Article

Scouts' Perspectives on Learning Experiences from a Pedagogical Innovation Scope

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Abstract: The Portuguese educational system aims at nurturing the holistic development of individuals and societal progress, surpassing the mere transmission of curriculum-based knowledge. While considerable advancements have been made, the need for ongoing innovation and equal educational opportunities remains evident, so that all children can have not only equal access to education, but also equal chances of success. This study investigates the largest Portuguese Scout movement, the CNE, exploring its organisational and pedagogical approaches, potentially applicable in formal education settings. This research surveyed participants aged 18–22, having completed approximately 12 years in the Scout movement. Data collection via focus group followed a semi-structured script, before a thorough content analysis was carried. Findings are organised as follows: Pedagogical organisation in learning cycles; Patrol system; The four stages of the Project Method; Characterization of the Scout Game and other learning process dimensions; Other competencies and values developed throughout the Scout learning course; and Comparisons with formal education contexts. The discourse of participants strongly suggests the Scout movement's potential to inspire educational change, displaying consistent indicators of pedagogical innovation. The study advocates for further exploration of the CNE's pedagogical functioning and its potential to serve as an inspiration for transformative changes in educational systems worldwide, as evidenced by the learners' reflections.

Keywords: educational change; pedagogical innovation; nonformal education; Scout movement; educational metamorphosis; grammar of schooling

1. Introduction

1.1. The Purpose of Schooling: The Case of Portuguese Formal Education in an International Setting

The 1986 Portuguese Basic Law of Education [1], in Article 1, defines education as the means to ensure the right to holistic human development, societal progress, and democratization. It aims beyond conventional curriculum-based knowledge transfer, highlighting the commitment of the educational system both to human growth and to sustainable societal development. Article 2 emphasizes cultivating citizens who are free, responsible, autonomous, and compassionate.

In a brief analysis of the ongoing transformation of the Portuguese schooling system, assumed in recent years by public policies as fundamentally needed, we can find two main tools shaping the present and probable future of the formal education contexts at a national level: the Portuguese Students Profile at the End of Compulsory Schooling (PASEO), published in 2017 (and approved by Order No. 6478/2017) and the Decree-Law no. 55/2018.

Other recent core documents are the Essential Learning outcomes, the National Citizenship Education Strategy, or the Curriculum Guidelines for Pre-School Education, although the emphasis these official documents give to the PASEO as a common denominator is visible, the latter serving as a matrix of other theoretical and practical explorations of what schools can and should be for their students.

The PASEO affirms itself as a "reference for decisions to be adopted by decision-makers and educational actors at the level of education and teaching establishments and bodies responsible for educational policies". This profile is organised into Principles, Vision for the Student (arising from the principles), and Values and Areas of Competence (skills expertise). Regarding student values, it defends the following: Responsibility and integrity; Excellence and exigency; Curiosity, reflection, and innovation; Citizenship and participation; and Freedom. In the areas of competence, we can read the following: languages and texts; information and communication; reasoning and problem solving; critical thinking and creative thinking; interpersonal relationships; personal development and autonomy; welfare, health, and environment; aesthetic and artistic sensibility; scientific, technical, and technological knowledge; and consciousness and mastery of the body.

The Decree-Law no. 55/2018 [2] reestablishes the curriculum of basic and secondary education, as well as its principles of design, operationalization, and evaluation (e.g., PASEO). Its preamble acknowledges the shortcomings of the education system, for despite its goals (e.g., equal access to schooling), not all students are equally ensured the right to learning and to educational success. Additionally, contemporary society confronts novel challenges stemming from rapid globalization and technological advancement. The school must prepare students for an uncertain future where they will face jobs and technologies that have yet to emerge, as well as unknown problems. Amid this uncertainty and potential for human development, students must cultivate skills enabling them to challenge established knowledge, assimilate emerging information, communicate effectively, and navigate intricate problems.

These guidelines for action are consistently mentioned by international organisations [3,4] and recognized by authors within the global context [5–9] who have been drawing attention to the need to reimagine the prevailing grammar of schooling [10], which persistently adheres to a factory-oriented approach characterized by the principles of selection and exclusion.

Indeed, there is ample evidence underscoring that the current educational system operates under the assumption that standardized teaching suffices for a diverse array of learners with varying needs. This results in a "one-size-fits-all" curriculum [11] and an assessment system that perpetuates social stratification, thereby neglecting the promotion of equal opportunities and social justice. A recent systematic review by Lomba, Alves, and Cabral [12] accentuates a growing international consensus regarding the imperative for a paradigm shift in existing educational models and highlights that "more and more schools committed to innovation processes indicate the intensification of a 'use of active, practical, and experiential learning', often linked to students' interests and the surrounding community".

1.2. Nonformal Education: A Brief Definition and a Possibility of Inspiration

Distinctions among formal, nonformal, and informal education are rooted in the institutional context, delivery methods, and instructional goals. Whereas formal education occurs within highly structured institutions, emphasizing established methodologies, models, and assessment processes and tracking while grading and certifying graduates for external opportunities, such as employment and societal status, and informal education arises from social institutions like family, peer, or workplace environments or even mass media—centred on intergenerational value transfer and norm teaching, fostering a symbiotic and sometimes unconscious learning process; nonformal education happens within organised but not fully and formally institutionalized educational activities. As Coombs and Ahmed suggest, nonformal education refers to "any organized, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the population, adults as well as children" [13].

Nonformal education may present several key success factors for learning, warranting some attention from the formal education perspective, despite the distinct educational models designed for varied purposes. As discussed in a research report by Johnson and

Majewska [14], nonformal education may emerge as highly motivating and engaging for learners, as the context for knowledge application can affect learning outcomes in several ways: situational problems stimulate intrinsic motivation, rendering abstract ideas "more real, tangible and concrete" and placing value on knowledge by connecting it with experience; nonformal learners can more easily apply skills to enjoyable challenges, fulfilling meaningful purposes. The flexibility inherent in nonformal education curricula stands out when compared to more rigid formal structures, seeming to effectively respond to the challenges of contemporary society, departing from a stringent institutionalized framework to align with the dynamic needs and interests of learners. This flexibility accommodates learners operating at a slower pace, alleviating the pressure to keep up with the accelerated delivery of more rigid, time-constrained curricula.

This recent research report finds that nonformal learning can have a holistic impact on learners across various dimensions: at an affective level, it can heighten learner interest, positively influencing future career aspirations; at a cognitive level, learning in nonformal contexts is shown to have a lasting impact on memory, possibly attributed to learners accessing multiple perspectives through focused discourse and connecting this information to their prior understandings, and critical thinking skills may be stimulated by encouraging interdisciplinary and cross-curricular knowledge linkages; and at a social level, it appears that nonformal contexts promote new ways of collaborative work, emphasizing active participation—contributing to the development of communication, organisational, leadership, social, time management, intercultural, persistence, and resilience skills. Compelling evidence suggests that these skills significantly influence learner self-worth and confidence, integral components of learner well-being. Furthermore, nonformal learning contexts provide educators with opportunities to modify learning conditions by introducing innovative tasks or incorporating diverse materials.

