

HOLISTIC EDUCATION: AN ANALYSIS OF ITS PEDAGOGICAL APPLICATION

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a theoretical and interpretative study, in which I analyze and evaluate the pedagogical application of the philosophical ideas advocated by the holistic education movement in four approaches to schooling.

Holistic education is an eclectic and inclusive movement, which emerged in the mid-1980s as a response to the then dominant worldview of mainstream education. It is an educational paradigm that integrates the idealistic ideas of humanistic education with spiritual philosophical ideas. It incorporates principles of spirituality, wholeness, and interconnectedness along with principles of freedom, autonomy, and democracy. Holistic education theorists assume an integration of what most progressive and democratic movements in education have proposed should be kept separate, namely, spirituality and humanistic ideals.

While these principles may be combined philosophically into an ideal of education, the question I ask in this study is as follows: could they be jointly *applied* in an approach to education? In this dissertation, therefore, I explore the pedagogical applicability of these principles and examine some of the tensions that arose for me as I compared how holistic education principles were applied in different approaches to schooling.

To carry out this study I selected four approaches to schooling that draw on holistic educational ideals in order to analyze the pedagogical application of the philosophical principles advocated by the leading theorists in the holistic education movement. For analytical purposes, I synthesized the principles of holistic education into eight broad principles (*spirituality, reverence to life/nature, interconnectedness, human wholeness, individual uniqueness, caring relations, freedom/autonomy, and democracy*). For each of the appointed principles, I identified pedagogical features across the selected school systems that I argue promote that particular principle and I examined the way and the extent by which they are applied. Finally, I compared the findings of all pedagogical features to determine the extent to which each principle is applied in each of the pedagogical approaches to schooling.

The findings of this study indicated that there are tensions in accommodating pedagogically the spiritual and humanistic principles of holistic education in one approach to education. I examine some of these tensions across the four selected approaches to schooling.

Dedicated to my beloved children

Julia and Matheu,

for their love and endurance

throughout this challenging journey

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PREFACE

This dissertation is part of a long journey that I have trodden in search of an educational ideal that could be pedagogically implemented.

About twenty-five years ago, I had my first experience as an educator. I took a teaching position in the early childhood program of a private school in São Paulo, Brazil, my home country. It was an ordinary school, following “traditional” or “conventional” methods of teaching and learning and no different from what I had experienced throughout my life as a student. There, I also found the regular practices of competition, repetition, memorization, purposeless activities, disconnected curriculum, consumerism, excessive authority, and so forth.

After two years of experiencing such empty and materialistic system of education, I decided to leave the teaching profession. I felt no purpose in what I was doing and at that time I knew nothing better.

Two years later, I heard of a job opening for a kindergarten teaching assistant position in a small private school in my neighborhood. The school seemed different from what I had experienced before; I needed a job, so I took the position. It was a Waldorf School, of which I had never heard before.

In a relatively short period of time, I began realizing how different that system was from the ordinary approaches to schooling I was used to. All activities seemed to have a philosophical and spiritual purpose for their application. Teachers were kind and respectful and they seemed to deeply care for each individual child. There was no competition of any kind; no grades or rewards. Consumerism was strictly avoided and so was any kind of media (TV, advertising).

I was very impressed with the Waldorf pedagogy and in a short period of time I became a strong advocate of the movement. I studied the spiritual science of Rudolf Steiner (Anthroposophy), the founder of the movement, as well as several other spiritual philosophies related to his teachings. I read extensively about Waldorf education and attended several courses and workshops offered by the Anthroposophical movement. I visited many Waldorf Schools in different parts of the world (USA, UK, The Netherlands, South Africa) and I raised my children based on Waldorf principles.

As I grew older and new life experiences came my way, I began distancing myself from the Anthroposophical movement and I started searching for other approaches to education. Due to life circumstances, my children could no longer attend Waldorf Schools and I had to face mainstream education again. It was a painful experience to see my own children participating in such meaningless and materialistic education.

My rage against mainstream education increased as the years went by and I had to witness the damage it was causing to my children. By the time I came to Ohio, USA, to do my PhD in education, I had already become a radical advocate against mainstream

education and an idealist in search of an educational ideal that could be pedagogically implemented. During my years of study at The Ohio State University, I researched alternative approaches to education, alternative approaches to schooling, radical movements of education, as well as spiritual initiatives in education.

For my dissertation, I had decided to further my research about alternatives approaches to mainstream education. My goal was to synthesize the literature in this area in order to propose an ideal model of education, which I had, for so long, reflected upon.

While searching the literature, I discovered the field of holistic education, about which I knew nothing at the time. As I researched further into the field, I noticed how closely aligned my ideas were with the holistic education movement. The more I studied the field, the more I realized that what I was trying to propose was already out there expressed in the ideas and thoughts advocated by the leaders of the holistic education movement. I felt no reason to pursue my original proposal. I then decided to redirect the focus of my dissertation and concentrate on the field of holistic education. As my initial interest was to explore the pedagogical application of the educational ideal, I carried the same question to my investigation of holistic education.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is a theoretical and interpretative study, in which I analyze and evaluate the pedagogical application of the philosophical ideas advocated by the holistic education movement in four approaches to schooling.

Holistic education is an eclectic and inclusive movement, which emerged in the mid-1980s as a response to the then dominant worldview of mainstream education. It is an educational paradigm that integrates the idealistic ideas of humanistic education with spiritual philosophical ideas. It incorporates principles of spirituality, wholeness, and interconnectedness along with principles of freedom, autonomy, and democracy. Holistic education theorists assume an integration of what most progressive and democratic movements in education have proposed should be kept separate, namely, spirituality and humanistic ideals.

While these principles may be combined philosophically into an ideal of education, the question I ask in this study is as follows: could they be jointly *applied* in an approach to education? In this dissertation, therefore, I explore the pedagogical applicability of these principles and examine some of the tensions that arose for me as I

compared how holistic education principles were applied in different approaches to schooling.

To provide the reader with a better understanding of the field of holistic education, in the following sections, I briefly describe the evolution of the movement, outline the philosophies, theories and worldviews underlying holistic education, and illustrate some of the main principles and concepts that integrate the holistic educational paradigm. A more detailed account of the ideas embedded in holistic education is provided in the subsequent chapters.

Following the introduction of holistic education, I describe the mode of inquiry and the method of analysis employed in this study. I, then, explain the structure and organization of the succeeding chapters.

