

MASD 2020  
STUDIO PROJECT

DESCHOOLING EDUCATION

A project about how to make the public school system more sustainable and valuable  
to create a more sustainable future society

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# STATEMENT OF INTENT

## ***Provide a single sentence introduction to your project***

Since children are going to be the adults of tomorrow their education should engage them to form a valuable future society through sustainable education that is fun, equal and foster each individual.

## ***Provide a single sentence ‘twist’***

Education is one of the 17 UN sustainable development goals but the only action that is happening so far is about changing the curriculum and not changing the way knowledge, especially sustainability, is getting mediated.

## ***Identify the overarching question or statement of enquiry***

How can design improve the education system, no matter if schooled or home educated, and make it as inclusive and available for every child as possible?

## ***Describe the ways that you are engaging design***

This module aims to engage with the education system through design by looking at various aspects of schooling and unschooling and combining those two worlds to lead a path towards a more connected and sustainable society. This was achieved by research into unschooling and schooling through primary and secondary research. Furthermore the research has defined gaps and opportunities for design to intervene and create tools that change the way children get taught nowadays.

## ***Describe the outputs that you have [or will] produce***

The first output is a proposal for a game that is in development in collaboration with a student of the school of education in Austria. This game should act like an educational game for unschooled and schooled systems but with more fun and less curriculum-based background. The main goal is to experience different ways of learning and to gain a lot of knowledge around a self-chosen topic. According to Eve L. Ewing, it is best to communicate important issues through pictures and easy language to reach a broader audience. Therefore, the second output will be a manual which describes the value of education combined with illustrations and tips about how to implement them.

To organize this project better for myself, I created the “cards of knowledge” which are a tool for researcher from different professions. The cards help to define comparators, touchpoints and unexpected influences and are customizable for every purpose.

Finally, a homepage that sums up all the key findings of the research and presents the proposed ideas will be created and updated throughout the module.

## ***Describe the theoretical contexts you are working within concerning both design and sustainability***

The research is focusing on unschooling (home education), Schooling, Impacts of Covid-19; Inequalities, Racism, Decolonizing the curriculum, Shadow education; Play and learning; How buildings, plants and animals learn, Collaboration and communication, Games design and what impact design can have. All those categories are influencing the design outputs.

## ***Outline the key comparators whose work relates to what you are doing***

The research is mostly inspired by alternative education advocates like Paulo Freire, Ivan D. Illich, John Holt, Stephen Sterling and Howard Gardner. Helen E. Lees is working with a similar approach of researching about home education and how it can impact the traditional education system. Stuart Brown, Eve L. Ewing, “Relative Creative” and “The institute of play” have mainly inspired my design proposals and are comparators for the creative work in this module.

## ***Identify your potential measures of success***

The project is successful if it gains awareness about the issues in education and motivates people to make a change on their own without waiting for the government to act. As a matter of fact, it will be hard to measure this success but through introducing the outcomes to the target audience it will create some discourse for sure.

I am going to present my proposed interventions to experts, children and parents (my interview partners) and will record their reactions and feedback. The game will be truly developed in the Master’s module and it would be amazing if in the end a final product is the output that can be used in classrooms and homes. Maybe there will be a possibility to talk at a conference this summer because all the talks that I have attended so far addressed all the issues that have been defined through the research. This offers real opportunities and necessity of the created tools and might be acknowledged by various educators.

# INTRODUCTION

“Education = the process of teaching or learning, especially in a school or college, or the knowledge that you get from this” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch/education>)

Is this the real definition of education? Or is it more than just getting taught at schools and colleges?

Previous research has shown that there is a lack in the education system. It is not only about WHAT children get taught, but HOW they get knowledge mediated. The school system in most countries is still based on ideas from the industrial revolution. Children get schooled into a system that is not sustainable, they don't learn for life but for school. I have been looking into alternatives to public schools and started to take a closer look into unschooling and home education. Unschooling should be considered as an alternative to public schools but there are still some misinterpretations and a lot of ignorance happening around this topic. Learning and schooling is something different and therefore change must happen soon.

The following project is about education and how education can be made more sustainable and valuable for children, so they rather learn for life and not for assessments. It especially focuses in Europe and USA on the public school systems which are the main providers of education for the majority of children living in this area. Exploring home education, as one of the biggest contrasts to public schools, and therefore a considerable alternative, the research will define the threads and values of schooling and unschooling to conclude with the real sustainable values of education. Primary and secondary research have been used and are highlighting that qualitative education is a privilege.

The role of a designer in this issue will be discussed through looking at the different systems and possible proposals towards change in the second part of the workbook.

Furthermore, several tools will be described as proposals that can be used in schools and home educated systems to fill a gap of unequal education and to make a change in the broken system.

The following research questions have been developed and will be answered through research about design and the system.

## Research Questions:

What is the value of education?

What does unschooling and schooling mean?

How can design help to de-school the public-school system to make education more equal?



FIG 2: JOURNALLING

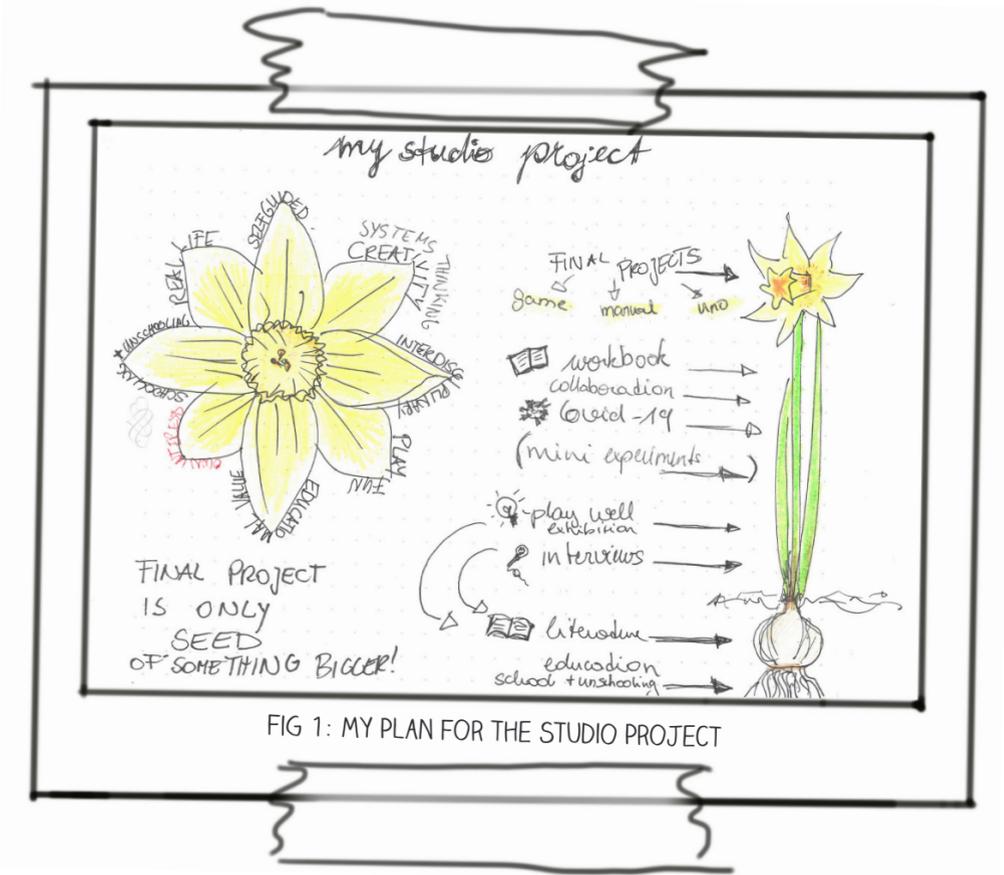


FIG 1: MY PLAN FOR THE STUDIO PROJECT

# METHODOLOGY

The project is based on different research methods. It consists of primary and secondary design research. The secondary research is all about already existing work and literature.<sup>1</sup> A lot of readings, discussions (webinars) and some exhibitions have influenced my work, and will be summarized in the following part of this workbook. Especially Ivan D. Illich, Paulo Freire and John Holt have influenced my work significantly as well as Ken Robinson and Stephen Sterling. Furthermore Helen E. Less, who works with a similar approach as I do towards education and Eve L. Ewing, who looks at the inequalities, are key comparators too.

In that case secondary research didn't seem to be enough for the module. Therefore primary research has been done too, which is original and new research, done through various methods by the researcher.<sup>2</sup> The first step was the inclusion of a questionnaire into an exhibited artefact at the work in progress show at the University of Brighton in February 2020. Additionally, interviews with children and adults (schooled and unschooled) have been conducted which led to a qualitative research of information.

## WIP Poster analysis

The questionnaire at the Work in Progress exhibition of the whole Master's course was designed as a poster and was only asking one question: What do you think about unschooling?

Including a short description of what unschooling means, the audience should engage with the poster and write their answers for this question on a post-it and stick it onto the poster. Together with a tiny flipbook about my previous research and what this project is about they could dig deeper into the field if they were interested. Through this short "questionnaire" I gained some data about what people have in mind when they think about unschooling. Answers like **"Children would end up all having different levels by the time they finish."** **What about the social aspect? When children are @ home in their own neighbourhood, they will not be exposed to different kinds of people and Freedom of school. We can learn anything by myself and complete personal idea to help each other and our society"** have influenced my further work and have motivated me to actually talk to people who

experience home education themselves. There were in total 18 answers on the poster, some were very clear for/against unschooling and some included different views on the topic. The answers have been coded into the following categories:

- C1...improvements for current school system
- C2...positive about unschooling
- C3...negative about unschooling, difficulties

As individual comments could be separated into different categories it showed that 11 comments were against unschooling, 5 comments were positive about unschooling and 9 comments included suggestions for improvements for the education system. This showed that there is still a lot of confusion about the topic and that unschooling also doesn't have a good reputation. The worries are justified, but they are still only assumptions from the visitors of the WIP exhibition. As there were several comments about the current situation in schools it can be concluded that there is necessity for action.

The full analysis and all the answers to the question can be found in the annex of this workbook.

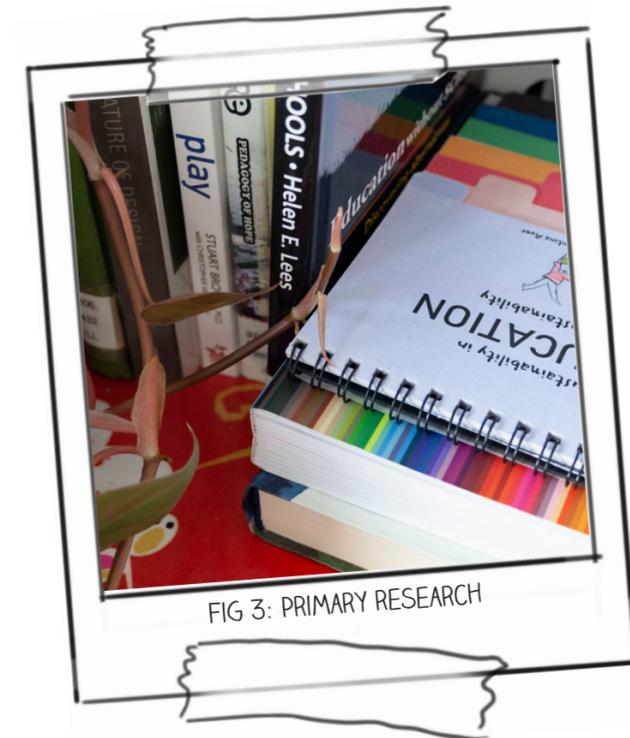
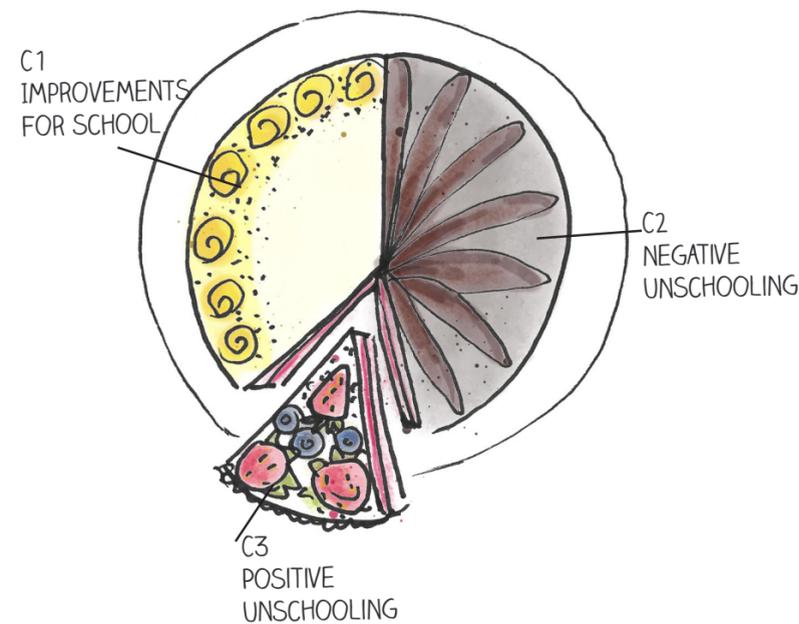


FIG 3: PRIMARY RESEARCH



FIG 4: WIP EXHIBITION POSTER

<sup>1</sup> Alex Milton, and Rodgers, Paul. *Research Methods for Product Design*. London: Laurence King Publishing, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Alex Milton, and Rodgers, Paul. *Research Methods for Product Design*. London: Laurence King Publishing, 2013.

# METHODOLOGY

## Analysing interviews (coding)

“One of the simplest and quickest ways of eliciting information from individuals is by asking them directly.” (Milton, Alex, and Paul Rodgers. *Research Methods for Product Design*, 2013. Page 69)

Interviews are a great way of gaining information and knowledge about a certain topic. Especially in design research. In that case it was mandatory to get in touch with people who are experiencing unschooled or schooled system. Therefore, asking children and their parents was a great opportunity to gain valuable data. Despite all the data that is already available on blogs, books and magazines about being educated at home, there was still something missing. They all focus too much on the positives and never really talk about the negatives which is necessary to understand the whole concept too. Especially because of the many negative comments on the WIP poster. Through this exhibition the project got a lot of attention and it was easier finding some people to get in touch with. Due to the Covid-19 outbreak the interviews had to be done online, which affected the output of the research minimal. But Covid-19 affected and influenced the project in general, and not necessarily in a negative perspective. This issue will be addressed later in this workbook. Through Skype, Microsoft Teams and Zoom it was possible to interview in total 13 people about their opinion on school, the current situation and their suggestions and ideas for a valuable and sustainable education. The interviews were basically semi-structured, only some core questions were asked but other than that it was more like a conversation between the interviewer and the participant.<sup>3</sup> Core questions for each participant like: what they would change at school, what they think about playing in education, how sustainability is included in the education and what they like/don't like about their education; have been asked. Children who are schooled were also asked about their first thoughts of school and if they have heard about unschooling before. Home educated children got questions about their social surrounding and how they prefer to learn. Some children talked to me without their parents, some with their parents which also possibly influenced the data. But talking to a stranger alone through a computer doesn't feel comfortable for some children therefore I have been aware of this interruption. The participants were Austrian and

British and recruited through personal contacts. Overall, 7 children were interviewed, two of them were home educated. Two mothers with children who go to school, two mothers who home educated their children, one student of the school of education and one adult who has been home educated and is now a teacher herself took also part in the research. Due to privacy terms and conditions no names will be used in this workbook therefore the participants will be called “Core Participant (CP)1-13”. The interviews got transcribed and coded. Qualitative data analysis method developed by Philip Mayring has been used as a coding method. Mayring emphasises the constitution of categories to ensure reliability and comparability in the final analysis. Important passages of the transcriptions were paraphrased to develop a structure. Different categories have been developed and coding rules were defined to put the paraphrases into those categories.<sup>4</sup> Following categories have been defined (see Fig. 5).

The full coding structure with all categories and phrases from the interviews can be found in the annex as well as the information sheet that has been sent to participants, questions and consent forms.

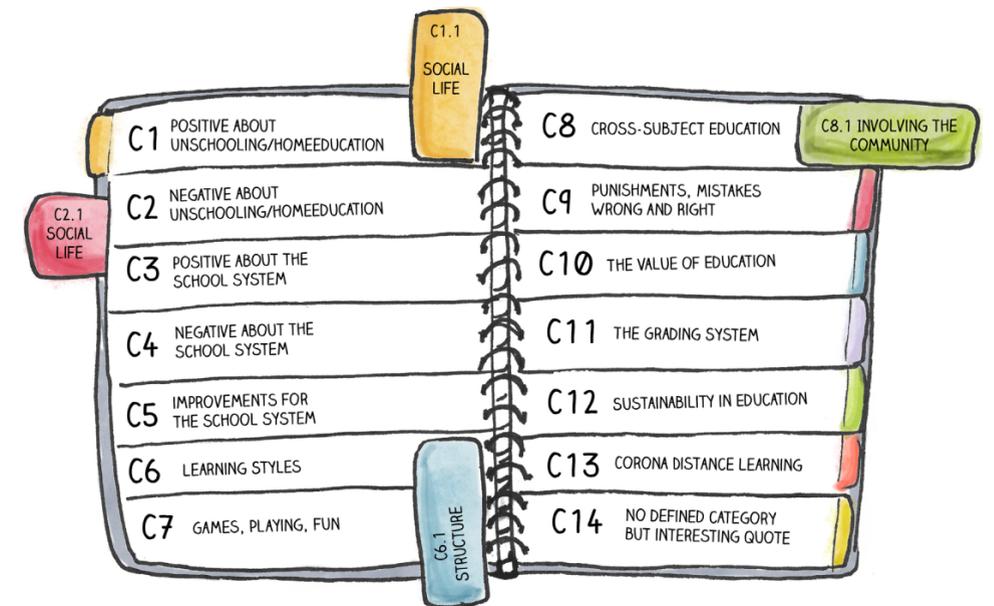


FIG 5: CATEGORIES AND CODING



<sup>3</sup> Alex Milton, and Rodgers, Paul. *Research Methods for Product Design*. London: Laurence King Publishing, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Philipp Mayring. *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse. Grundlagen und Techniken*. 12. Auflage. Weinheim und Basel: Beltz Verlag, 2015

# UNSCHOOLING VS. SCHOOLING

Since this project is about how to de-school the education system it was important to take a closer look at these contraire systems and understand their threads and values. Both, home education and school, show pro and contra aspects and it is very interesting to see what each of them can offer for children. The first part will be focusing on unschooling, leading into a detailed research about the school system followed by further important aspects of both subjects.

## Unschooling

My recent research has brought me across various education methods alternative to the public school system. As a designer who has never been in touch with any alternatives to the traditional system this was a journey into an unknown swamp of knowledge. Unschooling has really impressed me and was something I never thought of. In Austria unschooling is not possible per se, children still must attend an exam in the end of the school year and technically it is not allowed to take a child longer than three years out of school. Home education has also very negative reputation in Austria because it often gets in connection with religious and radically right or left winged ideas which shouldn't be the purpose of a sustainable education method.<sup>5</sup> But in Great Britain and other countries like the US or Canada, home education and therefore the unschooling system is allowed and has a better reputation than in my native country.

What is unschooling exactly and why is it important for a change towards a more sustainable education system, a de-schooled school system? Following, the terms “home education” and “unschooling” will be used to describe the same approach. It is necessary to mention that this is different to home schooling, which is miming schooled education at home, often with religious backgrounds. <sup>6</sup> Unschooling is fully child centred. No curriculum, no tests or grades, no influence from the school system. Children decide what they want to learn, what they are interested in and their parents are supporting them as much as needed. Unschooling means having a lot of trust into your child as a parent which is very motivating for our future society.<sup>7</sup> It is not a new model, in

fact home education has existed before school was invented. John Holt, one of the advocates of the home education movement in the USA, has written several books about the toxic public school system and concludes in his work that unschooling is the only correct way of education. He worked together amongst others with Ivan D. Illich and was very popular in the 1960s and 1970s. At the beginning he was very enthusiastic about changing the system but throughout the years he found less success and decided to fully focus on home education and give up on revolutionising school.<sup>8</sup>

Currently only 37% of adults have trust that children can cure the issues we caused and are still causing on this planet. With this attitude no change is going to happen, and we have to realize that young people are the agents of tomorrow's change.<sup>9</sup> But unschooling can show the real value of knowledge and education. Many people are not aware that home education is an option, they think it is illegal in Great Britain, but it is not and has never been. Whereas in other countries it is illegal indeed, for example in Germany or Austria until a certain age. Which is very crucial because it forces parents to school their children even though, according to the UN Human rights, home education should be allowed and legal anywhere because it includes the human right for suitable education for each individual.<sup>10,11</sup>

Home education also carries a lot of bad reputation along with several incidents and happenings from the past. But therefore, it should be even more important to inform the community about this option correctly so that they are aware of this alternative.<sup>12,13</sup> There are a lot of benefits that unschooled children take away from their youth. It is a natural way of learning life skills, general knowledge and developing the child's personality and confidence. Some parents say that their children are more mature and independent than children who go through the public-school system all their life. They also mention that creativity is more important than academic achievements and the children are not afraid of being different in the future, so it fosters individuality and originality. And this will have the positive effect of a personal voice and mind. Beside individuality, also working together, working as a team with their parents and the surrounding environment (neighbours, friends, siblings etc) is a key capability home educated children have to

engage with. Nature, society, exhibitions, up-to-date circumstances, and real-life experiences are building up their knowledge. Websites and online platforms offer a lot of information too, so it is much more easier to home educate these days than about twenty years ago. Children are using all their senses to learn and get to develop and experience their own style of how to process and understand information.<sup>14,15</sup> Learning subjects like chemistry through cooking and maths through shopping is also a clear benefit so children get the connections how to use their theory in real life applications. **“Home education is all about the journey.”** (CP9, Interview by Valentina Auer, 2020) Home education is the perfect model for independent and self-directed learning. Self-directed learner ask themselves: where do I want to get in life and how do I get there? They learn for themselves and for nobody else, but they are also keen to share their knowledge with people who are interested in the same things.<sup>16</sup>

There are also several reasons why families decide to take their kids out of school or never send them there. The participants of the interviews mentioned for example things like the system didn't fit them as both children were dyslexic and got treated the wrong way in school. Others mentioned that it was more accidentally but then it happened to be the better choice for their children. Or also because of prior experiences of home education in the family.<sup>17,18</sup>

**“So part of the reason was that she couldn't start on time but the other reason was that my mother home-educated the youngest of my siblings and she was a teacher, so it was one of the things to do.”** (CP6, Interview by Valentina Auer, 2020) Bullying, racism and harassment are also reasons why parents decide an education at home is necessary.<sup>19,20</sup> There isn't any significant age group when to start/end home education. It is more about the feeling that parents and children have. Some parents decide to never let their kids go through the school system, but in most cases children enter school or college at some point because they want to learn more for themselves. And it isn't a problem for them to adapt to the system then, home educated children actually find it very easy to go through the system because they know why they want to learn and how they want to learn.<sup>21</sup>

A guide for teenager about unschooling has been developed by Grace Llewinn, called *“The Teenage Liberation Handbook: How to Quit School and Get a Real Life and Education”* written in 1991. It should engage teenager who are

<sup>5</sup> Auke Boersma, *Nie mehr!*, Homeschoolers.at, June 11, 2016. <https://homeschoolers.at/erfahrungsberichte/orf-sendung-nie-mehr-schule.html>

<sup>6</sup> Valentina Auer. *Sustainability in education for sustainability*. Sustainable Design Presents workbook. Brighton, 2020

<sup>7</sup> Sara, *Is unschooling working?*, Happiness-hereblog, November 28, 2019. <https://happinesshereblog.com/is-unschooling-working/>

<sup>8</sup> Roland Meighan, and Richard Bailey. *John Holt*. London: Continuum, 2007.

