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CURRICULUM CO-CREATION IN EDUCATING CITIES: PATHWAYS TO MEANINGFUL LEARNING, SUSTAINABILITY, AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

CO-CREACIÓN CURRICULAR EN CIUDADES EDUCADORAS: CAMINOS HACIA EL APRENDIZAJE SIGNIFICATIVO, LA SOSTENIBILIDAD Y SOCIEDADES INCLUSIVAS

Verônica Gesser

Universidade do Vale do Itajaí (UNIVALI), Itajaí, SC, Brazil

E-mail: gesserv@univali.br

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2170-064X>

Patricia Murara Stryhalski

Instituto Federal Catarinense (IFC), Ibirama, SC, Brazil

E-mail: murarapatricia@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-5045-7079>

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes an analysis of the concept of Educating Cities, exploring both formal and non-formal spheres of education and their essential role in the co-creation of curricula and practices within and beyond school contexts. The investigation centers on the pursuit of building sustainable societies through education, emphasizing the potential of cities as conducive environments for the implementation of innovative educational strategies. In this regard, the article examines how the co-creation of curricula and practices contributes to social sustainability, considering the diversity of urban contexts, its citizens and the school stakeholders? Methodologically, the corpus of analysis was constructed through content analysis. The findings reveal that cities provide a rich and diverse context for implementing such innovative strategies. The results suggest that Educating Cities play a fundamental role in promoting sustainable societies, specifically, through the co-creation of curricula and educational practices. The integration of formal and non-formal educational spheres, both within and beyond the school environment, emerges as an effective strategy to address contemporary challenges and prepare citizens for active participation in community life.

Keywords: Curriculum Co-Creation; Educating Cities; Formal and Non-Formal Education.

Este artículo propone un análisis del concepto de Ciudades Educadoras, explorando tanto los ámbitos formales como no formales de la educación y su papel esencial en la co-creación curricular y de prácticas dentro y fuera de los contextos escolares. La investigación se centra en la construcción de sociedades sostenibles a través de la educación, destacando el potencial de las ciudades como entornos propicios para implementar estrategias educativas innovadoras. En este marco, el artículo examina cómo la co-creación de currículos y prácticas contribuye a la sostenibilidad social, considerando la diversidad de contextos urbanos, sus ciudadanos y los actores escolares. Metodológicamente, el corpus de análisis se construyó mediante análisis de contenido. Los hallazgos revelan que las ciudades ofrecen un contexto rico y diverso para implementar dichas estrategias innovadoras. Los resultados sugieren que las Ciudades Educadoras desempeñan un papel fundamental en la promoción de sociedades sostenibles, específicamente mediante la co-creación curricular y de prácticas educativas. La integración de los ámbitos educativos formales y no formales, tanto dentro como fuera del entorno escolar, emerge como una estrategia efectiva para abordar desafíos contemporáneos y preparar a los ciudadanos para la participación activa en la vida comunitaria.

Palabras clave: Cocreación curricular; Ciudades Educadoras; Educación Formal y No Formal.

INTRODUCTION

Educating Cities is a transformative and committed concept, whose foundations are articulated in the seminal *Charter of Educating Cities* (Barcelona, 1990). This foundational document recognizes the city in its entirety as an active and essential educational agent (Article 1), establishing the principle that the right to an educating city is an extension of the fundamental right to education (International Association of Educating Cities – IAEC). This article aims to analyze of the concept of Educating Cities, exploring both formal and non-formal spheres of education and their essential role in the co-creation of curricula and practices within and beyond school contexts based on consolidated academic research (theses and dissertations) and recent scientific contributions, seeking to understand its theoretical evolution and practical applications in the contemporary context.

The discussion is grounded in the premise, reiterated by the Charter, that the city transcends its role as a mere setting, assuming a relevant and intentional pedagogical function in the continuous, holistic, and critical formation of its citizens (Articles 3 and 4). This function extends beyond the walls of formal educational institutions, permeating all dimensions of urban life – from infrastructure, public spaces, and cultural heritage to social relations, leisure, and public policies. Cities that view themselves as Educating Cities, therefore, are those which, aligned with the principles of the Charter, intentionally and democratically leverage their physical, cultural, social, and human resources to foster meaningful, inclusive, and lifelong learning opportunities for all their inhabitants (Article 7), promoting equity and social cohesion.