1.1. Holistic Education – Its Beginning and Evolution

Holistic education is a fairly new movement, which began to take form as a recognizable field of study and practice in the mid-1980s in North America.¹ It emerged as a response to the dominant worldview of mainstream education, often referred to as the “mechanistic” or “Cartesian-Newtonian” worldview.² Rather than attempting to provide a model of education, holistic education seeks to challenge the “fragmented, reductionistic...assumptions of mainstream culture and education.”³ In other words, holistic education is concerned with “underlying worldviews or paradigms in an attempt

to transform the foundations of education...”⁴ As Ron Miller, one of the leaders of the movement, argues,

Holistic education is *not* to be defined as a particular method or technique; it must be seen as a *paradigm*, a set of basic assumptions and principles that can be applied in diverse ways.⁵

The first initiatives of the holistic education movement came in the late 1970s from the members of the transpersonal/holistic education group (Theodore Roszak, George Leonard, Joseph Pearce, Beverly Galyean, Jack Canfield, James Fadiman, among others) who formed a “Holistic Education Network and published two volumes of proceedings.”⁶ This enthusiastic group believed holistic education could be the revolutionary movement of our time. Their activities, however, Ron Miller reports, did not last very long and few years later most members had moved on to different projects.⁷ Ideas around holistic education, though, continued to evolve, and gradually the term “holistic education” grew in popularity across educators and psychologists, especially among the human potential/New Age movement. Although holistic education was sprouting across North America, until the late 1980s, there was not any clear definition of what this particular education really entailed. The first attempt to conceptualize and define holistic education as a distinct movement came from two scholars, Ron Miller and John Miller. In 1988, John Miller published *The Holistic Curriculum* in Canada, the first coherent and systematic account of holistic education,

and Ron Miller launched his new journal *Holistic Education Review* in the U.S (today published under the title *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice*).⁸ Two years later, in 1990, Ron Miller published *What are Schools for? Holistic Education in American Culture*, a groundbreaking book in which he traces the history of holistic education. In the same year, Ron Miller, together with Philip Gang, Edward Clark (two very active advocates of holistic education), and others in the field founded the Global Alliance for Transforming Education (GATE) with Gang as its director.⁹ GATE held annual conferences for few years and in 1991 issued *Education 2000: A Holistic Perspective*, in which they proclaimed ten principles of holistic education (see page 12-13 for a brief description of these).

The holistic education movement continued to grow. Several articles and books were written on the theme,¹⁰ institutes were opened to work with teachers and educators to implement holistic practices*, and conferences were established to attend the emerging field of holistic education.[†] Efforts to define, conceptualize, and theorize the field persisted. Among the most significant works representing this area, we have: Nakawaga's dissertation (later published into a book), *Education for Awakening: An Eastern Approach to Holistic Education*, which explores the theoretical foundation of holistic education from an Eastern perspective; Nava's book, *Holistic Education:*

* It is almost impossible to track down all institutes working to implement holistic educational practices throughout the world. We can, though, name a few institutes that have adopted the concept of "holistic education" as the core practice in their programs: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto in Canada, lead by Professor John Miller; The Holistic Education Institute in the UK, lead by Dr. Roger Prentice, The Holistic Education in Oregon, USA, lead by Dr. Scott Forbes and the Holistic and Integrative Education Unit in San Bernardino, at California State University.

† International Foundation for Holistic Education in Guadalajara, Mexico; Holistic and Aesthetic Education at OISE in Toronto, Canada; American Education Research Association (AERA); Holistic Education (SIG) and the International Conference on Children's Spirituality.

Pedagogy of Universal Love, which provides a comprehensive account of the nature and applicability of holistic education; and Forbes' dissertation (also published into a book), *Holistic Education: An Analysis of its Ideas and Nature*, which presents a sound philosophical foundation for holistic education.

Today, holistic education is recognized in many parts of the world as a potential response to the challenges and difficulties faced by the modern world.¹¹ Nonetheless, although the term "holistic education" is gradually spreading through schools, universities, and organizations, the field itself is still fairly unknown in the mainstream academic world.

1.2. Philosophies, Theories, and Worldviews Underlying Holistic Education

Holistic education is an eclectic and inclusive movement. Writers in the field draw on and integrate various educational theories as well as diverse spiritual and holistic philosophical orientations. On the educational side, contemporary holistic educators (Ron Miller, Forbes) claim that holistic education has its roots on the romantic educational theories of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel.¹² John Miller, however, traces holistic education back to the ancient Greeks.¹³ Overall, holistic education incorporates ideas and principles from humanistic (Plato, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Tolstoy, Maslow, Rogers) and progressive educators (Dewey and his followers), transpersonal thinkers (Channing, Emerson, Thoreau, Ripley, Alcott, Montessori, Steiner, Krishnamurti), anarchists (Ferrer), social critics (Paul Goodman,

Jules Henry, Edgar Friedengerb, Myles Horton) as well as radical critics (Holt, Kozol, Illich, A.S. Neill, amongst others).

In addition to drawing on the ideas and theories advocated by these thinkers, Contemporary holistic educators also integrate concepts and principles from other philosophical orientations. Nakagawa, a leader in holistic education in Japan, points out six major theories or worldviews underpinning holistic education: perennial philosophy, indigenous worldviews, Life philosophy, ecological worldview, systems theory, and feminist thought.¹⁴

Perennial Philosophy has guided the works of John Miller, Parker Palmer, amongst other contemporary holistic educators.¹⁵ This ancient philosophy, which was taken up by Huxley, and recently by Wilber, and Lemkow,¹⁶ is “primarily concerned with the one, divine Reality substantial to the manifold world of things, and lives and minds.”¹⁷ Huxley defines perennial philosophy as:

...the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being – the thing is immemorial and universal.¹⁸

The main themes of perennial philosophy that have been incorporated by holistic education are: divine Reality, Oneness, Wholeness, and multiple dimensions of

reality.

Indigenous worldviews are another orientation that has been integrated in holistic education. The former has influenced primarily the works of two contemporary holistic educators, Rachel Kessler and Gregory Gajete.¹⁹ The major ideas included the indigenous worldview that have been built into the theories and practices of holistic education are: reverence for nature, the earth, the universe, and the Spirit; the interconnectedness and sacredness of reality; and human's reintegration with nature.