Harbans S. Bhola defines nonformal education as "almost always a combination of 'living and learning' (...) fully immersed in life. The learners (...) are living their lives, not preparing for life" [15]. Bhola further contends that there are institutions whose primary organisational mission is providing nonformal education, although this form of education is generally less formalized in terms of content, method, and instructional structure compared to formal education. It could be argued that any Scout movement, particularly those affiliated with the main institution of reference—the World Organization of the Scout Movement—consists of a nonformal education setting, an assertion that has long been conveyed by several authors [16–18]. Considering Articles 4 and 26 of the Portuguese Basic Law of Education, which address nonformal education's role, we explore the Scout movements within Portugal's educational system, contemplating the several examples this type of context can provide on both national and global levels for reinvigorating formal education, still firmly rooted in a 200-year-old paradigm of traditional schooling that is failing to yield desired outcomes [9,19,20].

1.3. On the Origins of the Scout Movement

In the early 20th century, British soldier Robert Baden-Powell devised an educational method for London youths, detached from traditional schooling, by emphasizing character, physical fitness, manual skills, and service. This method, influenced by his expertise in scouting, survival, and camouflage, centred on practical, experiential learning in small, self-sustained youth communities outdoors. Learning transpired via "learning by doing" (a pedagogical approach advocated by John Dewey), guided by experienced Scouts. Older "Guides" (peers) and adult "Scout Chiefs" (educators) facilitated, nurturing the following aspects [21]:

- Survival skills and nature experience: mountaineering, pioneering, orienteering, fire use, and outdoor living;
- Team-building games encouraging logic, dexterity, and deduction;
- Emotional and social growth through group activities, dramatic games ("sketches"), and value promotion like loyalty, discipline, and joviality;

- Physical fitness and well-being and endurance;
- Community service, generosity, and kindness.

A fundamental element of Scout skill development appears to be closely linked to the semantics of 'Scout'—specifically, the enhancement and cultivation of observation techniques, which Baden-Powell identifies as a commendable skill, emphasizing its instrumental role in the formative process of character development [22]. Robinson and Mills further reveal Baden-Powell's concerns regarding the inadequacies of the traditional schooling system in fostering this particular skill, stating its absence from the formal curriculum and advocating for its optimal promotion through a pedagogical approach that is both enjoyable and compelling.

The Scout movement is consistently reported to contribute to the physical, mental, and spiritual development of children and adolescents, with a notable emphasis on activities taking place in nature [17]. Employing active learning as its methodology, the movement seeks to instil moral values and cultivate leadership qualities among young individuals. Furthermore, it has been posited that the primary objective of Scouting is to nurture character growth, instil a sense of service, facilitate skill acquisition, foster self-confidence, and develop the ability to both collaborate and lead [23,24]. Du Mérac [23] highlights that the aims of Baden-Powell's Scouting educational model were "in line with and drawn from active learning methods and the Montessori method", seeking to provide an experiential educational environment which encouraged young people to make decisions and adapt through practical experience.

Since its inception in 1907, the Scout movement has expanded from its origins in England to encompass numerous countries and territories worldwide, engaging over 57 million young people and volunteers globally, offering a platform within nonformal education settings for Scouts to develop their skills and knowledge.

1.4. The Portuguese Case of the CNE—Global and Local Recent Views on Scouts Education

In 1999, the WOSM (World Organization of the Scout Movement) outlined its mission as contributing to youth education through Baden-Powell's proposed values, fostering personal fulfilment and constructive societal roles. The WOSM Constitution [25] further emphasizes holistic development, nurturing physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual potential, shaping responsible individuals and community members.

These documents offer a shared foundation for international associations to review and revitalize their educational initiatives. In 2010, Portugal's largest Scout association, the National Scout Corps (CNE), established in 1983 and succeeding the CSCP—Portuguese Catholic Scout Corps (formed in 1923)—issued its educational project, the Leader's Handbook [26]. This document forms the bedrock of their planning and pedagogical engagement, redefining the CNE's educational proposal. The CNE employs the Scout Method to guide each youth's self-education, proposing to foster, between other given examples, the following:

- Responsibility, autonomy, perseverance, fairness, loyalty, and honesty;
- Courage and critical thinking, embracing initiatives and challenges;
- Balanced body relationship, acknowledging limitations;
- Initiate actions, prioritize learning, and foster friendships;
- Joy, sensitivity, self-awareness, and empathy;
- Brotherhood, respect, and a Christian commitment, advocating peace and tolerance;
- Embracing imperfections, using knowledge for informed decisions, valuing emotions, teamwork, and deepening faith;
- Active participation in the community, caring for the environment and contributing to the positive transformation of the world.

The CNE advocates for a perspective of human development so that through being, knowing, and acting, youths become responsible individuals and engaged community members, contributing to a better world.

In this brief overview, we can see the intentions of this Portuguese nonformal education movement outlined. A notable alignment with the Portuguese Students Profile at the End of Compulsory Schooling (PASEO) is apparent, apart from its religious contours. This alignment spans the proposed educational principles, values, and skill development, even if occasionally expressed through different terms.

We will now focus on some of the proposed methods of the CNE to fulfil the views above. Amongst its several specific educational frameworks and tools, we will give emphasis on the main framework for organising Scouts learners by age and normative developmental tasks, the core method for further organising these groups (to promote leadership, democratic participation, and development of societal roles), and other essential tools such as ludic pedagogical, learning-by-doing, or project-based learning practices.

1.5. Organising Learner Groups by Age and Developmental Tasks

The General Regulations of the CNE [27] outline Sections, or age groups, representing learning cycles and setting the basis for the organisation of learners—akin to formal schools:

- 1st Section—learners are called "Little Wolves", who form a "Pack"—ages 6 to 10;
- 2nd Section—"Explorers" form an "Expedition"—ages 10 to 14;
- 3rd Section—"Pioneers" form a "Community"—ages 14 to 18;
- 4th Section—"Hikers" form a "Clan"—ages 18 to 22.

Sections are organised considering age, development stages, and educational goals. The individual differences are observed in terms of "challenges, experiences, interests, expectations and maturity". The educational cycle progresses based mainly on age, but also on seniority in each Section and on evaluation of the state of development by Scouts educators. Each Section, with up to a maximum of 40 learners, has its own rituals, symbology, methodology, and pedagogical objectives.

