Unwalling School approach, with its array of collaboratively crafted and revised initiatives, as well as its dynamic and ongoing presence, poised to influence both today's and tomorrow's educational landscape.

To all the educators from EMEB Aparecida Merino Elias who joined us on this intense, vibrant, dynamic journey overflowing with learning, my respect and gratitude.

To all who have boldly strived for excellence in Jundiaí's education and embraced unwalling school practices to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, my deepest admiration!

CHAPTER 2 begins with a question followed by an answer that introduces the central theme of the article and of the entire book:

What should a city be like for children? This question has been at the forefront for Jundiaí City Hall, notably for the education professionals within the municipality, as they strive to respond and bring to life by enacting child-focused policies. These initiatives are deeply rooted in the local context, prioritizing the needs and rights of children.

Subsequently, expressing her joy at the invitation to write, the author provides a summary that contextualizes the objective, the values, and the significance of the work carried out in the municipal education of Jundiaí, as well as the importance of developing the Unwalling School methodology:

Firstly, because the municipality's experience stands out within the Brazilian context for placing childhood at the core of the public

agenda with an approach anchored by two central dimensions: Unwalling School and child participation. Secondly, because the municipality embraces conceptual and ethical choices that pioneer logical ways of thinking and practicing education based on the principles of equity, sustainability, and inclusion.

Recognizing childhood and education in the context of their specific environments and developing initiatives that enable children to engage with the natural and social world represents a method to uphold rights and commit to an education that is both humanizing and liberating.

The article unfolds with a series of reflections, conceptual elements, and interpretive keys that underpin and scrutinize the central issue of the work. Among these aspects, the following can be highlighted: walling/unwalling in contemporary society; the child as a subject of rights and as a social and cultural agent; the city of children (Tonucci) and the educating cities; the plurality of childhoods and their identities; holistic education in childhood; education and comprehensive training; holistic educational training as a place to confront social inequalities; the complementarity between educating and caring.

In the final considerations, there is yet another prospective summary that outlines theoretical and practical paths that will also be present in the development of the book as a whole:

Every child has the right to learn, to have their identity recognized and appreciated, and to access a diverse range of educational opportunities through engagement with various

languages, resources, spaces, knowledge, and actors. To uphold this principle of equity, it is essential that networks and schools organize themselves as spaces where relationships can address and transform the deep social inequalities that define contemporary society, starting with children's identities as the basis for engaging with diversity and building fair, democratic, and supportive communities and societies.

CHAPTER 3, in its introduction, delves into the concept of education, deriving from the etymology of the word (to extract, to develop, to lead out), and acknowledges the collaboration between the Alana Institute and the City Hall of Jundiaí:

Unwalling School as an educational proposal of the municipal education network of Jundiaí, rooted in the innovative educational concept formulated by the current administration, stands as a crucial example of this movement towards redefining educational practices as public policy. This article will share insights into the partnership between Instituto Alana, through its Child and Nature program, and Jundiaí City Hall in conceiving and developing this work.

These considerations are interwoven with others regarding the critical issue of disconnection from nature and the severity of the planetary crisis, presenting data on the situation globally and in Brazil, highlighting the importance of initiatives such as those undertaken in Jundiaí.

Progressing through the chapter, the text describes and discusses activities stemming from this partnership between the Alana Institute and Jundiaí City Hall, aimed at developing training

actions and socio-environmental public policies, especially concerning children and adolescents. This partnership has been instrumental in the creation of the Unwalling School methodology.

In conclusion, the text revisits the topic of environmental education, a foundational pillar of the Unwalling School methodology and a priority in our era of an unprecedented planetary crisis, and in the fight to save the present and future lives of children and adolescents, as well as all humanity and life on Earth. In its final paragraphs, it reiterates the significance of the partnership and the activities carried out, offering a synthesis:

It is with great joy that we acknowledge the endeavors made by the public education system to enhance the well-being of both students and educators by Unwalling School, thereby facilitating a closer relationship with nature. This contributes to expanding pedagogical opportunities, ensuring the right to learn within the framework of holistic education and the right to live in a healthy environment.

CHAPTER 4 unfolds as a fully dialogic text, engaging in ongoing conversation with its readers. It's structured with many questions, listed, and linked in meaningful clusters, creating an imaginative dialogue with the reader. There are over fifty inquiries that weave through the narrative of the writing.