"Life philosophy," argues Nakagawa, has also had great weight in the works of contemporary holistic educators.²⁰ Ron Miller and Atsu'hiko Yoshida (another leading figure in holistic education in Japan) are two scholars, who have positioned the concept of "Life" at the core of their theories of holistic education. "Life philosophy," describes Nakagawa, "assumes that there exists a fundamental Life force, or a universal Life process."²¹ This Life force "generates and organizes all beings in the cosmos."²² "Life philosophy" assumes "that our lives have a purpose, a direction, a meaning, and a goal that transcends our personal egos and particular physical and cultural conditioning."²³ It recognizes that we are connected, at deep and profound levels, "to the continuing evolution of life and the universe."²⁴ Contemporary holistic educators who endorse this concept of "Life" usually conceive education as a "manifestation of Life and at the same time a vehicle in the service of reconnecting human life with the fundamental Life."²⁵

The ecological worldview has been one of the most influential orientations to contemporary holistic education. As well pointed out by Nakagawa, the "ecological

perspective is so integral in contemporary holistic education that the term “holistic” is often interchangeably used with “ecological.”²⁶ The ecological worldview, often associated with deep ecology (Naess, Capra),²⁷ “focuses on the principle of interconnectedness of all beings in nature, life and the universe...a living phenomenon is understood only in relation to other phenomena and in larger ecosystems.”²⁸ Ecological thinking assumes that everything is interdependent and all life forms are part of the same web of life (ecosystem). The ecological worldview is often addressed in holistic education through “ecological literacy”, where topics such as environmental issues, dialogues with nature, the interdependence of reality, and sustainability are explored. Edward Clark, David Orr, and Ramón Nava have been some of the most active contemporary holistic educators in this area.²⁹

Systems theory, explains Nakagawa, “is a theoretical attempt to explore comprehensive, cosmological models of the cosmic world.”³⁰ Similarly to the ecological worldview, systems theory also recognizes the interdependence of all things, but its exploration of the subject is based on “systemic explanations of the dynamic structure of the universe,” or the cosmic world.³¹ Systems theory, describes Nakagawa, generally

...assumes several major subsystems within the entire universe such as the inanimate physical realm, primordial life forms, the biological realm of plants and animals, the mental field (symbolic and linguistic systems) produced by the human mind, and socio-cultural systems....The systems views not only describe

these subsystems in detail but also underline their structural connections.³²

This systemic worldview is present in the “holistic theory” of Ron Miller, a theory based on “multiple levels of wholeness;”³³ in the “integrated curriculum” of Edward Clark,³⁴ a systemic curriculum built on “system thinking;” and in the work of few other scholars, most notably Thomas Berry and Atsu’hiko Yoshida, in the field of holistic education.

Finally, feminist thoughts have also had impact in the field of holistic education, particularly the ideas articulated by Nel Noddings and Riane Eisler. The most relevant work of Noddings to holistic education has been her ideas on caring relations.³⁵

Noddings has proposed a caring-centered education that calls for the cultivation of relations of care in school, which includes: caring for the self, for the inner circle, for distant others, for animals, plants and the Earth, for the human-made world, and for the world of ideas. Similar to Noddings but focusing more on the egalitarian aspects of relationships, Eisler designed a model of education, which she called “partnership education.”³⁶ Her “partnership model of education” includes themes such as: democratic and egalitarian structure; equal rights to females and males; respect; peaceful conflict resolution; empathy; caring; non-violence; mutual responsibility; and connections to the Earth. Noddings’ thoughts on “caring relations” and Eisler’s ideas on “partnership education” are directly or indirectly present in the works of virtually every holistic educator.

1.3. Definitions of Holistic Education

Thus far, we have examined the evolution of the holistic education movement and the various theories, philosophies, and worldviews, from which the latter has emerged. Yet, we have not explored what holistic education really entails. What are the principles underlying holistic education? What defines holistic education? What is the aim of holistic education?

Amid the descriptions of holistic education, there appears to be a unanimous agreement that the main purpose of holistic education is to “nourish the inherent possibilities of human development.”³⁷ Rather than being concerned with basic knowledge and skills acquisition, holistic education is primarily concerned with the overall development (physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual) of the individual. The ultimate goal of holistic education, though, as argued by some theorists in the field (Nakagawa, Forbes), is self-transformation.³⁸ Nakagawa, for instance, claims that the main objective of Eastern holistic education is to transform the total being in pursuit of the higher “Self.”³⁹ The ultimate aim is to realize what he calls the “formless Self” (enlightenment).⁴⁰ Forbes, in the West, draws a similar argument (although more compatible to Western thinking) and maintains that the highest goal of holistic education is to reach “ultimacy,” which he defines as “the highest state of being that a human can aspire to” (e.g. grace, self-actualization, or enlightenment).⁴¹ In Eastern holistic education, the practices of contemplation (meditation) and arts are the primary means to bring about the “real” transformation of the self, while in Western holistic

education, experiential knowledge (life experience), argues Forbes, is the main path to reach “ultimacy.”

Another defining element of holistic education, with which most theorists in the field appear to agree, is the acknowledgment of spirituality. Several contemporary holistic educators (John Miller, Ron Miller, Nava) argue that the spiritual principle is what differentiates holistic education from all other alternative approaches to education.⁴² The view of spirituality advocated by the holistic education movement is usually broad, inclusive, and detached from any particular faith or creed. It is a vision that may or may not involve belief in a personal God. The holistic view of spirituality also differs in some respects from the New Age Movement, which tends to have a more individualistic view of spirituality, emphasizing personal empowerment, and self-aggrandizement.⁴³ In general, the spiritual vision advocated in the field of holistic education, embraces four main concepts – the belief that there is a “divine Reality substantial to the manifold world of things, and lives and minds,”⁴⁴ the idea that we are all interconnected and interdependent, and part of an “intricate web of life,”⁴⁵ the notion that there is a purpose for every life in the universe, and the conviction that there is a continuous plan of evolution in which we are all involved.

A third factor, which is also acknowledged by practically all leaders in the field, is the recognition of *wholeness* and/or *interconnectedness* as a fundamental principle of holistic education. Most theories and worldviews underlying holistic education are rooted in concepts of wholeness, integration, and interconnectedness. The basic underlying assumption of holistic education is that “everything in the universe is

fundamentally interconnected” and part of the same “whole.”⁴⁶ This context is evidenced in Clark’s “integrated curriculum”, in John Miller’s “holistic curriculum,” in Ron Miller’s “holistic theory,” and in Gang’s “purposes of holistic education.”

