

DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION IN NATURE
putting quality education in practice

workshop proceedings



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The Workshop Proceedings of the cycle of conference on "Democratic Education in Nature" was produced by the partners of the DEN project and published in April 2023.

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Project: "DEN- Democratic Education in Nature "
2021-2-BE02-KA210-SCH-000051555



INTRODUCTION

A cycle of workshops have been created in February 2023 in the framework of the DEN project.

DEN (Democratic Education in Nature) is an European project funded by the Erasmus+ Programme (Key Action 2 - Cooperation for Innovation and Exchange of Good Practices).

The duration of the project is of 15 months, from 01/04/2022 to 31/06/2023.

Responding to the needs of offering innovative pedagogical experiences promoting children's environmental stewardship, active citizenship and promotion of inner motivation and talents, the project has the ambition to systematise and disseminate a new developing approach that bridges Nature Pedagogy with Democratic Education.

Having the partners of the project a long-term experience in this domain, they promoted a research on this approach and its application, a series of workshops and guidelines for schools.

DEN is implemented by two Democratic Schools in Nature: Albero della Tuscia (Italy) and Playa Escuela (Spain) and by a European Education Network, QUEST (Belgium).

The DEN project has therefore the General Objective (GO) of:

- putting forward a new developing approach that bridges Nature Pedagogy with Democratic Education (DEN).

The GO is supported by the following Specific Objectives (SOs):

SO1: Promoting professionalisation of organisations already practising DEN

SO2: Creating an exchange of competencies of European school/organisations interested in improving their competences on DEN

SO3: Providing a systematisation of the DEN pedagogical approach

SO4: Promoting DEN in traditional schools and organisations not familiar with these concepts yet

SO5: Fostering change in education policy development

In order to achieve this objective, the project DEN is divided into three main activities:

- A1 Research
- A2 Workshop
- A3 Guidelines

The DEN project

what is

DEN is a European project funded by the Erasmus+ Programme (Key Action 2).

Start date: 01.04.2022
End date: 31.06.2023

about us

The project is implemented in three European countries by three democratic schools in nature: Brussels Outdoor School (Belgium) Playa Escuela (Spain) Albero della Tuscia (Italy).

our mission

Systematise and disseminate a pedagogical approach that bridges Nature Education with Democratic Education, in order to promote children's inner motivation and talents, active citizenship and environmental stewardship.

The project steps



INTRODUCTION

The Democratic Education in Nature consortium convened a cycle of workshops from the 2nd of February to the 23rd of February 2023 called "Democratic Education in Nature: putting quality education in practice".

The Workshop was held in virtual format. Four sessions, each 3 hours in length, brought together 50 participants live and other 70 who have participated watching the recordings of the sessions. Both live participants and participants that watched the recordings have contributed to the workshops by exchanging doubts, opinions and doing the exercises through the shared platform (Google Drive). A facebook private group was also created to facilitate exchanges after the end of the workshop

Participants came from a wide range of countries and had different professional backgrounds: 50 traditional schools teachers, 20 alternative schools pedagogical staff members, 20 non-formal education trainers, 10 Homeschooling parents, and others in the frame of adults education (Universities and Academies).

The four sessions were held in a similar format: a presentation was given addressing cross-cutting issues, to which an interactive question and answer moment followed.

After each session, participants were provided with shared documents, where they could comment on a feedback, own reflections, or outstanding doubts regarding the session or for the following one. They were also provided with the recording in case they wanted to watch it again, or if they had not been able to attend the live session.

Participants who requested it have received a certificate of participation.

WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS

.....

4

sessions
running from

2 - 23

February 2023

.....

120 participants

from

15 countries

.....

insights from more than

70 schools presents



session 1

This session was dedicated to explore what quality education means.

This has been done firstly by analysing what are the objectives of education, asking the following question: **What kind of citizens and people does this society need?**

The reflection evolved in analysing the importance of developing skills to have citizens that are: empowered, autonomous, sensitive, responsible and creative (not only in the artistic sense) people, who know how to act on their own initiative and through democratic participation.

Following, the workshop evolved on the question: **What is going wrong in conventional and also progressive education?**

A conversation was initiated around the fact that education is normally understood as curriculum/evaluation/instruction, but this means that for children the message we deliver is that they are submitted to continuous expectations, which transmit to them the message that they are insufficient.

It has also been discussing the possible consequences of the fact that children are mostly not allowed to freely follow their basic biological and ethological needs, such as free movement, play, talk, drink, eat, rest, go to the toilet, etc.. This profoundly harms the healthy development of basic personal competences like self perception and connection to one's own being.

2nd February 2023 / 17h00-20h00

Session title:

What should quality education be like? Eight central aspects of quality education

Speaker:

Gabriel Groiss, PlayaEscuela

From this lack of connection with oneself, other disconnections in conventional education have been mentioned: from the social environment (separation from the mother, competition, segregation, etc.). from the world (Isolation in centers, abstract content, etc.).

All these introductory reflections conclude with the following question: **what can be done in order to change this reality?** This open-ended question, is the speaker's invitation to address the subsequent "*Eight central aspects of quality education*".

QUALITY EDUCATION

1: Self-education of the adults:

The continuous willingness to reflect and evolve, which means the self-education, first of the adults themselves (towards cultural development and coherence, e.g. towards sustainable life-styles), which also represents the best reference that we can give to the infants and young people (of "lifelong learning").