From the introduction, the tone of dialogue and explicit interlocution is evident, posing the central question of the article and simultaneously highlighting its relevance in our time:

We live in a society that imposes countless conditions that distance us from the rhythm of life, from nature, from ourselves. Concrete covers the ground, rivers are channeled and altered in shape, towering buildings obscure the sky and horizon, and our days are spent in indoor, sealed, climate-controlled spaces. Children habitually find pleasure in spaces filled with synthetic elements: artificial turf, rubberized flooring, plastic toys, and screens.

Two examples of semantically linked enumerated questions:

Picture a newborn baby experiencing the myriad facets of this world for the first time. Can you imagine the wonder as they feel the breeze on their skin and see it rustling the treetops? What is it like for them to handle a dry leaf, to crumple it and hear the crackling sound it makes? How enchanting must it be to watch the clouds drift across the sky? What discoveries await as they touch stones, soil, or even another hand? What sensations are triggered when smelling the scent of rain-soaked earth?

As we reflect on the experiences that children have, there comes a reflection on our own role: What enriching opportunities are we offering for children to know the world?

The inquiries and dialogues with readers are interspersed with significant quotations. The text converses with and from these quotations. One example:

Unwalling a school goes beyond breaking down architectural barriers and spending time with children outside. We need to reconsider the environments to improve peer interactions, movements, interests, and life itself. How can indoor spaces become more vibrant and embrace life in the best way? How do investigations that begin in outdoor areas unfold indoors, and vice

versa? How do internal and external spaces converse and intertwine?

The article is also interlaced with accounts of various training sessions conducted by the author with educators from the municipal network, in the implementation of the Unwalling School methodology.

The conclusion circles back to the beginning, broadening a reflection initially introduced on the contemporary school, crystallizing this thought in its closing sentence:

Living and learning with the world today, deeply engaged in a direct and sensitive relationship with nature, is essential for contemporary education.

CHAPTER 5 begins with the author's affectionate recollections of her childhood in Jundiaí, a childhood marked by the poetic presence of nature. It then recounts the author's collaboration with the network of municipal early childhood education schools in the city, which began in 2002. The narrative spans many years of this partnership, emphasizing involvement in the network's curricular review and even recalling the creation of CIEMPI, experiences deeply intertwined with the development of the Unwalling School methodology.

In the subsequent sections of this chapter, I express my profound appreciation and admiration for the educational journey these professionals have embarked on. Their dedication is aimed at transforming schools, teaching methods, and the urban landscape into realms rich with experiences and learning that align with the rights of children.

Alongside continuing narratives, the text offers theoretical considerations about education and schooling, referencing Dewey, Tonucci, and other thinkers. These reflections have significant parallels with the Unwalling School concept. The chapter then evolves with discussions on essential topics and dimensions for the theoretical and practical elaboration of the methodology, such as curriculum, record-keeping and documentation, assessment, and learning processes based on interaction with nature.

In the Jundiaí network, educators strive to create opportunities for children to experience and learn both inside and outside of school, emphasizing the interdependence between children and nature and acknowledging them as complete individuals.

The chapter also ponders the importance of experiences that are crucial in childhood and underscores the role of educators in relation to the inquiries undertaken by children, emphasizing the need to listen to and value the questions they pose.

We have come to appreciate and marvel at the reality that children's genuine learning springs from what they already know and wonder about, and that their questions are poetic and touch upon great themes of humanity.

Another critical issue highlighted is interpretation, where the theoretical discourse is enriched by presenting foundational questions for developing interpretive thought, essential for the daily decision-making of educators.

It is a sensitive and contemplative text that dialogues with theoretical frameworks and

knowledge born from experience, which also includes the voices of participating teachers, their practical and theoretical contributions. A text that interweaves narrative, descriptive, and expository elements with tenderness and precision, covering many facets of praxis and poesis in the educational efforts unfolding within the Jundiaí municipal network. In its final considerations, the chapter comes full circle with a statement embodying active and creative hope:

Listening responsively to children is the opportunity we have as a society to build the future we desire now.

This is how I see the present and future of the schools and the city of Jundiaí: filled with professionals who listen to children, who respect their interests, and who spare no effort to ensure their rights to full development, committed to life on the planet, to social justice, and peace.