Clark’s “integrated curriculum” is built upon his construct of “systems thinking,” which views everything in terms of “integrated systems of relationships.”⁴⁷ Human intelligence, thinking, and learning are seen as an inseparable process, part of a “single, dynamic, multi-faceted, functional capacity that is inherent in human consciousness.”⁴⁸ In his “integrated curriculum,” Clark offers a systemic design to “reflect the natural process of intelligence/thinking/learning, to demonstrate the interrelationship among subjects, and to allow students to construct their own meaning.”⁴⁹ John Miller’s “holistic curriculum” is also based on this “relationalist worldview.”⁵⁰ His curriculum focuses on connecting linear thinking and intuition, mind and body, self and community, and the various domains of knowledge as well as nurturing one’s relationship to the Earth and the soul.⁵¹ Ron Miller’s “holistic theory” follows the same paradigm, but the focus is on making connections between “multiple levels of wholeness.”⁵² According to Miller, a “holistic conception of education recognizes wholes within wholes – that is, it strives for the integration and meaning at each level of organization.”⁵³ Miller identifies “five levels of wholeness:” the person, the community, the society, the planet, and the cosmos. In Miller’s argument, the individual “exists within a communal context, which is a larger, more inclusive system. This communal context, in turn, is shaped by the society of which it’s a part.”⁵⁴ The society, in turn, is a member of the global family of humanity; and finally, the “human family as a whole,

along with its host planet, is contained in the all-embracing wholeness of the cosmos, the absolute...⁵⁵ Finally, there is Phil Gang's vision about the "purposes of holistic education," purposes which are either directly or indirectly related to the notion of *wholeness* and *interconnectedness*.⁵⁶ In his proposal, Gang outlines four broad goals of holistic education:

- Give young people a vision of the universe in which all animate and inanimate are *interconnected* and *unified*.
- Help students synthesize learning and discover the *interrelatedness* of all disciplines.
- Prepare students for life in the 21st century by emphasizing a *global* perspective and common human interests.
- Enable the young to develop a sense of harmony and spirituality – which are needed to construct *world* peace (italics added).⁵⁷

Besides the themes of spirituality and interconnectedness, which are central aspects of holistic education, several other principles and concepts integrate the conceptualization of the latter. The statement *Education 2000*, for example, lists ten basic principles of holistic education:

I – *Educating for human development* – The primary purpose of education is to nourish the inherent possibilities of human development.

II – *Honoring students as individuals* – Each learner is unique, inherently creative, with individual needs and abilities.

III – *The central role of experience* – Education is a matter of experience and learning is primarily experiential.

IV – *Holistic education* – The concept of “wholeness” should be at the core of the educational process.

V – *New Role of educators* – Educators ought to be facilitators of learning, which is an organic, natural process and not a product that can be turned out on demand.

VI – *Freedom of choice* – Students and parents should have opportunities for real choice at every stage of the learning process.

VII – *Educating for a participatory democracy* – Education should be based on democratic values and should empower all citizens to participate in meaningful ways in the life of the community and the planet.

VIII – *Educating for global citizenship* – Each individual is a global citizen. Education therefore, should be an appreciation for the magnificent diversity of human experience.

IX – *Educating for earth literacy* – Education must spring organically from a profound reverence for life in all its forms and nurture a relationship between humans and the natural world.

X – *Spirituality and Education* – Every person is a spiritual being and education must nourish the healthy growth of his/her spiritual life.⁵⁸

In addition to *Education 2000*, which includes most of the principles related to holistic education, there are other definitions of holistic education, which are worth examining as they complement the above illustration. John Miller, for instance, frames holistic education within a “transformation model” of education, arguing that the core motto of holistic education is to seek transformation, that is, to seek the continuing growth of the individual and society.⁵⁹ Miller synthesizes holistic education as an approach that encompasses three main principles: 1) “Connection” – entails integrating school subjects; establishing connections with the community; fostering student’s relationship with the earth; and encouraging students to connect to their souls, their deeper sense of selves. 2) “Inclusion” – refers to including students of diverse races and abilities and providing a range of educational approaches to attend the differences in learning styles. And 3) “Balance” – means reaching for equilibrium between complementary energies (individual learning and group learning, analytic thinking and intuitive thinking, content and process, and learning and assessment).⁶⁰ Ramón Nava (a leader in the field in Mexico and Latin America), on the other hand, defines holistic education within four basic dimensions: scientific, ecological, social, and spiritual.⁶¹ The scientific dimension involves developing a scientific consciousness to the new science (e.g. chaos theory, the gaia hypothesis, quantum theory, etc.). The ecological dimension is concerned with educating students to live in a sustainable culture. The social dimension emphasizes an education for peace, social participation, and global citizenship. The fourth dimension, spirituality, is at the core of all educational activity

and is the dimension that “allows the student’s potential to flourish.” According to Nava, it is “through spirituality that we come to know our true nature.”⁶² Finally, Ron Miller provides another definition of holistic education (in addition to his “holistic theory”), which places more emphasis on the social, cultural and democratic dimensions of education. Miller views holistic education as primarily a “democratic education, concerned with both individual freedom and social responsibility.”⁶³ He argues that children should be allowed “freedom to develop according to their unique (and ultimately spiritual) destinies and to follow their own personal interests *as well as* [be challenged] to engage in their social and political milieu critically.”⁶⁴ Overall, Miller describes holistic education as containing the following broad characteristics: 1) it nurtures the development of the whole person; 2) it revolves around relationships (egalitarian, open, and democratic relationships); 3) it is concerned with life experiences (instead of “basic skills”); 4) it “recognizes that cultures are created by people and can be changed by people” (instead of conforming and replicating a established culture);⁶⁵ and 5) it is founded upon a “deep *reverence for life* and for the unknown (and never fully knowable) source of life.”⁶⁶