<sup>9</sup> David W Orr. *The Nature of Design: Ecology, Culture, and Human Intention*. New York;Oxford;Oxford University Press, 2002;2004.

<sup>10</sup> Helen E. Lees. *Education without Schools: Discovering Alternatives*. Bristol: The Policy Press, 2014;2013.

<sup>11</sup> “Organic Apples and Free Learning - Unschooling in Austria”, YouTube video, 9:59, posted by “DadsTalkCommunity Torsten Klaus”, May 29, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6zdT4P8g1f45> Interview CP6

<sup>12</sup> Core Participant No. 9, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, May 5, 2020)

<sup>13</sup> Helen E. Lees. “Education without Schools: Discovering Alternatives”. Bristol: The Policy Press, 2014;2013.

<sup>14</sup> Core Participant No. 9, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, May 5, 2020)

<sup>15</sup> Peter Gray & Riley, Gina. *The Challenges and Benefits of Unschooling, According to 232 Families Who Have Chosen that Route*. Journal of Unschooling and Alternative Learning. 7. 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Blake Poles, *The art of self-directed learning*. United States: Tells Peak Press, 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Core Participant No. 9, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, May 5, 2020)

<sup>18</sup> Core Participant No. 6, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, April 30, 2020)

<sup>19</sup> Michael Jodah, *Unschooling and how i became liberated: the teenage liberation handbook, quitting school and getting a real life and education*, in “Journal of Unschooling and Alternative Learning 2017 Vol. 11 Issue 21”, 2017. Online: <https://jua.nipissingu.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/25/2017/05/v11i21.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Helen E. Lees. *Education without Schools: Discovering Alternatives*. Bristol: The Policy Press, 2014;2013.

<sup>21</sup> Core Participant No. 9, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, May 5, 2020)

# UNSCHOOLING VS. SCHOOLING

struggling with school to take the alternative path.<sup>22</sup> Also the participants of the interviews showed that there is no rule for when to start or end home education.

And since everybody has the right for a suitable education it can be an attractive alternative to school. But is it really like that? Beside all the benefits home education has also detriments which are often not mentioned in blogs or articles about this topic. Unschooling is not an easy path, not for the parents nor the children. It is a privilege because some families can't afford to have one parent staying at home or working from home to educate the children.<sup>23</sup>

**“When you take the child out of school, you get nothing. You don't get any help. You don't get any of that funding, any child generates costs.”** (CP10, Interview by Valentina Auer, 2020) All materials, excursions and also experiences have to be paid through the own budget.

**“What about the social aspect? When children are @ home in their own neighbourhood, they will not be exposed to different kinds of people”** (Unknown, WIP exhibition poster, 2020) **“The social component is absolutely missing and this is a totally weird society who do that.”** (CP2, Interview by Valentina Auer, 2020) **“The main thing that people worry about are the social aspects. Or how will my kids meet people?”**

(CP6, Interview by Valentina Auer, 2020) One negative factor that has been mentioned very often was the social aspect. A reason why some people are afraid of taking their kids out of school, taking them away from their friends and contemporaries. For some unschooled children it is harder to get to know people, which has also to do with personal preferences. Or because they are more mature than children at their own age, so they don't know what to talk about with their peers. But they are not socially awkward in most cases, they find their friends through other exercise, like dancing classes, music school, workshops, forest schools and home education communities. **“So most of my friends I talk to on a more regular basis are from a danceschool”** (CP7, Interview by Valentina Auer, 2020) And let's not forget about the children from the neighbourhood, the surrounding community. Home educated children mix socially even more than children in schools because they are not forced into a classroom with people from the same age and sometimes

neighbourhood.<sup>24</sup> But also parents have to deal with the social issues. Some families will turn away from parents who home educate their children, yet family members sometimes don't accept the decision they have made. **“Even family friends, they didn't use to come around anymore. Their kids and our kids, close family friends.”** (CP10, Interview by Valentina Auer, 2020) It seems like home education is not fully accepted in society, which is a thread that home educated families have to deal with, no matter which approach they chose. Another disadvantage that is often underestimated is that children can't escape from problems they face with their education. **“You can complain about your teachers. But you can't complain about your parents, with whome would you complain?”** (CPI, Interview by Valentina Auer, 2020)

The problem is always there. A child in school can leave their schoolbooks and stuff in the school building, they “only” have to work on homework but that's it. A home educated child cannot leave those things behind. Even if they have an own study room, everything seems to be educational and has to have to do with learning. This is an assumption which is partly true, because those kids also have their learning times and free time where they can do whatever they want like every other child as well. But they can tailor it to their needs, which again is a benefit.<sup>25, 26</sup> What is important is that the government knows about the educational path the parents decided on. There are about 60.000 children who are currently home educated in England and the number is rising. The families get annual visits by Ofsted inspectors, the school's watchdogs. Some families get in trouble with them, but according to my primary research these inspections are necessary to ensure that the child is actually learning something and doesn't get brainwashed by their parents. One downside of home education, and also a reason why many don't support the philosophy behind it, is that parents can harm children physically and mentally. Therefore, inspectors like in Great Britain the Ofsted ones, shouldn't be seen as enemies.<sup>27, 28</sup> **“If this is somebody who doesn't know basic knowledge they will never teach the child something, for example how simple maths work.”** (CPI, Interview by Valentina Auer) Children need mentors and role models, they need some authority but educators should function more as guides towards knowledge than the leaders of it.<sup>29, 30, 31</sup>

Both teachers who attended the interviews had a very negative view on home education. It is relatable because it would cost them their job but also because they think one must be qualified to teach. A schooled child who participated in an interview commented that their teacher is a real teacher and not one of their parents.<sup>32</sup> But are teacher really qualified for every individual? In fact, one doesn't have to be a teacher to home educate their child. Another reason why most families are afraid of doing this step if they realize that the system doesn't fit their children.<sup>33, 34</sup> Another thread, which can also be an opportunity, is that home educated kids have to be very disciplined. Learning at the same place where you can equally play is hard, but through that they learn how to motivate and structure themselves to be self-directed learners.<sup>35, 36</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Michael Jodah, *Unschooling and how i became liberated: the teenage liberation handbook, quitting school and getting a real life and education*, in “Journal of Unschooling and Alternative Learning 2017 Vol. 11 Issue 21”, 2017. Online: <https://jua.nipissingu.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/25/2017/05/v11i211.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> Desmarais, Idzie, *The Cons of Unschooling*, I am unschooled. Yes I can write. (blog), January 6, 2010. <https://yes-i-can-write.blogspot.com/2010/01/cons-of-unschooling.html>

<sup>24</sup> Roland Meighan, and Richard Bailey. *John Holt*. London: Continuum, 2007.

<sup>25</sup> Core Participant No. 9, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, May 5, 2020)

<sup>26</sup> Core Participant No. 6, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, April 30, 2020)

<sup>27</sup> Martin Myres, *Record numbers of children are now homeschooled, but who's keeping an eye on the parents?* Theconversation.com, December 12, 2017 online: <https://theconversation.com/record-numbers-of-children-are-now-homeschooled-but-whos-keeping-an-eye-on-the-parents-88449>,

<sup>28</sup> Helen E. Lees. *Education without Schools: Discovering Alternatives*. Bristol: The Policy Press, 2014;2013.

<sup>29</sup> David W Orr, *The Nature of Design: Ecology, Culture, and Human Intention*. New York;Oxford;Oxford University Press, 2002;2004;

<sup>30</sup> Core Participant No. 1, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, May 1, 2020)

<sup>31</sup> Core Participant No. 2, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, April 27, 2020)

<sup>32</sup> Core Participant No. 13, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, May 8, 2020)

<sup>33</sup> Core Participant No. 9, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, May 5, 2020)

<sup>34</sup> Core Participant No. 6, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, April 30, 2020)

<sup>35</sup> Core Participant No. 9, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, May 5, 2020)

<sup>36</sup> Core Participant No. 3, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, April 27, 2020)

# UNSCHOOLING VS. SCHOOLING

In summary unschooling, or home education, is a possible alternative to the school system for families that can afford it and have the strength, time and patience to do so. For some families, the home educated system might fit, but they might be afraid to do so or don't have the capacities and strength. In addition, other alternatives to the public-school system, for example Montessori schools and democratic schools like the very famous Summerhill school in Suffolk, England, are also not accessible for everybody. Summerhill school was founded already in 1921 by A. S. Neill and is based on democracy. Children are on the same level as adults, decisions are made by elections and it is all about the interests and passion of the children.<sup>37,38,39</sup>

Home education is a privilege but so is education in general. Schooling is an option, education is not! And this has to be clearly communicated to all parents and educators.<sup>40</sup> The participants of the qualitative research all agreed on one main benefit: unschooling is all about the fun and enjoyment. Learning without enjoying has no value to the children, therefore it is not sustainable. Children can grow and develop through their own interests and learn how to be critical and think for themselves. They don't get confronted with grades and pressure so they learn through other motivations.<sup>41,42</sup> These are all aspects that are important for a sustainable education system.<sup>43</sup> Therefore it is necessary to include unschooling and take the key factors of it to de-school education and the traditional public school system.

## CONS

Not allowed in some countries

Bad reputation

Doesn't fit for everybody

Is a Privilege

Many different variations and not all of them are healthy

Children can not „escape“ from education

It isn't an easy path

## PROS

**Focus on the child**

**Focus on the individuality**

Increasing self confidence

Foster critical thinking

All about fun and Enjoyment

Learning through experience

**Learning for life and not for school**



37 Summerhill school, *About Summerhill*, summerhillschool.co.uk, <http://www.summerhillschool.co.uk/about.php>

38 Helen E. Lees. *Education without Schools: Discovering Alternatives*. Bristol: The Policy Press, 2014;2013.

39 Valentina Auer. *Sustainability in education for sustainability*. Sustainable Design Presents workbook. Brighton, 2020.

40 Helen E. Lees. *Education without Schools: Discovering Alternatives*. Bristol: The Policy Press, 2014;2013.

41 Core Participant No. 9, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, May 5, 2020)

42 Core Participant No. 6, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, April 30, 2020)

43 Valentina Auer. *Sustainability in education for sustainability*. Sustainable Design Presents workbook. Brighton, 2020

# UNSCHOOLING VS. SCHOOLING

## Schooling

The opposite of home education is the public-school system. Through research for earlier projects I concluded that the public-school system in most countries is very old fashioned and very much built up on capitalistic ideas.

Since the system was developed through the industrial revolution nothing much has changed until today. Adaptations in the curriculum have been done but the system itself hasn't been touched since many years.<sup>44</sup> Fig. 6 shows a drawing from the late 19th century by the French artist Jean-Marc Côté about how he imagined school in the year 2000. The teacher feeding the kids with knowledge from books through a technological device.<sup>45</sup> Luckily this vision didn't come true but the concept is still the same. Children at public schools get fed with information from the teacher without expressing their individual thoughts, knowledge and interests. But school should not prepare a child for their future job, it should learn them about competences, improve their personality and keep their motivation for lifelong learning.<sup>46</sup> As many alternatives already developed in the early 20th century it is questionable why still nothing much has changed in the education system and why school reforms often are not effective or not taken seriously. Clearly, it takes effort and time to change a whole system, yet in most countries it is still the same as in the last century even though many people have already gained awareness about the problems of schooling.<sup>47</sup>

Children who go through the school system lack of life skills and finding creative solutions to problems they must face daily. They don't learn how to think for themselves, their imagination is all schooled-up and some get insecure and lose their motivation to learn. **"The fear of failure"** (CP9 Interview by Valentina Auer, 2020) is one thing children learn at school, but making mistakes is so important to understand complex topics. It is not beneficial for their well-being to fail at school and one clearly must accept that failure at school isn't a personal issue but an issue in the system.<sup>48,49,50,51</sup> Furthermore, children get very much detached from their natural and social environment. Even though sustainability is touched in the curriculum it is not enough. Especially children who grow up in an urban area see animals, plants and the environment as strange objects rather than something they live in and

interact with.<sup>52</sup> **"learning about living things ... learning to respect living things"** (Trisha Maynard, *Forest Schools in Great Britain, 2007, page 4*) But let's focus on the positive aspects of school first. The question "Do you like school?" has been answered by most of the interviewed children with a clear yes. "School is fun, school is full of friends, learning is fun, my teachers are really nice" was the overall reaction. Only one child was a bit sceptical and preferred the breaks because that's the time they can spend outside in the garden.<sup>53,54,55,56</sup> Due to the current circumstances many schools had to close during the lockdown of several countries and this has shown how much social value school actually has to offer. It will be more discussed in this workbook under the point "What is COVID-19 doing now?".

**"I dream about that child is in the centre and that we can keep this magical brain alive"** (Eve L. Ewing, "What a School Means: A Conversation with Eve L. Ewing", YouTube, 2020) School should be for the children, developed with them and only give them the best possible opportunity to gain confidence and knowledge. The reality shows that school isn't child centred. Holt even pictures school like a "prison for children" because they are trapped there to be out of the way of their parents and the adult society. Except for alternatives where the education is already child centred, teachers are too much focused on getting the job done right. Which means getting the children to achieve good grades in tests that proof nothing about their understanding or critical thinking of the taught subjects. Lecturing is still the most common technique of how knowledge is mediated, it is also the oldest known one. Since people couldn't afford books many hundred years ago, they had to write their own books by listening to their teacher. Then Guttenberg invented letterpress printing and by that lecturing wouldn't be necessary anymore.<sup>57,58,59,60</sup> Heutagogy is the keyword in that case. "In true heutagogical approaches the teacher provides the material, but the students decide how to negotiate the learning process." (Colleen M. Halupa, "Pedagogy, Andragogy, and Heutagogy." 2015) Heutagogy is another way of pedagogy and simply describes a double-loop learning style. This means that students try to search for answers beyond the given tasks and think systematically where the core of the problem lies. Important is that the educator is only a guide and not a

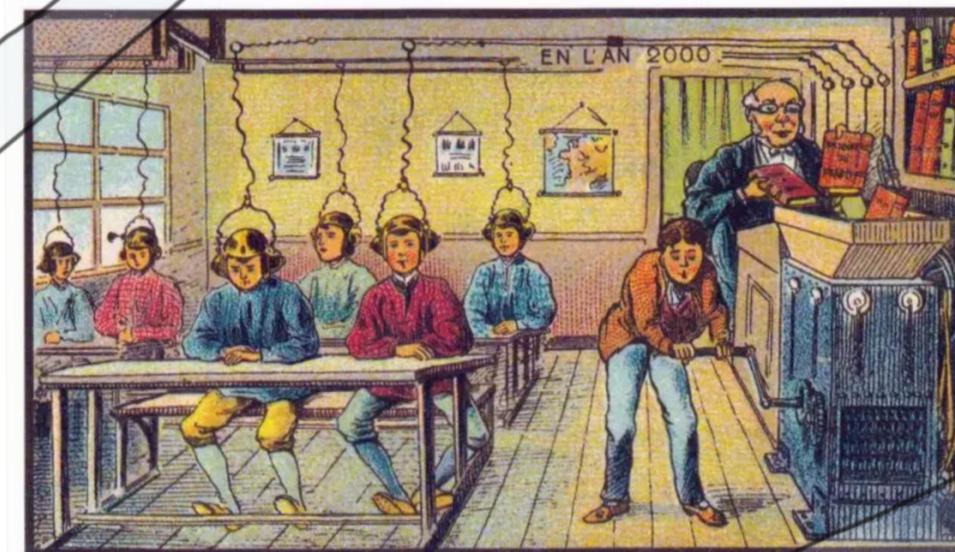


FIG 6: SCHOOL IN 2000; A VISION BY FRENCH ARTISTS IN 1900

44 Valentina Auer. *Sustainability in education for sustainability*. Sustainable Design Presents workbook. Brighton, 2020

45 The book of Life, *The importance of Play*, Thechooloflife.com. Online: <https://www.thechooloflife.com/thebookoflife/the-importance-of-play/>

46 Schule-sorglos.de, *Schule sorglos Ratgeber: Wie selbstständig sollten Grundschüler sein?* Online: [https://www.schule-sorglos.de/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Selbststaendigkeit\\_Grundschoeler.pdf](https://www.schule-sorglos.de/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Selbststaendigkeit_Grundschoeler.pdf)

47 Roland Meighan, and Richard Bailey. *John Holt*. London: Continuum, 2007.

48 Valentina Auer. *Sustainability in education for sustainability*. Sustainable Design Presents workbook. Brighton, 2020

49 Core Participant No. 9, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, May 5, 2020)

50 Ivan D. Illich, *Deschooling Society*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976

51 Colleen McLaughlin and John Gray, *Adolescent well-being and the relational school in "The connected school"*, 2015. Online: [https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachment/the\\_connected\\_school\\_final\\_for\\_web.pdf](https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachment/the_connected_school_final_for_web.pdf)

52 David W. Orr. *The Nature of Design: Ecology, Culture, and Human Intention*. New York;Oxford;Oxford University Press, 2002;2004.

53 Core Participant No. 3, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, April 27, 2020)

54 Core Participant No. 4, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, April 27, 2020)

55 Core Participant No. 5, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, April 27, 2020)

56 Core Participant No. 12, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, May 5, 2020)

57 "The more you're taught, the less you know | Stephen Baldrige | TEDxACU", YouTube video, 17:14, posted by "TEDx Talks", May 11, 2015. Online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CzomeFzNoQ>

58 "What if Schools Taught Us How to Learn | Jonathan Levi | TEDxWhiteCity", YouTube video, 14:32, posted by "TEDx Talks", November 19, 2015. Online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtQzwnyW6E>

59 Valentina Auer. *Sustainability in education for sustainability*. Sustainable Design Presents workbook. Brighton, 2020

60 Roland Meighan, and Richard Bailey. *John Holt*. London: Continuum, 2007.

# UNSCHOOLING VS. SCHOOLING

approach. A teacher should also be a connector to the community, a person to talk to when help is needed. Educators are the innovators that our communities have been waiting for and they can make a change happen.<sup>61,62,63</sup> It is obvious that there is something going wrong. Keeping the focus on teachers who are professionals in the subjects they teach and in pedagogy, it is clearly an advantage of school to be surrounded by so many experts of various fields. A teacher went through higher education themselves to become a classified educator. Parents who unschool their children are often not professionals in teaching, but they still got a lot to offer for their children. I am sure that also teacher at schools could surprise their pupils with hidden talents. And every child can clearly tell a passionate from an unpassionate teacher apart. The problem is that they are forced through their employer, the public-school system, to teach the children exactly the way the curriculum wants them to. They also get brainwashed through their education at universities to become professionals. Therefore, it is necessary to change their opinion about schooling, learning and mediating knowledge to make a change affective and achievable. Their title should be changed from teachers to guides or supporters.

Beside the question what the participants of the interviews like about school, I also asked them what they would change if they had the possibility to make a change. Fig 7 summarizes the different answers that have been announced. Change has to happen soon, but how to achieve it is the challenge.