CHAPTER 6 opens with references to the Innovative School Program, which was established as a public education policy in Jundiaí in 2018, highlighting its interdependent pillars – School Ambiance, Educator Training, and Teaching Quality:

One of the initiatives of the Innovative School Program was the implementation of a methodological approach termed Unwalling School.

The text unfolds by narrating and commenting on the conceptual development journey of this methodology. It recalls ideas debated with the school community, discussions that expanded the network

of meanings around the Unwalling concept in the educational context, significantly contributing to the methodological choice by the Educational Management Unit (UGE) of Jundiaí City Hall.

Reflecting on the theme of walling/unwalling, the text draws a correlation between walling as fragmentation and unwalling as integration. This association further elevates the proposal's importance, tackling one of the major contemporary challenges: the rupture of knowledge and reflection that hinders understanding the world and its complexity.

The article continues with theoretical considerations that flesh out the conceptual domain of Unwalling within education. One of the most notable pertains to the curriculum and the Political Pedagogical Project (PPP).

Another substantial dimension of the text comprises narratives about training sessions, which broadened and deepened the Unwalling proposal.

These narratives, in their logical-expository organization, feature a unique characteristic: didactic clarity addressing complex issues and a clear articulation between concepts and examples:

Experiencing different environments, both within and outside of school, enables dealing with unforeseen and novel situations so that skills in communication, collaboration, imagination, creativity, critical thinking, among others, can be exercised in understanding an event or solving a problem, for example. In an integrated manner, the practice of autonomous,

responsible, empathetic, respectful, inclusive attitudes is also a characteristic and goal of 'Unwalled' practices.

The text also makes references to the ambiance pillar, the publication of the Outdoor Learning Guide, the unwalling activities carried out by educators, in-person training with coordinators, including specific examples (experiences in the Argos Complex square), training sessions with teachers from all units in the network, again with a specific example (World of Children), an activity that led to the e-book "School in the World," and a lecture on Unwalling Mathematics at the 5th Pedagogical Update Week (SAP).

After these practical and theoretical references, the article culminates with a synthesis that is both Cartesian and complex:

Gradually and carefully, educators built a learning community regarding the meanings of whole-person education and the Unwalling School methodology. A community characterized by the exchange of ideas during training sessions among professionals from each school, between schools, between schools and UGE teams, and between educators and families. A wealth of ideas, marked creativity, attitudes of co-responsibility, and explicit intentionality were some of the hallmarks of this training process, which involved all educators in the Jundiaí school network generally, and teachers, coordinators, and principals of elementary and adult education specifically.

CHAPTER 7 discusses the contributions that the Unwalling School methodology can make to Youth and Adult Education (EJA). At the outset, it provides

general considerations on education globally and in Brazil and on the role of the school:

It is a fact that the school is a space for learning, coexistence, political and social action and, therefore, must be attentive to the problems afflicting the educational community, enabling active intervention in social and environmental issues.

While contextualizing EJA from various angles, the text draws connections to the Unwalling methodology, which can enrich the learning and development of these students.

Throughout its narrative, the chapter builds further relationships between EJA and Unwalling through a lengthy list of topics, including: the study-walk (Freinet); environmental studies; preparation for the world of work; scientific procedures; curiosity; initiative and creativity; leadership and teamwork skills; emotional intelligence; cognitive flexibility; and negotiation abilities.

The article concludes by reiterating thoughts on the educator's role in this context:

Pedagogical purposefulness is a critical component in this process, involving setting clear and precise goals, which are approached through the lens of Unwalling School. This means identifying which competencies, skills, and concepts need to be fostered in students, as well as the strategies and resources to be utilized.

CHAPTER 8 explores the intersections of the Unwalling School methodology with Blended Learning, initially defined as an education that “blends and integrates various strategies, knowledge,

and spaces to create rich learning experiences.”

This definition is supplemented with a quotation from one of the key theorists of Hybrid Education Models (Moran, 2017), and a commentary on it:

In this sense, hybrid teaching models align with the educational framework being constructed in the municipal schools of Jundiaí and, as such, have also become part of the pedagogical reference framework for teaching practices.

Subsequently, the article discusses the choice of a sustained blended teaching model and its modalities: station rotation, rotational lab, and flipped classroom. This model was deemed most suitable for engaging with the work dynamics of Jundiaí's municipal network and thus became the focus of training journeys undertaken with teachers and management teams.