In this context, co-creation emerges as a fundamental structuring axis, directly linked to the participatory spirit of the Barcelona Charter. The collaborative construction of curricula and educational practices – both school-based and non-school-based – embodies the principle of shared governance and educational co-responsibility (Article 13 of the Charter). Education is thus recognized as a collective endeavor, involving a multitude of actors (educators, students, families, public administrators, community leaders, civil society organizations, and citizens in general), as highlighted by contemporary research (VILLAR, 2020; BRAZIL, 2022).

It is precisely at this dynamic intersection – between the educational potential of the city (as outlined by the Charter) and the participatory processes of co-creation of school curriculum and school practices, considering school stakeholders and the cities citizens – that this article centers its investigation. Our core objective is to explore, considering the identified state of the art and current theoretical frameworks, how co-creation processes of curricula and educational practices (formal, non-formal, and informal) contribute in concrete and measurable ways to the construction of more sustainable, resilient, and just urban societies. We seek to understand how these processes are articulated and influenced by the complexity and diversity of urban environments, and how they effectively empower citizens for active, critical, and responsible participation in community life and decision-making – key aspects of urban sustainability (FRASER; PINEDA, 2022).

The primary aspect that gives this article global relevance is its interdisciplinary and innovative approach to the role of cities as educational agents promoting social

sustainability. By proposing the co-creation of curricula and educational practices among diverse social actors—both within and outside schools—the article presents a strategy replicable across various urban contexts worldwide. The linkage between formal and non-formal education, anchored in values such as equity, citizen participation, and social justice, directly addresses the global challenges outlined in the UN's 2030 Agenda. In this way, the study makes a significant contribution to international debates on sustainable cities, transformative education, and participatory democracy.

Through this critical analysis, we aim to provide relevant theoretical and practical insights for the ongoing development, evaluation, and enhancement of the Educating Cities project in the 21st century. In doing so, we intend to reinforce education as a fundamental pillar – as envisioned in the Barcelona Charter – for the construction of truly democratic, inclusive, sustainable, and educational cities for all generations.

EDUCATING CITIES AS LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Before delving into the discussions surrounding Educating Cities as Learning Environments, it is essential to reflect on the conceptual foundations of the term "Educating Cities," its transformative role, and the international movements that underpin it. A foundational milestone in this regard is the *Charter of Educating Cities*—a document resulting from the 1st International Congress of Educating Cities (Barcelona, 1990). Its essence is rooted in principles aligned with key global frameworks: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the World Declaration on Education for All (1990), the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), the Paris Climate Agreement (2015), and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015).

According to the Charter, cities play a pivotal role in fostering holistic education:

“It is a complex system and, at the same time, a permanent, pluralistic, and multifaceted educational agent, capable of enhancing educational factors and driving social transformation.” (*Charter of Educating Cities*, 1990).

The Charter also highlights that:

“The Educating City has its own identity, integrated within the country to which it belongs. Its identity is therefore interdependent on the territory in which it is situated. It is also a city connected with its surrounding environment, with other urban centers in its region, with the rural areas that encircle it, and with cities in other countries. Its enduring aim is to learn, innovate, and share, thus enriching and making the lives of its inhabitants more secure and dignified.” (*Charter of Educating Cities*, 1990, p. 4).

Guided by these principles, contemporary urban centers emerge as complex ecosystems where inclusion, education, and participation converge to enable qualitative transformations in civic life. This paradigmatic reconfiguration establishes the city as a permanent pedagogical device, governed by the principle of lifelong learning (Charter, 1990; Freire, 2021).

Education—rooted in childhood yet continuous throughout life—cannot be reduced to the logic of labor. As a lifelong transformative praxis, it seeks to:

- Foster awareness of the ethics of dialogical responsibility (freedom × commitment);
- Reveal interdependent human-nature relationships, fundamental to urban habitation;
- Cultivate critical reflection on systemic complexities;
- Enable authentic participation in political governance;
- Envision non-predatory and inclusive civilizational alternatives.