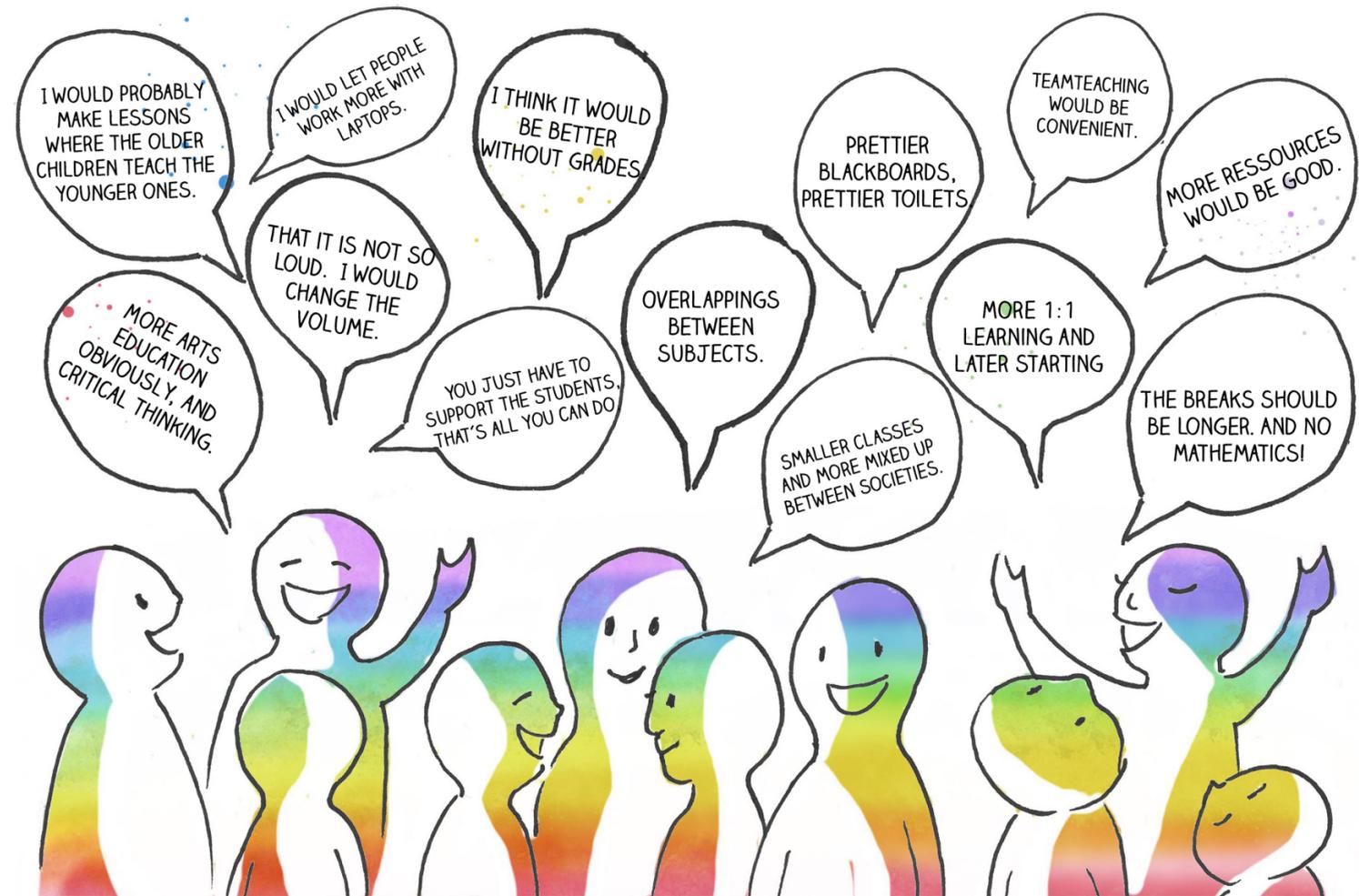


FIG 7: IMPROVEMENTS FOR SCHOOL ACCORDING TO INTERVIEWS

61 Helen E. Lees. *Education without Schools: Discovering Alternatives*. Bristol: The Policy Press, 2014;2013.

62 Colleen M. Halupa, *Pedagogy, Andragogy, and Heutagogy*. Transformative Curriculum Design in Health Sciences Education. IGI Global, 2015.

63 OpenIDEO. *Webinar: Reimagining Learning, During COVID-19 and Beyond* June 6, 2020. Online: <https://www.openideo.com/content/webinar-reimagining-learning-during-covid-19-and-beyond>

# UNSCHOOLING VS. SCHOOLING

## Impact of COVID-19

With the beginning of 2020 a big disruption took place: the corona virus spread across Europe, soon across all over the continents. Suddenly the world stood still, a pandemic was happening, and nothing was ever like it has been before. People had to isolate, to stay at home and everything was closed for a while. Now of course this also applied to schools, kindergartens, nurseries and universities. Suddenly, every family had to home educate their children. The idea of de-schooling the school system became reality over-night. But is it really that easy? Is it really a “de-schoolization” of the system? And what is the outcome of this abrupt change of daily life? What does it mean for children and their parents, but also for teacher? Covid-19 was definitely a surprise and a big game changer for the project.

What children as well as parents have experience through that time is, that it is exhausting and definitely not easy to home educate. It is to mention here that this is not particularly home educating as described above. “Distance learning” would be the correct term to use since the parents are not in charge of what the children learn. It is still the teachers who send learning materials, work sheets, suggestions and exercising tasks through various online platforms. Parents who have to work from home are overwhelmed with all the information, children have a lot of workload and still the pressure of achieving high grades and pass the school year. Home educated children are led by their interests, don’t get graded and experience less pressure. All the families now also didn’t chose to home educate, which is an important factor as well since not everybody is ready to educate their own children. According to these differences it is wrong to compare “traditional” home education with the “Covid-19” distance learning.<sup>64,65</sup> **“There is at least one thing that will come out of this. One of them will be that you don’t have to explain as much in detail to people what it is to be home educated. By the end of the month they will all know what it actually involves.”** (CP10, Interview by Valentina Auer, 2020) Families who are going through regular home education are hoping that people will afterwards understand the whole concept of the value of learning better. It shows the important factors of education and learning very well and parents get a lot of advice from home educators at the

moment. It surely brings those two worlds a bit closer together.

Firstly, kids need structure. Beside various articles and papers about that, also participants of the interviews mentioned the importance of structure. Whether it is for sanity of some kids who are used to going to school, for their own preferences or to draw a line in the life of a child who is educated at home to define learning- and leisure time. Any structure helps to stay motivated and to keep up with a daily routine. But parents must be aware that they shouldn’t mime school at home. Too much structure and especially workload is also not healthy, a balance must be found. It is not good for a child’s development if they have to plan everything on their own, especially with online tools they have barely used before.<sup>66</sup> Since the children are now learning on their own they have to take their individual time to understand tasks and exercises. This might take longer and, in some cases, even shorter. Therefore, it is unnecessary to plan exactly every hour through the day and stick strictly to it, which is usually happening in public school lessons. This might be an advice for teacher that it is not possible to keep up with all the mandatory things in the curriculum. It is useless to worry that children won’t learn anything during this time. If they don’t learn maths, they will learn how to cook, clean, use the internet, plan and structure their day. Life skills are so much more valuable than anything else these days.<sup>67</sup> But how can children motivate themselves to learn? **“Because if you are at home you have to motivate yourself first. And at school there are also other people who motivate you.”** (CP4, Interview by Valentina Auer, 2020) One secret is to let the kids get bored. Children naturally want to learn, especially things they are interested in. Once they are bored they will get back to school related things. Or at least learn something through playing. The current situation shows how important playing and fun is when it comes to education, but this topic will be covered in more detail later in the workbook.<sup>68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74</sup> “Learning, learning and again learning.”, this is what one child answered during the interview what comes to their mind when thinking about school. Even though this 8-year-old enjoys going to school, it is afraid of failing, being slower than their classmates and therefore getting punished with shorter breaks and more homework. But school is so much more than learning and



FIG 8: RAINBOWS IN WINDOWS DURING LOCKDOWN

64 Internet ABC, *Homeschooling? Corona, Schule und das Lernen zuhause*. Internet ABC (blog) April 22, 2020. Online: <https://www.internet-abc.de/lehkraefte/aktuelles/meldungen/homeschooling-corona-schule-und-das-lernen-zuhause/>

65 Idzie Desmarais, *Homeschooling in the age of Covid-19: Advice from six unschooling parents*, I am unschooled. Yes I can write. (blog), March 20, 2020. <https://yes-i-can-write.blogspot.com/2020/03/homeschooling-in-age-of-covid-19-advice.html>

66 “What a School Means: A Conversation with Eve L. Ewing”, YouTube live webinar, 1:31:20, uploaded by “Haymarket books”, May 15, 2020. Online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHo2egETxvI>

67 “Remaking Schools in the Time of Coronavirus”, YouTube live conference, 1:17:49, posted by “Haymarket Books” April 22, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DnP663yEbM>

68 Lisa Nimmervoll, *Tipps für Homeschooling: Aufstehen! To-do-Liste! Schreibfisch statt Couch!*, Der Standard, March 19, 2020. <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000115901574/tipps-fuer-homeschooling-aufstehen-to-do-liste-schreibfisch-statt-couch>

69 Olivera Stajić, *Muttersprachenlehrerin: „Für unsere Schüler ist das alles nicht repräsentativ“*, Der Standard (Vienna), April 4, 2020. <https://apps.derstandard.at/privacywall/story/2000116568501/muttersprachenlehrerin-fuer-unserer-schueler-ist-das-alles-nicht-repräsentativ>

70 The Guardian, *The Guardian view on life without school: not a level playing field*, London, March 20, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/mar/20/the-guardian-view-on-life-without-school-not-a-level-playing-field>

71 Tobias Lill, *Ungleichheiten werden sich massiv verstärken*, Der Spiegel (München), April 1, 2020. <https://www.spiegel.de/panorama/corona-krise-arme-familien-leiden-unter-schulschliessungen-besonders-a-c6f21634-f5c2-4f24-85ac-8d5402241483>

72 Wunpini Fatimata Mohammed, *What COVID-19 reveals about educational inequality in Ghana*, www. Aljazeera.com (blog), April 7, 2020. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/covid-19-reveals-educational-inequality-ghana-200407100729985.html>

73 Donna Ferguson, *Let your kids get bored: emergency advice from teachers on schooling at home*, The Guardian, March 23, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/mar/23/let-your-kids-get-bored-emergency-advice-from-teachers-on-schooling-at-home>

74 Silke Fokken, *Eltern sollten jetzt nicht Ersatzlehrer spielen*, Der Spiegel, March 24, 2020. <https://www.spiegel.de/panorama/gesellschaft/corona-krise-eltern-sollten-jetzt-nicht-ersatzlehrer-spielen-a-17acead5-f1c9-4a4d-98af-ffe50a427aa1>

# UNSCHOOLING VS. SCHOOLING

teaching, especially the current COVID-19 situation shows it. Children miss their friends and teachers, they miss the community and the environment. Getting up early and sitting all day in a full classroom, attending assemblies or way too short breaks is something they clearly don't miss according to interviews and literature review. But children feel disconnected to their peers and no virtual meeting, app or text message can be compared to the social value of school. Learning only online isn't possible, for no child either schooled or unschooled. Computers won't replace a face-to-face interaction which is very important for learning.<sup>75</sup> It shows that education can only happen through relationships, therefore it is important to have this relationship between parents and children. Nowadays some parents don't even know how to connect with their children because they don't spend a lot of time with them. This is for sure one big advantage of home education. **"It has also been good for our relationship; we are good friends nowadays."** (CP9, Interview by Valentina Auer, 2020) This means that a better relationship between teacher and students can also improve the nature of learning at school.<sup>76,77,78</sup> A very nice example of how to stay in touch with the pupils and the teacher is the "Duisberg Late Night Show". A German headmaster started a Youtube channel which is more about the networking rather than the learning. "Duisberg Late Night" is a show where the headmaster informs the viewer about all different kind of things but one can also send a video message to be part of the show. It is a very creative and successful approach to entertain the pupils but also not to disconnect too much from their school environment.<sup>79</sup> Giving children the feeling that they are safe and secure at home is important for their motivation to learn. Learning and stress doesn't fit together, no matter how old the person is. Teacher are worried about their students because for some, school was the safest place in their life. Especially in the USA, but several other countries too, school is an important "source of nutrition". One of the first questions that came up was: How are we going to feed our children? The current situation doesn't only spotlights the advantages of a more individual education, it also shows how much socioeconomic gaps influence the system and therefore the education of children as well. Beside the pressure and stress, many households only have one computer for the whole family and one room where everybody has to study. This is the best case, because some households don't even have access

to internet or a computer. This is where the real problems start. Also, families with refugee background who are not fluent in their new country's language yet are struggling.<sup>80,81,82,83</sup> Children must take over households, elder siblings have to take care for their younger ones and have no time left to study. These are all disadvantages that also make pretty clear that home education is a privilege and can't be done by every family. Not only children but teachers had struggles to adapt to distance learning. Most of them had to learn how to use all the online tools first or had struggles with no access to internet or owning a computer. It is shocking how much inequality is happening in the education system. They are now giving their best to keep children connected to school which also might change the classic "bad teacher" reputation that some parents have.<sup>84</sup> Yes, maybe one advantage of the whole situation is that children get very independent and learn how to use online learning tools on their own. Also teacher and parents, even myself, learn a lot during these time about how to connect remotely and structuring one's day effectively. But shouldn't a qualitative education be available for everybody, no matter the family background, financial status or social status?<sup>85,86</sup> Yes, it should. The issue of inequalities in the education system will be discussed in the next chapter. The pandemic lockdown restrictions have also proven that children need a social infrastructure to learn. Especially primary- and elementary schoolchildren had struggles to learn online if they were able to. The situation has shown that school is more than an institution for learning, it is a social environment, a communal place. Taking this away from children is crucial, even though they gained during this time more knowledge about life than they would ever learn at school. It is questionable whether the parents now got more attracted to home education or not, because as mentioned earlier distance learning isn't necessarily the best thing to compare with home education. If any other than that they got to experience their child's education and maybe create their own critical opinion about schooling. Covid-19 has changed the view on school for most people and opened a lot of discussions for future development. Hopefully, there will be a change in the system, but since education is very political it is unclear if it will be a priority after this pandemic crisis.<sup>87</sup> Driven by this it is even more motivating and necessary for design to accept the challenge of changing the education system.



75 Blake Poles, *The art of self-directed learning*. United States: Tells Peak Press, 2014.

76 Core Participant No. 13, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, May 8, 2020)

77 Schulgschichtn.com, *Schule in Zeiten von Corona*, Der Standard, March 15, 2020. Online: <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000116101059/schule-in-zeiten-von-corona>

78 Silke Fokken, *Was wir jetzt über das Lernen lernen*. Der Spiegel, April 14, 2020. <https://www.spiegel.de/panorama/homeschooling-was-wir-jetzt-ueber-das-lernen-lernen-a-e627efd2-8157-4b80-9f5c-30ed2b2b9a13>

79 Silke Fokken, *Ich kenne meine Schüler jetzt im Schlafanzug*, Der Spiegel, April 6, 2020. <https://www.spiegel.de/panorama/lehrer-in-corona-krise-ich-kenne-meine-schueler-jetzt-im-schlafanzug-a-6ee7a1e2-440c-48a7-93c7-e8e26d7c487b>

80 Olivera Stajić, *Muttersprachenlehrerin: „Für unsere Schüler ist das alles nicht repräsentativ*, Der Standard (Vienna), April 4, 2020. <https://apps.derstandard.at/privacywall/story/2000116568501/muttersprachenlehrerin-fuer-unserer-schueler-ist-das-alles-nicht-repraesentativ>

81 Tobias Lill, *Ungleichheiten werden sich massiv verstärken*, Der Spiegel (München), April 1, 2020. <https://www.spiegel.de/panorama/corona-krise-arme-familien-leiden-unter-schulschliessungen-besonders-a-c6f21634-f5c2-4f24-85ac-8d5402241483>

82 Wunpini Fatimata Mohammed, *What COVID-19 reveals about educational inequality in Ghana*, www. Aljazeera.com (blog), April 7, 2020. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/covid-19-reveals-educational-inequality-ghana-200407100729985.html>

83 "Remaking Schools in the Time of Coronavirus", YouTube live conference, 1:17:49, posted by "Haymarket Books" April 22, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDnP663yEbM>

84 Emma Brooks, *After just half a day of home-schooling, I am officially in awe of all teachers*. Theguardian.com, March 20, 2020. Online: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentis-free/2020/mar/20/home-schooling-teachers-child-coronavirus-homeschooling>

85 "What a School Means: A Conversation with Eve L. Ewing", YouTube live webinar, 1:31:20, uploaded by "Haymarket books", May 15, 2020. Online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHo2egE1xvl>

86 "Remaking Schools in the Time of Coronavirus", YouTube live conference, 1:17:49, posted by "Haymarket Books" April 22, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDnP663yEbM>

87 Core Participant No. 12, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, May 5, 2020)

# UNSCHOOLING VS. SCHOOLING

## *Inequalities in the education system*

Having mentioned inequalities that showed up during Covid-19 lockdowns, everybody probably has faced some unfair treatment at school in their life.

One of the most important and biggest problems we are facing right now in the education system is inequality.<sup>88</sup> It is sad that unethical behaviour and disparity starts at a very young age already. Thinking about a story from my niece who got bullied in kindergarten for wearing a dress that made her look

“fat and clumsy”. One can imagine what happened to that dress and to her self-confidence after this day. But looking around the world there are more issues than just getting bullied for the way one dresses. Getting bullied for skin colour, ancestry or being slower than other pupils in class is something

that happens on a daily basis. Especially in the USA many children have to deal with racism at school. I won't talk too much about this issue here but there are very interesting approaches about how to face and teach about racism in public schools in Northern America. An organization called “Black Lives Matter at school” is working towards how to address and teach about

racism in schools. Their main demands are that more about racism in history should be talked about, more teachers of colour should be hired and that schools should focus more on funding councils and not the police.<sup>89</sup> But racism and especially racist historical events should be addressed in different

ways during various lessons. Eve L. Ewing, a female, young and black teacher from Chicago, wrote a teacher's guide about how important it is to teach children black history and also how to achieve this the best. Analysing poetry, writing stories, making soundtracks or let kids develop data and graphs should

emphasise thinking about racism in a critical way. The truth shouldn't be hidden from children and it should also be addressed through many different subjects and disciplines.<sup>90</sup> Ewing created comic books with black female super heroes as main characters to inspire black girls and show them that they can do anything if they just want to do it, that it is ok to do mistakes, it is ok

to be slower than others and that friends are very important. She says that comic books are an important media to learn for children. It is easier to read with pictures and at the same time learning something about history.<sup>91, 92</sup> Also including the black community and let children get more in touch with them

is important. Learning through experience and learning with society. Ewing mentioned that most of the staff in schools in Chicago have an immigrant background, why should teacher not use this rich source of knowledge and include them in the education? Or including the parents more into the process and create a connection between them and school. I already mentioned this

approach in my earlier project about sustainable education and referenced to Richard Gerver's idea of including school's staff in education as well.<sup>93</sup> This leads back to more diverse and creative education. Mediating sensitive topics that are maybe hard to understand for children but important to talk about

through creativity and experience is a very successful approach. Beside black history and racism, education seems to be owned by the wealthy and white community. Inequalities happen all over the world, within communities and cultures. Mostly because children from poorer economic

backgrounds are more likely to fall behind at school than their wealthier peers.<sup>94, 95, 96, 97</sup> As already mentioned, economics is a driving force in education and public schools in the USA for example are in danger of being

privatised soon. Noliwe Rooks, Author of “cutting schools”, formed the term “segromics” which exactly summarizes the privatization of schools through companies who make profit from this unequal system. A combination of segregation and economics. Since most children in public schools in the

USA are poor and come from black communities, it is important to start decolonizing the curriculum.<sup>95</sup> **“Decolonizing the curriculum means creating spaces and resources for a dialogue among all members of the university [...]”** (Elizabeth Charles, *Decolonizing the Curriculum*, 2019)

This quote refers to higher education than schools for children but it can be adapted for the whole education system no matter the age. Democratic schools are already focusing on equal communication and collaboration between students and their teacher. Schools like Summerhill in England for example

are very successful with this approach. Also because children can decide themselves what to learn in these alternatives to public schools and have the power of their own education.<sup>98, 99, 100</sup> Again, democratic schools are not the norm and, in most cases, private or boarding schools which makes it not

accessible for everybody.

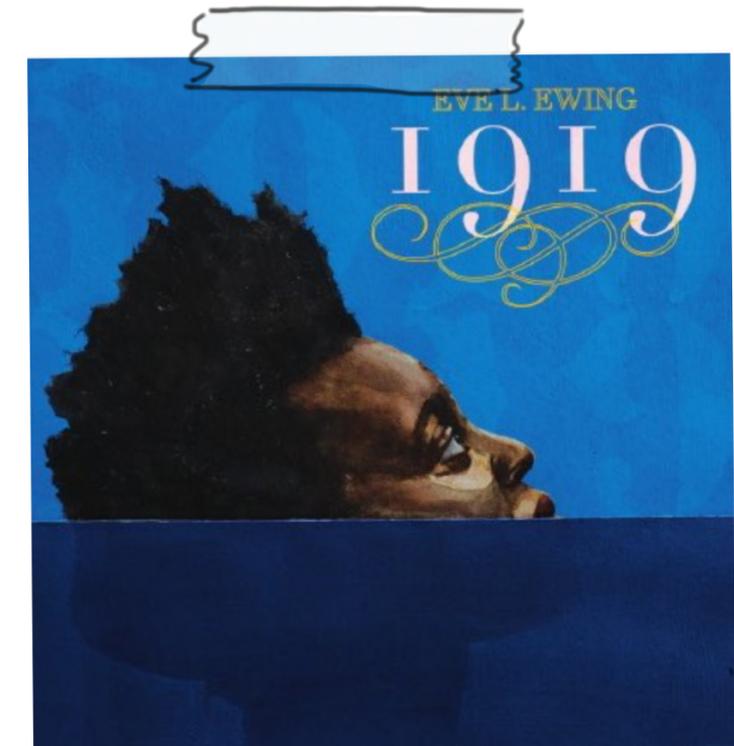


FIG 9: EVE L. EWING, 1919 A TEACHER'S GUIDE

88 Colleen McLaughlin and John Gray, *Adolescent well-being and the relational school* in “The connected school”, 2015. Online: [https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachment/the\\_connected\\_school\\_final\\_for\\_web.pdf](https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachment/the_connected_school_final_for_web.pdf)

89 Black Lives Matter at school. *About*, Blacklivesmatteratschool.com 2020. Online: <https://blacklivesmatteratschool.com/about/>

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91 Eve L. Ewing, *Ironheart*. Online: <https://eveewing.com/#/ironheart/>