2. Trustful relationships:

Trustful relationships are key. This pedagogical quality work is only possible interacting within small groups, in pedagogical teams, accepting and respecting the infants and young people in their current state of development.

3. Intrinsic motivation:

Seek to preserve and cultivate intrinsic motivation, and consequently the processes of self-determined, self-organised and therefore "Self Directed Learning", as a central motor of development and learning.

4. Personal development in democratic environments:

Pedagogical approaches focused on mental health through the development of basic personal and socio-emotional competencies and skills in free and democratic structures, which form citizens accustomed to responsible, cooperative and supportive democratic participation.

5. Free play:

To recognise free play, not only for its great educational value, but also as an ethological need for a healthy development, and therefore as a fundamental right of the young person.

Self-Determination Theory's Taxonomy of Motivation						
Motivation	AMOTIVATION	EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION				INTRINSIC MOTIVATION
Regulatory Style		External Regulation	Introjection	Identification	Integration	
Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of perceived competence, Lack of value, or Nonrelevance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External rewards or punishments Compliance Reactance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ego involvement Focus on approval from self and others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal importance Conscious valuing of activity Self-endorsement of goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Congruence Synthesis and consistency of identifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interest Enjoyment Inherent satisfaction
Perceived Locus of Causality	Impersonal	External	Somewhat External	Somewhat Internal	Internal	Internal



6. Contact with the real world

To be in continuous contact with the natural, socio-cultural and socio-economic environment, which offers so much authentic stimulation, interaction and learning



7. Situational and process orientated

A pedagogical work that acts on situational and spontaneous concepts (and not pre-established and rigid study plans), and is focused on the process itself (and not mainly towards the visible products), in which skills and knowledge are mainly built through countless "micro-learning" situations in co-construction processes.



8. No discrimination or segregation

Living together in inclusive, open and mixed, also mixed-aged groups, which provide indispensable empathetic social learning. (...and which avoids education in an unsupportive hierarchy of "classes".)

Literature and other references

Books and articles

- Gray, P (2012) Free to Learn: Why Unleashing the Instinct to Play Will Make Our Children Happier, More Self-Reliant, and Better Students for Life
- UNESCO, Futures of Education, A global initiative to reimagine how knowledge and learning can shape the future of humanity and the planet. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379707>
- Review of Research into Children's Rights based Education
- Miller, R. (2000). Creating learning communities: Models, resources, and new ways of thinking about teaching and learning. Brandon. VT: The Foundation for Educational Renewal.
- Raith and Lude (2014). Startkapital Natur: wie Naturerfahrung die kindliche Entwicklung fördert. München, Oekom. (Original in German, could not find it in other languages)



A photograph showing the lower legs and feet of several children standing in a shallow puddle on a paved surface. The water is dark and reflects the surrounding environment. The children are wearing various casual clothing like shorts and leggings.

session 2

The session departed asking the central question “*what it means to be human*” (Biesta, 2006) based on which answers it is possible to identify the differences on pedagogical approaches. The objective of the workshop was to analyse and understand together the different answers that pedagogues brings and underlying the ontological difference that democratic education bring in considering what does it mean to be human (and therefore child). Following, the workshop analised the limits, the critiques and how could democratic education coexist or be embedded in the national, European and international level.

Following the session explained the **definition of democratic education** as an educational philosophy based on self determination and democratic community processes.

The speaker went into details explaining the different components of every of these two pillars, that are brefly exposed here:

SELF DETERMINATION

- **Human rights.** Children’s fundamental right to participate in decisions concerning their own lives has recently been recognised, (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989). but many more steps needs to be taken to take children human right of self determination seriously.
- **Mental and Phisical Health.** **Self-determination** (internal locus of control) is one of the most important

9 February 2023 / 17h00-20h00

Session title:

How does Democratic Education work? A pedagogical approach based on human rights and self-directed learning

Speaker:

Martina Paone, QUEST

factors for mental health. (La Guardia, J. 2017, Ntoumanis N, Ng JYY, et al 2021; Ryan, R. M. & Deci, E. L., 2017). Motivation plays a big role in our lifestyle choices and in our ability to make sustained changes as needed to maintain our health.

The tendency to be either proactive or passive is largely influenced by the social conditions in which we are raised, and school plays a big role there. (Ryan and Deci, 2017)

- **Self directed education.** As many authors proved it “Children educate themselves brilliantly when we provide the conditions that allow them to do that. This is no longer a theory; it is a proven fact proven by many democratic schools [...].

Given such proof, it is a crime that we continue to use methods of coercion and forced uniformity in our standard schools". (Peter Gray, 2021)

DEMOCRATIC COMMUNITY PROCESSES

- **Community of Equals:** In democratic education there is no hierarchy between teachers and students, only different roles. Children are seen as human beings that deserve the same respect, attention and care of adults. In democratic schools, children are therefore offered the possibility to have a say in all matters that interest them, and in which they have the competences to decide about.
- **Democratic participation:** Socio-political belief that exercising democratic rights in childhood is the best way to become an adult who is comfortable functioning within a democracy. We cannot expect young people to suddenly become engaged citizens, without having prior experience of what it means to use their voice, organise themselves and influence their lives.

HISTORY OF DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

After this introduction, the workshop continued bringing an overview of the history of Democratic Education. Departing from the end of 1800 the workshop considered the main pedagogues involved in the raising of this approach, the different places in the world where a democratic education culture developed, and also the major schools that were symbol of the multiple models of democratic education: Yasnaya Polyana, Laboratory School, Escola Moderna, Summerhill, De Werkplaats School and Sudbury.