The educational interaction (educator–learner) occurs within each Section. Annually, the educational team is formed, with the number of educators being roughly proportional to the number of learners in the Section each year. This team meets weekly to evaluate prior activities, assess pedagogical needs and plan upcoming activities. Activity units vary widely in duration (from 4 weekly hours, usually on the weekend, to camping trips of 8 days or more). The team focuses on active methodologies, which they will promote mainly by resorting to indirect pedagogical action, fostering active participation of the learners in planning, in making significant decisions, and in evaluating past activities that impacting future ones.

The educational team shares responsibility for both group learning and individual development. Collaborative work, learning management, and pedagogical leadership are considered key. The education team will annually define a team leader; other roles are distributed between educators as needed. This approach aligns with the Patrol System, mirroring how young people are organised (see below).

1.6. Leadership, Democracy, and Participation Roles: The Patrol System

The CNE Leader's Handbook highlights Baden-Powell's assertion that the patrol system is Scouting's core engine, allowing each Scout to find their place amongst their society. This system divides each Section into yearly groups of four to eight learners. Within these "micro-societies", leaders are chosen, tasks performed, relationships developed, and a collective focus on the common good is fostered. Task division is used to encourage values like responsible leadership, democracy and teamwork, camaraderie, and friendship.

Patrol dynamics influence individual and collective development paces within each Section. Packs divide into Bands, Expeditions into Patrols (in this case homonymous of its category), Communities into Teams, and Clans into Tribes, with each group holding a unique symbolism (with an animal or a personality as patron), cultivating history, traditions, and goals throughout the year. Annual roles include guide (leader), sub-guide, secretary, treasurer, material guard, animator, rescuer, and quartermaster. Decisions are democratically discussed and made during Patrol meetings, usually upon hearing the guide

and other senior members, culminating in loose ideas, structured projects, or positions presented in the civic engagement moments of the Section.

Thus, the Patrol System involves communication and decision-making meetings among peers, mediated as needed by the educational team as adults partake in these forums judiciously, exercising agreement or disagreement with parsimony and pedagogical rationale. Three other crucial kinds of meetings, explained below, stand out in the Section life. The general characteristics of each body are hereby presented, with some statutory differences based on each specific Section, according to an increasing level of learners' stage of development, maturity, and responsibility.

The Section Council, where all learners have a voice and voting rights, serves as the unit's highest deliberative body, promoting democratic participation and evaluation, recognizing progress, and choosing further projects. In the oldest Sections, it is also in this forum that the learners decide whether their peers are ready for the main rites of passage in the Scouts learning course. The Council of Guides, formed by the Patrol guides (leaders) and on occasion by the sub-guides, addresses general interests, guiding the Section's life under the educational team coordination. The main goal here is the encouragement of leadership and management skills, sense of responsibility, cooperation, and autonomy.

Technical Committees are temporary groups of learners formed to address specific missions like animation, logistics, fundraising, or design tasks for the predefined main activities. This structure is of additional importance for fostering active learning, participation, and hard and soft skills development.

1.7. Other Essential Educational Practices

The CNE asserts that children and young people possess an innate desire for adventure, challenges, and action. Scouting activities must cater to these desires, allowing for exploration, experimentation, and personal growth. This active learning entails more than passive observation or listening; it involves becoming a dynamic participant in one's own learning. Autonomy grows as tasks are accomplished, fostering the construction of knowledge and skills.

The "Project Method", the CNE's name for their project-based learning approach, involves active designing and executing of extended-duration activities, guided by the educational team. It encompasses four stages: ideation and democratic selection (between projects proposed by the different Patrols), preparation (pursuing technical or physical training and financial goals, as previously defined), implementation (the activity itself), and evaluation (assessing outcomes, addressing shortcomings, suggesting improvements for future activities). Every year comprises three subsequent Project Method cycles. This approach aims to show learners the practical value of what they learn, fostering skill and interest development. The moments of project selection and evaluation are designed to significantly aid self-awareness, acknowledging progress and areas for growth, as mistakes are perceived as valuable learning experiences.

The concept of the "Scout Game", or "spontaneous social game", aligns with this pedagogy. Activities revolve around imaginative themes, merging dreams and aspirations (e.g., stories of courageous and corrupted sorcerers, Vikings and Tuaregs) with real-world actions (e.g., camp infrastructure construction). Infused to the Patrol System, these ludic mechanics, often involving friendly competition between Patrols, promote a sense of wonder, shared discovery, and cooperation. The Project Method assumes a different narrative depending on the Section—Little Wolves call their projects "Hunts", Explorers have "Adventures", Pioneers have "Enterprises", and Hikers have "Hikes". Both the Project Method and the Scout Game are intertwined, connected to other pedagogical approaches and designed, in each learning cycle, to cultivate participation, rule adherence, and to internalize group values, while enhancing individual capacities like imagination, dexterity, flexibility, self-confidence, and strategic thinking.

The CNE seems to anticipate proactive learner engagement, progressively self-directed over annual and quadrennial periods of reference. Through action, the CNE materializes

its educational proposal, focusing on integrated learning to develop skills applicable in personal, family, professional, and other societal contexts.

1.8. Research Questions

As we moved through the literature, four key research questions were identified, which subsequently set the basis for the empirical research undertaken (including the development of a semi-structured focus group script):

1. How do Scouts learners articulate and characterize the identified Scout pedagogical approaches and methods?
2. How do Scouts learners perceive and express their personal challenges, interests, expectations, and other subjective experiences concerning these pedagogical approaches and methods?
3. How do Scouts learners perceive the evolution of their own values and skills (encompassing physical, affective, character, spiritual, intellectual, social, and other dimensions) within the context of their Scouts learning experience?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Participants and Instruments

Focus group was the selected method for data collection, with a duration of approximately 3 h and 40 min. The participants exhibited the following characteristics, which conformed to predetermined criteria:

- 12 Scouts learners—5 men and 7 women;
- All participants were aged between 18 and 22 years, meeting the specific criteria set to ensure their alignment with three additional conditions (final years of Scout experience, average duration of learning experience, and absence of pedagogical experience with the author of this study);
- All participants were in the final years of their Scout learning experience;
- The participants had initiated their learning experiences at different ages;
- The average duration of these experiences between the participants was 12 years (in order to match the duration of the Portuguese formal education course—12 years of compulsory schooling);
- The participants came from two Scouts contexts in the Porto region: 10 participants were from 143 S. Mamede de Infesta, and 2 participants from 902 Moreira da Maia;
- Though the author of this study was an educator of the Scout movement, he had never been an educator of these participants throughout their learning experience, which is considered to significantly reduce the effects of social desirability.