(*Charter of Educating Cities*, 1990, p. 5)

Anchored in the concept of lifelong learning, this principle recognizes education as a multidimensional phenomenon, manifesting not only within schools but also across domestic, professional, and socio-territorial spheres.

It is, therefore, vital to assert that it is not enough to merely acknowledge the educational potential of a city regardless of our intent or desire. A city becomes educational out of the necessity to educate, learn, teach, know, create, dream, and imagine—all of which are imbued by men and women into its fields, mountains, valleys, rivers, streets, squares, fountains, homes, and buildings, leaving the mark, the style, and the spirit of a particular era. (Freire, 2001, p. 13)

In this sense, a more holistic approach to city development is pursued, positioning education as one of the foundational pillars for municipal policies and practices. This approach fosters active civic engagement, particularly within the local urban context, encouraging more effective participation in community decision-making through the educational process.

“The educating city is seen as a complex system in constant evolution, prioritizing cultural investment and the formation of its population.” (Alvarenga et al., 2023, p. 2)

Regarding the concept of educating cities, Alvarenga et al. (2023, p. 2) affirm:

“The concept of educating cities refers to the idea that a city should go beyond its traditional functions—economic, political, and service provision—and adopt an educational role. This implies investing in the permanent education and training of all its inhabitants, starting with children.”

By transcending the traditional dimensions of urban governance (economic, political, and service-oriented), the paradigm of educating cities institutes education as a central axis. This entails: (i) Continuous investment in civic education, with a strong emphasis on early childhood education; (ii) Recognition of children and youth as rights-bearing individuals, as emphasized in the Charter (1990, p. 6):

“Ensuring rights [...] involves fully guaranteeing their status as protagonists of their own lives.”

Focusing on early childhood within the context of educating cities is to acknowledge that the foundations of society are built during the formative years. Cities must understand that their role surpasses physical infrastructure and economic activities. By providing lifelong formative opportunities, the city contributes to the holistic development of its citizens. In doing so, it effectively promotes human development across knowledge, culture, and civic engagement.

Recognizing children as protagonists within the context of educating cities strengthens the foundations for a more participatory and capable society. It is

therefore essential to guarantee their right to actively engage in decisions that impact their educational environments. Thus,

“Guaranteeing the rights of children, adolescents, and youth in the city begins, first and foremost, by fully ensuring their condition as protagonists of their own lives and the development of their civil and political rights. They must also be empowered to participate in community life through high-quality representative and participatory mechanisms, alongside adults and elders, promoting intergenerational coexistence.” (*Charter of Educating Cities*, 1990, p. 6)

One of the pillars of educating cities is the active participation of citizens in the community life and decision-making processes that affect them. This premise includes not only adults but also children, adolescents, and youth—recognized as individuals with rights, and as agents capable of meaningfully contributing to local development. From this perspective:

“Education is the answer to the finiteness of infinitude. Education is possible for humans because they are unfinished beings who are aware of their incompleteness. This awareness drives them toward their own perfection. Education, therefore, implies a pursuit carried out by a subject—humankind. Humans must be the subject of their own education. They cannot be its object. Hence, no one educates anyone else.” (Freire, 2021, p. 34)

Educating cities, by acknowledging the crucial importance of education from early childhood, invest in the creation of environments that foster the full development of children. This means ensuring not only access to quality education but also to safe, inclusive spaces for play, exploration, and interaction with the surrounding world. Such environments are essential to the process described by Freire (2021c, p. 85–86), in which the human being:

“Creating and recreating, integrating into the conditions of their context, responding to challenges, objectifying themselves, discerning, [...] projects themselves into their exclusive domain—that of history and culture.”

Another fundamental aspect of educating cities is their commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion. This means creating spaces where all individuals—regardless of ethnic, social, cultural, or economic background—feel welcomed and valued. These cities strive to combat prejudice, discrimination, and exclusion in all their forms, fostering mutual respect and peaceful coexistence among diverse groups.