Lev Tolstoy, 1859
Yasnaya Polyana



Laboratory School - 1894
John Dewey, USA



Escola Moderna - 1901
Francesc Ferrer, Spain



Summerhill School - 1921
A.S. Neill, UK



De Werkplaats School - 1926
Kees Boeke, Netherlands

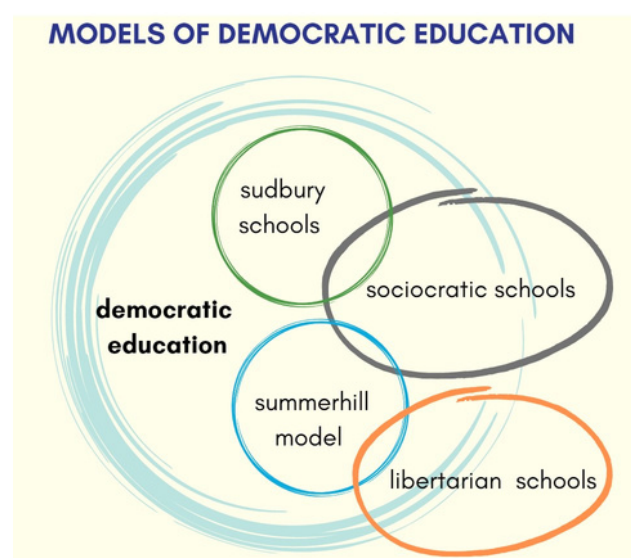


Sudbury Valley - 1968
Daniel Greenberg +, USA

DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL MODELS:

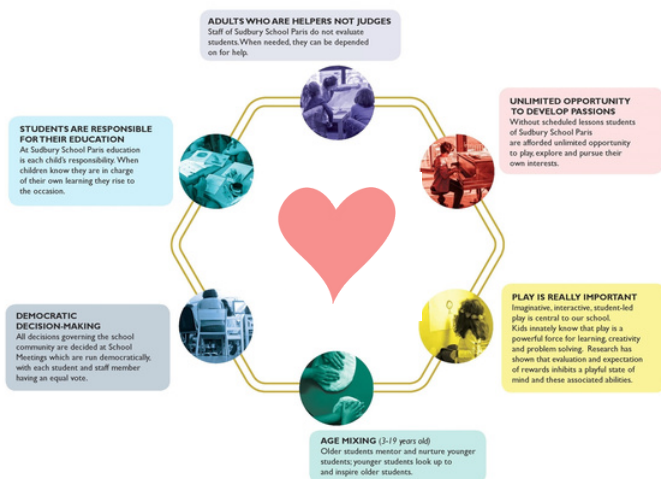
After showing the historical trajectory that brought the current understanding of democratic education, the workshop evolved around the different models of democratic education that could be identifiable, keeping into consideration that these are no fixed categories, but rather a useful distinction to allow a mental mapping of the variegated scenario of democratic schools. The workshop speaker was also very cautious in explaining that every democratic school can also recognise itself in more/different models, and that the following might not be an exhaustive classification. Indeed, as it is common to say, there are as many democratic school models as many democratic schools.

The following drawing offers an analytical understanding of the democratic school scenarios:



DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL IN PRACTICE

Finally, the workshop moved from the theory to the practice, showing the practical aspects of a democratic school, which are symbolised in the below graphic inspired by the Sudbury School Paris.



DEMOCRATIC STATE SCHOOLS?

The final part of the workshop evolved around the debate about the possibility of including democratic education into the public school system. Before doing so, the speaker presented the international and European framework concerning self-directed learning and community decision making in school.

Following the speaker considered the challenges at the national level, but also the potentialities that arises from applying democratic education in state school. The speaker mentioned the following projects:

- DESC project, to promote democratic education in state schools (<https://desc.academy/>)
- SUVEMAE: a democratic state school in Tallin
- The 20% campaign by Darryl Hannam
- The Lycée Autogeré de Paris

FURTHER REFERENCES

books and articles

- Deci, E.L., & Ryan, R. M. (2002). *The paradox of achievement: The harder you push, the worse it gets*. In J. Aronson (Ed.)
- Gray, P (2012) *Free to Learn: Why Unleashing the Instinct to Play Will Make Our Children Happier, More Self-Reliant, and Better Students for Life*
- Greenberg, D (1991) *Free at Last: The Sudbury Valley School*.
- Hannam, D. (2020) *Another way is possible. Becoming a democratic teacher in a state school. Self-Directed Learning in a Context Of Democracy, Human Rights and Community: Smashwords*
- Hart, R. A. (1992). *Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship* (No. inness92/6).
- Paone, M. (2023) *Research Report on Democratic Education in Schools* (forthcoming)
- Neill, A.S. (1978) *Freedom not Licence*. Pocket.

websites

- www.eudec.org
- <https://desc.academy/>

movies

- School circles
- FREISTUNDE – Doing Nothing All Day
- Being and Becoming
- School of Trust

session 3

The objective of the session was to learn about the importance of nature for a healthy development having a look at the benefits of pedagogy in a natural setting.

The first part was about various studies that have shown the numerous benefits of nature for the MENTAL and PHYSICAL HEALTH, the PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT, the SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR and the ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS of children (and adults!). Afterwards the speakers offered some practical ideas how to integrate nature into the education, followed by a short explanation about different approaches of education in nature.

Last but not least the speaker had a look at the question why democratic education and education in nature complement and nurture each other in many ways.