1.4. The Purpose of this Dissertation

As can be noted from the previous sections, the field of holistic education has already been extensively studied. Leaders in the field have traced the historical roots of holistic education (Ron Miller); investigated its purpose (Nakagawa, Forbes),

proclaimed its principles (*Education 2000*), and outlined the educational and philosophical theories underpinning the movement (Ron Miller, John Miller, Nakagawa, Forbes); they have designed holistic curriculums (John Miller, Clark) and suggested holistic practices (Kessler, John Miller). What has not yet been examined in the field of holistic education is the correspondence between its principles and theories and the pedagogical application of them. Although there have been some loose connections between holistic theories and pedagogical practices (of which the Waldorf pedagogy and the Montessori method are the most cited)⁶⁷ and several empirical investigations of holistic practices,^{*68} there has never been a systematic analysis of the pedagogical application of holistic education in relation to its philosophical and educational ideas. One attempt on this direction came from Forbes, in his book *Holistic Education: An Analysis of its Ideas and Nature*, based on his dissertation, where he outlines and discusses (using Bernstein's competence model) eight pedagogical features of holistic education. Nevertheless, his effort is still geared towards an investigation of pedagogical *ideas* instead of an examination of the pedagogical *application* of holistic education. This dissertation, therefore, investigates this unexplored area. Its purpose is to examine, and analyze the pedagogical application of the principles advocated by the holistic education movement using four approaches to schooling as the basis for investigation. Furthermore, considering that holistic education integrates ideas and principles from diverse educational and philosophical theories and worldviews in one

* Waldorf and Montessori Schools, in particular, have been widely researched. Additionally, there has been empirical research of holistic practices in other educational settings. Flakes' edited book *Holistic Education: Principles, Perspectives and Practice*, for instance, provides several examples of holistic practices.

single educational paradigm, this study also explores some of the tensions that arise as they are applied by other approaches to education with similar assumptions.

1.5. Mode of Inquiry

The process of inquiry that I used in this study included the following steps. First, I researched the field of holistic education and tried to understand *what holistic education is*. Considering the wide scope of this movement added to hundreds of educational initiatives that claim themselves as holistic, it was not an easy task to understand what holistic education stands for. The next step included the identification of the philosophical principles of holistic education. To identify the principles, I focused my attention on the works of theorists (John Miller, Ron Miller, Forbes, Nakagawa, Nava, Clark, Gang) who attempted to define and conceptualize holistic education. This was not an easy task either. As seen previously, each theorist defines certain principles as the foundation of holistic education. Many of them overlap but many others do not. *Education 2000: A Holistic Perspective*, in one way, is the work that best synthesizes the principles advocated by the holistic education movement. However, this statement was written in 1991 and much has been added to the conceptions of holistic education since its publication. Forbes, for example, in his book *Holistic Education: An Analysis of its Ideas and Nature*, includes additional principles as the philosophical foundation of holistic education (e.g. autonomy, inner freedom, inherent motivation to learn, and so forth). Nakagawa, in *Education for Awakening*, describes the Eastern perspective of

holistic education and provides a new dimension to the movement. Ron Miller wrote several articles and books after the *Statement 2000* (in which he was one of the authors), still with an attempt to define holistic education. Hence, in view of such a complex field with such amplitude of conceptions and definitions, I decided to assign the principles instead of using, for example, the principles listed by *Education 2000*. I identified, therefore, eight principles, which I argue, encompass most of the ideas advocated by leaders of the holistic education movement. The eight principles are: *spirituality, reverence for life/nature, interconnectedness, human wholeness, individual uniqueness, caring relations, freedom/autonomy, and democracy*. Four of them (*spirituality, reverence for life/nature, interconnectedness, and human wholeness*) encompass the spiritual/holistic orientation of holistic education whereas the other four (*individual uniqueness, caring relations, freedom/autonomy, and democracy*) comprises the humanistic ideas embedded in its educational paradigm.

The principle of *spirituality*, as discussed earlier, is a central theme in holistic education. *Spirituality* is what differentiates holistic education from all other alternative approaches to education. Most theories and worldviews underlying the movement of holistic education (perennial philosophy, indigenous worldview, and life philosophy) are spiritually oriented. The aim of holistic education is spiritually grounded (i.e. a concern with human and spiritual development/inner transformation) and the holistic values and beliefs are spiritually centered.

Reverence for life/nature is another principle that integrates the spiritual orientation of holistic education. Contemporary holistic educators place great emphasis

on nurturing a “sense of reverence towards nature and life,”⁶⁹ on developing “ecological awareness,”⁷⁰ on “educating for earth literacy,”⁷¹ and on establishing “earth connections.”⁷² This principle is a central aspect of the ecological and the indigenous worldviews, which have greatly influenced holistic education.

Interconnectedness is the most common principle across the conceptions of holistic education. This principle is present in almost all theories and worldviews underlying holistic education and in practically all definitions concerning the latter. Throughout this chapter we have already seen how dominant this principle is in holistic education.

Human wholeness is a humanistic principle (educating the *whole* child has always been a central theme in humanistic education) adapted to the spiritual/holistic paradigm of holistic education. Usually contemporary holistic educators discuss *human wholeness* into five essential elements: intellectual, emotional or affective, physical, social, aesthetic, and spiritual.⁷³ They regard all of them as equally important and call for an education that nurtures them all.

Individual Uniqueness is another principle that integrates the humanistic orientation of holistic education. Contemporary holistic educators recognize every person as a unique being with inherent qualities, potentialities, and needs, and with a singular way to interact and respond to reality.⁷⁴ They reject any form of standardized approach to education and call instead for an education that begins with the child, with the “living reality” of each individual.⁷⁵

Freedom/Autonomy is a central theme amongst humanistic as well as transpersonal educators. Holistic education integrates the views from both strands. Overall, *freedom/autonomy* in holistic education usually stands for inner freedom, freedom of mind and expression, and freedom of action. Contemporary holistic educators are usually concerned with the attainment of inner/spiritual freedom, through providing an atmosphere that allows freedom of mind and expression, and with an education that fosters freedom of choice and autonomy in the learning process.⁷⁶ With the exception of a few who have paid more attention to this principle (Ron Miller, Nakagawa, Clark) in their advocacy for holistic education,⁷⁷ the theme of *freedom/autonomy* is more present in the works of former educators who are commonly referred as pioneers or contributors to the movement of holistic education, than in the works of contemporary holistic educators.⁷⁸

Caring relations is a humanistic principle that has been fully embraced by the holistic education movement. The relationship between teacher and students and among students themselves, is seen in holistic education, as the foundation for learning, social life, and social justice.⁷⁹ This principle is present in the works of practically every holistic educator. This principle is also central to Nel Noddings' works, which has had great impact in the field of holistic education.⁸⁰

Finally, *democracy* is another principle that has been widely discussed in humanistic education, which has been incorporated by the holistic education movement. Contemporary holistic educators refuse to accept a rigid authoritarian system ruled by economic, social, or cultural power.⁸¹ Instead, they call for "participatory democracy,"

where citizens are empowered to participate in meaningful ways in the community, in the society, and in the planet.⁸² They argue for an education that values egalitarian, open, and democratic relationships, similar to Eisler’s model of “partnership education.”⁸³