The text recounts and comments on this formative journey, acknowledging the professional knowledge of teachers. It also details a practice that combines a Blended Teaching modality (Rotational Lab) with the Unwalling School methodology (Nature-Outdoor Activities), implemented with a third-year elementary class.

Regarding the possibilities of working with Blended Teaching, the author includes a critical caveat:

(...) It is understood that the training project described in this chapter promotes the digital transformation of teachers and how they teach. The goal is to train them to implement lessons that seek a new form of education, where the student is active in the construction of



knowledge, the teacher is the great architect of the learning experiences (the “strategist”), and digital technology plays an important, but not primary or indispensable role, in the knowledge construction process.

The conclusion presents a synthesis, penned with a quotation from Nóvoa – “The transformation of education begins with teachers” – from a lecture given at the 6th Pedagogical Update Week (6th SAP):

The concluding message of this quote justifies and encapsulates the essence of the Education Management Unit’s project: to transform education, starting with teachers. This is achieved and built upon each time we conceive, discuss, implement, and analyze any practice aimed at uniting Blended Learning methodologies and the Unwalling School initiative.

CHAPTER 9, from its opening lines, poses a question that resonates throughout the text:

Why is the environment envisioned as “educational” culturally limited to a “classroom” rather than the entire school?

Beginning with this inquiry, it unfolds into discussions on school environments using both concepts and narratives, detailing the “Yes Space” Exhibition held at CIEMPI in 2023.

It continues with reflections on the right to high-quality school environments, even referencing legal frameworks.

As it progresses, the chapter enumerates *seven principles for contemplating learning spaces*. It

persistently provides a set of questions to assess the quality of the proffered environments.

In its concluding remarks, with similar recursiveness, it reaffirms the core ideas of the text:

The physical space of a school can be defined as a language that speaks according to precise cultural conceptions and deep biological roots.

CHAPTER 10 provides a reiterative synthesis of the development of the Unwalling School methodology: the formative process of studies and research developed by the Education Management Unit (2019-2023); the implementation process (2021-2023), which melds practice and theory, emphasizing the contribution of teachers’ experiences and their knowledge acquired from real-life experiences.

Theoretically, it highlights the concept of learning IN and WITH nature, drawing from references to great educators and seminal texts, such as those of the Alana Institute. It also emphasizes the concept of the educating city, acknowledging the importance of territories and social equipment as learning environments. Another key reference is the BNCC, especially concerning the issue of technology, primarily digital, which is indispensable for the necessary, critical, and creative dialogue with the contemporary world.

The chapter also presents practical propositions that are inseparable from the theoretical conceptions. With clear and organic exposition, it details the modalities of Unwalling School: Nature-Outdoor

Environment; Educating City; Digital Technology. It discusses each modality and the necessary interactions between them, synthesizing references, and experiences, including allusions to passages from the book itself.

Throughout the text, as in the entire book, the recognition of children and students as subjects – and thus as subjects of learning and knowledge, both personally and collectively, in constant interaction with other subjects, institutional spaces, and nature in the daily life of schools in the process of Unwalling, is underscored. Such schools continually recreate themselves as enablers of experiences of holistic education, sensitive listening, democratic citizenship, and reverence for life.

The Unwalling School methodology acknowledges that education extends beyond classroom walls and requires a joint effort to address the multiple dimensions of human development in the pursuit of holistic and civic education. It is a complex challenge that demands intersectoral actions in public administration, as its application demands collaboration among different government sectors, such as education, health, culture, social assistance, urban mobility, security, and public services, to create an environment conducive to the full development of children, youth, and adults.

The considerations made in traversing this afterword lead me to think that the experience of the Unwalling School methodology bears resemblance to what a utopian<sup>1</sup> philosopher of the 20th century

envisioned about art as being simultaneously a laboratory and a festival of the possible.

A laboratory and festival of the possible are necessary to create high-quality public education, which is essential and indispensable for building a genuinely democratic society in our country marked by extreme inequalities, as well as for achieving human development that is sensitive and solidary, critical and creative, capable of preserving life on Earth, preventing the devastation of nature and humanity.

This vision of a utopian horizon is to be created and recreated in everyday history, working inside and outside the classrooms and schools, among children and with children, among students and with students, in nature and with nature, creating and recreating burgeoning times in the present and future.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ernst Bloch (1885 - 1977), German philosopher, thinker on utopia and hope. Main work: *The Hope Principle*.