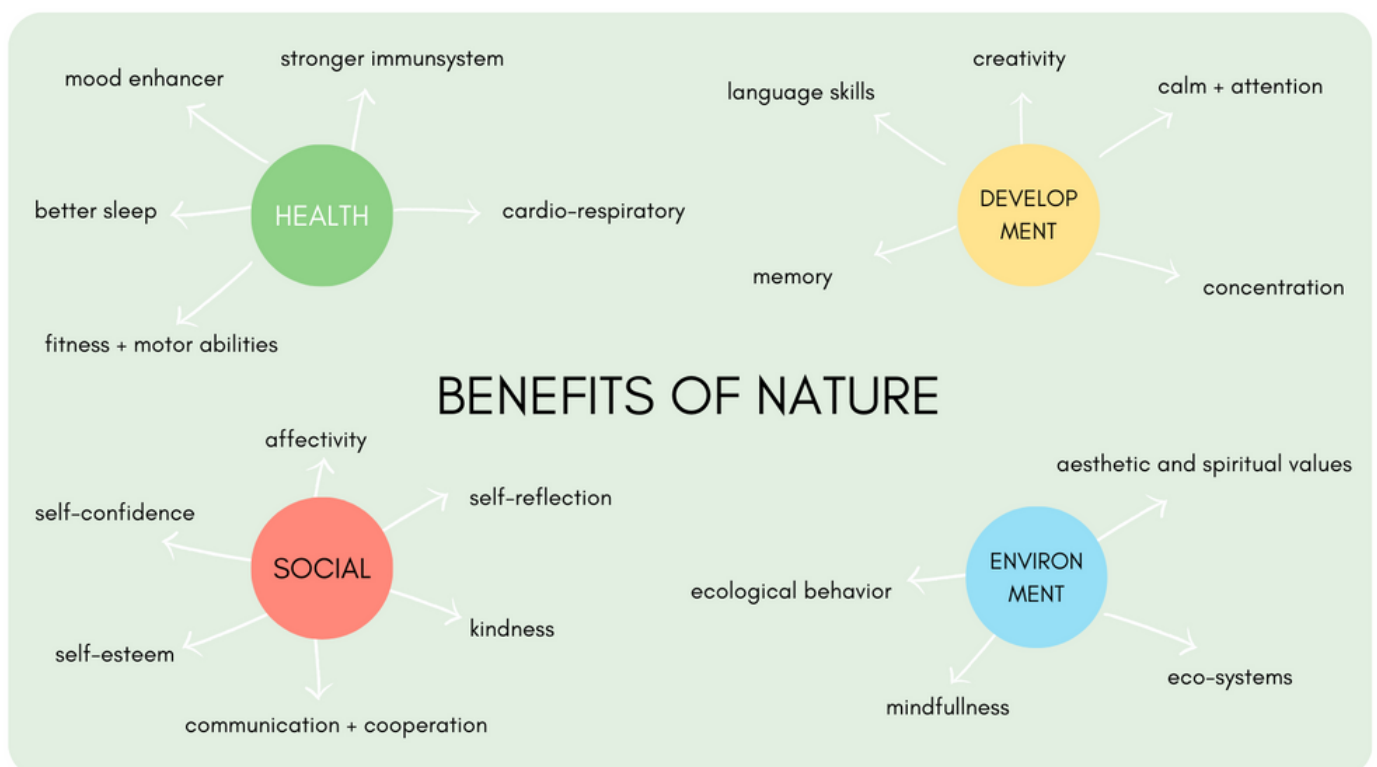
15 February 2023 / 17h00-20h00

Session title:

Why is Nature so important for a healthy development? Benefits of pedagogy in a natural setting.

Speakers:

Aurelia Bachmann & Matteo Sturlese
Albero della Tuscia



BENEFITS OF NATURE

Education in nature can be the key to sustainable development, physical and mental health and social cohesion. Many scientific studies presented in the workshop show how exposure to nature, whether virtual (pictures, videos or recorded sounds) or experiential (walks, swimming in the sea, wilderness camp, essential oils), is beneficial for healthy human development. A short summary:

HEALTH

On the health side, various studies show how exposure to nature (natural exposure, NE) strengthens the immune system, leads to better sleep, greater cardiorespiratory health, improved mood and fitness. These benefits are obtained from seawater, sunlight, forest air, simple walks in parks, and even from observing photos of natural landscapes.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Regarding the personal development, studies have shown that spending time in nature can improve language skills, lead to a calmer and more concentrated behaviour, a better memory and even increase and nurture creativity.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Natural exposure can promote self-confidence and self-esteem and it can be observed that children show more affectivity and kindness with each other. Also the communication and cooperation is getting more fluent in a natural setting.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Various studies have demonstrated that children that live close to nature show a more mindful and ecological behaviour. They are more conscious about the existing eco-system and aesthetic and spiritual values are nurtured.