These eight broad principles integrate the two paradigms incorporated by the holistic education movement, the humanistic and the spiritual paradigm. While most educators (Rousseau, Dewey, Holt, Neill, Illich, among others), who have advocated for ideas of freedom and democracy, have always kept spirituality separate from education, contemporary holistic educators try to integrate them. Although the principles from these two paradigms might coexist well philosophically, I see some tension in accommodating them pedagogically. Particularly those that are more spiritually centered (*spirituality, reverence for life/nature, interconnectedness*) with those that are more democratically oriented (*freedom/autonomy, democracy*). As stated earlier, most educational movements that embrace democratic ideas (free/democratic schools) tend to avoid spiritual issues, whereas those that are more spiritually oriented (Waldorf Schools) tend to avoid libertarian ideas. Hence, as I explore the pedagogical applicability of these principles I also examine possible tensions that might arise as they are applied.

1.5.1. The Selection of Holistic Pedagogical Practices

The third step involved in this study concerns the selection of pedagogical practices. Instead of choosing single practices carried out by individual teachers, I chose to focus the analysis of this study on well-established pedagogies already implemented in schools. More specifically, I selected pedagogies represented by large school movements, which had caused not only local and national impact but also international attention and therefore proliferated worldwide. The inclusion of solid, well-established pedagogies, carrying holistic practices at local and international levels, I argue, increases the trustworthiness of the findings of the analysis because of the consistency of such practices on a larger scale.

The process for selecting the school movements included first, a search of school movements that carry holistic pedagogical practices. I searched for alternative approaches to schooling that seemed to endorse many of the philosophical principles of holistic education in the descriptions of their pedagogies. I selected eleven school movements (Democratic/Free Schools, Open Schools, Quaker/Friends Schools, Krishnamurti Schools, Waldorf Schools, Montessori Schools, NHE Schools, Reggio Schools, KPM Schools, Robert Muller Schools, and the homeschooling movement).

After having selected the school movements, the next step was to refine this selection. As the purpose of this study was to examine the pedagogical application of the philosophical principles of holistic education, I needed to select school movements that most incorporated the ideas advocated by the holistic education movement.

Additionally, I wanted to select large school movements operating at local and international levels, as a means to increase the trustworthiness of the findings of this study.

To be able to select the school movements, I researched the literature, examined the websites of several schools and organizations/associations related to each movement, and e-mailed some school units (Neohumanist Schools, Robert Muller Schools, Quaker Schools) in order to obtain supplementary information. Based on my interpretation of the literature, I selected four school movements, which seemed to meet both criteria I had assigned. In Chapter 2, I explain in detail why I chose only four school movements.

As a final point, I want to clarify that I do not claim any of the eleven school movements as representations of a holistic education. I see them as alternative school movements carrying holistic pedagogical practices based on a philosophy that might share some common ideas with the field of holistic education. Nowadays, some school movements (Quaker, Krishnamurti, Waldorf, Montessori, NHE Schools) call themselves holistic, as the term “holistic” becomes more popular, however, there are others (particularly Reggio Schools) that have never referred to their approaches as holistic. The reader should be aware that these eleven school movements emerged before the holistic education movement came into view, which means their philosophies of education were already well solidified when the field of holistic education began to delineate its own philosophy.

1.5.2. Method of Analysis

Rather than empirically collecting data from schools, the analysis of this study is drawn from the extended literature of the selected school systems. That means this dissertation is essentially theoretical and interpretative.

The method of analysis used in this study involved the following approach. For each of the selected principles, I first examined the philosophical and educational ideas advocated by the holistic education movement. I also explored the philosophical thoughts of earlier educators about the principles, those that have been influential to the evolution of holistic education.

Second, I explored the school systems' perspective about the principle. I analyzed the literature I was able to obtain and I determined the extent to which the school system seemed to endorse each principle.

Third, I identified pedagogical features across the selected school systems that promoted the principles. For every pedagogical feature identified in one school system, I searched the other selected systems to examine if they also had that feature in their pedagogical approach. At times a pedagogical feature was more evident in one school system than in the other. Thus, by revisiting the school systems for every new pedagogical feature identified, I could confirm that I was not missing a feature that was not initially apparent. Occasionally, several activities were identified as promoting one main concept. In that case, I combined the activities in one single theme. For example, in regards to the principle of *reverence for life/nature*, I identified across the school

systems various activities fostering “earth connection” (caring for the environment, playing in the environment, trips to the nature, meditation, etc.). Instead of making each single activity a pedagogical feature, I integrated them all into the theme of “earth connection.” This procedure was important to make the representation of the pedagogical applications of each particular principle more clear and organized. Otherwise, there would be too many pedagogical features and the analysis would become too confusing.

I limited the identification of pedagogical features to the general curriculum or the general practices of the selected school systems, which was explicit in the literature. For example, in regards to the principle of *interconnectedness*, one of the pedagogical features identified across the school systems to promote this principle was to bring awareness to the interrelation and interdependence of life, humanity, the natural world, and the universe. This is a very broad theme, which could be addressed through projects, discussions, or lessons in any school. Thus, it could be argued that this feature could be present in any school system. Nonetheless, the school systems, in which this pedagogical feature was identified, have this feature as a regular practice in their curriculum. That is, teaching about *interconnectedness* is part of their general curriculum. Hence, rather than including occasional practices, I considered only the pedagogical features that were explicitly and recurrently present in the school systems’ educational approach.

For each pedagogical feature identified, I examined the way and the extent by which the feature is applied in the selected school systems. Considering the uniqueness

of each school system, I had to be very thorough in my analysis of the pedagogical features, as they varied considerably from one system to the other. The arts, for example, which were several times identified as a facilitating medium for fostering various principles (*spirituality, reverence for life/nature, interconnectedness, human wholeness, freedom/autonomy*), are applied quite differently across the selected school systems. Namely, some of them have the arts at the center of their approach to education, weaved throughout the entire curriculum, whereas others have the arts as a separate subject offered daily or weekly (depending on the age group). Additionally, some school systems use the arts as a medium to develop sensibility and a sense of aesthetics and to connect humans with their inner selves, whereas other uses the arts as a medium for learning. As a result, each school system applies the arts quite differently. Hence, all these factors were taken into consideration when interpreting the pedagogical application of each principle.