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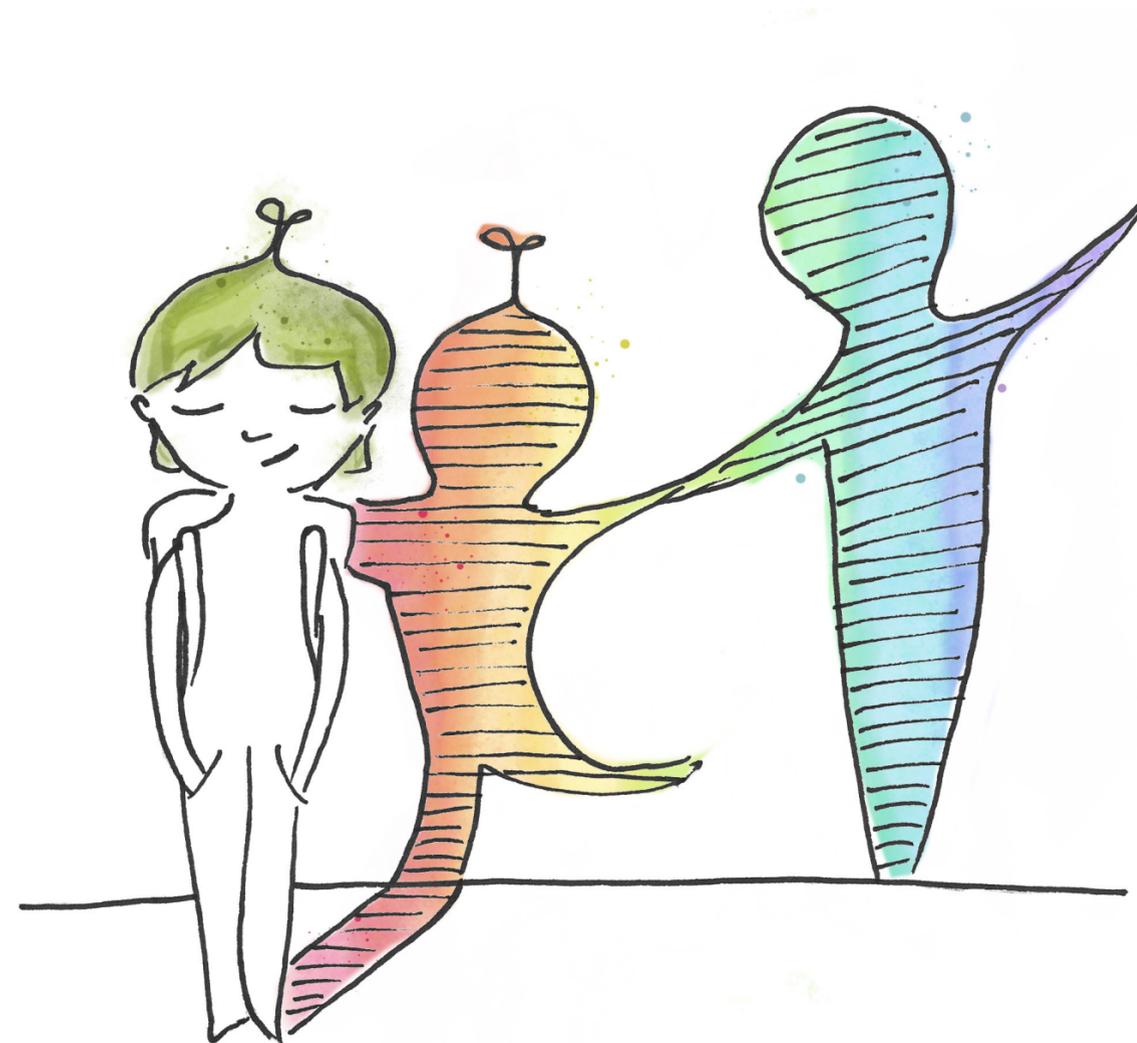
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100 Summerhill school, *About Summerhill*, summerhillschool.co.uk, <http://www.summerhillschool.co.uk/about.php>

# UNSCHOOLING VS. SCHOOLING

But not only in Europe or America (Freire also mentions it in his book *Pedagogy of Hope*) decolonization and democratization of education has to happen, also Asian countries like South Korea or India are trying to get rid of westernized education. South Korea for example was teaching through a so called “hakwon education” traditionally before it adapted to the western model. Hakwon education is all about a very close and caring relationship between the teacher and the students. This helped to address the special needs of some students and tailor the teaching around them. But with the US implementing their curriculum in the country without understanding their culture, Hakwon changed to shadow education, which is private education after school. Most children can’t keep up with the workload and pressure at school and since the East-Asian culture is all about success and high achievements, it is important to achieve high grades. One’s grades in highschool will form one’s career path later on and to get an successful business employee one has to achieve the highest grades. Whereas arts and languages are not as seen as important, STEM subjects are highly rated. I remember one of my Korean friends telling me about this system and I was shocked about how much their performance as kids or teenager influences their life as grown-ups. It is unbelievable with how much pressure these children have to deal with. Shadow education seems to lower the socioeconomic gap but is very expensive, so only the wealthy communities can afford it. Which makes it a privilege and again less equal to the whole population. Therefore, children can never escape their social status they were born into, a very big problem in the system. This years movie “Parasite” has reflected on that topic very well too. The government is aware of this education problem and instead of changing the curriculum they try to ban shadow education. Which at the same time it strengthens the economy, so it is like a double-sided sword.<sup>101, 102</sup> And this doesn’t only apply to the Asian culture but it can be seen as an overall issue. Tutoring centres which are open for everybody to join and are run by volunteers from different professions are developed in the USA for example. They don’t look or feel like tutoring centres and the children enjoy every minute there. They get equally treated and every child gets the time they need for their exercises.<sup>103</sup> In conclusion

this shows that smaller groups or even 1:1 tutoring, is more effective than teaching in a one-size-fits-all environment at public schools. Equality is a key point in education because this is where society starts to split apart. The unacceptance of alternative pedagogy methods like Montessori, democratic schools or home education can be also seen as “racism within the education system”.<sup>104</sup> Wouldn’t it be wonderful to stop this unfairness?



101 Soo-yang Byun, *Shadow Education and Academic Success in Republic of Korea*, 2014. DOI:10.1007/978-981-4451-27-7\_3

102 Jung Jung-Hoon, *Decolonizing educational/curriculum studies in East Asia: problematizing shadow education in South Korea*, in “*Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*” 19:2, 269-281, 2018. DOI: 10.1080/14649373.2018.1463074.

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# UNSCHOOLING VS. SCHOOLING

**Summing up** the research about school and its real value: school isn't all bad and it has a lot to offer. It is a communal space, but the teaching and education methods used in this space are rotten. Children often don't learn for themselves but to please the teachers' expectations and to go through the system with the least amount of effort and troubles as possible. The real problem lies in the way people use schools. Future reforms of the education system should focus more on the individual, as in the child and the teacher. The well-being of both components is mandatory for a healthy education system. Changing the curriculum and making it national is not enough. Schooling and learning are two different things and it must be realized that schooling is an option whereas education is not.<sup>105, 106, 107</sup> Therefore, the next part of the workbook will take a closer look into learning itself and what learning really means. Fig 10 sums up all the findings from the research about school and schooling.

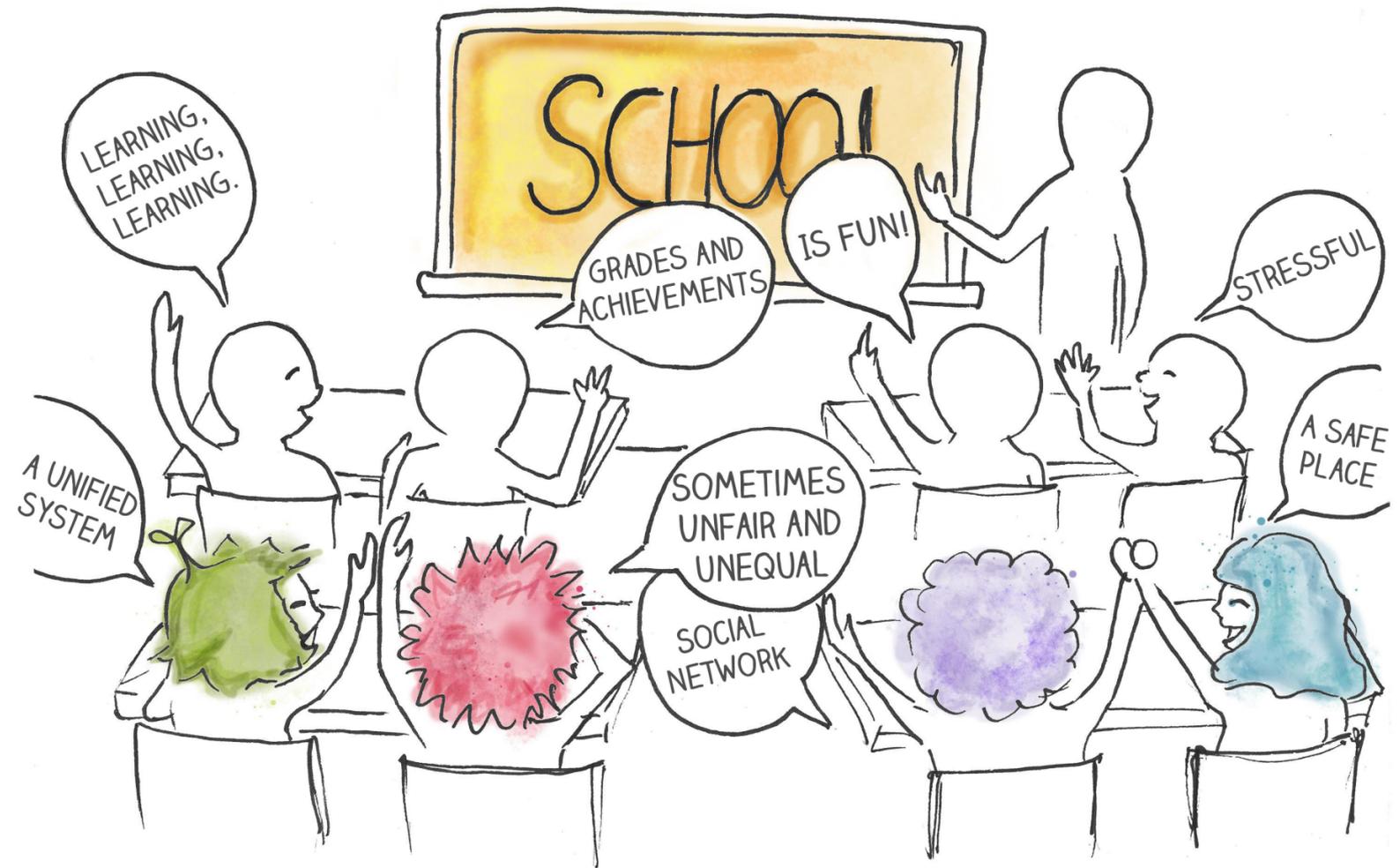


FIG 10: SCHOOL MEANS ...

<sup>105</sup> Helen E. Lees. *Education without Schools: Discovering Alternatives*. Bristol: The Policy Press, 2014;2013.

<sup>106</sup> Roland Meighan, and Richard Bailey. *John Holt*. London: Continuum, 2007.

<sup>107</sup> "School is optional: Ken Danford at TEDxAmherstCollege", YouTube video, 19:14, uploaded by TEDx Talks, December 11, 2013. Online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eq1rXdDWXrM>

# LEARNING TO LEARN

What is learning and differs it from schooling? Learning defined through neuroscience and psychology means long-lasting change in behaviour. Long-lasting is the key word here, sustainable knowledge.<sup>108</sup> Apparently there are very different approaches towards learning and every individual has to find their own method that suits them. Learning about learning is called meta learning and often used in computer science in context with artificial intelligences. It means that we learn through remembering different experiences and therefore develop our own knowledge about our best way to learn.<sup>109, 110</sup> The following part of the workbook specializes on different aspects that are mandatory for learning and sustainable development. Before looking at how humans learn I did research about how non-human animals and plants learn. And this reveals that they are quite similar to human learning routines and clarifies the purpose of learning.

## Learning in Flora and Fauna

Animals for example learn through playing but also have a lot of instincts that are not gained through learning. Therefore, it is hard to tell what is actually learned or innate. Animals in caption who are trained, for example dogs or seals in zoos, learn through solving a problem. The animal does X the result will be Y, mostly a treat. This means they also learn through repetition. But a lot comes from experiences and playing.<sup>111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118</sup> Through making mistakes or observing how their peers make mistakes, which can end deadly in the wilderness sadly, they learn a lot too. Also plants “learn” through experience and repetition. It is not scientifically correct to use the term learning for a species without a brain, but experiments have shown that plants are actually able to adapt very fast to their environment. They also remember what treats them well and what doesn't. They have over 20 senses, including the five sense we developed. And isn't it fascinating that a species without a brain can actually make decisions and “learn”?<sup>111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118</sup> Both, non-human animals and plants, learn for life, they learn to survive. This short excursion into another discipline shows that we are not that different to our natural environment. This is the toxic relationship that humans have with

their non artificial surrounding. They think they are better, smarter and more advanced than flora and fauna. It is only a subject to study rather than living or experiencing it. But there is so much we can learn from and also with nature. Structures, systems, behaviours. We have to accept that we can collaborate with other species, just like the indigenous cultures did and are still doing to some extent<sup>119, 120, 121</sup> If we want to respect other living things we have to learn about them and understand them.<sup>122</sup> Moving a bit away from “living things”, also buildings and cities can learn. We know that AI is able to learn (which is actually using the structure of animal brains) but also other manmade things “learn” through time. Buildings are adaptable, they can change and it's very organic how they do it. Architects and interior designers should always keep that in mind, a building that can adapt is always better. Houses learn from their occupants and the other way around. Natural materials used in buildings let the inhabitants know when maintenance is needed. A house or any other building is never finished, it is always a start for something new. Most people who have built their own house will know that feeling. Amongst others a lot of emotion has been put into a self built place which makes it more sustainable. Anyway, buildings learn over time, which humans and other species do as well.<sup>123</sup>



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# LEARNING TO LEARN

## *Language of Learning*

While researching about plants, animals and buildings I stumbled across one important factor for learning, teaching and understanding. Language.

Communication is such an important part in our life. Without communication there would be no community, no social life, pretty much nothing. Humans

have developed a very advanced form of language with many different variations. But plants and animals have their own way od communication.

Animals are communicating through sound, through ultrasonics, through scents and a lot through body language. Plants are using chemicals to

communicate between them. For example mushrooms and their underground

root system is like a social media network for the forest, like a news channel

for all the trees and insects. It is interesting how those two worlds are

collaborating so well.<sup>124</sup> Humans are also using body language, thinking about

how to communicate with deaf people. Or using senses like taste and touch

as a blind person. There are so many different channels of experiencing the world but at school it is mostly about reading, listening and talking. Wouldn't

it be more fun if we could learn through all our senses and evolve empathy

for disabled communities and our non-human environment? In fact, learning

using different channels is more affective and children will come up with the greatest ideas about how to achieve their ideas.<sup>125, 126, 127</sup> Also digital devices

can be seen as a language, programming is actually a language. Currently

children and adults are communicating mainly through technology. This is

a big shift in how to mediate knowledge, but it seems to work. Duolingo for

example, a very well-known app to learn a foreign language, is often used by home educated children nowadays. But also schooled children use it to

develop their language skills.<sup>128, 129, 130</sup> Could this be also a bridge between the

two different education systems? Language is like a dance, it is magical.<sup>131</sup> It

is such a strong and powerful tool to communicate and therefore collaborate.

Thinking about partner dancing, it is all about communication without using

words. This is also why learning remotely is difficult for some people because

the body language is clearly missing. Body language is subtle, but it often

helps to understand the context. We should learn how to dance but also dance

to learn.<sup>132</sup> Let's make use of it and use it in different ways in education.

## *Fun is important*

What has been mentioned earlier several times is that fun and play are a core ingredients when talking about valuable and sustainable education.

Everybody knows how exhausting and unmotivating it can be to do something one doesn't enjoy. This is what happens with learning as well. Once the fun

is gone, the motivation is gone too. According to the UN convention from

1989, Play is a basic human need.<sup>133</sup> But already dating back to the ancient

Greeks play was an important part of society and even their gods, Apollo and

Dionysus, represented that life can't be complete without play, chaos and

wisdom.<sup>134</sup>

“**A child is naturally primed to learn through play. The aim in education**

**should be to create schools where children are encouraged to trust their**

**instincts and continue using play as a tool for learning, growth and**

**personal growth.**” (*Lego Play Well report, 2018, page 25*)

Researching about unschooling has already shown that a playful approach

in education is considered as very successful. The Wellcome Collection in

London has highlighted this issue even more. Play is essential for learning

about the world, it is an instinct but to flourish it requires the right conditions.

Kindergarten founder Friedrich Fröbel for example said that play is important

to protect and maintain emotional wellbeing.<sup>135</sup> In Bangladesh, so called

“Play Labs” are provided for less-income families to help children to heal

their traumatic experiences from war, diseases, harassment and more. There

are over 800 play labs provided by the NGO BRAC. They are simple but

colourful and built with materials that are available in the region for a low

cost and patterns and colours that represent the country. Children are learning

and healing through playing with the educators and peers and they seem to

enjoy it a lot.<sup>136, 137</sup> Humans are naturally creative and learn through their

creativity. According to that play and creativity are working together. Role

play for example foster imagination but also empathy for getting to know the

world from a different point of view.<sup>138, 139</sup>

The power of play is that everyone can do it, no matter the socioeconomic

status. It creates more understanding then any statistical analysis or traditional

teaching.<sup>140</sup>

So why are we not using it more in the public education system? According to

Ivan D. Illich “educational games can provide a unique way to penetrate the

formal system”(Illich, de-schooling society, 1973).

A study led by the Danish company LEGO, well known for their colourful

building blocks kids and also adults love to play with, has shown that educational

games are not very attractive for children between 5-12 years but also their

parents show less interest into them. The study has been taken place in 9 countries

across the world, including Great Britain, and shows a wide overview of different

opinions from different cultures.<sup>141</sup> But they are still used a lot in education.

Especially when it comes to topics like sustainability, local history and geography

and chemical experiments. Games which focus on Mathematics or spelling are

often used in primary schools to entertain the children. Most of the kids don't

consider this as real playing. “**And after 2 hours the boy walks up to me and**

**asks: when ware we allowed to actually play something?”** (*CPI, Interview*

*by Valentina Auer, 2020*) That is a typical response some teachers get when

introducing an educational game to their pupils. Some children who took part in

the interviews also mentioned that they don't play during class. Maybe some role

playing but other than that the lessons seem to be very dry. They would wish to

play more though because they all agreed that it is easier to learn and understand

difficult topics. Also home educated children mentioned that they enjoy gamified

learning a lot. Especially if it is playful and creative.<sup>142, 143, 144, 145</sup> What games

would have a lot of value to the development and learning of children then?

Apparently less structured play which also embraces mistakes and risks are fun

and full of value. Original games where children can fight and confront each other

are challenging and very important for a child's development. Like young animals

who are also fighting and jousting to learn how to survive in the wilderness, it is

for human children necessary too.<sup>146, 147, 148</sup>

A definition of different types of play developed by LEGO shows how much value

free and unstructured playing has and what competences are fostered through

them.

# LEARNING TO LEARN

**Social playing -> connect with each other, collaboration**

**storytelling -> empowers self confidence and self-esteem**

**critical thinking games -> understand own thought process**

**fantasy play (role playing)-> explore being others and builds up empathy**

**constructive play -> creative ways to solve problems.**

These are all the key competences that would be needed for a successful future society.<sup>149,150</sup> Children who are not allowed to play miss an important part in their development. But through school they have less time to play due to long school days and a lot of homework. 18% of British children say that they don't have time to play which is a shame and should give us many reasons to change something in the system.<sup>151,152</sup>

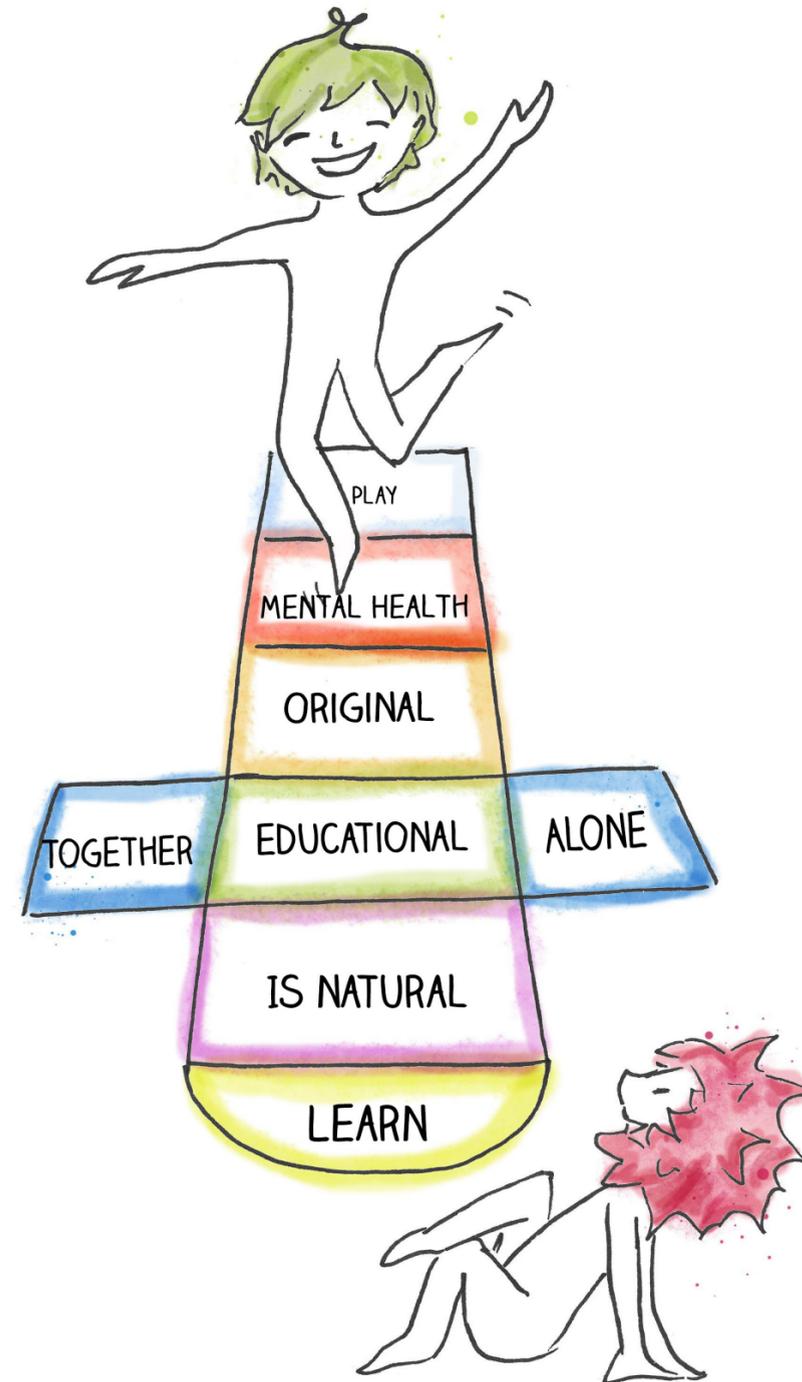
We should not stop playing as we grow up because this helps us to develop.

If we stop to play, and therefore stop using our imagination, we start dying slowly. The opposite of play is depression therefore it should be included throughout our lives. Also higher education should focus on that. Since the teachers will be the one who are educating children they should already be introduced into new methods of learning in their education at university.<sup>153,154</sup>

**“The ability to play is critical not only to being happy, but also to sustaining social relationships and being a creative, innovative person”**

*(Stuart Brown, play [...] 2010, page 6)*

This is also one reason for my personal deck-of-cards because I learned how to organize this project with a creative and fun approach through a game I used to play a lot and still like to play. Using metaphors which are easy to understand and adapt helped me to make sense of all the information I collected throughout the module.