All participants involved in this study provided explicit, informed, and voluntary consent prior to their involvement. The consent process was designed to be comprehensive, ensuring that participants had a thorough understanding of the study's objectives, procedures, and potential implications. To preserve anonymity, participants' identities were coded, and any personally identifiable information was systematically removed and replaced with unique identifiers. Since this was a noninterventional empirical study, ethical approval was not required. To collect the data, the group was brought to a previously reserved room; chairs were arranged in a circle and there were no face masks, tables, or other physical barriers between the participants. The discussion was conducted using a semi-structured focus group script, which allowed for some unplanned discussion of directly related themes, emerging in the participants' narratives.

2.2. Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was carried out using audio recording, later transcribed. The most significant nonverbal evidence was registered, to better inform the subsequent analysis.

As for the methodology of analysis of results, content analysis was chosen, performed manually. The steps of this content analysis are further explained:

- 1st phase: a provisional Content Analysis Grid was designed, with categories and subcategories;
- 2nd Phase: the collected material underwent a meticulous analysis, during which units of relevant content, such as anchor quotes (individual sentences or expressions), were carefully isolated and organised in correspondence to each defined category. Each unit was assigned a specific code indicating the correspondent participant and sequentially numbered, thus turned into a registration unit. The registration units were then associated with predefined categories and subcategories. As the provisional subcategories were finalized, each registration unit was associated with an indicator within each subcategory. Each registration unit was associated only once to an indicator. The content analysis grid was gradually changed, in accordance with the actual results obtained, in order to obtain a system of categorisation of the data as faithful and useful as possible to the isolated recording units;
- 3rd phase: then, the indicators were organised by frequency tabulation, in the working version of the category system. In this phase, each indicator was methodically redefined in a confined sentence, in order to further ensure that the indicators were completely comprehensive (covering the richness of the registration units) and restrictive (limiting themselves to the registration units to which they correspond). In the elaboration of these definitions, some indicators were revised, some registration units were reattributed, and the conceptual boundary lines between some subcategories were reassessed.

3. Results

The results are presented by category, including the indicators for each subcategory. In addition to the frequency of registration units (RU), the number of people (Ppl) with one or more registration units coded under each indicator is displayed. The main indicators within each subcategory are explored; although in some cases, considering article size limitations, some subcategories are not explored (e.g., either being more self-explanatory or not being the essential focus of this study). For the same reasons, a seventh category, "Other findings", is not presented here since its indicators have fewer associated registration units and a weaker link to the rest of the data.

Furthermore, each time a point of view verbally expressed by a participant (later encoded as a registration unit) explicitly provoked a group reaction showing an expressed general agreement (in almost or full unanimity, whether it was shown through nonverbal communication or even several "show-of-hands" requested by the data collector), a "+A" is displayed in the column related to number of people. This was utilized to better convey the degree of expressed consensus regarding some indicators.

Occasionally, we present a registration unit in its original form, incorporating a participant citation following the corresponding indicator, to enhance the transparency of the data treatment process. Given the extensive size of the collected data, only a limited number of representative examples are showcased.

3.1. Pedagogical Organisation in Learning Cycles

The findings related to this category are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Category: Pedagogical organisation in learning cycles.

Subcategory	Indicator	RU	Ppl
3.1.1. Learning cycle characterization	Progression	15	5 + A
	Security, Consistency, and Stability	8	5 + A
	Right Duration	7	3 + A
	Wanting to Evolve	5	2
	Wish to Extend 4th Section Duration	4	3
	Different Growth Rates	2	1

Table 1. *Cont.*

Subcategory	Indicator	RU	Ppl
3.1.2. Peer education *	Older Peer as a Role Model	17	6
	Learning Through Teaching	15	7 + A
	Cyclical Development	11	4
	Personalized Learning	7	3
	Taking on the Role of Senior Peer	6	3
	Proactive Inclusion	5	3
	Growth Through Interpersonal Relationships	5	3
	Emancipation	5	3
	Collective Learning	3	1
3.1.3. Relationships among learning peers	Cohesion, Brotherhood, and Sense of Belonging	11	4
	Difference in Maturity	6	5
	Fascination with Older Individuals	3	1
	Initial Relationship Challenges	2	1
	Shyness and Initial Reserve	2	1
3.1.4. Main educational goals for Little Wolves (1st Section)	Socialization	6	4
	Leader Role Modelling (Character)	6	3
	Developing Independence from Parents	4	3
	Play-Based Learning	4	2
	Learning from Mistakes	3	2
3.1.5. Main educational goals for Explorers (2nd Section)	Empowerment	12	6
	Initiation to Scout Techniques	7	3
	Formal Induction into Scouting	6	4
	Autonomy	5	3
	Exploration of the Unknown	5	2
	Learning from Mistakes	3	3
	Work team (Patrol dynamic)	3	3
	Scout Game	1	1
3.1.6. Main educational goals for Pioneers (3rd Section)	Search for Direction and Identity	7	4
	Sense of Community	6	3
	Construction	3	2
	Service	1	1
3.1.7. Main educational goals for Hikers (4th Section)	Personal Life Project	4	3
	Value System	4	1
	Sharing	3	1
	Departure for New Challenges	2	1

* In the context of education.

3.1.1. Learning Cycle Characterization

- Progression: Recognizing the continuous nature of personal development and learning, both within each educational cycle and across different cycles, from the direct experience of the varying abilities and skills among Scouts of different ages;
- Security, Consistency, and Stability: Highlighting the sense of security and stability that arises from the four-year duration of each educational cycle (Section), providing a foundation for tackling developmental challenges and fostering the consolidation of values and experiences;
- Right Duration: Emphasizing that the four-year duration of each educational cycle aligns well with the progressive challenges and expected levels of development, as perceived by the learners themselves during transitions between cycles: "B8-you couldn't do it any more or any less—you acquired [the skills] in the right dose".

3.1.2. Peer Education

- Older Peer as a Role Model: Recognizing the older peer (senior learner) as a significant role model, due to their proximity in age and shared experiences. The senior is viewed as relatable and empathetic, capable of comprehending the challenges faced by the

individual and of offering alternative approaches to problems, and also poses tangible indicators of competence levels, by both positive and negative examples: "N7—"Okay, I want to be like you" or "I don't want to be like you", there it is, it is having a perspective of what is next";

- Learning Through Teaching: Teaching a concept or skill implies a comprehensive understanding, often demonstrated through the capacity to draw analogies. The act of teaching is seen as reinforcing the senior learner's own learning and invites additional learning, prompted by junior learner questions or perspectives not previously considered;

- Cyclical Development: Acknowledging the cyclical transition between roles of learning (as a junior learner) and teaching (as a senior learner) as a natural component of human development;

- Personalized Learning: Scouts recognize that teaching entails the challenge of acomodating acquired knowledge to individual learners, requiring a distinct form of knowledge. This involves understanding the learner's background (prior experiences) and learning style (how they best acquire knowledge): "T2-the closer the analogy is to the person, the better the person will understand the concept.".