To systematize my interpretation of the application of the pedagogical features relative to each principle, and to be able to compare it across the school systems, I assigned five levels of application (very high, high, moderate, low, N/P). Six main questions guided my interpretation to determine the levels of application of each pedagogical feature: Is the pedagogical feature present? In what ways are the pedagogical feature applied? Is the pedagogical feature applied to foster a certain principle? To what extent is the pedagogical feature applied? To what extent is the pedagogical feature applied in one school system *in comparison* to another? Is the pedagogical feature constantly applied across the schools of the school system?

I, then, used the following rationale to assign the level of application for each pedagogical feature:

Very high = the pedagogical feature is extensively applied in the educational approach of the school system.

High = the pedagogical feature is not applied as extensively as it is applied in the other school system(s), or the pedagogical feature is not directly applied to foster that particular principle.

Moderate = the pedagogical feature is applied to a lower extent in comparison to other school systems or it may not be constant across the schools of a school system.

Low = the pedagogical feature is occasionally applied.

N/P = the pedagogical feature is not present

To illustrate the rationale described above, below I use the example of two pedagogical features that were identified as conducive to foster the principle of *spirituality*: the arts and meditation and/or religion.

All selected school systems have the arts in their approach to education. However, as already discussed, the ways and the extent by which the arts are applied in each school system vary considerably. Hence, the school systems, in which the arts are at the center of their curriculum and they are used as a means to foster *spirituality*, I considered their application of arts relative to the principle of *spirituality* “very high.” In another school system, where the arts are also dominantly present but they are used

as a medium for learning instead of a means to foster *spirituality*, I considered their application of arts relative to the principle of *spirituality* “high.” A school system may not use the arts as means for spiritual development, however, if we consider the argument that the arts can be a medium for spiritual connection (Steiner, Sarkar, see page 77), the school system is indirectly promoting the principle of *spirituality*. Finally, the school system that offers the arts as a separate subject few times a week, I regarded their application of art as “low.”

In regards to meditation and/or religion, I also found great variation across the selected school systems. One of them uses meditation as a daily practice in their approach to education. Meditation is at the core of its curriculum and it is one of the main activities purposefully used to foster *spirituality*. I, therefore, considered their application of meditation relative to the principle of *spirituality* “very high.” Another school system draws on religious lessons and rituals (singing, versus, rhythmic movements, etc.) as a means to promote *spirituality*. Religious lessons are optional and offered once or twice a week. The rituals are weaved through the children’s daily activities. In this case, I regarded their application of religion/ritual as “high” because these two activities are not as extensively and intensely applied as meditation is in the other system. A third school system draws on religious lessons as a medium to promote *spirituality* and uses the practice of silence as a means to have children appreciate quietness (which is one form of meditation). However, not all schools in this system offer religious lessons. I, therefore, interpreted their application of religion/meditation as “moderate.” Finally, in the other selected school system, neither meditation nor

religious lessons are part of their curriculum. In this case, I assigned “N/P” (not present).

After identifying the pedagogical features and determining its level of application relative to the principle being addressed, I synthesized the findings of all pedagogical features in a table (illustrated in Chapters 3 and 4). I, then, compared the findings across the school systems and determined the extent by which each principle is applied in the pedagogical approach of every school system.

Before ending this section, I want to explain that the focus of analysis of this study is on the pedagogical application of the principles advocated by the holistic education movement and *not* on the pedagogy of the selected schools movements. I use these school movements or school systems, as they are called throughout the analysis (see definitions of terms), to analyze how the philosophical principles of holistic education are applied pedagogically. Although I interpret and evaluate the school systems’ application of the principles throughout this study, my interest is to investigate how the principles are applied (or not applied) and not to judge whether or not a school system applies these principles in their approach to education.

1.6. The Interpretative Nature of this Study

This is a theoretic dissertation in which I analyze, interpret, and evaluate the pedagogical application of the philosophical ideas advocated by the holistic education movement in school systems that carry holistic pedagogical practices. This work

involved a great measure of subjective interpretation and inference. I researched and analyzed the field of holistic education. I interpreted its philosophy and selected eight principles that I judged would encompass most of the ideas advocated by the movement. I selected the school systems based on the criteria I defined. I identified the pedagogical features and interpreted the school systems' application of them based on my reading of the literature. Finally, I evaluated the pedagogical application of the principles based on my interpretation of the literature.

In order to foreground my subjectivity, particularly in regards to the pedagogical application of the principles across the schools, I tried to explain in detail the method of analysis used in the interpretation of the pedagogical features, so the reader could evaluate my own interpretation. Additionally, I deliberately described the pedagogical features with reasonable detail so the analysis would be transparent and the reader would have a clear idea of how I drew my evaluations. Nonetheless, despite my efforts to foreground my subjectivity, this study still reflects my subjective interpretation of the literature gathered.

1.7. Definition of Terms

The use of some terms in this dissertation needs clarification. The first one concerns the usage of “school movements” and “school systems.” The term “school movement” usually refers to an approach to schooling based on a philosophy of education whereas the term “school system” normally implies a system of education

that is applied in schools. The eleven approaches to schooling referred in this chapter are school movements, however not all of them are school systems (e.g. homeschooling movement).

In Chapter 2, when I describe the eleven approaches to schooling I use the term “school movement,” as my intention in this chapter is to discuss their philosophical approach to education. In the following chapters, however, when I analyze the pedagogical application of the principles in the selected approaches to schooling, I use the term “school systems” because I essentially discuss the *application* of their philosophy of education.

Other terms that need to be clarified are: “contemporary holistic educators,” “pioneers” and “holistic educators.” As discussed earlier, holistic education is an educational paradigm, which has its roots in the works of the ancient Greeks. Although the movement of holistic education is relatively new, the holistic educational paradigm is not. Leaders of the holistic movement have identified several thinkers (Plato, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, amongst others) as the pioneers of holistic education and they often refer to them as holistic educators. Hence, in this study, when I refer to the pioneers of holistic education, I use the term “pioneers.” When I refer to the educators who have initiated or are currently involved with the movement of holistic education, I use the term “contemporary holistic educators.” Finally, when I refer to the pioneers as well as the contemporary holistic educators and those in between, I use the term “holistic educators.”