# LEARNING TO LEARN

## Collaboration

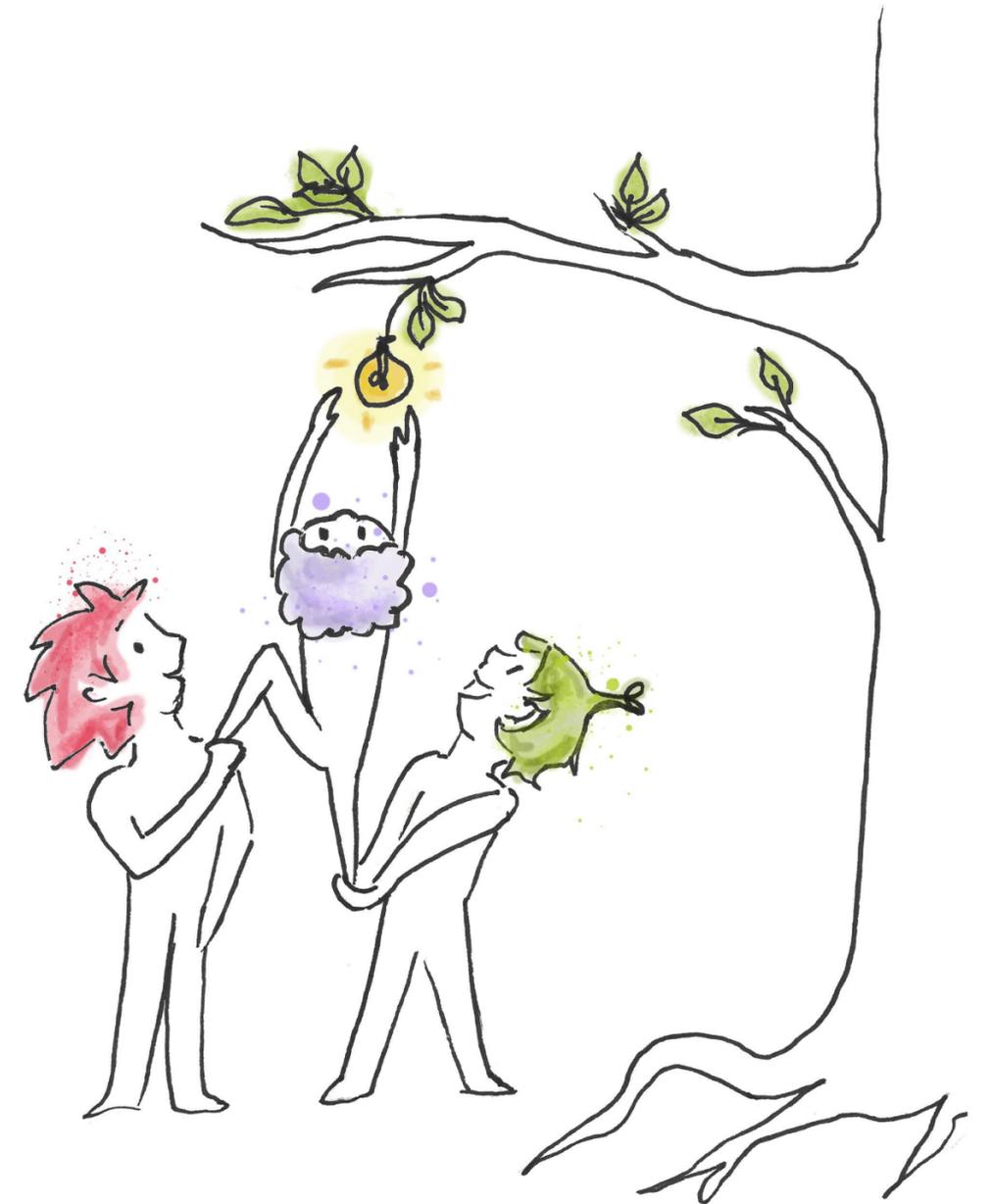
Since playing among other activities is something that is more fun and valuable when done in a group, collaboration is not only a competence that is key for a sustainable society but also important for learning and education. Firstly, the relationship between educator and student should be a collaboration and not a measuring of power and strength. As mentioned earlier in this workbook, teacher should not put themselves on a higher hierarchy than the pupils. They are equal with the pupils and can learn so much from each other. Democracy in schools should be mandatory. Teachers should be seen as friends and supporters and not “enemies” as it mostly happens in schools.<sup>155</sup> This is what home education is very successful at and without collaboration between the children and parents the whole concept doesn’t work. Educators therefore must respect the educates and shouldn’t try to manipulate them with their knowledge, no matter if in a schooled or unschooled system. The dialogue between them is mandatory, also to work with people and not for them. Therefore, empathy and thinking in systems is core.<sup>156, 157, 158, 159, 160</sup>

Beside the collaboration between teacher and students, teacher from different disciplines should communicate more as well. This could develop interesting cross-subject projects which are helpful to understand difficult topics and their relationship to other disciplines. It also fosters systems thinking, another competence that must be more discussed in education. Like Eve L. Ewing mentioned in her teacher’s guide about how to teach racism, it is the best way to do it through different subjects and not only history or English literature.<sup>161,</sup>

<sup>162, 163, 164, 165</sup>

Collaboration between teacher also means including the staff of the school more. As already mentioned above, this would help children a lot with developing communities and not being unfair or racist. Lastly but most important, including the whole society outside school into education would give public schools so much more value. Communication within and across communities is very important for kids. It develops understanding but also confidence. New networks are needed to spread an equal opportunity for teaching and learning. **“It would be important because teacher often**

**have a tunnel view and no experience about real life.”** (CP2, Interview by *Valentina Auer, 2020*) Illich for example proposed the idea of creating a skill bank for societies where people can share and exchange their skills rather than money or other goods. This would be one step towards a de-schooled society, according to Illich, but it would also make a lot of sense for public schools.<sup>166</sup> Since home educated families already work a lot within communities, either their home educating societies, the neighbourhood or other families and friends. Schools should also make more use of the common knowledge that is available for free. Especially elderly or indigenous people should be more included because they offer a lot of knowledge that gets lost and not included in schoolbooks or on the internet. Furthermore, within communities people have always known how to educate their children best; what to teach them so they are able to survive and be successful. It seems that school is more like a network rather than a community. But real education happens through collaboration therefore it is important to foster it more in the public education system. Let’s get the world into the classroom and learn from each other and with each other.<sup>167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173</sup> To stay realistic, not everybody wants to be included into the education system. So, this is again not applicable for every individual but starting collaboration at a young age will lead them to more collaboration through their life as adults. Even though teamwork between students can be tricky sometimes it should be practiced more in schools.<sup>174</sup> Also letting elder pupils teach the younger ones, classes with mixed age groups. This would be profitable for everybody involved. As mentioned earlier schooled children enjoy learning with their friends surrounded. It is motivating and therefore it is necessary to learn accompanied by people who share the same or similar interests.<sup>174, 175, 176</sup>



<sup>155</sup> Colleen McLaughlin and John Gray, *Adolescent well-being and the relational school* in “The connected school”, 2015. Online: [https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachment/the\\_connected\\_school\\_final\\_for\\_web.pdf](https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachment/the_connected_school_final_for_web.pdf)

<sup>156</sup> Freire, Paulo, and Ana Maria Araújo Freire. *EPZ pedagogy of hope: Reliving pedagogy of the oppressed*. A&C Black, 2004.

<sup>157</sup> Core Participant No. 8, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, April 30, 2020)

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<sup>164</sup> Core Participant No. 2, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, April 27, 2020)

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<sup>167</sup> Core Participant No. 1, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, May 1, 2020)

<sup>168</sup> Core Participant No. 2, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, April 27, 2020)

<sup>169</sup> Core Participant No. 9, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, May 5, 2020)

<sup>170</sup> Core Participant No. 10, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, May 5, 2020)

<sup>171</sup> John Huckle, *Towards greater Realism* Published as Chapter 1 in Arjen E J Wals & Peter Blaze Corcoran (Eds.) *Learning for sustainability*, Wageningen Academic, 35-48, 2012. Online: <https://huckleorguk.files.wordpress.com/2016/10/hucklerealism2012.pdf>

<sup>172</sup> “What a School Means: A Conversation with Eve L. Ewing”, YouTube live webinar, 1:31:20, uploaded by “Haymarket books”, May 15, 2020. Online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHo2egETxvI>

<sup>173</sup> Roland Meighan, and Richard Bailey. *John Holt*. London: Continuum, 2007.

<sup>174</sup> Core Participant No. 3, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, April 27, 2020)

<sup>175</sup> Core Participant No. 4, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, April 27, 2020)

<sup>176</sup> Blake Poles, *The art of self-directed learning*. United States: Tells Peak Press, 2014.

# LEARNING TO LEARN

## Different ways of learning

Through the primary and secondary research, it appeared that not everybody is learning using the same methods. Education can and should be very diverse, also when it comes to the different levels of understanding and how to gain knowledge.<sup>177</sup> Howard Gardner already drew attention on these differences between individuals, but also Ken Robinson wrote in his book “The element” about how everybody has his their own learning style.<sup>178</sup> I didn’t spend much time on researching about the approved definitions for learning and teaching methods, but I am going to make assumptions based on all the knowledge I gained throughout the module. The graphic on the right hand side (Fig. 12) shows all the findings. Some of them go hand in hand, some of them are very separate from each other. Including the different learning methods used by teachers for disabled children should be considered for the education of children without disabilities. For example, singing, movement, using all different senses like feeling, tasting, smelling. Talking to a teacher who is teaching a class of children with physical and mental disorders shows, that these classrooms are way more de-schooled than traditional classrooms. Only up to seven kids are in the room and between 2-3 teacher are assisting them. Of course, they have special needs and therefore need special care but why can some of this not be adapted to regular schools as well? So, children with disabilities could also easier join regular schools, for example deaf children. They are so used to their “deaf environment” that it might help them to also explore different systems and education methods to break out of their social bubble.<sup>179, 180</sup> Children with dyslexia, dyscalculia and ADD wouldn’t suffer that much by getting pushed into a system that clearly doesn’t fit them.<sup>181, 182</sup> Furthermore, knowing how to learn the best for oneself is helpful for self-directed learning. Home educated children are self-directed learners, children at school are most of the time not. Self-directed learning is a mindset and seems to be a touchpoint where schooling and unschooling can meet in the middle.<sup>183, 184</sup> Especially systems thinking, critical opinions and collaboration gets huge attention if people know how to learn independently. Thinking in many different levels and making connections between subjects and cases is something that children can and should develop through their education.

Therefore, it is important to let children be aware of their learning various approaches of how to gain, process and mediate knowledge. What if school would teach us HOW to learn and not WHAT to learn? Instead of assuming that every individual learns the same way and wants to learn the same things. The main key of learning is to accept, that a truly educated human doesn’t know a bit of everything but knows about their position and purpose in life. True knowledge is to know what you don’t know, as Confucius said in his famous quote. Knowledge starts when one starts to make connections between single cases to see the big picture. Therefore, teaching children how to think in systems leads them to knowledge. Being aware of what you can and want to learn and how to learn it, gives education the real value back.



FIG 12: LEARNING METHODS

177 Helen E. Lees. *Education without Schools: Discovering Alternatives*. Bristol: The Policy Press, 2014;2013.

178 Valentina Auer, *Sustainability in education for sustainability*. Sustainable Design Presents workbook. Brighton, 2020

179 Margarethe Auer, talk about teaching disabled children, May 4, 2020. Recorded, not published.

180 “Making Education Accessible to Deaf Children | Nyle DiMarco | TEDxKlagenfurt”, YouTube video, 14:27, Published by TEDx Talks, September 5, 2018. Online: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U\\_Q7ax14oXY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_Q7ax14oXY)

181 Core Participant No. 10, Interview by Valentina Auer (Brighton, May 5, 2020)

182 Roland Meighan, and Richard Bailey. *John Holt*. London: Continuum, 2007.

183 Blake Poles, *The art of self-directed learning*. United States: Tells Peak Press, 2014. 6 Small is Beautiful (Schumacher 1973)

184 “What if Schools Taught Us How to Learn | Jonathan Levi | TEDxWhiteCity”, YouTube video, 14:32, posted by “TEDx Talks”, November 19, 2015. Online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtQzuwnyW6E>

# THE VALUE OF EDUCATION

In conclusion of this research, education is so much more than grades, tests and lessons at school. It is about learning for life, gaining important competences for future societies, and developing own interests and self-confidence. The goal of education is to improve the children's capabilities and not to let them grow as a product of capitalism. This is where problems evolve and inequalities happen. School could be a very enriching environment for children but sadly we are not using all the resources that are available for free. Many schools are worried that they don't have a high budget or don't get funded enough by the government, but if school would make more use of the communal knowledge it could grow a lot. Furthermore, including the natural environment to make children less detached from nature should be considered as well. Making collaborations between various subjects, learning through different channels, and let the children explore what they really want to explore. Educating has to lead towards independence, individuality, creativity and critical thinking. Especially thinking in systems and accepting other's voices should be engaged more as a capability that children need to change the rotten systems that are all over the world. Taking advices from home educated families, not only during a pandemic but also during a "normal" daily business is already one step towards collaboration between different societies. And to keep the motivation of learning alive. Don't let children be afraid of school, of punishment for not understanding something or being distracted by something. **"Kids at school never get time to sit and daydream. But it's a shame of the education system."** (CP10, Interview by Valentina Auer, 2020) Give them the time and space they need, but with a certain kind of structure and mentoring. Children need support but not drill and as they are naturally curious, they want to learn and get taught by people who are more mature than themselves. May it be older pupils, teacher, parents or any other person in the community. Let them be part of the community and develop their own interests and ideas about the world. With that spirit they will be successful in their own professionality and will therefore life an impactful and hopefully fulfilled life.

De-schooling the school is one step towards sustainability in education.



FIG 13: WHAT EDUCATION SHOULD EMBRACE

# CHANGES THROUGH DESIGN

The research shows very well that school offers a lot of possibilities for improvement and that learning can and should be done in different ways. But to make the public-school system more sustainable a change in society must happen. De-schooling the society, as Illich preaches, but this society depends on the people who are being schooled right now.<sup>1</sup> John Holt mentions that people who become teachers either never had a problem with the system and therefore will never make a change, or are motivated to reform school but are stuck in a system which is hard to escape from.<sup>2</sup> It is a circle, a wicked problem that one has to face. This is where design will have an impact. Therefore, I am going to propose some ideas that can be developed to help improving the existing system, shifting towards change, and developing a sustainable future for society and the environment. I, as a designer want to break the circle with creating something that helps to de-school the school system and through that leads to a shift in the whole society. Above mentioned advocates of revolutionizing education amongst others in the 60s and 70s have already tried to combine unschooling and schooling but apparently it didn't show much success.<sup>3</sup> As those people have mostly been educators themselves who escaped the system it is time to include design as a discipline to make a change. Looking from another perspective on education can help to see the threads and possibilities better. Also applying design thinking and using design principles to create a new schooling system have already shown successful outcomes. For example High Tech High school in California, USA, is using design thinking as a teaching method. The school is very successful and the children are above average with their academic outcomes even though the school doesn't use traditional schooling methods. Design thinking is about questioning old patterns and ways of working, which is a necessity in current education system. Teacher should be designers and designer can be teachers too.<sup>4</sup>

Collaboration between disciplines is something that makes design valuable and sustainable. Therefore, I am working together with a student from the school of education in Salzburg, Austria, to develop something that can make a change through design. Participants of the interviews like home educated children, adults and schooled children will get the different ideas presented as

will and have the chance to give their input for improvements. One of the main gaps that has been defined throughout the research is that education is a privilege and especially school is very unequal. The overall goal is to create tools that make education more equal, no matter where the school is located, how much money is available in institutions and families and how much infrastructure and safety is provided for each individual child. De-schooling the public-school system will offer opportunities for more equality. It is important to keep the decolonization of design and the curriculum in mind here especially because these tools cannot not only be applicable in one culture, country or society. The international use of the tools would be a very valuable feature, but it is important to mention that the majority of the research is based on the western society education systems where it is either legal or illegal to home educate children. The tools that create an unschooled atmosphere at public schools are therefore even more important in countries where home education isn't an alternative. But to make it applicable in more than one country or society it has to be adapted anyways (language, curriculum, legalization etcetera) Exploring different learning methods for example can be already an approach towards a less schooling nature and is also interesting for children who are already home educated. The tools should also inform that unschooling is an alternative that can be relevant if the child suffers at school and to gain awareness about it to foster collaboration between the two systems. The proposed ideas should show teachers and parents as educators how it is the best way to support a learning child.

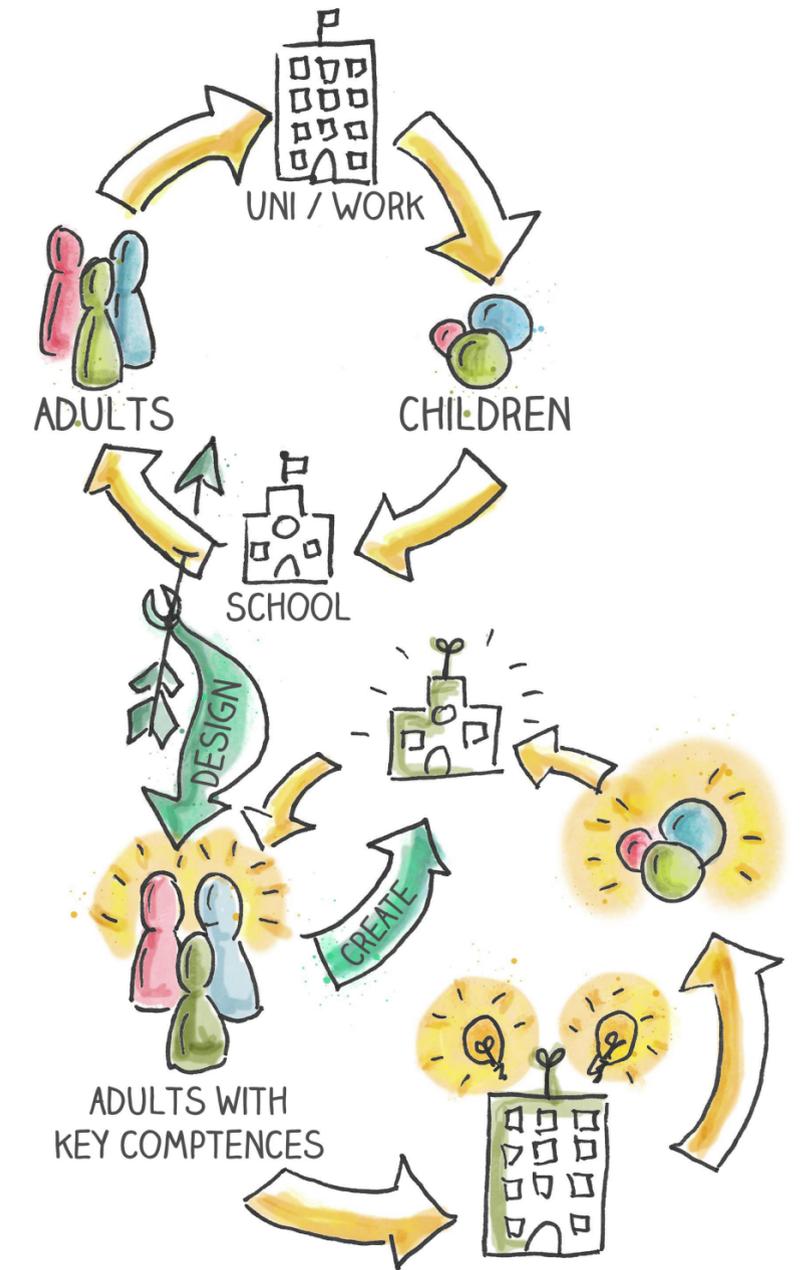
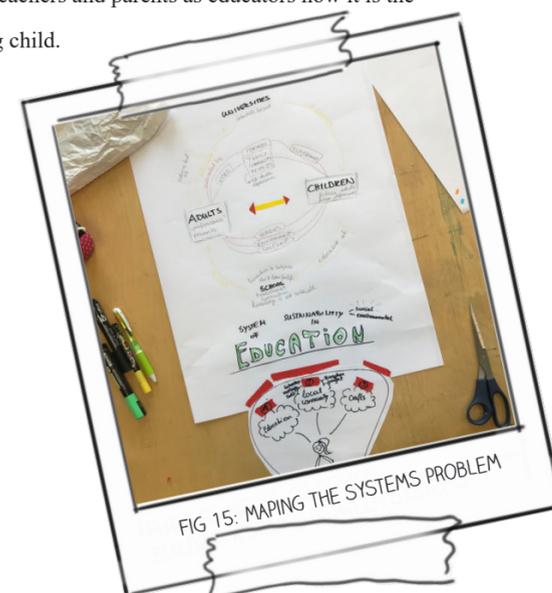


FIG 14: IMPACT OF DESIGN



<sup>1</sup> Ivan D. Illich, *Deschooling Society*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976

<sup>2</sup> Roland Meighan, and Richard Bailey. *John Holt*. London: Continuum, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Roland Meighan, and Richard Bailey. *John Holt*. London: Continuum, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Louise Thomas, *Design for learning in "The connected school"*, 2015. Online: [https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachment/the\\_connected\\_school\\_final\\_for\\_web.pdf](https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachment/the_connected_school_final_for_web.pdf)

# CHANGES THROUGH DESIGN

## *The bridge between two systems*

To visualize the importance of design in this case a model of design has been developed. The model pictures the two different education systems, unschooled and schooled, and shows their main differences. The individual in each system was surrounded by bubbles, which represent the influences a child is exposed to throughout their education. The individual in the unschooled system is covered only partially by the bubbles and has therefore more freedom to develop and grow. Each component of the model is glued together by the systems glue. Its ingredients are all the key requirements for a sustainable education system. It shows that the unschooled part of the model is less stable and therefore needs more of the glue which makes it in turn more valuable. The most important part of the model is the bridge which connects one individual from each system to another. This is a metaphor for the role of design in this wicked situation. It also shows the importance of a collaboration between the schooled and unschooled system. Home education shouldn't be seen as a thread in the system but as an opportunity.<sup>5</sup>

The model of design doesn't offer a final solution but room for inspiration, development and discussion around this topic. It is a discursive model of design and there is definitely room for improvement, but design always changes with the situation and has to adapt very quickly.<sup>6</sup> Now it is time for me to start building the bridge and create proposals that are well designed and well developed.