3.1.3. Relationships among Learning Peers

- Cohesion, Brotherhood, and Sense of Belonging: Prolonged interaction among junior and senior peers within the learning process fosters feelings of well-being and contentment among individuals, sometimes causing them to overlook age disparities. This leads to a strong alignment of mindsets, values, and perspectives on life and the world, as well as the sense of belonging to a collective with a shared identity: "V7-when the group got together, whether it was with a guitar, whether it was to play a game, whether it was for anything, whether it was to work, there was a force and an energy there that was contagious";

- Difference in Maturity: Recognizing that disparities in maturity are still evident, particularly between 1st and 4th graders in each Section, and becoming more pronounced in the 3rd Section (between 15 years old teenagers and those transitioning into adulthood).

3.1.4. Main Educational Goals for Little Wolves (1st Section)

- Socialization: Learning to share, coexist, and establish friendships and collaborative relationships within both small and large groups of other children;

- Leader Role Modelling (Character): Learning is primarily facilitated by educators who adopt personas from The Jungle Book by Rudyard Kipling, embodying distinct attributes and values, influencing children's development.

3.1.5. Main Educational Goals for Explorers (2nd Section)

- Empowerment: Learning autonomously fosters their emancipation and nurtures their ability for effective self-management, which entails accountability for their own actions and consequences. They note that freedom and the ability to interact with the world amplify and mutually reinforce one another;

- Initiation to Scout Techniques: The Expedition Section is the period when Scouts grasp more tangibly the distinctiveness of being a Scout. They acquire foundational Scout techniques, such as mountaineering, orienteering, and camping, which remain applicable throughout their journey. Associated symbols are water flask, hat, Polaris star and walking stick;

- Formal Induction into Scouting: This 2nd Section involves comprehending Scout values and making a formal commitment to the movement (whereas the 1st Section is often viewed as the preparation for this rite of passage).

3.1.6. Main Educational Goals for Pioneers (3rd Section)

- Search for Direction and Identity: The final phase of adolescence is seen as a journey of self-discovery and identity formation, marked by personal choices and the process of uncovering and pursuing one's life aspirations. The compass rose is the symbol associated with this developmental challenge;
- Sense of Community: Within this age group, a deep understanding of the significance and strength of a united group emerges, emphasizing the impact of collective unity for a common purpose. The sense of community is highly valued and represented by the symbol of the drop of water;
- Construction: The act of creating, building, and realizing tangible projects and dreams is a significant aspect of this developmental stage. Participants emphasize the importance of translating ideas into concrete achievements, often symbolized by the axe;
- Service: As maturity develops, there is a growing desire to contribute and give back to the community.

3.1.7. Main Educational Goals for Hikers (4th Section)

- Personal Life Project: The concept of creating personal paths through individual choices, particularly in areas like personal life, education, and career, which may impact the Scout journey, is a prominent one in this Section, associated with defining directions and making decisions, symbolized by the forked walking stick;
- Value System: The Clan is regarded as the Section where the value system developed throughout the Scout journey becomes solidified and integrated into the participants' lives within real-world society;
- Sharing: Regardless of the diverse paths that individuals take, the process of transitioning into adulthood is a shared experience among peers. The act of sharing this journey is symbolized by bread;
- Departure for New Challenges: The preparation for and acceptance of the conclusion of the Scout journey, along with the various transitions and normative developmental challenges associated with this age group. This phase is symbolized by the backpack, signifying readiness for new challenges.

3.2. Patrol System—Life and Learning in Society

The findings related to this category are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Category: Patrol System—life and learning in society.

Subcategory	Indicator	RU	Ppl
	Valuing Co-leadership (Sub-guide)	9	8
	Exigency and Complexity	9	2
	Fostering Potential in Others	7	2
	Skill Diversification	7	2
	Maturation	6	3
	Advocacy for Group Interests	5	5
	Cooperation with Other Leaders	4	3
3.2.1. Leadership	Initiative	4	1
	Creation of Rapport with Those Led	3	1
	Trusting Those Led	2	1
	Leaving No One Behind	2	1
	Senior Learner as a Close Modelling Figure	1	1
	Work Organisation	1	1
	Appreciation for Other Team Roles	1	1

Table 2. *Cont.*

Subcategory	Indicator	RU	Ppl
3.2.2. Patrol level (team)	Work Organisation	3	1
	Participative Democracy	2	2
	Teamwork	2	2
	Discovery and Acceptance of Others	2	2
	Communication	2	1
	Pragmatism	2	1
3.2.3. Section level (learning cycle)	Democratic Duty	16	3
	Communication	6	4
	Critical Thinking	5	3
	Evaluation	3	3
	Recognition of Others' Competences	3	2
	Participative Democracy	3	1
	Fostering Future Leaders	2	1

3.2.1. Leadership

- Valuing Co-leadership (Sub-guide): Recognizing the significance of a "right-arm", capable of assuming the leader's role when the latter is absent. This individual provides support to both the leader and the team, acting as a leadership partner and supplementing the leader's guidance: "Q16—it's like we have two arms. We have the right arm and the left arm. And if our dominant arm is the right, the Guide will be the dominant one, but we still need the left arm in many situations, if only to support the other arm";
- Exigency and Complexity: Acknowledging the complexity of considering everything and everyone. Leading involves service and support, challenging the perception of leadership as a simple exercise of authority and power;
- Fostering Potential in Others: Empowering followers to take initiative, offering assistance when needed, contributing to their development (which can include future leadership roles);
- Skill Diversification: Acquiring additional skills alongside leadership, notably handling responsibility for others and making tough decisions;
- Maturation: Gaining new perspectives on human development and associated challenges, facilitated by forums like the Council of Guides where Patrol leaders convene under educator guidance. This can involves addressing inappropriate behaviours from junior learners when necessary: "A5-they talk about problems that are not talked about in other places, things that you had not thought of but make sense".

3.2.2. Patrol Level (Team)

- Work Organisation: Defining roles, coordinating, and distributing tasks within a team to achieve desired outcomes;
- Participative Democracy: Realising that society's democracy starts with individual engagement within their sphere of influence;
- Teamwork: Collaborative support and group cohesion, towards a common goal;
- Discovery and Acceptance of Others: Grasping differences and respecting diversity of people and perspectives.

3.2.3. Section Level (Learning Cycle)

- Democratic Duty: Embracing group decisions and, even if in previous disagreement, actively participating in their execution, prioritizing group interests over personal ones: "D16-continue to row to the side that [the group] chooses. And not for the one I [alone] think is the best";
- Communication: Effective active listening, structured expression of ideas, and skilful ideas presentation and debate;

- Critical Thinking: Mastering the capacity to critically and constructively analyse issues: "P2-they become aware of 'this is not right, don't do it like that', they have this capacity for analysis, for each other".