According to Freire (1979, p. 33), the legitimacy of any educational practice fundamentally depends on two prior conditions: a profound reflection on human nature and a careful analysis of the learner’s specific life context. Without this anthropological reflection, education risks adopting methods that objectify the human being, treating them as passive recipients when their true vocation is to be active agents in their own process. Likewise, a lack of understanding of the cultural context inevitably results in disconnected, pre-packaged, and therefore ineffective education—unable to dialogue with the concrete needs and experiences of those it aims to serve.

Thus, educating cities represent a meaningful approach to human-centered urban development by placing education at the heart of their policies and practices. In this regard, the *Charter of Educating Cities* proposes the creation of environments that

foster lifelong learning, civic participation, and social inclusion—contributing to the construction of more just, democratic, and sustainable societies.

CO-CREATION OF CURRICULA AND SCHOOL PRACTICES

Derived from the Latin *currere* (to run) and *curriculum* (course/path), the word “curriculum” carries in its etymology the notion of a path to be followed. Historically, curriculum theories have evolved, leading to profound changes in education and enabling multiple perspectives on its educational, social, and philosophical dimensions. However, the school curriculum is not neutral, as:

“[...] the curriculum provides the foundation for elements of culture to be questioned and taken as objects of teaching and learning. The curriculum implies choices and selection; therefore, some cultural elements are highlighted, while others are excluded or given less visibility, such as those forged around cultural differences, where power manifests itself in forms of domination, transgression, and resistance.” (FREIRE, 2019, p. 409)

The term “curriculum” has been given various definitions throughout the history of education, some of which have strayed from its core meaning. We define it as the organized and systematized educational experiences provided to students within an educational system. This conception goes beyond school content, also encompassing the values, attitudes, and competencies developed within the context of formal education.

The curriculum, as a school artifact, transcends its traditional role of organizing content and pedagogical practices to function as a mechanism that shapes how individuals perceive, interpret, and interact with space. (VEIGA-NETO, 2009, p. 32)

The development of the school curriculum follows national educational guidelines, incorporating regional and local specificities, pedagogical objectives, performance standards, large-scale assessments, and teaching approaches. To these elements are added the influences of current pedagogical trends—such as learner-centered approaches, technology-education integration, socio-emotional skills, and innovations in school practices. This complexity reinforces the understanding that, according to Vitiello and Cacete (2021, p. 3), “The curriculum arises as a social need, especially economic and cultural, expressing power relations, ideologies, values, and different conceptions related to the educational process.” The construction of the school curriculum as a social practice has historically involved issues of power. Power relations that permeate the school curriculum are reflected in the decisions and influences that shape what is taught in schools.

“In the field of curriculum, the categories of social control and social efficiency significantly influenced not only its origin but also its development, as they were considered useful to the interests underlying the emerging theory and practice.” (MOREIRA & SILVA, 2009)

The school curriculum is not neutral. The paths and choices involved in its construction are influenced by ideologies, values, and power relations present in society. “This implies that the curriculum is laden with intentions and choices. Such intentions or choices are also present in the curricular conception of a type of education, a course, or a program” (RANGHETTI & GESSER, 2011, p. 18).

These intentions include certain decisions about what will be addressed in the school curriculum, how topics will be addressed, and which aspects will be included or excluded—in other words, which voices will be heard. In this sense, conceiving a curriculum that analyzes, understands, and takes ownership of its nature means understanding how it affects and is affected by the individuals who share the same formative process with it. (RANGHETTI & GESSER, 2011, p. 19)

Finally, although the *Charter of Educating Cities* (1990) does not explicitly discuss the school curriculum, it recognizes the role of urban environments in human development and advocates for education tied to local realities. Its Article 6 establishes that municipal education policies should be integrated into a broader context guided by principles of social justice, equality, democratic citizenship, sustainability, and quality of life. This document, therefore, promotes a holistic and participatory vision of education.

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATING CITIES

The intersection between non-formal education and citizen participation has proven to be a fertile ground for the co-creation of curricula and the development of educating cities. However, it is essential to understand the distinctions between formal and non-formal education.