HOW TO INTEGRATE NATURE IN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- adding plants in the classroom
- care about a view from the classroom into nature or add pictures of landscapes to the walls
- support interaction with animals
- go for a walk in a natural environment (park or forest)
- organise school-camps + one day trips into the wilderness
- outdoor lessons
- walk barefoot
- go sun bathing

DIFFERENT APPROACHES

Environmental Education

- teaches how natural environments function and how human beings can behave to live sustainably
- **multi-disciplinary** field
- interactive learning, see interconnectedness, critical thinking, raise tolerance, more respect, health benefits, responsibility
- **often theoretical** approach combined with **outdoor experiences**

Outdoor Learning

- **organised and facilitated learning** approach that takes place in the outdoors
- draws upon the philosophy, theory, and practices of **experiential education** and **environmental education**
- provide more **memorable** and **stimulating** learning experiences

Forest-Schools

- very focused on outdoor time
- small groups led by (fully qualified) Forest School Leaders
- children visit and experience natural spaces to learn personal, social and technical skills, raising confidence and self-esteem
child-led experiences, focused on individual learning

DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION IN NATURE

In the end the speaker showed how democratic education and education in nature complement and nurture each other in many ways. Some examples are: democratic education offers an opportunity for direct participation in decision-making processes and social integration in wilderness education projects. It can be an excellent way to bring children together in nature, offering tools to develop social cohesion, community identity and self-esteem, while nature appears as the perfect environment to stimulate cooperation, communication, creativity and learning.

Some presented studies have shown that in nature, cooperation and communication is promoted and impulsivity and social tension is reduced, this can help in collective decision-making processes. The affective state and sense of belonging improves and natural environments help people to feel more integrated. In addition, language skills are fostered by the variety of landscape and situations promoting communication in a very practical way.

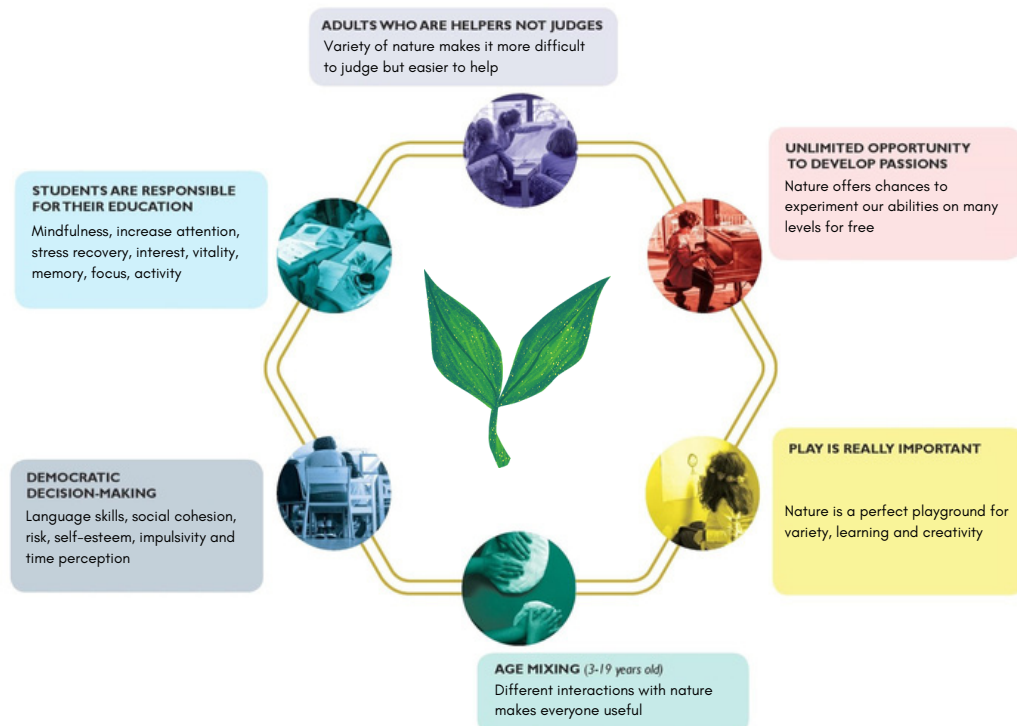
FURTHER REFERENCES

books and articles

- "Startkapital Natur" - Andreas Raith
- "Biophilia Effekt" - Clemens G. Arvay

a collection of scientific studies on the benefits of nature for health, personal development, social life and environmental consciousness can be found here:

- https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1qTXo42N4lwm9_1JhXDzEHOUsF0jrXTAV



session 4

This session started with a review of the 3 previous sessions, outlining the central aspects of each one:

QUALITY IN EDUCATION

Reminding that Education should not postpone mental, emotional and physical health, over the study or memorization of contents, the speakers invited to review the *Eight central aspects of quality education*:

- Self-education of the adults
- Trustful relationships
- Intrinsic motivation
- Personal development in democratic environments
- Free play
- Contact with the real world
- Situational and process orientated
- No discrimination or segregation

Continuing with the review of session 2, "Democratic Education".

DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

Its fundamental pillars are:

- **Self-determination:** Human rights, mental and physical health, self-directed education
- **Democratic community processes:** Community of equals, and democratic participation.



23 February 2023 / 17h00-20h00

Session title:

What does a Democratic School in Nature look like, and how to become one?
Practical aspects of a "new type of school"

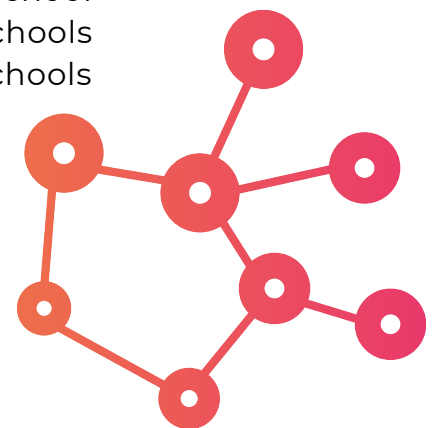
Speakers:

Aurelia Bachmann & Matteo Sturlese
Albero della Tuscia
Paola Boccia & Gabriel Groiss,
PlayaEscuela

DIFFERENT MODELS OF DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

In order to understand how Democratic Education is implemented in practice, the different known models are mentioned:

- Sudbury Valley School
- Summerhill School
- Sociocratic schools
- Libertarian schools



During the review of session 3, the speakers remind the participants about the many benefits of the natural environment for a healthy and complete development.