3.3. The Four Stages of Project Method

The findings related to this category are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Category: The four stages of Project Method.

Subcategory	Indicator	RU	Ppl
3.3.1. Ideation and Selection stage	Fostering Ambitious Ideas	4	2
	Cherishing Personal Dreams	3	2
	Cultivate a Dreamer Mindset	1	1
3.3.2. Preparation stage	Life Skills	15	3
	Transforming Dreams into Reality	8	3
	Financial Acumen	5	2
	Assessing Viability	4	2
	Team Management	3	1
	Cultivating Realistic Dreams	3	2
	Responsibility	2	2
	Time Management	2	1
3.3.3. Implementation stage	Positive Change in Attitude	9	1
	Embracing Unpredictability	6	2
	Keeping Calm	5	1
	Adapting	3	2
	Teamwork	3	1
3.3.4. Evaluation stage	Fostering Critical Thinking	14	4
	Valuing Continuous Improvement	12	4
	Acknowledging Successes	9	3
	Evaluation as a Fun Thing	7	3
	Self-discovery	5	2
	Challenges to Constructive Discussion	3	3
	Negative Weight of Assessment	3	2

3.3.1. Ideation and Selection Stage

- Fostering Ambitious Ideas: Generating bold concepts while initiating your project, assessing feasibility later;
- Cherishing Personal Dreams: Learners' desires are channelled into structured proposals by the Patrol before showcasing, assessing, and voting by the Section Council. Each participant, as co-creator, cherishes their project and wants to see it come to life.

3.3.2. Preparation Stage

- Life Skills: Abilities like project management, understanding diverse methods and contexts, have broader applications across life domains (academia, work, community, and family), sometimes propelling learners into leadership roles in these domains as they are used to project method and culture; "N4-when I applied for these projects in which I am [working], I only talked about the scouts and I was perfectly aware that what I was saying were not [abstract] barbarities"; "T9—and it will be much easier, we don't have that mental barrier of not knowing how to do it, because we already did it in the Scouts";
- Transforming Dreams into Reality: Converting aspirational dreams into tangible outcomes through project methodologies, even those who initially deemed utopian.

3.3.3. Implementation Stage

- Positive Change in Attitude: Transforming prior rejection or unexpected setbacks into optimistic outlooks, embracing challenges and reframing initial resistance to the

unknown; "D5-everyone [rejected a little], I believe even more sharply in the face [of the loss] of the camp, but then, when we were here, we were all participating in the moments of imaginary [Scout Game], at work";

- Embracing Unpredictability: Acknowledging that unforeseen occurrences are inherent even to well-defined plans, stemming from internal flaws (such as planning gaps) or external factors (e.g., weather conditions).

3.3.4. Evaluation Stage

- Fostering Critical Thinking: The evaluation stage enhances cognitive abilities to dissect problems, proactively identifying and analysing causes of setbacks for future prevention or management. This involves reviewing alternatives from the preparation and implementation stages, as well as deciphering successful aspects for replication. Cultivating consequent attitudes is fostered between learners: "Q10-why did it work in that context, because if we replicate it just because it went well once, applying it in another context may just be the worst thing that happened";
- Valuing Continuous Improvement: Recognising that evaluation's importance lies in driving ongoing enhancements—a chance for refining projects. Learners focus on refining for future evolution through constructive discussions, valuing this process highly;
- Acknowledging Successes: Valuing positive outcomes during evaluation acts as motivation, especially after significant setbacks that could deter future efforts. Despite a natural inclination to prioritize problems, highlighting successes is perceived as crucial;
- Evaluation as a Fun Thing: The importance of making evaluations engaging and interactive, capturing attention and culminating in a convivial, celebratory moment. This fosters emotional bonds and reconciles divergent views.

3.4. Characterization of the Scout Game and Other Learning Process Dimensions

The findings related to this category are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Category: Characterization of the Scout Game and other learning process dimensions.

Subcategory	Indicator	RU	Ppl
3.4.1. Self-determination and self-agency	Responsibility	11	4
	Sense of Ownership	6	4
	Motivation	6	2
	Freedom to Choose	5	3
	Freedom to Make Errors	2	1
3.4.2. Learning-by-doing	Practicing	4	3 + A
	Autonomy	2	2
	Critical Thinking	2	2
	Challenges	2	1
	Work team (Section dynamic)	1	1
3.4.3. Experiential learning: symbolic and imaginary play	(Un)Awareness of Meaning Behind Symbols	10	5
	Engagement	10	4
	Symbols Suitability to Developmental Challenges	5	3
	Educational Power of Narrative Play	3	2
	Educational Power of Music	2	1
3.4.4. Playful nature of learning	Fun Engages Learning	8	5 + A
	Fun Facilitates Learning	8	4
	Play Promoting Work and Results	4	2

3.5. Other Competencies and Values Developed throughout the Scout Learning Course

Competencies are hereby understood as "complex combinations of knowledge sets, skills and attitudes" [28], appearing in the participants' narratives regarding emotional, social, civic, cognitive, and physical levels; whereas at the spiritual level, they refer to the

relationship between their personal value systems and how they develop in Scouting. The findings related to this category are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Category: Other competencies and values developed throughout the Scout learning course.

Subcategory	Indicator	RU	Ppl
3.5.1. Emotions and affections level	Emotional Regulation	17	5
	Empathy	8	4
	Resilience	3	2
	Self-confidence	3	2
3.5.2. Social and civic level	Civic Participation	19	4
	Gratitude and Valuing Life's Essentials	11	4
	Socialization Skills and Respect	9	3
	Moral and Ethical Development	9	3
	Exposure and Openness to Different Realities	8	4
	Detaching from the Superficial	7	3
	Initiative and Proactivity	6	3
	Transcending Social and Cultural Boundaries	5	2
	Committing to Something	4	1
3.5.3. Cognitive and physical level	Divergent Thinking and Solution Orientation	10	3 + A
	Life Skills	9	2
	Critical Thinking	8	5
	Understanding the Body's Limits	2	2
	Pushing Physical Boundaries	2	2
	Self-Care	1	1
3.5.4. Spiritual level	Freedom for Personal Interpretation	14	4
	Identification with Faith Values	6	3
	Distinguishing Scouting and Church	6	1
	Scout Movement's Influence on Church Evolution	6	1
	Distinguishing Spirituality and Religion	5	4
	Nonidentification with the Catholic Church	3	2

3.6. Comparisons with Formal Education Contexts

The findings related to this category are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Category: Comparisons with formal education contexts.