Formal education takes place in schools, with predefined content; informal education refers to what individuals learn throughout their socialization process—in the family, neighborhood, clubs, with friends, etc.—laden with values, cultural heritage, belonging, and inherited feelings. Non-formal education, in turn, occurs in the "lifeworld" through processes of experience-sharing, especially within everyday collective spaces and actions. (GOHN, 2006, p. 28)

By its flexible and inclusive nature, non-formal education plays a crucial role in complementing and enriching formal educational experiences, offering learning spaces that go beyond the school walls. Simultaneously, citizen participation emerges as a fundamental principle in the construction of educating cities, where citizens are encouraged to actively contribute to the planning, management, and transformation of urban spaces.

In non-formal education, learning spaces are located in territories that follow the life paths of individuals and groups, outside formal schools, in informal settings where intentional interactive processes take place (with intentionality being a key distinguishing element). In contrast, informal education operates in learning spaces defined by references such as nationality, locality, age, gender, religion, ethnicity, etc. (GOHN, 2006, p. 29)

It is important to highlight that non-formal education offers a wide range of learning opportunities, ranging from extracurricular activities to community programs and cultural initiatives. "The first educational experiences occur through instincts and through family and community culture, successively reproduced by genetic-transgenerational means." (FUHRMANN & PAULO, 2014, p. 553) These spaces allow citizens of all ages and backgrounds to engage in educational experiences that are meaningful to their lives and local contexts.

Moreover, non-formal education often promotes active participation, encouraging individuals to share their knowledge, skills, and perspectives, and to collaborate in defining the objectives and structure of educational activities. In formal education, what is primarily expected is effective learning (which, unfortunately, does not always occur), along with certification and qualification that enable individuals to pursue higher academic degrees. In informal education, there are no expected outcomes—they simply happen as individuals develop common sense, which guides their ways of thinking and acting spontaneously. (GOHN, 2006, p. 28)

Citizens' participation in the co-creation of curricula and educating cities entails meaningful community engagement in decision-making processes related to education and urban development. This can take place through public consultations, discussion forums, collaborative working groups, and other forms of participatory engagement. By involving citizens in these processes, local authorities, educators, and other stakeholders can ensure that educational and urban policies are more inclusive, responsive, and culturally relevant.

“The content, objectives, methods, processes, and technological tools serving lifelong education—these may and indeed must vary from place to place and time to time. The ontological need for education, for the formation to which the City, becoming educational by necessity, must respond, is universal. The way this need for knowledge, for learning and teaching, is met is not universal. Curiosity, the need to know, is universal. The response, however, is historical, political-ideological, and cultural.” (FREIRE, 2001, p. 13)

Thus, the co-creation of curricula and educating cities becomes an empowering exercise in which citizens become co-authors of their own education and urban environment. This not only fosters a greater sense of belonging and responsibility within the community, but also contributes to the building of more democratic and sustainable societies. By recognizing and valuing local knowledge and citizens' perspectives, it becomes possible to create more contextualized curricula and more inclusive cities, where everyone has the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive.

Furthermore, the co-creation of curricula and educating cities opens space for the integration of diverse types of knowledge and practices, including traditional, cultural, and scientific knowledge, as well as innovative pedagogical approaches. This diversity of perspectives enriches both educational and urban processes, allowing curricula and city development to reflect the complexity and richness of local communities.

At the same time, citizen participation in the co-creation of curricula and educating cities promotes collective responsibility and a sense of belonging. Citizens become active agents in shaping their own learning environments and in planning their urban space, taking a leading role in defining the policies and practices that affect their daily lives.

“The City is culture, creation—not only because of what we do in and with it, or what we create in and with it—but also because of the aesthetic or awe-filled gaze we cast upon it. The City is us, and we are the City. But we must not forget that who we are bears traces of what has been, of what reaches us through the historical continuity from which we cannot escape, yet which we can work upon, and through the cultural marks we inherit.” (FREIRE, 2001, p. 13)

Through this collaborative process, curricula become more relevant and meaningful to learners, reflecting their needs and interests. Likewise, cities become more inclusive and welcoming spaces, where communities feel genuinely represented and empowered to shape their own futures.

By acknowledging and valuing diversity, promoting collaboration, and encouraging citizen empowerment, we can build fairer, more equitable, and sustainable societies where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential and contribute to the common good.