BENEFITS OF NATURE

- HEALTH: mood enhancer, better sleep, stronger immune system, cardio-respiratory, fitness abilities
- DEVELOPMENT: language skills, memory, calm and attention, concentration, creativity
- SOCIAL: affectivity, self-confidence, self-esteem, self-reflection, kindness, communication and cooperation
- ENVIRONMENT: ecological behaviour, mindfulness, aesthetical and spiritual values, eco-systems

But, what does it look like...?

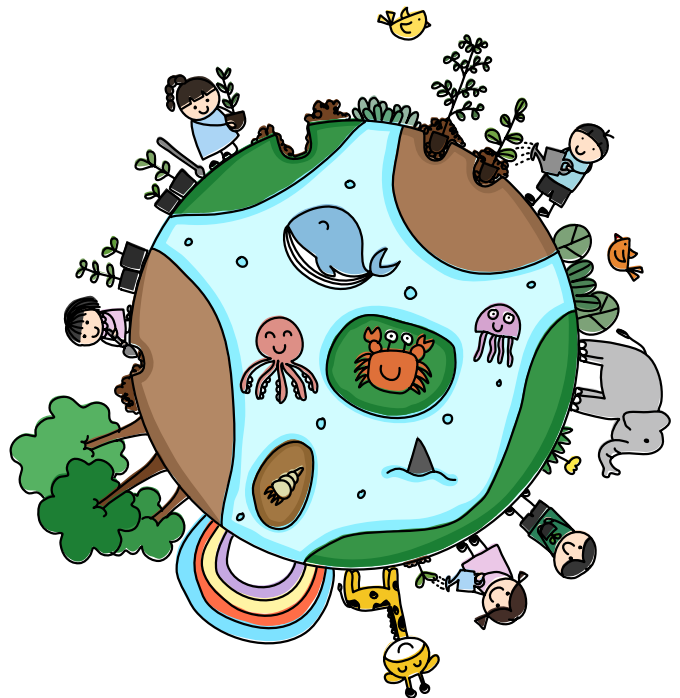
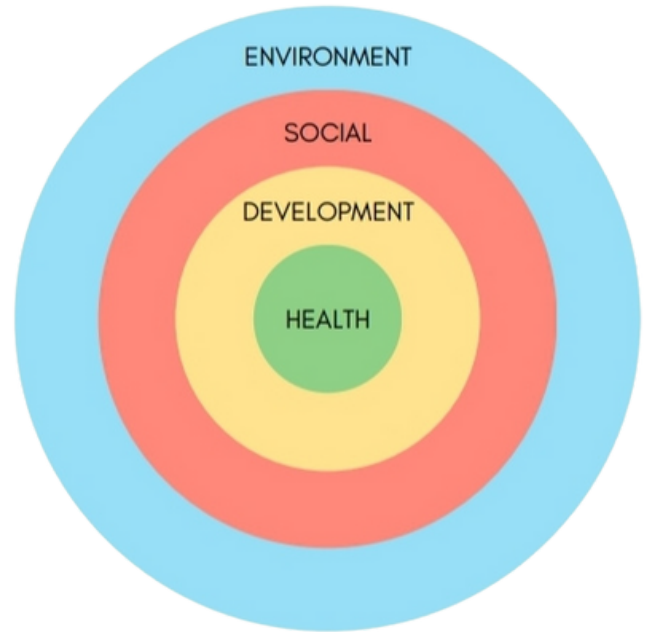
In order to reach a concrete vision of possible examples, PlayaEscuela and Albero della Tuscia have prepared and shown some pictures and videos to accompany their description.

PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLS IN NATURE

what does "in nature" mean? A house in a city...with a garden? Preferably "Wild" nature
what is wild? How to get access to Nature in the cities? Searching for Parks, or nearby and accessible rural environments
For which school levels? Nature is everywhere and for everyone!

SPACE

- Location
- Nature (safety, diversity, access, legal)
- Surrounding (Potential members, economic autonomy)
- Setting: bubble/eco-village...
- Buildings in nature
- School buildings, thematic spaces, materials
- Excursions



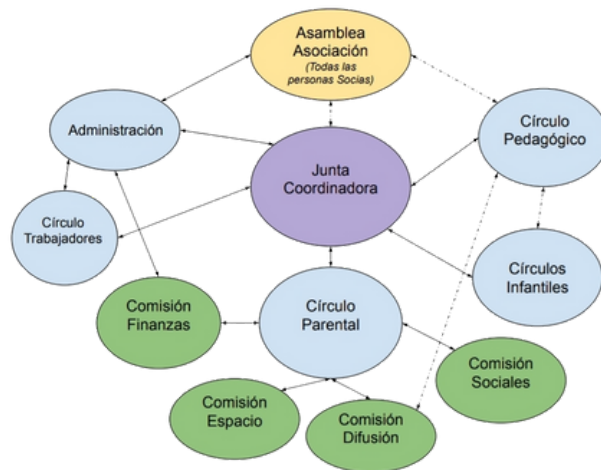
CYCLES AND AGES

Some age-mixing groups benefits:

- Inclusion practices
- Learning from each other
- Development of different society roles, we don't look over our shoulder
- Diversity of impulses, enriched learning

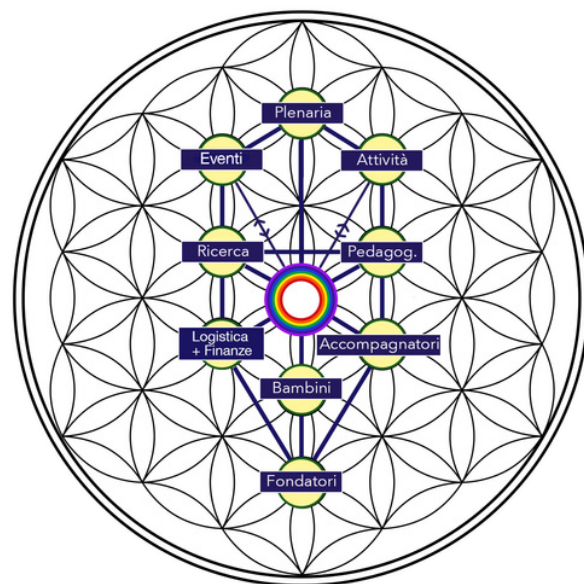
COMMUNITY:

- Legal framework
- Organigram
- De-institutionalisation
- Size
- Ratios
- Structure and schedules
- Enrolments
- Visitors
- Team
- Parents
- Role of the adult



KEY ELEMENTS OF DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLS

- Sovereignty (Children, Staff, Parents)
- Freedom and responsibilities
- Assemblies (types, styles, rules, roles, votes, majority, consent, consensus, democratic culture and values)
- Rules and sanctions (Constitution or Rule Book), conflict resolution, culture of trust and corporation
- Activities and learning environments and concepts (play, projects, committees, workshops, lessons)



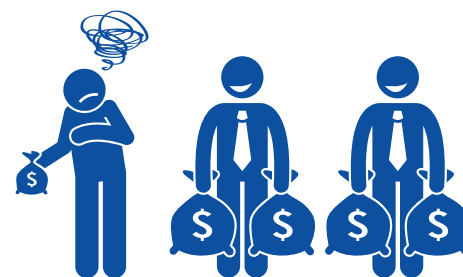
CHALLENGES

SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS

- Evaluation
- Titles

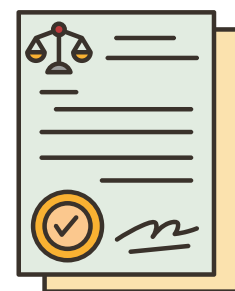
ECONOMIC SITUATION

- Access to public funds depends on legal requirements (still outdated and inflexible in several aspects).
- Membership fees vs. staff wages (vs. public investment per child)
- Dependency on "sponsors"



LEGAL SITUATION

- New standard, but not legal
- Different countries, different laws



CRITICISM TO DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLS

- Size (micro vs. macro)
- Economical exclusive
- Liberal
- Different cultures/models



ACADEMIC DEBATE

Evidence and research Universities

- <https://suitable-education.uk/evidence-base-for-self-directed-education/>
- <https://www.progressiveeducation.org/post-category/research/>



bonus session

Since the enthusiasm of the participants in the workshop was very high, and the project team had the feeling that the 12 hours of training were not enough to clarify doubts, debate, share experiences and reflections, an extra session was offered to the participants.

The Team decided to leave it as an open session, where the participants could share their experiences and make questions.

During the session, the following topics have been discussed:

- Profile and background of Pedagogical Staff.
- Adequate ratio of children and adults to allow quality education
- Families and Staff co-working structures
- Programming and structure in self-directed learning
- Conflict resolution.
- Children's freedom through economic independence.
- Settlement in nature and toilet management.
- Pedagogical planning and evaluation in democratic education.
- Limitations of the national legal frameworks (in the different nationalities) with respect to the recommendations of the European Union, UNESCO, etc.

Compared to the previous ones, this session was, shorter and less attended live. However, at the request of several participants who were unable to attend, it was recorded and made available, so that each participant could have access to a recorded version at their own free time.

30 March 2023 / 17:30-20h

Session title:

Bonus Session: exchange and questions and answers about Democratic Education in Nature

Speakers:

Paola Boccia & Gabriel Groiss,
PlayaEscuela
Aurelia Bachmann & Matteo Sturlese,
Albero della Tuscia



Outcomes and feedback

TESTIMONIALS

Some testimonials received during and after training:

"The DEN training provided a whole new framework for teacher education in colleges and universities.

I wish the content of the DEN training was the content of my original 3 year professional bachelor primary school teacher! (this was the official title of my bachelor degree)

The DEN training gave a clear insight into topics that really need to be implemented in education.

Also, the training made me realise that the current education system is deliberately failing our children in unlocking their full potential by, most of the time, 'locking' them onto their chairs having to learn things that don't benefit them at all.

Thank you once again for the amazing training.

It was without a doubt one of the most energy and life giving training I have ever followed in my life.

*I'd love to stay connected to all of you!
A warm hug".*

Kenny, Belgium, 06/03/2023

"I want to thank you for doing this, thank you for sharing your knowledge and experience and most importantly: THANK YOU for making it accessible to anyone, not narrow it down to people working in alternative education, for instance. I feel very grateful for being able to listen to you. Thanks again and best of luck with all! It was a pleasure. Long live DEN! :)))"

Katarzyna, Poland, 23/02/2023

"Thank you Gabriel, Paola, Martina, Matteo and Aurelia for realising this fantastic sessions!!! You covered so many crucial points...amazing!"