Subcategory	Indicator	RU	Ppl
3.6.1. Characterization of the formal educational environment	Lack of Values Promotion	17	6 + A
	Lack of Life Skills Promotion	9	3
	Lack of Intergenerational Development	9	3
	Socioeconomic and Cultural Barriers	8	3
	Lack of Intergenerational Relationships	4	2
	Learning Cycle Discontinuity	4	2
3.6.2. Characterization of teaching and learning processes	Ineffectiveness of Expository Teaching Methods	7	3
	Non-Regarding of Individual Needs	6	2
	Student as a Passive Subject	4	2
	Importance of Affective Connection to Teachers	4	2
	Contents that Lack Subjective Meaning	3	3
	Impermanence of Knowledge	3	2
	False Active Learning Methods	2	2

Subcategory	Indicator	RU	Ppl
3.6.3. Critical perspectives on the teaching and learning process and the underlying pedagogical model	Creating Emotionally Significant Learning	15	4
	Building Learning on Students Previous Experiences	12	2
	Diversification of Teaching Methods	8	4
	Time and Curriculum Management	7	3
	Learning Beyond the Syllabus	2	1
	Emphasizing Learning-by-Doing	2	1
3.6.4. Critical perspectives on the teacher	Hardships on Innovating	9	2
	Lack of Teacher–Student Proximity	2	1
	Incentive through Teacher Evaluation	1	1
	Need for Comprehensive Training	1	1
3.6.5. Critical perspectives on the organisational model	Efficient Human Resources Management	2	1

4. Discussion

The CNE educational project occurs through distinct educational cycles that vary in terms of challenges, experiences, interests, expectations, and maturity. Each cycle possesses its unique symbolism, methodology, and educational goals. The cycle functions as the fundamental pedagogical and organisational unit. Within it, the development of competencies—specific capacities, attitudes, and context knowledge—is anticipated; so, there are reference points for gauging levels of acquired learning. Individual learning paces are acknowledged and nurtured [29].

The concept of a true "learning cycle" finds direct reflection in formal education, prompting new perspectives on curriculum management, flexibility, reorganisation, and adaptation. This fosters innovative approaches to grouping students and teaching teams, redefines resource allocation, and ushers in fresh pedagogical paradigms, as noted by Verdasca, cited by Cabral [20].

Within the "micro-societies" and Scout society context, it is relevant to remember the vision outlined by the Portuguese PASEO—a vision advocating an educational model that not only seeks individual qualification but also endeavours to foster democratic citizenship, thus aligning with the intents of the formal educational system. Beyond compulsory schooling, the young are expected to become citizens "who grasp and uphold democratic society's fundamental rights, guarantees and freedoms; who value the respect for human dignity, for full citizenship engagement, for solidarity towards other people, for cultural diversity and for democratic discourse", which links to other evidence from the international literature on Scouting [17,22–24,29]. It is now more visible how the Patrol System can tangibly embody these ideals, constituting a noteworthy research finding, as a significant level of democracy within schools can not only be beneficial but also essential in fostering the development of democratic citizens, as suggested by Gutmann [30]. The main Scouts pedagogical tools regard learners as active participants in their learning journey. This approach acknowledges their interaction with the world and knowledge, influenced by past experiences and emotional connections with subjects and learning environments. Learners engage in various activities, not as passive recipients of knowledge but as actors and creators. Projects prompt individuals to propose, execute, and assess their own learning experiences, fostering autonomy and agency for improvement [17,23,24,29]. It is worth noting that the Project Method, as presented by Larmer and Mergendoller, encompasses all seven elements of project-based learning [31]: a need to know; a driving question; student voice and choice; 21st Century Skills; inquiry and innovation; feedback and revision; and a publicly presented product. It is interesting to note here the OECD 2018 report "Teachers as Designers of Learning Environment" [32], as it identifies crucial clusters of pedagogical approaches which are inherent to the CNE's pedagogical functioning.

We can observe that the first one, Gamification, is inherent to the Scout Game approach, as found in the literature [24,29]. This was already overviewed in the 3rd Category of the empirical evidence and its importance was further emphasized in the 4th Category. The other two main clusters are Experiential Learning—with the main components being concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation [17,22–24,29], all present throughout participants' discourse—and embodied learning [22], which encompasses the following principles: body and mind work together in learning, movement and concepts are connected, action and thinking take place simultaneously, science and art influence and support each other, the physical and the ideal are in dialogue with each other, reality and imagination are intertwined, and the living body and the lived body are united in forming human consciousness. It is quite remarkable how many associations one can find between the narrated experiences of the participants and what could be an idyllic version of the Portuguese formal education context.

The learners' discourse reflects the development of various competencies, with many aligning with those pertaining to the Portuguese Students Profile at the End of Compulsory Schooling (PASEO). We conducted a summarized evaluation of skill growth, referencing participants' statements and using a scale from 1 (absent in discourse) to 5 (constantly present). Five of the competence areas emerged, with an average score of 4.6: information and communication, reasoning and problem solving, critical thinking and creative thinking, interpersonal relationships, personal development and autonomy, and consciousness and mastery of the body [17,22–24].

This assessment offers insightful implications from this nonformal education context for the pedagogical functioning of Portuguese schools. Moreover, it prompts valuable introspection within the Scout movement, considering skills differently highlighted by learners in this exploratory study, even in aspects of well-being, health, and the environment (scoring 3.6 "only"). Notably, comments about the spiritual and religious dimension warrant attention, as they intersect with the CNE's connection to the Catholic Church. This opens pathways for further investigation, including historical analysis and reflections on the evolution of both movements.

The discourse of participants showcases their consistent capacity for critically reflecting on traditional schooling, providing significant examples through which the Portuguese education system can draw inspiration from nonformal education, specifically the CNE and the broader Scouts movement, thus innovating across its multiple systemic levels—from ideological and conceptual aspects to pedagogical and logistical realms, among others. Including these "firsthand" perspectives from Scouts learners, who simultaneously are recent school graduates embarking on university courses or professional careers, seemed essential. This should ignite a sense of urgency among formal education stakeholders dedicated to cultivating an inclusive, democratic school that positively reaches every student.

Notably, amidst positive interactions with educators, the discourse predominantly underscores the impactful roles of senior learners (learning cycle peers) and self-directed learning. Learners themselves constantly emerge as the central figures in this narrative.