The co-creation of curricula and the development of educating cities can also strengthen social bonds and community cohesion. By involving citizens in collaborative decision-making processes, a sense of community and solidarity is fostered, where individuals feel connected to one another and share a common purpose of improving their living and learning environments.

By ensuring that all members of the community have a voice and agency in defining educational and urban policies and practices, disparities can be reduced and resources and opportunities more equitably distributed.

Finally, involving citizens in the co-creation of curricula and educating cities fosters a culture of innovation and creativity. The diversity of perspectives and the free exchange of ideas can lead to more creative and effective solutions to educational and urban challenges, encouraging experimentation and out-of-the-box thinking.

“The City is also us, our culture, which, while gestating in it, in the body of its traditions, shapes us and reshapes us. We outline the City, and it outlines us.” (FREIRE, 2001, p. 14)

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

We used the search tools of the CAPES Theses and Dissertations Database and the CAPES Journals Portal to explore how the co-creation of curricula and both school and non-school practices contribute to the construction of sustainable societies, taking into account diverse urban environments.

The initial search filters applied in the CAPES Theses and Dissertations Database were: “Co-creation of curricula.” This search yielded three dissertations (two from Professional Master’s programs and one from an Academic Master’s program). However, all three were excluded from the study as they addressed topics such as educational games and resources, and were, therefore, outside the scope of this research. The time frame selected was from 1990 to 2024, based on the publication of the Charter of Educating Cities in 1990.

To broaden the results, new search parameters were applied. In this second search, the term “educating cities” was used, with filters by Major Area “Human Sciences,” Field of Knowledge “Education,” and Area of Concentration “Education.” This procedure retrieved 7 master’s dissertations and 10 doctoral theses related to the topic.

With the definition of this documentary corpus (7 dissertations and 10 theses), a refinement process began through a thorough reading of the selected works. It was found that the relationship between curriculum co-creation and educating cities was present in 7 theses and 6 dissertations. However, the topic showed greater incidence

in scientific article publications—which, nevertheless, will not be addressed in this article.

For the data analysis and processing, content analysis was used, following the methodology proposed by Bardin (1977). Through this technique, it was possible to identify common themes, research gaps, and potential areas for future development in the field of urban education and educating cities, which will be discussed in the following SECTIONS.

CURRICULAR CO-CREATION AS A FOUNDATION FOR SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY IN EDUCATING CITIES: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This article examines how the co-creation of curricula and practices, grounded in the premise of promoting holistic and inclusive education, contributes to social sustainability within the diversity of urban contexts. From this perspective, the concept of educating cities emerges as an approach that involves all sectors of the community, making such practices feasible. In certain contexts, this approach materializes through curriculum co-creation, in which various stakeholders—teachers, students, parents, and community organizations—collaborate in defining educational goals.

The academic production concerning educating cities and curriculum co-creation, as identified in this study, is quantitatively limited and heterogeneous in terms of context. It is important to note that despite the multidisciplinary nature of the topic (involving Education, Sociology, and Public Policy), this study adopts a specific focus within the educational field. Below, we highlight the research found, encompassing articles, theses, and dissertations.

The study by Souza (2019) investigates the development of autonomy, participation, and geographical perspective among adolescents from small towns in the state of Paraná through academic research. Employing a participatory approach, the research aims to understand how these elements interrelate in the civic education of youth. Pinhal (2017), in turn, examines the concept of educating cities and their role as educational spaces beyond traditional school institutions. The work is grounded in innovative educational principles that transcend classroom boundaries, drawing upon references that discuss the expansion of out-of-school education.

Martin (2014) analyzes actions implemented by educating cities in the state of São Paulo, assessing their alignment with the thematic profile and principles of the movement. From a complementary perspective, Murillo (2013) focuses on children's perspectives of urban space, emphasizing their narratives and perceptions as active agents in the city. These authors provide fundamental contributions to recognizing and valuing children's voices in the construction of inclusive and sustainable cities. Lastly, Simoes (2022) explores the intersections among childhood, city, and education, drawing conclusions from relevant studies on the subject.