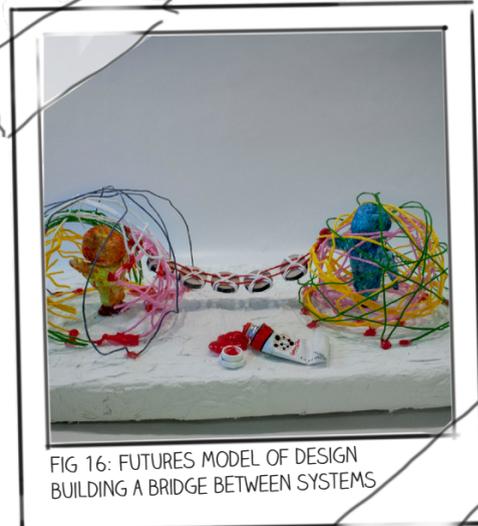


FIG 16: FUTURES MODEL OF DESIGN BUILDING A BRIDGE BETWEEN SYSTEMS

## *Proposals for design interventions*

Following the research done about education above, I want to propose some ideas that can be developed through design in collaboration with the education system.

The final outputs are three playful and creative products that can be used by children, teacher, parents and students at universities. They are designed to be used in various education systems, no matter if unschooled or schooled. Helping to de-school the school system whereas is the main focus. Therefore, they must meet the following requirements (see Fig 17).

This might look like a lot of requirements but it is a challenge to create a “Eierlegende Wollmilchsau” as it is called in German. An animal that can lay eggs, gives wool, gives milk and provides meat. A nightmare for all vegans but a great metaphor for a solution of every problem. This also justifies why there must be more than one proposal for tools developed. Covering too many needs ends up in bad design because it is in most cases not possible to meet everybody's claims and wishes. Especially not when dealing with a wicked problem. Every of the proposed tool in itself is performing less but better. Since decolonization has been mentioned earlier, these proposals will initiate an approach towards decolonizing. Knowing I grew up in a white, western, privileged society I tried to look into other perspectives and listen to more than one voice as well. Decolonizing design means to acknowledge and respect other cultures' methods and philosophies and not trying to change them and make them fit into one own's ideology. Colonization has already destroyed a lot and I don't want to interfere with cultures that I can't empathize with due to lack of knowledge or experience. Even though the manual and all the other proposed ideas should be as inclusive as possible it doesn't mean that they fit for every system. Decolonizing also means that we can reimagine something beyond the already existing systems and this is one of the main goals of this project: reimagining the education system by creating tools that help shifting towards a more sustainable future.<sup>7, 8, 9</sup> Following, the proposals of how design could possibly change the education system according to the findings of the research above are going to be described in detail.

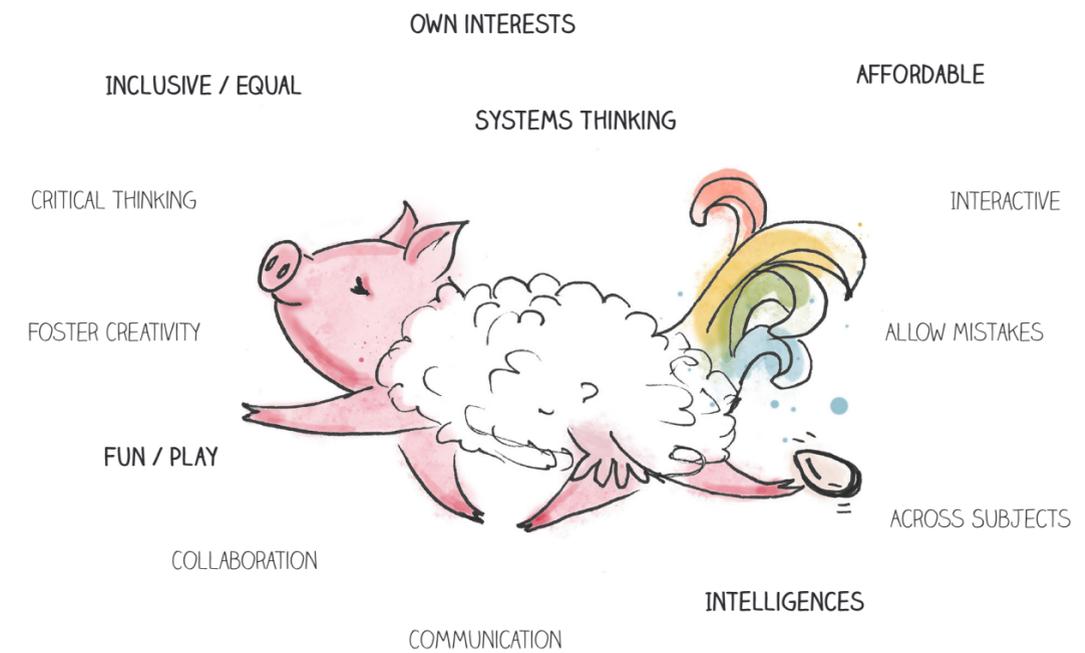


FIG 17: EIERLEGENDE WOLLMILCHSAU - THE OPTIMAL SOLUTION TO EVERYTHING

<sup>5</sup> Roland Meighan, and Richard Bailey. *John Holt*. London: Continuum, 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Valentina Auer, *De-Schooling School. A model of design to rethink the education system*, Sustainable Design Futures workbook. Brighton, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Danah Abdulla, et al, *A manifesto for decolonizing design*. in *Journal of Futures Studies*, March 2019, 23(3): 129–132. 2019. Online: <https://relativecreative.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/12-Ansari-Decolonising-Design.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Anoushka Khandwala, *What Does It Mean to Decolonize Design?* Aoga Eye on design, 2019. Online: <https://eyeondesign.aiga.org/what-does-it-mean-to-decolonize-design/>

<sup>9</sup> Ahmed Ansari, *What a Decolonisation of Design Involves: Two Programmes for Emancipation*. Decolonizingdesign.com, 2018. Online: <http://www.decolonisingdesign.com/actions-and-interventions/publications/2018/what-a-decolonisation-of-design-involves-by-ahmed-ansari/>

# THE GAME

One of the main conclusions and focus of this research is that education has to be fun and enjoyable but equal and challenging too. What could better include all these requirements than a game? Games are played all over the world by old and young, by rich and poor, alone and in groups since many centuries. Of course, every culture has different games, but it is still the same motivation and background why people like to entertain themselves. Games are a very powerful tool to use for learning and understanding and to train one's mind.<sup>10</sup> Currently I am working on something that is specially designed and developed for children: the game (still without a name but I am working on it). It will be a game that can be used at school in the classroom but also at home for unschooled children. Together with an expert in education, Ms. Elena Hirsch, student at the school of education is Salzburg, Austria, we are planning to create an innovative game that embraces the different learning methods and gives children the opportunity to experience self-directed learning. Especially for creating an educational game it takes more than one person to develop and design something with value. According to the institute of play the perfect game is developed by combining three expertise. Fig 18 shows that it takes a game developer, a teacher and a curriculum designer to collaborate on the development of a game for an educational purpose. In my case Elena will be the teacher, I will be the game designer and together we form the third party, the curriculum designer as this game should not only work in a schooled system but also in an unschooled one.<sup>11</sup> The descriptions of the game are first drafts and no final designs, changes will happen through going deeper into detail.

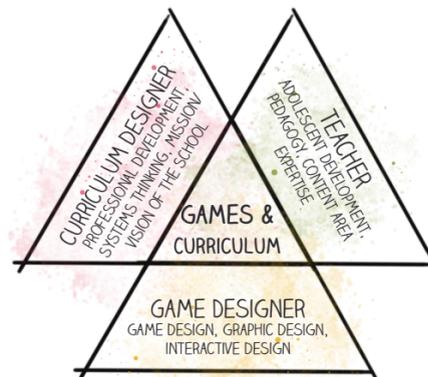


FIG 18: EXPERTISE COMBINATION FOR EDUCATIONAL GAME

The target group are children aged between 7 and 12 years, Year 3 to year 7 students. According to psychology, children between the age of 6-10 start to be competitive and ambitious. They start to make logic combinations and conclusions. They also get aware of their feelings like fear and aggression. With seven they start to understand consistency of numbers, measurements, and distances. Piaget has done a lot of research about this. Important is that they start to be independent and work independently.<sup>12,13,14</sup> Since the game will include reading, researching and independent work it is good to start in year 3. When puberty starts, they are already too far from making changes in their behaviour. Apparently humans start to build up their attitudes regarding consume, diary and spare time activities during the first years of school.<sup>15</sup> This is when the game will have most impact on their lives. Elena and I are collaborating online through Skype and Zoom. Due to Covid-19 we both got used to work with people online through videocalls therefore it wasn't a problem for us to communicate like that. We brainstormed and inspired each other by using the whiteboard tool on Zoom (which sometimes didn't want to work properly). As both our mother tongue is German we had no difficulties to express our ideas and discuss possible dissensions.



FIG 19: ZOOM BRAINSTORMING

10 Institute of Play, Q Design Pack – Games and Learning, 2020. Online: <https://clalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Design-Pack-Games-And-Learning.pdf>

11 Institute of Play, Q Design Pack – Games and Learning, 2020. Online: <https://clalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Design-Pack-Games-And-Learning.pdf>

12 The school Run, How to build your child's independence. theschoolrun.com, 2020. Online: <https://www.the-school-run.com/building-childrens-independence>

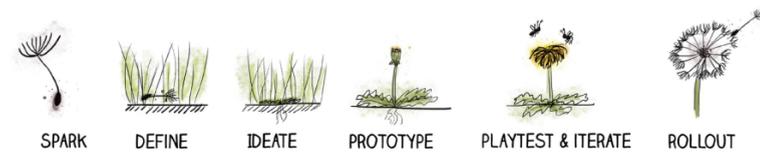
13 Gabriele Haug-Schnabel and Joachim Benschel, Die Welt verstehen wollen. Das Kind von sechs bis zehn Jahren in kindergarten heute 1999, Jg. 29, Heft 9, S. 22-28. 1999. Online: <https://kindergartenpaedagogik.de/fachartikel/psychologie/138>

14 Schule-sorglos.de, „Schule sorglos“-Ratgeber: Wie selbstständig sollten Grundschüler sein? Online: [https://www.schule-sorglos.de/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Selbstaendigkeit\\_Grundschoeler.pdf](https://www.schule-sorglos.de/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Selbstaendigkeit_Grundschoeler.pdf)

15 Schule-sorglos.de, „Schule sorglos“-Ratgeber: Wie selbstständig sollten Grundschüler sein? Online: [https://www.schule-sorglos.de/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Selbstaendigkeit\\_Grundschoeler.pdf](https://www.schule-sorglos.de/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Selbstaendigkeit_Grundschoeler.pdf)

# THE GAME

For the development my collaborator and I are using design thinking techniques and typical game developing tools. As the game itself will engage children to use design thinking, or systems thinking, for their education and life choices it is great to use it as a designer yourself. So one is not only preaching about things that they are not even using for their own purposes. The game design thinking process has naturally been as followed:



Currently we are still in the phase of ideating our sparks, but we will take our time until we are finally ready for the first prototype.<sup>16</sup>

As already discussed, educational games are not very popular nor much appreciated amongst children or adults. Children do like to play during their classes, but they see a clear difference between playing for fun and playing for learning. Therefore, the goal is to make it less obvious that it is an education game with a learning outcome.

For this purpose, I have observed some games similar to my ideas that are educational and focus on things like systems thinking, sustainability and decolonization. The institute of play in the US for example is developing many games together with Quest schools (schools who are working with a heutagogy approach and where playful learning is key). Especially the game about systems thinking caught my interest. Their game includes several tools that teacher can use in the classroom or in workshops with children to explain and foster systems thinking for children. Graphs, maps, feedback loops and clusters are used in a particular order to give pupils the chance to develop their own big picture of an issue. The teachers have first been introduced into systems thinking so they are “specialists” in it as well and can help the children when they feel stuck.<sup>17</sup> Another popular playful approach that focuses on systems thinking had similar approaches but instead of making it like a

boardgame it was a game where children had to act out a system. The classes got split into groups, one group are the observing scientists and one is the system which is “living” after certain rules. The scientists have to figure out the rules by changing the individual parts of the system and therefore affecting it. Through that the children understand how much impact one single action has on a whole system.<sup>18</sup> A creative collaborative group in Australia who is focusing on the decolonization of design have designed the knowledge cards to motivate and start conversations about decolonization and have used them at a workshop for 12-year-olds. The main goal of the workshop was to create a solution for a sustainable water system for the future of the city where the event took place (Brisbane). They included groupwork, physical activity and creativity into their structure and in the end every group had to present their individual solution. Through the input the participants learned about water filtering, storage and pumping methods used by the indigenous people in Australia. With those ideas they built a models of design without any limitations. From a business idea to an actual artefact, the children could explore the whole range of outputs. The organizer and creators of the event introduced the challenge via a fun video to the participants so they could engage in a fun way with them and show the necessity of a change.<sup>19, 20</sup>



FIG 20: SYSTEMS THINKING GAME



FIG 21: PRISONERS GAME



FIG 22: FUTUREBNE DECOLONIZING DESIGN WORKSHOP

<sup>16</sup> Institute of Play, *Q Design Pack – Games and Learning*, 2020. Online: <https://clalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Design-Pack-Games-And-Learning.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Institute of Play, *Q Design Pack – Games and Learning*, 2020. Online: <https://clalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Design-Pack-Games-And-Learning.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Institute of Play, *Q Design Pack – Systems Thinking*, 2020. Online: <https://clalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Design-Pack-Systems-Thinking.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Tatum Omari, *How to practice systems thinking in the classroom*, teacher-blog.education.com, April 20, 2016. Online: <https://teacher-blog.education.com/how-to-practice-systems-thinking-in-the-classroom-9cbfa3dcd2cf>  
UCAR, “The Systems Game”, [scied.ucar.edu](https://scied.ucar.edu/2012), 2012. Online: <https://scied.ucar.edu/activity/2925/print-all>

<sup>19</sup> Bec Barnett and Tritsan Schultz, *Decolonising Approaches to Designing With Children: Futurebne Water Security Challenge*, Relative Creative, 2018. Online: [https://relativecreative.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/DECOLONISING\\_APPROACHES\\_TO\\_DESIGNING\\_WIT-1.pdf](https://relativecreative.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/DECOLONISING_APPROACHES_TO_DESIGNING_WIT-1.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Relative Creative Knowledge Cards, [RelativeCreative.com.au](https://relativecreative.com.au/resource/relative-futures-knowledge-cards/). Online: <https://relativecreative.com.au/resource/relative-futures-knowledge-cards/>

# THE GAME

As there are already some specialists in designing these kind of games out there, I decided to contact some and get their opinion about the idea of Elena and me. Talking to Bec Barnett from Relative Creatives, who was one of the developers of the decolonizing design event in Brisbane, Australia and Jeanette Müller, a design thinking expert from Vienna, will give me some interesting insights. As the talks are scheduled very close to the submission deadlines I won't include them very detailed in this workbook, but as I plan to work more on this project for the Masters module, I will include them in the next research paper. During the game design process, especially in the prototyping and playtest period, I will contact my partners of the interviews as well and let them test the game. Through the research done so far and through discussing the project with the experts and my collaborator, I came to the following conclusions about what is important to keep in mind for designing a game:

- **Define the learning outcomes and communicate them very clear**
- **First “teach” the educators to introduce them into the topic so they feel comfortable with guiding the children through the game because they should only assist the children through the game. Therefore, a good relationship between children and educators must be developed.**
- **To understand a game one has to give examples, so the game must have a “test round” or some examples ready.**
- **The best way to learn something new is through experience and simply doing it, so make it as active as possible.**
- **If the game is used in schools there must be a final output and something that can be graded. Also the game should fit with the curriculum as the system still hasn't changed yet.**
- **Go beyond the learning outcomes of the curriculum and use design as a powerful tool**
- **The whole game is a system and every tool in it is one part of it**

Following the toolkit for creating an educational game from the institute of play we defined the learning goals, game ideas and how they will be assessed in the game. This tool is called the game idea generator.

After defining these we followed again the design pack tools and defined the individual parts of the game.

## LEARNING GOALS

Children will learn how to gain and mediate knowledge through different methods. They will learn how to learn for their own needs.

Children will explore their own topic of interest and will get experts in their field.

Children will get introduced into systems thinking, collaboration, playful learning and self-directed learning. They will get independent and develop a critical mind.

Children will see that school is not only about learning and learning can happen outside of school too.

## GAME IDEAS

A test round will be done with the educator to get familiar with the different learning methods on one topic that will be done together.

Children chose their own topic (educator can decide if it has to fit in one certain category or if children are completely free to pick their topic)

Learning methods will be collected and used through various tasks  
They will go through different stations on the board

Minigames that are just for fun will be included and the winner will have to prepare something about their topic for the next subject (decided by a dice so it is fair and a bit surprising too)

Each child has to experience one method throughout their project.

All outcomes of the project will be collected in one folder or box etc.

At the end of the game (2-3 months) children will present their project outcomes. They can decide how they want to present their knowledge to their peers.

In the end children will have experienced various learning methods and can decide for their own which one they liked the most/least. They will have some reflexion sheet and can always refer back to that throughout the year.

## HOW TO ASSESS

Children will collect all their outputs of tasks and exercises in a folder.

As there is no right or wrong of doing the tasks the educator can still see how much effort and motivation the child put into the project.

The presentation at the end of the game has to be graded in some way, but without pressure or fear of failure. It is very subjective to grade these projects but since one main goal is to experience all the different learning methods the teacher can make assumptions about if the children really engaged with all of them.

Children have to reflect at the end of the game how they liked it and what they learned for themselves on some sort of reflexion sheet.

FIG 23: GAME GENERATOR FOR THE GAME

## GOALS

introducing different learning methods learning is fun and very broad foster self-directed learning and critical thinking

## CHALLENGE

children working independently, collecting marbles and going through all the stations, create something you can be proud of

### CHALLENGE FOR US

that the game provides a real learning outcome for the children, focusing on heterogeneous groups and equality, make a creative and attractive design.

## CORE MECHANICS

Fill the basket with the learning methods, travel between the stations, exercises and tasks will make travelling possible, collect all the outputs of each task

## SPACE

classroom and at home, school building, libraries, natural environment, social environment

## RULES

Every method must be tried at least once, journaling of the progress, no task will be done twice, children can do one method more often than others but have to switch after a certain time, work on your own but collaborate with others during the tasks, help others if they need help, educator is a guide and managing the game but not teaching

## COMPONENTS

learning methods, game board, baskets as pawns, cards with exercises, mini games, dices, folder with collected projects, reflexion materials manual and examples, the educator as a guide

FIG 24: PARTS OF THE GAME

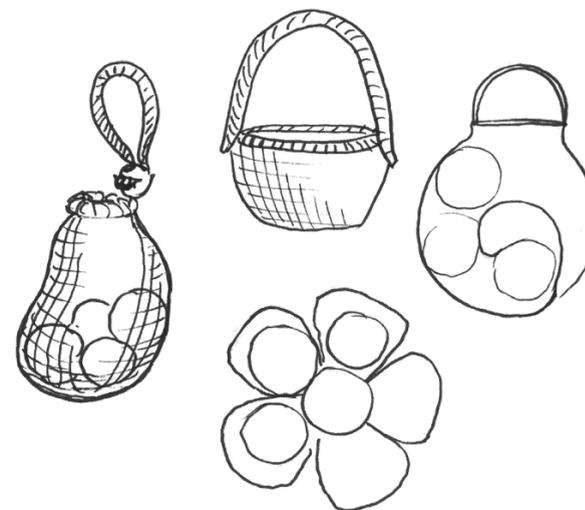
# THE GAME

## *The Materials*

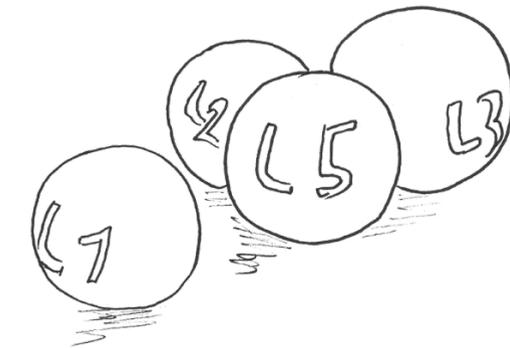
The idea is to create a special boardgame that will be present throughout the suggested three months period of playing. It would be useful to keep it in the classroom or home throughout the year so that the children can remember their learning outcomes of the exercises. Therefore, the board should not be in the way, so the conclusion is to put it on the wall. The main material will be fabric since it is easy to attach to a wall, lightweight and can be washed and reused several times for other classes. The fabric shows a landscape which is full of touchpoints. The touchpoints indicate different exercises the children must fulfil. Each child will get a basket as a pawn in the game which they can customize as they wish to. The baskets are going to move between the touchpoints to show the children what learning methods they are asked to do. In the baskets they will collect different learning methods. The learning methods are coloured marbles or coins and each colour has a meaning. Since we don't want to focus on losing or winning in the game, but interviews have shown that children enjoy games where they are able to win, this is the part where the children can be a bit competitive. **“You put more effort into it because you want to win in the end.”** (CP3, Interview by Valentina Auer, 2020) Goal is to collect all the methods but it doesn't mean that the child must like them or use them for further education. It is just an indication that they have tried all different kinds of learning and in the end found the one that most suited them. Other materials will be cards and dices with different activities and exercise on them including mini-games and activities. learning and the winner of the game will get the chance to do some extra tasks on their individual project. Those tasks will be decided by throwing a dice. Could be for example developing a maths exercise on your project and presenting it in the last 10 minutes of the maths class. Everything that is developed through this tasks will be collected in a folder, map or box so that the children have a collection of their journey on their specialized topic.



FABRIC PLAYING FIELD



BASKETS (PAWN IN THE GAME)



COLLECTABLE LEARNING METHODS



MATERIAL FOR TASKS AND EXERCISES

# THE GAME

## Playing Scenario

Once the game started the children will go through different phases. The educator will indicate all the different phases as they are the manager of the game.