Paola, Italy, 23/02/2023

Outcomes

At the end of the training, participants completed a questionnaire.

They indicated that, on average, the training has had a very high impact on their realities; the vast majority see it possible to apply what they learned during the workshop in their schools.

In the case of a follow-up project, all participants expressed that they would like to take part in it.



"I am very happy that I had the opportunity to participate in the DEN-training. Unfortunately I wasn't able to take part in three of the zoom-meetings, but I did enjoy a lot to watch the recordings afterwards.

I found the four sessions all very valuable. I really liked the aspects of qualitative education, the overview of democratic schools and the benefits of nature. I found the information to be clear and comprehensive. It was very interesting to learn about the experiences of Playa Escuela and Albergo della Tuscia.

I am working in a non-democratic public school in a city. Often I feel sad about what my colleagues and I offer to our children. I would like to be able to offer them a whole different learning environment.

I really would like to see some changes in 'normal' public schools and I am hopeful that the DEN-training will have made more people aware of the need for this and the great value of democratic education in nature.

For me it was good to hear that even small steps can mean a lot, such as taking the children on outings to nature or even to just bring some nature into the classroom.

Thank you very very much!"

Sigrid, Belgium, 06/03/2023

"I would like to thank you for all these sessions of knowledge and experiences from different points of view and locations. THANKS!"

Helena, Spain, 23/02/2023

*"I have watched all 4 sessions and I am so grateful for everything I have learned! Thank you so much for that! :-)
"*

Denise, Italy, 08/03/2023

"Was a really moving experience, thanks guys. You lit a spark for me."

Soledad, Argentina, 23/02/2023

"I've enjoyed meeting up these last few weeks very much. It has really broadened my scope on what democratic education can look like. Unfortunately I can't join today because my kids are free and really want to go to the sea. So I'll better practice what I preach, right? I hope to have some inter vision or sound-boarding online with lots of you a little more often than the EUDECs. This Erasmus+ idea was really genius. Aside from the lack of alumni formula, it really brilliant. Thank you and wish you all the best "

Alexander, Belgium, 23/02/2023

"Thank you so much DEN Team. Thank you for the quality of the training, for the detailed and deep work shared and the clear explanation throughout the presentations. Thank you for making it enjoyable and close, even when telematics circumstances can make it more complicated.

Nowadays, and seeing the participation and backgrounds of the group, we have certain experiences in the world of training, because we are passionate about the subject and because we think a transformation in education is necessary. That is why I would emphasise the quality that you have offered and that has been evident in your exhibition. Although today we have become "accustomed" to online training, it is not easy to maintain attention and generate dynamics, which has been taken into account and has been favourably carried out. Thank you for your generosity and for a well done course".

Jone, Spain, 22/03/23

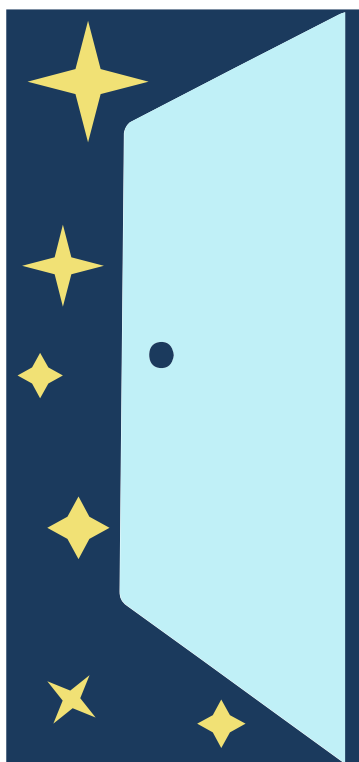


"I want to tell you that I loved it, especially today. I would have been so grateful to have people to share with while I was accompanying in our little school! Today especially, when you mentioned various difficulties, issues with the families..., I felt very identified. Anyway, thank you very much for your fantastic work and we will keep in touch."

Mercedes, Spain, 23/02/2023

"So natural and beautiful that it's hard to believe all schools/kindergartens are not like this!! also feel very inspired and moved by sharing your experience and knowledge. Thank you so much and let the sparkle and positive energy turn into action. 😊"

Magdalena, Poland, 23/02/2023



The coordinating partner for this activity was PlayaEscuela. Due to the large number of people enrolled, the administrative management of the training was more demanding than expected. However, it has been considered as a great opportunity to learn how to manage it in a structured way, adding tools that allow to create, in a virtual room, a safe and trustful space for all attendees.

In response to the cultural diversity, technical complexities and work-life balance needs of the participants, some flexibility was offered, while ensuring that the objectives of the activity were met.

For the DEN project team, both the creation and internal development of the training have had a very positive impact. Communication has been assertive and effective, and although everyone had clearly assigned tasks, all parties have worked willingly and collaboratively. They are very satisfied and grateful for the teamwork that has been achieved.

All members of the DEN team have been very satisfied and grateful with the feedbacks from the participants, which have reinforced the conviction that there is a great need to further disseminate this pedagogical concept, and that, in general, there is little knowledge about Democratic Education, Nature Education, and the wonderful results offered by the fusion of the two.

In conclusion, the great appreciation, positive response and enthusiasm of the participants motivated the DEN team to reflect on the possibilities of continuing this project with approaches and methodologies that would allow a greater impact on local communities.



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