Among the theses analyzed, several offer valuable insights into educating cities. Camargo (2016) examines the concept in light of the Constitution, exploring how

constitutional principles can guide urban educational practices, offering reflections on the interface between legislation and municipal education.

Baptista (2023) investigates the role of urban literacy in shaping the sensitivities of urban subjects, analyzing how reading the city contributes to the formation of territorialities. From an interdisciplinary perspective, Fabricio (2016) explores the connections between the concept of educating cities and the Science-Technology-Society (STS) approach, particularly in science teacher education.

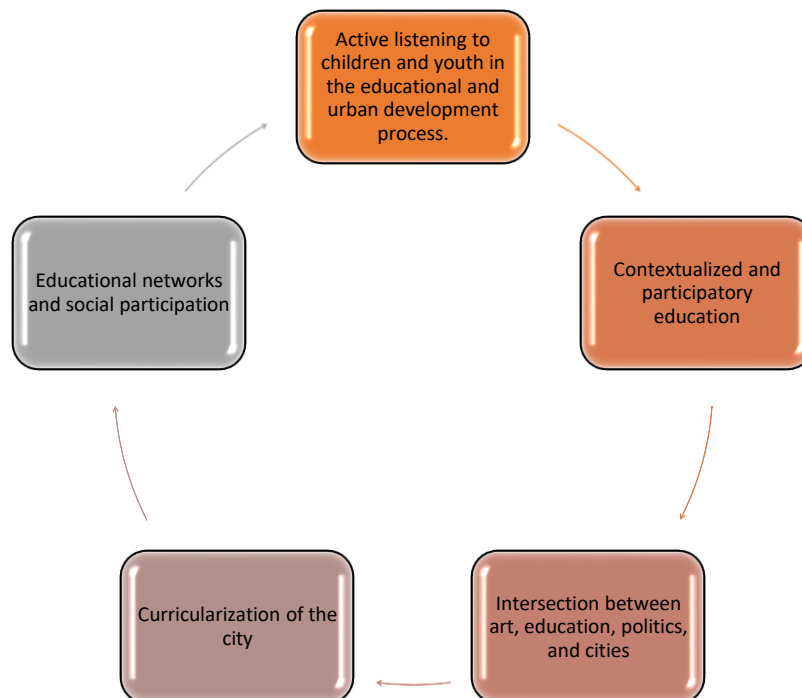
Oliveira (2019) and Carvalho (2016) provide significant contributions to understanding the interface between science education and urban practices. Complementarily, Figueiredo (2015) examines how political practices in Full-Time Education programs in Vitória-ES relate to the curricularization of the city, analyzing their impact on public education. Finally, Almeida (2020) and Pereira (2018) present relevant perspectives on educational policies and curricular practices.

Oliveira (2020) investigates the perceptions and experiences of students in Porto Alegre concerning urban space, highlighting processes of meaning-making and the construction of youth identities in the city. In a similar vein, Silva (2019) and Souza (2017) provide foundational insights into the relationship between youth, urban space, and education. Souza (2020) analyzes educational networks and social participation in youth collectives, exploring how the articulation between art and politics fosters the construction of more inclusive and participatory cities.

Along this same line, Santos (2018) and Fernandes (2020) offer reflections on the intersections between education, artistic production, and political action. Silva (2020) investigates the conceptions and impacts of the transition from public school to public educational space in São Carlos-SP, examining the effects of this transformation on the school community and the urban territory. Lastly, Oliveira (2020) and Mendes (2019) present pertinent analyses of educational policies and processes of urban transformation.

The review of selected studies provides a comprehensive overview of key themes in urban education and educating cities—autonomy, participation, urban literacy, and the political-art-city interface. The review of the state-of-the-art revealed both gaps and opportunities for future educational research, highlighting a plurality of approaches and perspectives. Through content analysis, the main contributions were synthesized, interlinking the studies and fostering critical reflection on the current state and future directions for the field of education and educating cities. The findings are summarized in Figure 01 below:

Figure 01: Summary Categories of the Research Findings



Source: The Authors (2025)

The examination of selected theses and dissertations through content analysis revealed, on one hand, the complexity of approaches within the field of urban education and educating cities and, on the other, the relative scarcity of research in this area. The studies analyzed underscore the importance of incorporating the diverse dimensions of urban life into educational policies and practices, as well as fostering the participation of multiple stakeholders in the construction of inclusive and sustainable educating cities.