### STAGE 1: Get to know different learning Methods.

Stage 1 will be mostly done under guidance with the educator (in classroom/ at home). A topic chosen by the teacher will be explained using all different learning methods together with the childre. It can be also done by other teacher in various subjects, so children are not always prepared for getting to know a method of learning. They will collect all the methods and then after 1-2 weeks going into stage 2. If the game is played at school, it is good to include all the teachers from various subjects so they can incorporate it in their individual lessons too. It will be then working across subjects too and the children get encouraged to see each subject from different perspectives.

### STAGE 2: chose a subject and explore it through different learning methods.

The children will then decide on a topic they want to work on. The educator can decide if the topics have to fit several categories (for example animals, sustainability, professions, etc.) or if the children can decide completely on their own what to choose. As Elena pointed out, it is important for a teacher to combine activities with the curriculum so to give the teacher the option to decide on one category that fits with the curriculum is necessary. Each child should have their own project, they will collaborate through the game as much as possible, but they should have their own individual output in the end. They are going to choose a basket and customize it (painting, drawing etc.) and put their name and project title on it. The baskets will be put on the play field and will move around as the children explore their topics. Each station on the field is designated to a different learning method. Every child has to stop at each station at least once but children can stay longer or shorter there, depending on how much they enjoy the method. The learning methods will be collected in the baskets and each child will have different combinations of them in their basket. The longer they spend on one method, the more marbles of this colour they will collect. Goal is to have every colour in the basket at least once. There will be also an reflexion sheet where the participants of the game can make notes what they liked or disliked about each method for their individual learning outcome. The children will

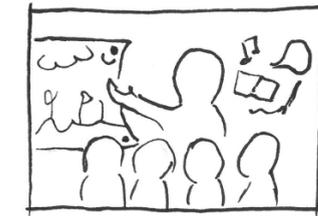
sometimes do the same exercises all together or will explore different exercises. This is not very clear yet but it will be developed further. The exercises or tasks could be for example drawing a picture about your project and then trying to explain that picture to an imaginary blind person. Or searching for videos and documentaries on the internet. Little games that have nothing much to do with learning or the project like memory, boardgames or original physical games will be included to make it more exciting. Those games should give children a break from learning and the winner of the game will get the chance to do some extra tasks on their individual project. Those tasks will be decided by throwing a dice. Could be for example developing a maths exercise on your project and presenting it in the last 10 minutes of the maths class. Everything that is developed through this tasks will be collected in a folder, map or box so that the children have a collection of their journey on their specialized topic.

### STAGE 3: explain your topic to peers

After about 7 weeks the children start to wrap up their projects and put them together into a workbook, collage, film or whatever they prefer. Finally, they have to present it to their peers. Creating something that has to be presented to somebody else motivates people to give their best. Also teaching and explaining their topic in a certain timeframe increases one's own knowledge even more.<sup>21</sup> Home educated children will present it to their parents, friends or siblings. Children in the classroom to their fellow classmates and teachers. They are now specialists about their chosen topic which gives them power over their knowledge. They have experienced many different methods of learning so the main learning outcome, which won't be very obvious for the participants themselves, is that they experienced that there are more methods than just getting lectured by the educator and that they can learn for themselves too.

### STAGE 4: summarize what you learned throughout the game.

The board (fabric) of the game with the baskets attached will stay in the room so that the children can always look back and maybe get inspired to work on some tasks with a different approach. Throughout the year some games or exercises can be repeated in different subjects or projects if the educator liked the idea of the game. Children can also make suggestions to improve the schooled lessons in class or at home by including the methods more.



WEEK 1-2: PHASE 1  
EXPLORING THE LEARNING  
METHODS TOGETHER WITH  
EDUCATOR WHILE WORKING ON A  
COLLECTIVE PROJECT



WEEK 3: PHASE 2  
PICKING A BASKET AND  
CUSTOMIZING IT.  
ALSO DECIDING ON A PROJECT



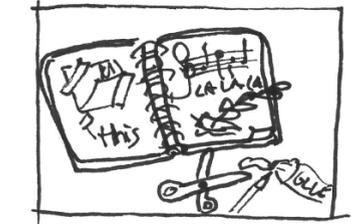
WEEK 3-6: PHASE 2  
EXPLORING SELF PICKED TOPIC  
THROUGH THE DIFERENT LEARNING  
METHODS. MOVING THE BASKET ON  
THE FABRIC



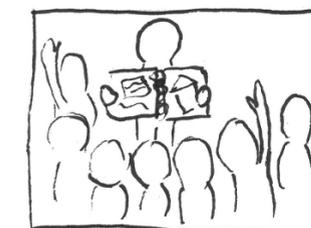
WEEK 3-6: PHASE 2  
COLLECTING THE METHODS ONE  
WORKS WITH AND EXCHANGING  
THEM THROUGH OTHER ONES



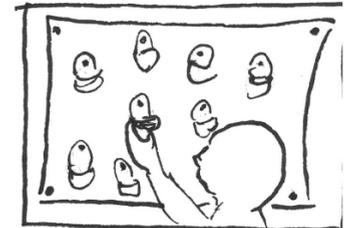
WEEK 3-6: PHASE 2  
MAKING DIFFERENT EXERCISES,  
GAMES AND TASKS AROUND THE  
PICKED TOPIC IN WITH THE PEERS



WEEK 7-9: PHASE 3  
WRAPING UP THE PROJECT. PUT  
ALL THE COLLECTED KNOWLEDGE  
TOGETHER IN ONE PROJECT  
FODLER



WEEK 10-11: PHASE 3  
PRESENTING THE PROJECT TO  
YOUR PEERS, FRIENDS AND FAMILY.  
TEACH THEM ALL THE NEW  
KNOWLEDGE.



REST OF THE YEAR  
KEEP THE FABRIC WITH THE  
BASKETS. USE THE PREFERED  
METHODS OF LEARNING AND KEEP  
ON DOING MINI EXERCISES

<sup>21</sup> Blake Poles, *The art of self-directed learning*.  
United States: Tolls Peak Press, 2014.

# THE MANUAL

## “DESCHOOLING EDUCATION”

**A manual for educators to work towards a sustainable future.**

Making knowledge available and understandable for everybody, no matter what language, culture or social status the person comes from is one key requirement for the vision of a sustainable education system.

It is even more important to communicate the findings throughout this research to impactful people and not hide them in the storage of a computer where nobody will ever get to see them. Therefore, the idea of creating a document that describes very precisely but detailed what sustainable education means, what it requires and how it can be done, was born. A step by step guide for educators and parents to motivate them for a change in the system. A manual that can be used to teach about this issue. With input from my collaborator Elena Hirsch who is going to graduate from the school of education next year, I developed the manual for a de-schooled education system.

This booklet can be handed out to parents on school information days or maybe also in bookstores where they have to buy schoolbooks for their children. Teach could have access to it while going through their pedagogy education themselves or get it handed out at the school they are working for. The book can be available online as a printable and interactive PDF version so it can reach a broader audience. It is important that people who usually don't think about the frauds and issues of the education system get to read it. Especially people from lower socioeconomic communities who have no other opportunity than sending their kids to state funded schools.

As the research has shown, play in learning and teaching is necessary. Since the manual is targeted to adults, the graphics shouldn't be too childish but it needs to be visual so that everybody can understand it easily. Eve L. Ewing is using the language of comics to mediate issues like racism to children and adults. Using pictures makes reading more fun, for adults as well as children.

For example an article about advices from unschooled families for parents during covid-19 is using comic illustrations to make it more understandable and memorisable.<sup>22, 23</sup> (See Fig 27)

Furthermore, many books discussing the toxic impact of schooling on children have been written so far. Sadly, they get lost somewhere as only specialized people or some who actively want to make a change are targeted by them. It is time to create something that won't get dusty in a bookshelf of a library and really motivates educators to revolutionise the school system. Those amongst other reasons gave inspiration and evidence to create an illustrated manual. Focusing on the issues that are planned to communicate to the target group they support the written explanations. The goal is to keep it short but informative. Each topic will have a short text why it is important. The question about how it can be implemented into education will be answered by giving tips and suggestions as well. It can be read very easily and therefore incorporated into the daily business promptly. There is also a section where people can write their own thoughts and notes about each proposed key competence. It will make the manual more interactive for the user and it can be convenient to write down epiphanies and inspirations while reading something. The manual should also inspire people to get interested into the game that will be developed.

Here is one example of an illustration together with a text how it could appear in the final design.



FIG 26: EXAMPLE DESIGN OF THE MANUAL



FIG 27: ILLUSTRATIONS ABOUT TIPS FOR HOME EDUCATION DURING COVID-19

<sup>22</sup> Eve L. Ewing, 1919: *Teaching Guide*, Chicago, 2019. Online: <https://eveewing.com/#/new-page-4/>

<sup>23</sup> Anja Kamenetz and Cory Turner, *Tips For Homeschooling During Coronavirus*, npr.org, March 24, 2020. Online: <https://www.npr.org/2020/03/23/820228206/6-tips-for-homeschooling-during-coronavirus>

# THE MANUAL

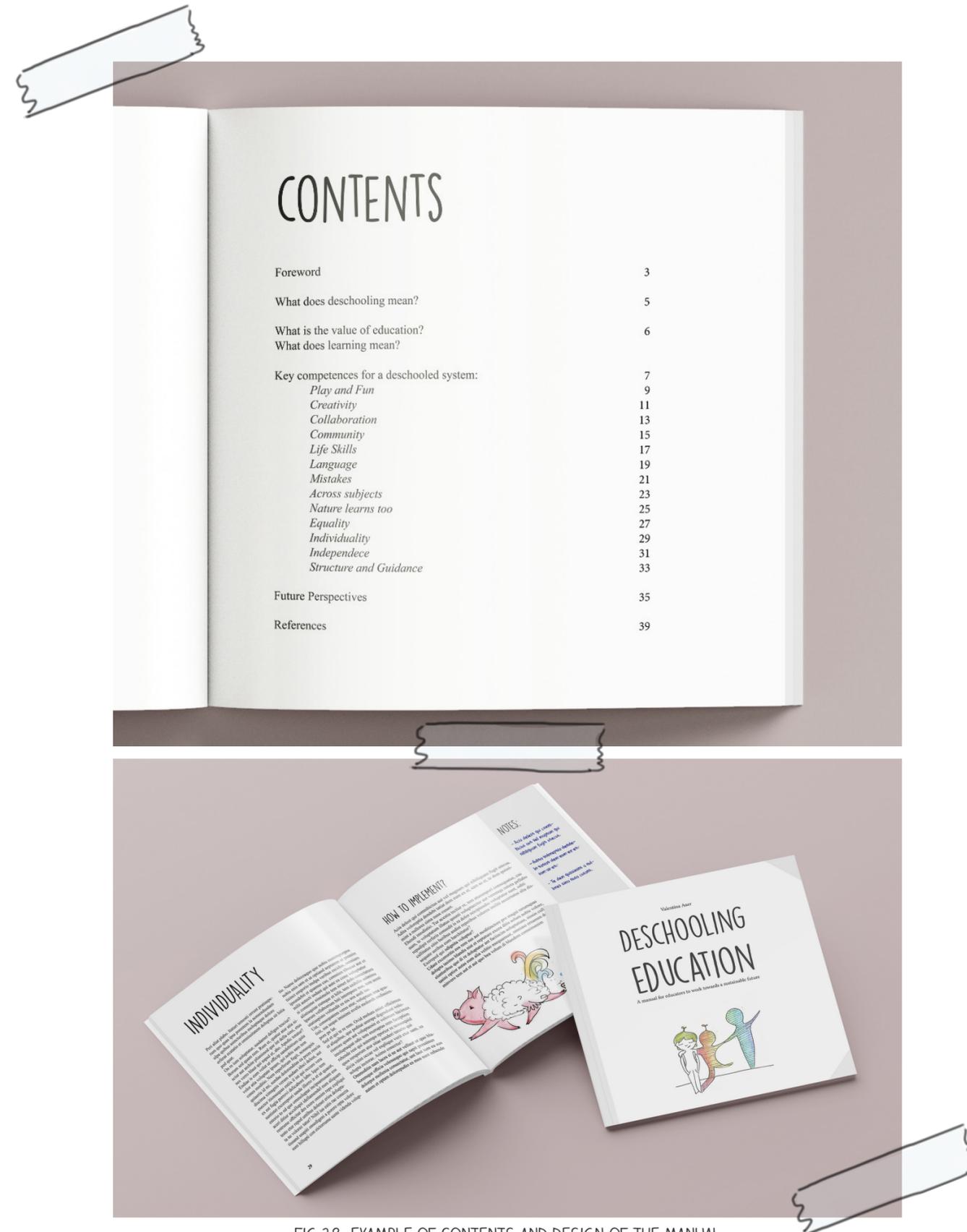
Beside the key competences there is also a foreword where the whole research process and all the people referenced to is mentioned. Also an introduction into deschooling and what learning actually means will be given. A proposed list of contents shows that the following topics will be covered. (See Fig 28)

The language used for the text will be professional but understandable for everybody. So not using complicated and complex sentences. It will also not include any gender specifications nor ethnicity or socioeconomic classifications. This ensures that nobody can be offended or feeling discriminated. Keeping in mind that the goal is to make it available in every culture and country it must be easy translatable into many languages. The prototype will be in English, but it is planned to develop a German version too in the future.

Here is an example of how the illustrations and the text will function together. The illustrations are all hand drawn by myself using inspirations from illustrators like Christoph Niemann and Jean-Jacques Sempé.

Since the manual will be written with the goal to be understandable by a broad audience it can also be read by children. For example, it could be introduced to pupils in classrooms to let them know what kind of education they are going to experience or why several exercises are important for their development. But the target audience should still be focused on parents and teacher. Especially for those who are exposed to a colonized and very westernized education that doesn't fit with their cultural values.

How will the target group have access to the booklet?



## CONTENTS

Foreword	3
What does deschooling mean?	5
What is the value of education? What does learning mean?	6
Key competences for a deschooled system:	7
<i>Play and Fun</i>	9
<i>Creativity</i>	11
<i>Collaboration</i>	13
<i>Community</i>	15
<i>Life Skills</i>	17
<i>Language</i>	19
<i>Mistakes</i>	21
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<i>Nature learns too</i>	25
<i>Equality</i>	27
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### INDIVIDUALITY

For each child, there is a unique path to learning. This path is shaped by their experiences, interests, and abilities. It is important to recognize and support this individuality, rather than trying to force a one-size-fits-all approach. Learning should be a joyful and meaningful experience for every child.

### HOW TO IMPLEMENT?

When implementing deschooling, it is crucial to create a supportive environment. This involves providing resources, encouragement, and a safe space for exploration. Teachers and parents should act as guides, not controllers, allowing children to take ownership of their learning process.



### NOTES:

Notes section containing small text and a drawing of a pig and a sheep.

## DESCHOOLING EDUCATION



FIG 28: EXAMPLE OF CONTENTS AND DESIGN OF THE MANUAL

# THE CARDS OF KNOWLEDGE

During one exercise of the project I developed my own game to get a little bit of structure into all the research and ideas I have had. Looking at my old UNO cards in the drawer I came up with the cards of knowledge game. Learning and gaining knowledge should be fun and full of enjoyment and there is nothing more to enjoy for me than playing with a deck of cards. UNO is a game that many people across the world know and fancy, it is easy to understand and easy to play. I transformed them so they fit to my project. A-cards are Authors that inspired or influenced my work. Part of the secondary research. E-cards are areas that I really wanted to explore and cover in this project. I are inspirations that I came across and will also use as research. The colour changing cards, or joker, game changer, are the interviews and COVID-19, which I don't have control over but have to make the best out of it. There is also a pause and return card which allows me to stop and review my work if I am stuck. There are also blank cards, so the game evolves and is flexible. Just like design research should be, it always changes throughout time and develops new perspectives and opportunities for possible solutions<sup>24</sup>

## Playing with my cards of knowledge

Now it is finally time to shuffle the cards, dealing them out and show them. Because playing with open cards and transparency is important to understand this project. I am still playing with myself, laying the cards open on the table in front of me, showing them to my peers but not really playing a game against or with somebody.

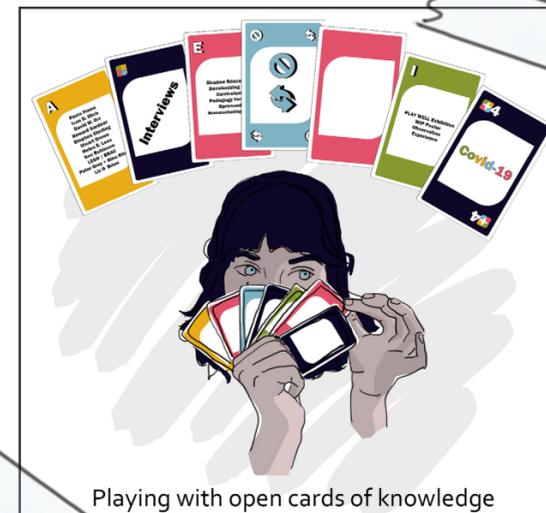
This tool helped me a lot with organizing and structuring this project. I developed it as a metaphor for all the research that flows into this project and to kind of gamify the whole process. But it actually also helped with making connections between things. It is good to shuffle the cards, pick them randomly, make new connections or to play them together with your peers or collaborators. It can be also a useful tool at design thinking workshops for example. The game will grow and develop along with the research process and in the end it is a collection of all the ideas and reference points that have been used for the individual project. The target group are students in higher

education who are working on bigger research projects, design thinkers and participants of creative thinking workshops. I can imagine the idea of the games can be used in the game for children as well but it needs to be adapted then. To make this project accessible there will be a printing kit so everybody can print the cards for their own purpose.

### Instructions:

This card game should help to organize research in, about and through design. It is a tool to keep an overview over things one want to explore, gets inspired by and has already found literature/materials about. Each card has a different meaning. A is for Authors, secondary research and literature can be written on this card. E means explore, topics that are interesting to put into the research. Fields of interest can be written on I-cards. The Jokers are things that add special value to each project and can also be a game changer. The blue "pause and reverse" card indicates that sometimes it is good to stop and go back in your research. Embrace mistakes and learn from them. Plain cards can be customized with more categories.

This game functions as a metaphor to mix and shuffle research to get to new perspectives and connections. You can shuffle the cards and pick each day one. Or you can play them with your collaboration partners to make decisions. Get creative about how to use the cards, there are no rules, no right or wrong. Seeing research and learning as a fun game might help to motivate you.



Playing with open cards of knowledge

FIG 29: CARDS OF KNOWLEDGE

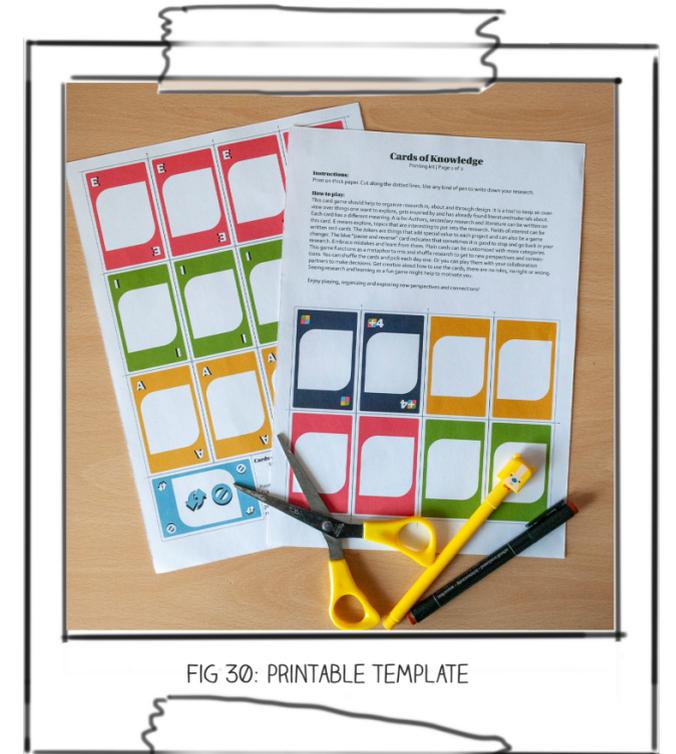


FIG 30: PRINTABLE TEMPLATE



FIG 31: PLAYING WITH THE CARDS

<sup>24</sup> Ben Sweeting, Sustainable Design Futures: Decide the undecidable. MASD ADM06. (Brighton: February 18, 2020. Brighton University)

# CONCLUSION

Education is necessary to make a change, but education is not schooling. It is so much more and people have to realize that and take it more serious and in their own responsibility to make it valuable and equal for every child. We should go away from the classic school model and embrace the world as a classroom. Learning how to learn for each individually to gain confidence and knowledge should be more focused on rather than according every topic in the curriculum in a very inflexible way. School as a communal environment and teacher as guides and connectors to lead children towards capabilities that are important for a sustainable society. The absence of school and distance learning circumstances due to the Corona Virus has shown the inequalities and difficulties of education very clear. People start to rethink school now and as time goes by hopefully some changes will happen. Especially the value of playful learning, self-directed learning, systems thinking and creativity must be appreciated and incorporated in the curriculum. Education should be equally accessible for every individual, decolonizing it is one approach but also racism and the privatization of schools are an issue to be addressed. Home education isn't the solution for everybody as it is a privilege too but it needs to be seen as an alternative to public schools and other pedagogy methods. Especially the communication between the unschooled and schooled system is necessary to reform the whole concept of education for children. De-schooling the school system has to happen soon, as school get's criticised since many decades already. Giving more alternatives that are not available for every child and family isn't a sustainable solution therefore developing tools to embrace change in the whole system are keys that can open new doors.

These tools can be developed through design in cooperation with experts about pedagogy and schooling. Together with an student at the school of education the idea of a game to embrace self-directed learning to combine unschooling and schooling was born. Spreading the knowledge gained through this research could be done by creating an illustrated manual for educators (teacher and parents). Furthermore the cards of knowledge can be included in design research at universities to foster systems thinking and make connections between different subjects.

What are the answers to the research questions that have been developed at the beginning?

Research Questions:

## **What is the value of education?**

Equality, learning for life and yourself and not for school, embracing creativity and design thinking to solve problems, looking at the individuality and going away form a one-size-fits-all model, collaboration within the education environment but also outside, learning is fun and playful, guidance and structure are important for children, mistakes are allowed and necessary to gain knowledge, systems thinking to make connections and see the big picture is a key capability for the future and has to be addressed during education.