5. Possibilities and Limitations

The complete unpublished version of this study covers a wide array of themes through documentary review and empirical research, from which several avenues for future exploration emerge. Examples of these potential directions, here identified both as study limitations and as promising research prospects, include the following:

1. Symbology and Educational Objectives: Delving into the connection between section symbology and learning cycle objectives, exploring more deeply how symbolic play and embodied learning enhance education;
2. Progress System: Investigating one significant educational tool of the CNE educational project to develop and assess competencies outlined in its educational framework, excluded from this study due to data size limitations;

3. Temporal and Spatial Dimensions: Examining the distinctive treatment of "times" and "spaces" in learning, considering the CNE's stark contrast in this regard with respect to traditional educational paradigms;

4. Environmental Awareness: Probing the somewhat tenuous relationship found between environmental awareness and Scout pedagogy;

5. The CNE and Catholic Church Relationship: Analysing the complex association between the CNE Scout movement and the Catholic Church;

6. Civic Participation Skills: Addressing the disparity between the current findings on the development of civic and democratic participation skills and the neutral (sometimes negative) impact that a Scout learning experience can present to individual levels of political participation in Portugal (e.g., due to lack of trust in political institutions) such as was previously found by Rodrigues, Menezes, and Ferreira [33];

7. Quantitative Exploration: Expanding this study's scope by incorporating larger samples and quantitative methodologies, for more comprehensive and conclusive outcomes in the areas under investigation;

8. Educator Action: While effective Scouting is distinguished by being child-led rather than adult-led, the role of adults in facilitating this process is crucial. Therefore, further investigating the necessary training and skills required for adult educators to deliver intricate pedagogical experiences, such as experiential and differentiated learning, could end up revealing key success factors and enriching the capacity of Scout movements to inspire formal education [18,34,35].

These facets offer rich potential for deeper exploration, enhancing the understanding of Scout pedagogy and its impacts within the CNE context.

6. Conclusions

Based on these exploratory findings, it can be argued that the CNE pedagogical frameworks and methods are inspiring examples, capable of providing insights into the Portuguese formal education system.

Edgar Morin [36] employs the metaphor of the "metamorphosis" of the natural world to illustrate that when a societal system proves incapable of addressing its vital problems, it faces degradation or disintegration. In such circumstances, a profound transformation becomes imperative to effectively tackle its challenges. This metaphor can aptly be applied to the current educational systems, since it implies not only adaptation but a more radical transformation, in this case, of the grammar of schooling [10], preserving essential elements while ushering in new qualities. As Ken Robinson [37] asserts, current educational models and systems "are based on the manufacturing principles of linearity, conformity and standardization. The evidence is everywhere that they are failing too many students and teachers alike. A primary reason is that human development is not linear and standardized, it is organic and diverse. People, as opposed to products, have hopes and aspirations, feelings and purposes. Education is a personal process. What and how young people are taught have to engage their energies, imaginations and their different ways of learning".

Robinson emphasizes the importance of personalized learning and identifies the main challenge for educational change: rather than scaling a single promising model, the challenge lies in disseminating these principles across education so that teachers, parents, students, and principals are encouraged to develop their own approaches tailored to the unique challenges they encounter. Scouting can potentially fulfil this purpose by serving as an inspirational source for educational change, highlighting increased participation, personalization, and active learning. It should not be perceived as a universally applicable reference model for formal education, readily exportable to various educational models designed for different purposes. Nevertheless, Scout educational practices may be advocated as a source of inspiration for transformative changes in educational systems worldwide, including the Portuguese educational system.

While also showing several characteristics of a "good school" as postulated by John MacBeath [38], the Portuguese Scout movement could maybe be described by Alves and Cabral [10] as having some fundamental "morphological, syntactic and semantic dimensions that enable[d] the functioning of a renewed grammar of schooling", most notably, the people (educating competent, conscientious, compassionate, committed, and creative people); the syllabus (placing the focus on people who learn and mobilize knowledge in developed competence, and not in a static set of knowledge, uniformly instructible and devoid of meaning); the whole organisation (with rich interactions and more possibilities for encounters and interconnectedness, diluting the logic of segmentation and segregation); the ways of pedagogical intervention (where pedagogy is "the mother of all promises of liberation and emancipation", a "pedagogy of autonomy, responsibility, interaction, contract, and which seems to generate such good results"); and the time for educators whose work—as can be inferred from the pedagogical circumstances and results lived by learners—can provide a "more humane [school], more attentive, closer to realizing the potential of each human being"), as supported by José Matias Alves.

The essential elements of this new grammar have to do with a professional and organisational autonomy that goes beyond fiction; a more autonomous, collaborative, interactive, deliberative, committed, and responsible teaching practice; a more professional (democratic and responsible) and inscribed-in-the-territory school management and leadership; an essential curriculum, more flexible and contextualized; a more flexible grouping of students (beyond the [organisation by] year) that considers the cycle; an organisation of teaching in educational teams and allocation of teachers to students; construction of standardized spaces, outside normal classes, of different configurations; learning times outside the common places at the service of learning; leadership focused on student learning and the development of the professional community; systematic intervision and supervision of pedagogical practices (in articulation with educational team practices and collaborative work); and teaching strategies based on a pedagogy of research, production, debate, and systematic formative assessment—assessing to learn, Alves, 2021 [39].

It is evident that this study focused on an approach to education centred on learning rather than teaching. The presented educational praxis aligns with the ideas advocated by John Dewey [40], emphasizing the learner's active participation. This underscores a pedagogy of action that diverges from many formal education practices characterized by a standardized and rigid schooling structure, operating under a paradigm of division and separation (of knowledge, spaces, times, and people). Therefore, there may be value in drawing inspiration from specific nonformal practices governed by principles such as personalization, experiential learning, and action-oriented learning—practices liberated from an evaluation system primarily at the service of classification and selection. This analytical shift is relevant not only to the Portuguese educational context but also on a global scale, as education fulfils UNESCO's recommended principles of learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together [41,42]. Teaching, fundamentally, should ignite the will and determination to learn [43].

Institutional Review Board Statement: In accordance with the guidelines set forth by the Portuguese Society of Educational Sciences (SPCE), the submitted non-interventional study adheres to a rigorous ethical framework, which ensures the protection of participants' rights and confidentiality. Although the nature of our research does not necessitate intervention or direct interaction with participants that would typically require Ethics Committee or Institutional Review Board oversight, we want to emphasize our commitment to ethical conduct and participant welfare. All participants involved in this study provided explicit, informed, and voluntary consent prior to their involvement. The consent process was designed to be comprehensive, ensuring that participants were fully informed about the study's objectives, procedures, and potential implications. To uphold anonymity, participants' identities were coded, and any personally identifiable information was systematically removed and replaced with unique identifiers. While the study did not seek formal approval from an Ethics Committee due to its non-interventional nature, we affirm our unwavering commitment to ethical research practices. We believe that our adherence to the ethical guidelines set by the SPCE ensures the integrity and reliability of the study findings while prioritizing the rights and well-being of our participants.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in this study.

Data Availability Statement: The research data are shared and can be accessed in their original language here: https://data.mendeley.com/datasets/mff5m4jjxb/1 (accessed on 9 November 2023).

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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