In this process, co-created curricula—defined collaboratively by these stakeholders in terms of objectives, content, and methodologies—become more responsive to community needs and aspirations. As a result, education becomes more relevant to students, and the bonds between schools and communities are strengthened, fostering a sense of belonging and social cohesion. This is aligned with the principle of the Charter of Educating Cities (1990, p. 8), which affirms that “The right to an Educating City must be regarded as an extension of the right to education.”

Alongside to the formal educational sphere, the co-creation of non-formal educational practices (such as environmental programs, volunteer work, and artistic-cultural initiatives) plays a vital role in promoting sustainability. These practices enrich civic experiences by developing socio-emotional skills and

practical competencies essential for active community engagement, reflecting the values of social justice and sustainability espoused by the Charter (1990, p. 10).

The coherent articulation between school curricula and non-formal practices thus constitutes a holistic educational proposal within Educating Cities, equipping citizens to face contemporary challenges—such as sustainability, diversity, inclusion, and civic participation. This integrated approach fosters not only individual development but also the construction of more resilient, democratic communities oriented toward collective well-being.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN CURRICULUM CO-CREATION

The implementation of curriculum co-creation processes within the context of Educating Cities presents substantial challenges and opportunities for educational systems and urban communities. This collaborative process, characterized by the involvement of multiple stakeholders in defining educational objectives, selecting content, and implementing pedagogical practices, unfolds in a complex environment.

Nevertheless, there are significant challenges. Ensuring full representativeness and the inclusion of all sectors of the community is a primary concern. The difficulty in equitably engaging ethnically, socioeconomically, and culturally diverse groups may result in curricula that fail to meet the needs of significant portions of the student population. Overcoming this limitation requires concerted efforts to enable equitable participation and to value all perspectives. Another major obstacle is ensuring effective coordination among diverse actors in dense and heterogeneous urban contexts. Establishing shared goals, promoting transparent communication and building mutual trust and commitment demand time investment, resource allocation, skilled leadership, and efficient mediation.

On the other hand, curriculum co-creation offers significant opportunities for educational innovation and community empowerment. Integrating local knowledge, cultural traditions, and the specific needs of the population allows for the development of more relevant and context-sensitive curricula. Additionally, the co-creation process fosters a sense of belonging and shared responsibility for the educational project within the community.

Active citizen participation in defining educational priorities encourages deeper engagement with students and with the overall quality of the education system. Such involvement tends to increase the commitment of parents, volunteers, and other community members, resulting in greater support for school life and students' learning processes.

Therefore, the challenges and opportunities inherent to curriculum co-creation in the context of Educating Cities highlight the fundamental importance of participatory and collaborative approaches to education. By recognizing the urban territory as a comprehensive educational space and leveraging the intellectual capital and sociocultural diversity of the population, it becomes possible to construct more dynamic, inclusive, and effective curricula—preparing students to meet the complex challenges of the 21st century.

The analysis presented in this article demonstrates that the co-creation of curricula and educational practices within Educating Cities constitutes a powerful strategy for meaningful learning by addressing contemporary challenges such as inequality, social exclusion, and environmental degradation.

This study's primary theoretical contribution lies in its articulation of the Educating Cities concept—grounded in the Barcelona Charter—and the practice of curriculum co-creation as an instrument for meaningful learning, social transformation and urban sustainability. By proposing an educational model rooted in civic participation, cultural diversity appreciation, and social co-responsibility, the article expands the conceptual horizons of urban education and school curricula.

The findings suggest viable pathways for developing integrated public policies capable of mobilizing schools, administrators, communities, and institutions around common goals. This participatory approach fosters a sense of belonging and strengthens bonds between individuals and their territories.

In a global landscape marked by environmental, social, and political crises, this article stands as a significant contribution by offering a situated, contextualized, and replicable educational proposal aligned with the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals. It thus represents a relevant advancement not only for education studies but also for urban research, public policy, and social movements committed to building more just, resilient, and inclusive societies.

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