## **What does unschooling and schooling mean?**

Unschooling, or home education, is an alternative to schooling and focuses on the individual needs and interests of a child. Even though it isn't suitable for everybody but some methods and core ideas can be combined with the school system. Schooling isn't learning, schooling is fitting children into a system that isn't sustainable at all. School itself can offer a lot of value but the methods that are used in a traditional school system aren't compatible with the present society anymore. Inequality happens in an unschooled and schooled system but combining both ideologies can help to narrow the gap.

## **How can design help to de-school the public-school system to make education more equal?**

Design thinking is a capability that designers are mastering with their expertise. Through collaboration and creativity, design can help to change the system. Workshops, talks, games that are less educational and many more tools are necessary to create change. Designers have to acknowledge that they are responsible for society and for the future as well as children are.

Summing up all this I want to refer once again to Ghandi who once said that we have to be the change we want to be. Only watching and complaining about the current situation won't have much impact. I cannot change a whole system but I can create something that leads towards change and I want to take this advantage and responsibility as a task for further development.

To gather this massive research and pool of ideas a bit together I created a website which is like a short version of this workbook. It is still work in progress as the game isn't done yet and other ideas are still very rough too but it gives a nice overview about what I have been collecting through out this Masters course. The website can be seen as a portfolio of this course and I want to use it to spread the knowledge to a broad audience. All the topics I mentioned in this workbook will be covered there and explained in a few sentences. People who are more interested in the topic will have the ability to contact me and get access to the full workbook. I can use the website for my own collection of work to apply for jobs but will also promote it on several social media platforms to gain awareness.

**The link to the website is:** <https://auerva29.wixsite.com/deschoolingeducation>

I am very keen on developing it further and it will grow a lot until the graduation. I hope to keep on developing some ideas further, also after the graduation, so the project will evolve and change through out time for sure.



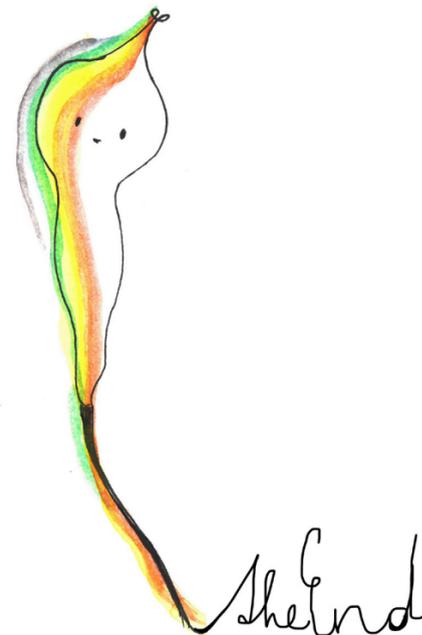
# SELFREFLECTION AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

It has been a long journey through the education system and the train just started to move. I am clearly not yet at my final destination but hopefully through the Masters module I will get closer to it. I am aware that these ideas won't have a massive impact in the system if the educators won't they implement them in the classroom. But I guess this is always the issue with design. The designer is responsible for the output but what happens with it is not within their power.<sup>25</sup> But it is my duty to make it attractive, promote it to the right people and also spend more time on developing each proposed idea. The cards of knowledge are only a nice little gadget that might not help everybody, as learning styles are different for each individually. As all the facilities are currently closed due to Covid-19 I am not able to do any testing with my peers. This could enrich the development of the concept a lot but I can only stick to theoretical ideas here. Also, Matell ® probably won't give me the rights to "steal" their game design so I would have to change the graphics anyway before going viral.

Something that can have a huge impact on the improvement of education is the manual. Since this is targeted to educators and parents it will encourage them to think about the system very critically. The manual can be published online and will be promoted through social media to reach a broad audience. For the beginning at least, it would be great if a printable version can be developed but of course this takes time and effort to be developed properly. Furthermore, for my Master's project I want to focus especially on the game and put a lot more effort in its research. Talking and presenting the ideas to more experts and creating prototypes for my focus group will get the project further. Especially the unschooled participants of my interviews also agreed on helping me with developing the ideas on the game. The collaboration with Elena Hirsch is working very well. It is great to develop ideas together, me as the creative and leading part and her expertise in how to adapt them into the classroom successfully. But beside more interviews, talks and collaborations I also want to explore more about already existing games that are either successful or not successful so I can get inspired or make changes to some ideas. Also looking more into professional ways of game development and how to design attractive visuals for children. To really engage with equality

it would be great to narrow the target group down and decide on what aspects we are going to focus the most. It is not possible and smart to create a "Eierlegende Wollmilchsau" and in most cases less is more. So I definitely have to put more research into that as well. I am really looking forward to become this project reality and to create something with impact.

As I am already trying to practice the proposed changes in the education system through my own education at the university, I really want to foster these approaches to show that design is an important tool for many disciplines towards sustainability. Through this Master's course I got challenged with working autonomous and independently on a self-chosen topic. Also the mini briefs through the studio module helped a lot, also inspired me to develop the idea for the game as it should be similar to what the education of sustainable designers looks like. It feels like this course is working with an heutagogic approach and the more I researched about this topic the more value I gained in this MA.



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Fig 22: Futurebne decolonizing design workshop - Picture by Relative creative "Decolonising Approaches to Designing With Children: Futurebne Water Security Challenge", Online: [https://relativecreative.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/DECOLONISING\\_APPROACHES\\_TO\\_DESIGNING\\_WIT-1.pdf](https://relativecreative.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/DECOLONISING_APPROACHES_TO_DESIGNING_WIT-1.pdf)

Fig 23: Game generator for the game - Illustration by Valetnina auer following Institute of Play, "Q Design Pack – Games and Learning", Online: <https://clalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Design-Pack-Games-And-Learning.pdf>

Fig 24: Parts of the game - Illustration by Valetnina auer following Institute of Play, "Q Design Pack – Games and Learning", Online: <https://clalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Design-Pack-Games-And-Learning.pdf>

Fig 25: Storyboard of the game - Illustration by Valentina Auer

Fig 26: example design of the manual - Photomontage by Valentina Auer

Fig 27: illustrations about tips for home education during Covid-19 - Illustrations by LA Johnson Online: <https://www.npr.org/2020/03/27/816575527/comic-how-to-turn-your-home-into-a-school-without-losing-your-sanity>

Fig 28: example of contents and design of the manual - Photomontage by Valentina Auer

Fig 29: Cards of knowledge - Illustration by Valentina Auer

Fig 30: printable template - Photo by Valentina Auer, Object by Valentina Auer

Fig 31: playing with the cards - Photo by Valentina Auer, Object by Valentina Auer

OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS NOT LISTED HERE WERE DRAWN BY VALENTINA AUER

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# ANNEX

## Information sheets Core participants over 18:

### Sustainable Education

Exploring more sustainable alternatives to the traditional education system



"The key to a more sustainable world is learning"  
Stephen Sterling, 2001

#### Thank you...

... for the interest in taking part of this study about sustainable education and how alternative educational methods can be successful in terms of sustainability.

This information sheet might answer some of your questions before taking part in the actual interview.

#### What is the purpose of this research?

The study aims to get more knowledge about experiences, motivations, advantages and difficulties from parents who home educate their children or try other alternatives to public schools. It is also important to include the children in this research because they are the one who experience learning the most. The outcomes will be used to design a tool which should help to make current educational methods more sustainable to create a thoughtful and motivated society for the future.

#### Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been invited to participate because you chose to educate your child in an alternative way to traditional public schools.

#### Who is the researcher?

My name is Valentina, I am a young designer from Austria who is now doing a master's course in Sustainable Design at the University of Brighton. I have always been interested in working with children and making use of design skills to help with their education. I believe that sustainability and climate change is an important topic to talk about with children and nowadays they are more aware of it then every generation before. Due to prior research I have gained a lot of knowledge about different education methods and theories apart from the traditional state school system. Therefore, I am interested in talking to people like you about their experiences and motivations to find out what can be done to create something that helps children develop their interests, knowledge and also awareness of sustainability.

#### Do I have to take part?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are absolutely free to decide to withdraw and can ask to have the audio recording of the conversation deleted at any point for up to one week after the data collection, at which point data will be anonymized and transcribed.

#### What do I have to do?

This research is gaining knowledge and understanding, the researcher will ask some questions about the education you chose for your children. If you agree with it, your children will be also asked some questions by the researcher. The interview will only be semi-guided therefore it will more be like a casual conversation rather than a traditional interview. Due to the current situation with COVID-19 interviews will take place through Microsoft Teams, Skype or Zoom. The researcher will call you through any of this softwares and will be in a private room without any other people.

If you wish to be interviewed via Skype or Zoom, please read the privacy statement of their data collection here:

Skype: <https://privacy.microsoft.com/en-us> Zoom: <https://zoom.us/privacy-and-legal>

As this will be still handled as a valuable research for further development the conversations will be recorded with an audio recording device, transcribed and coded afterwards. It is also important to mention that participants are also not allowed to record, film or take pictures during the interview to ensure data privacy and to not accidentally spread sensitive information. It is important that the researcher as well as the participant are aware of this.



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#### Will I be paid for taking part?

There are no planned payments or any cover of expenses, but every family will receive a little thank-you-gift as appreciation of taking part in the study.

#### What are the potential disadvantages or risks of taking part?

There won't be any disadvantages or risks if you wish to take part in this study. All gathered information will be handled with care and all participants will be anonymized by myself.

#### Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Your identity will be kept confidential. Your conversation will be recorded using a digital audio recorder (no film or pictures). Any identifying information, including your name, will be digitally edited out prior to transcription. Transcribed conversations will be fully anonymised and pseudonyms (for example Participant A, B, etc...) will be used. Transcriptions will be stored securely on university storage until the end of the Master project and deleted after 1st of September 2020.

If you want more information about your privacy and data protection I can provide you with the University's Research Privacy Notice.

#### What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

You can change your mind and tell me to delete the recordings and data at any time up to one week after the conversations. (After one week the data will be anonymised.) Your decision to take part or to withdraw will not affect your relationship with anybody in any way.

#### What will happen to the results of the project?

The results will be used as a reference for the final design of the project and also used in written form in a workbook for the course module. I might use some relevant quotations from the interviews but your names and any identifying information will be removed. Drawings or anything else might be shown in the workbook as well.

#### Who has reviewed the study?

The study has been reviewed and given a favourable ethical opinion by the relevant Research Ethics Committee. It has also been approved by my supervisors and they are really looking forward to the outcome of this study.

Contact supervisor: Dr Tom Ainsworth, Principal Lecturer, School of Architecture and Design  
T.Ainsworth@brighton.ac.uk

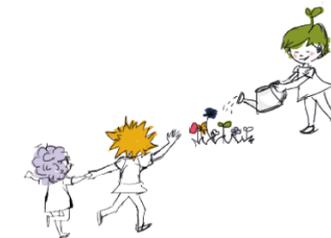
Contact ethics committee: Dr Annebella Pollen, Arts and Humanities Chair of the Research Ethics Committee  
a.pollen@brighton.ac.uk

#### What if I have a question or concern?

If you have any more questions or concerns, please feel free to e-mail or call me anytime. The contact details are listed below.

#### Contact details

Valentina Auer, BA  
University of Brighton, School of Architecture and Design  
E-mail: [v.auer1@uni.brighton.ac.uk](mailto:v.auer1@uni.brighton.ac.uk)  
Mobile: 07824 412184



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# ANNEX

## Information sheets Core participants age 10-18 years:

### Sustainable Education

Exploring more sustainable alternatives to the traditional education system

"The key to a more sustainable world is learning"  
Stephen Sterling, 2001



Thank you...

... for being a part of this project!

My name is Valentina, I am a design student at the University of Brighton.

Today I would like to ask you some questions about school, learning, playing and nature. Maybe you can also tell me your biggest wishes or what you are interested in at the moment, I am very curious about everything you want to share with me. And there is no need to be afraid. This is not a test, no answers are right or wrong, it is all about your thoughts and opinion. If you want, you can also draw your answers, write them down or we can design something together. If you want to ask me something as well, I am more than happy to answer all your questions.

Our conversation will be audio-recorded to help me remember what you are going to tell me now. It would be amazing if I could keep any drawings that you might make so I can use them for my study or simply keep them as a memory.

Your parents can stay with us, but if you want (and they are ok with it) you can also talk to me alone. And if you don't feel like talking to me at all, it is also ok.

Let's get started whenever you are ready! :)



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## Information sheets Core participants age 4-9 years:

### Sustainable Education

Exploring more sustainable alternatives to the traditional education system

"The key to a more sustainable world is learning"  
Stephen Sterling, 2001



Hello there!

My name is Valentina, I am a design student at the University here in Brighton.



I have some questions about school, learning and playing. You can also tell me your biggest wishes or dreams if you want to. I am very curious about everything you want to share with me. Don't be afraid, this is not a test so there is no right or wrong.

If you want, you can also draw something or write your answers down. If you have any questions you can ask me anything too.

To help me remembering everything you have said I will record our conversation. Your parents can stay with us, but if you feel brave enough you can also talk to me without them in the room.

If you don't feel like talking to me at all, it is fine too.

Let's get started whenever you are ready! :)



University of Brighton

# ANNEX

## Consent Form Core participants adults:

  
**University of Brighton**  
**Sustainable Education**  
Exploring more sustainable alternatives to the traditional education system

**Participant Consent Form**

**Title of Project:** Sustainable Education  
**Name of Researcher:** Valentina Auer

Please initial or tick box

I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions.

The researcher has explained to my satisfaction the purpose, principles and procedures of the study and any possible risks involved.

I am aware that I have been asked to take part in an interview.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without incurring consequences from doing so.

I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will normally be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else.

I agree that I didn't record, film or take pictures during the interview and that nobody else who is not part of the interview was listening and/or recording it.

I agree to take part in the above study.

.....  
Name of Participant, Date, Signature

.....  
Name of Researcher, Date, Signature

## Consent Form Core participants children

  
**University of Brighton**  
**Sustainable Education**  
Exploring more sustainable alternatives to the traditional education system

**Participant Consent Form**

**Title of Project:** Sustainable Education  
**Name of Researcher:** Valentina Auer

Please initial or tick box

My child has read and understood the information sheet for the above study and has had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions.

The researcher has explained to my and my child's satisfaction the purpose, principles and procedures of the study and any possible risks involved.

I am aware that my child was asked to take part in an interview.

I understand that my child's participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without incurring consequences from doing so.

I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will normally be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else.

I agree that my child didn't record, film or take pictures during the interview and that nobody else who is not part of the interview was listening and/or recording it.

I agree that my child is allowed to take part in the above study.

.....  
Name of Participant aged under 18

.....  
Name of parent or legal guardian, Date, Signature

.....  
Name of Researcher, Date, Signature

# ANNEX

## Recruitment spreadsheet:



**University of Brighton**  
**Sustainable Education**  
Exploring more sustainable alternatives to the traditional education system

The CPs will be recruited mainly through personal contacts of people who know about my research. E-mails have been sent out using the following text and through getting in touch with those people I will hopefully recruit more CPs that might be interested in being part of this research.

Students from the school of education at Brighton University or already practicing teachers will be e-mailed directly by myself as well. Their contacts will be either found on the University's research platform <https://research.brighton.ac.uk/> or through personal contacts again.

This is the text that some of my colleagues at university and other friends forwarded to their personal contacts that can be considered as core participants:

*Hey there!  
My name is Valentina, I am currently doing a master's course about sustainable design at Brighton University and I started to take a closer look at the sustainability of education. I stumbled over various pedagogy methods and to get some deeper insights I would like to talk to people about their approach of either educating or getting educated in an alternative way to traditional schools. As I am still at the beginning of my project it is more like a casual conversation rather than a guided interview to find my position as a designer in this context.*

*I appreciate any collaboration, so if you and/or your child are interested I would be very happy to cooperate with you! Please feel free to contact me if you are interested.*

All the best,  
Valentina

E-mail: [v.auer1uni.brighton.ac.uk](mailto:v.auer1uni.brighton.ac.uk)  
Mobile: 07824 412184

University of Brighton, School of Architecture and Design

This is the text that will be sent out to **teacher/students** at the school of education at Brighton University

Dear [insert name],

*my name is Valentina Auer, I am currently doing a master's course about sustainable design at Brighton University and I started to take a closer look at the sustainability of education. I stumbled over various pedagogy methods and to get some deeper insights I would like to talk to people that are more experienced in pedagogy than I am. I would like to know about your opinion of alternative educational methods, your own experiences with it and the benefits or disadvantages that can occur. As I am still at the beginning of my project it is more like a casual conversation rather than a guided interview to find my position as a designer in this context.*

*I appreciate any collaboration, so if you are interested I would be very happy to cooperate with you! Please feel free to contact me if you are interested.*

All the best,  
Valentina

E-mail: [v.auer1uni.brighton.ac.uk](mailto:v.auer1uni.brighton.ac.uk)  
Mobile: 07824 412184

University of Brighton, School of Architecture and Design

## Interview Guideline core questions:



**University of Brighton**  
**Sustainable Education**  
Exploring more sustainable alternatives to the traditional education system

### Interview Questions

This interviews will be a semi-structured interview. The following questions are only core questions to receive information that can't be found in related articles or papers.

**Questions to ask the parents:**

- What was your motivation to give your children/your child this form of education?
- What are the advantages for the children/the child?
- How can your chosen method help your child being more sustainable?
- Do you think your chosen method can apply for every child?
- How is your social surrounding (neighbours, family, friends) reacting to it?
- Are there any difficulties to deal with for you and/or your children/your child?

**Questions to ask the children (depends on age group):**

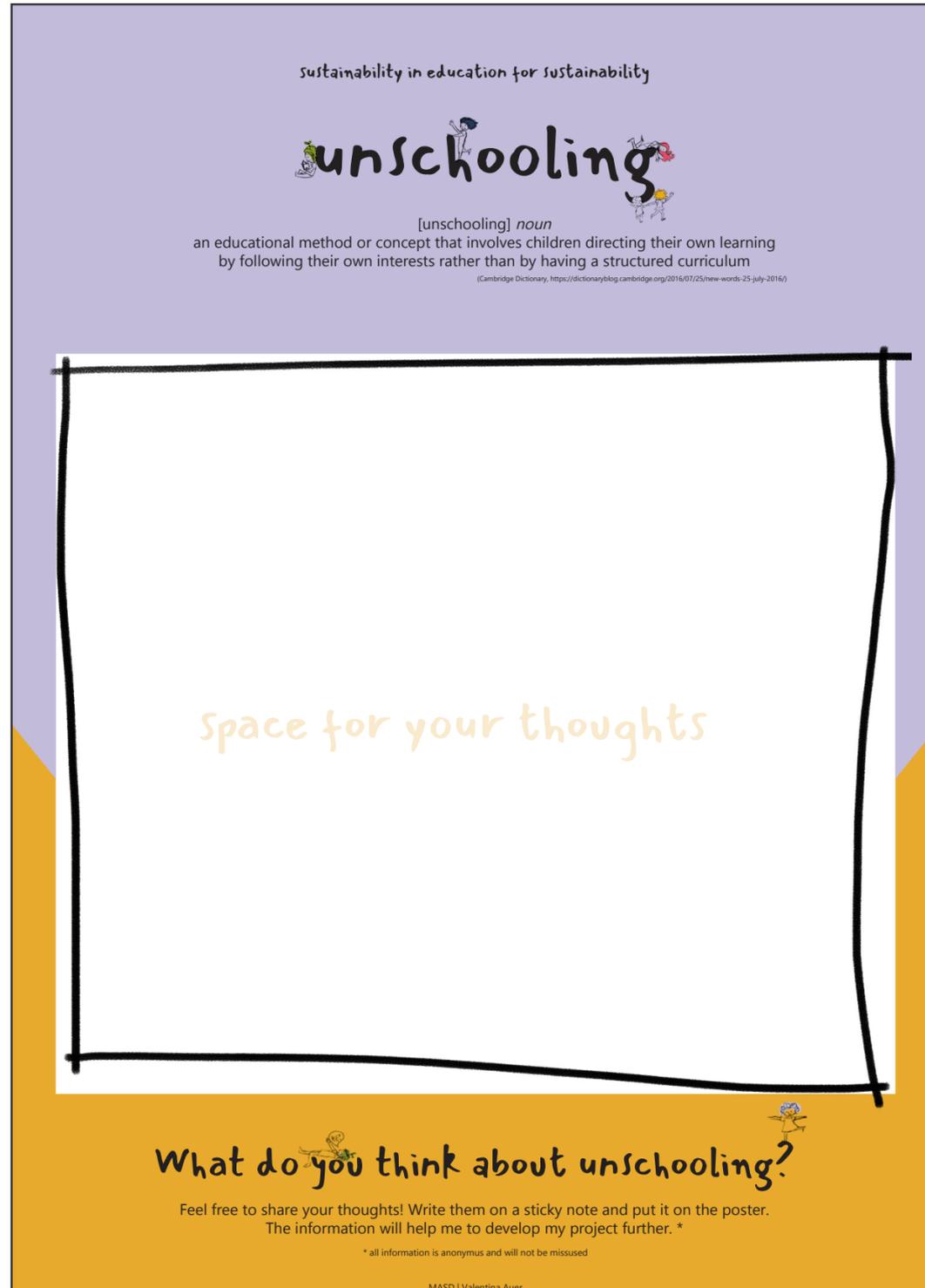
- Do you enjoy learning?
- What do you enjoy the most about not going to school?
- What do you enjoy the least about not going to school?
- What is the main difference to your education than to the one at school?
- Do your friends go to school or are they also home educated?
- How do you think about climate change/sustainability?

**Questions to ask people that are experienced with traditional pedagogy:**

- Have you heard of unschooling/home schooling/forest schools?
- What do you think about these methods?
- What would you change about the current school system?
- How is sustainability included into your work?

# ANNEX

## WIP Exhibition 2020 Poster:



The full analysis can be found at: [https://unibrightonac-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/v\\_auer1\\_uni\\_brighton\\_ac\\_uk/EbgfzDuuOxKxBlJqgtIdN8xMB9ZhcffHA44N\\_GRnF0dOltCg8e-MBKVSj](https://unibrightonac-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/v_auer1_uni_brighton_ac_uk/EbgfzDuuOxKxBlJqgtIdN8xMB9ZhcffHA44N_GRnF0dOltCg8e-MBKVSj)



MASD 2020  
STUDIO PROJECT

Valentina Auer | MASD 2020 | ADM05 Studio

Feel free to visit

<https://auerva29.wixsite.com/deschoolingeducation>