1.8. Chapters Organization

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. In Chapter 2, I examine eleven school movements carrying holistic pedagogical practices (cited above), appoint those that have been selected for the analysis of this study, and explain the reasons why only four school movements were selected. In Chapter 3, I explore the four spiritual/holistic-based principles (*spirituality, reverence for life/nature, interconnectedness, and human wholeness*). Each principle is explored separately following the method of analysis described in the previous section. I first examine the holistic view about each principle and its implication to education. I then investigate the philosophical perspective of the selected school systems about each principle and how they apply the referred principle in their educational approach. Finally, I examine the correspondence between the school systems' perception of that particular principle and the holistic view and I evaluate the pedagogical application of each principle across the school systems. In Chapter 4, I explore the humanistic-based principles *individual uniqueness, caring relations, freedom/autonomy, and democracy*). I follow exactly the same structure used in Chapter 3. In Chapter 6, I synthesize the findings relative to all principles and discuss them. I then describe the limitations of this study, address the implications for future research, and draw a final conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

SCHOOL MOVEMENTS WITH HOLISTIC PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

During the 1900s, the educational sector saw the emergence of various alternative school movements, * particularly in the northern hemisphere. Some of them evolved into hundreds of schools around the world (Montessori Schools, Waldorf Schools), others were very popular for a few years but after while lost their appeal (Open Schools), whereas others never grew very wide (KPM Schools, Krishnamurti Schools). Most of these alternative school movements emerged as a response to a dissatisfaction with the shortcomings of mainstream education. Some of them were more humanistic centered while others were more spiritually oriented. Overall, they all shared one thought in common; they were concerned with the overall development of the child. The most well-known alternative school movements in the West, which are significant to the field of holistic education, are: The Democratic/Free Schools, Open Schools, Quaker/Friends Schools, Krishnamurti Schools, Waldorf Schools, Montessori

* Alternative school movements are here referred as philosophical educational movements that emerged as an alternative to mainstream education. Most of the school movements addressed in this chapter emerged in the private sector. There are, however, several alternative approaches to schooling in the public system as well. Nonetheless, the public initiatives usually adapt the philosophy of alternative educational movements to their system of education instead of developing their own movement. Reggio Emilia Schools are an exception, which is later discussed in this chapter.

Schools, Neohumanist Schools, Reggio Schools, KPM Schools, Robert Muller Schools, and the homeschooling movement.⁸⁴

Considering the inclusiveness of the holistic education movement, it can be argued that these eleven school movements carry holistic practices in their approach to education. However, as explained in Chapter 1, not all of them have been selected for the analysis of this study. According to my interpretation of the literature, only four school movements seemed to meet the criteria I assigned for selection. In the following sections, therefore, I first introduce each school movement and then I explain my rationale for selecting or not selecting each one of them.

2.1. The Homeschooling Movement

The homeschooling movement is perhaps the largest alternative school movement in the world with 1,1 million students being homeschooled in the United States alone,⁸⁵ about 170,000 in England and Wales,⁸⁶ and several more thousands around the world.⁸⁷ The homeschooling movement began in the late 1970s with John Holt, an American educator, who became utterly dissatisfied with the institutionalization of schooling and its consequent limitations. According to Holt, the schooling system was the greatest inhibitor to learning.⁸⁸ He believed schools bored children and destroyed their desire to learn. In his view, schools fill up “their days with dull, repetitive tasks that make little or no claim on their attention or demands on their intelligence.”⁸⁹ Moreover, Holt argued that schools encourage students “to feel that the

end and aim of all they do in the school is nothing more than to get a good mark on a test, or to impress someone with what they seem to know.”⁹⁰

Holt’s dissatisfaction with the schooling system began while he was a private school teacher. When he joined academia (as a visiting lecturer at Harvard and Berkeley) he quickly became a supporter and advocate of school reform, along with several of his colleagues.⁹¹ However, soon he realized that the educational changes he sought for schools would not happen. Holt envisioned making schools smaller with more individualized learning places, decreasing testing as much as possible, and fostering human relationships over competition for grades and school prestige. By the late seventies he had given up on the possibility that schools would welcome and assist the sorts of changes he was suggesting. He then began considering other ways of learning without conventional schooling. In 1977, he founded the first magazine about homeschooling in the US, *Growing Without Schooling*, a magazine written for parents and the public in general. Holt dedicated the rest of his life to supporting and writing about homeschool learning.

Holt’s homeschooling movement rapidly grew and today it has become one of the largest alternative movements in the world. The reasons for homeschooling vary from family to family. The motives include financial and religious reasons, a desire to provide a better education at home, dissatisfaction with the schooling system, among several other reasons. The curriculum and methods of instruction used by each family is also very diverse. The market for homeschooling is now very extensive, offering a wide

range of curricular possibilities. Even the Waldorf and Montessori methods are now available for homeschool families.

2.2. Democratic/Free Schools

The democratic/free schools represent another large movement in education. Some theorists label them as free schools, others as democratic schools, while still others use both terminologies to define this group.⁹² The democratic/free school movement has its roots in the Anarchists' Modern Schools of Spain in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Francisco Ferrer's Modern School (Escuela Moderna) is perhaps the most successful example of that time.⁹³ This movement resurged again in the 1960s, inspired by the radical and libertarian ideas of educators who envisioned they could revolutionize education (Ivan Illich, John Holt, Paul Goodman, A.S. Neill, among others).⁹⁴ The oldest surviving free/democratic school is Summerhill School, in England, founded in 1921 by A.S. Neill. The latter was an avant-garde educator who believed that children could only thrive in an environment of freedom.⁹⁵ In Summerhill, students experience boundless freedom unrestricted from any adult authority. Lessons are not compulsory, activities are chosen freely, and school and community issues are discussed and voted democratically by pupils and staff in a form of self-government.

The Summerhill "free school model" gained great popularity in the 1960s, inspiring the opening of several schools in various parts of the world. Ron Miller estimates that in the United States alone, between 400 to 800 free schools opened

between mid 1960s and late 1970s.⁹⁶ Although several of them closed within a short period of time, many remain in operation with significant success. In the Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO), an association dedicated to support the educational alternatives around the world, 246 schools are listed as democratic schools (175 in thirty countries and 71 in USA).⁹⁷ The most well known successful examples of the free/democratic school movement in the United States are the Sudbury Schools. The Sudbury model originated at the Sudbury Valley School in Massachusetts in the 1960s.⁹⁸ The success of its method spread across the U.S. and to other parts of the world. Today there are 34 schools following the Sudbury model, 24 in USA and 10 in the world (Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Israel, Netherlands).⁹⁹

The key characteristic of this school movement is its emphasis on freedom and democracy. Students usually have a central voice in the educative process and in most aspects of school operations. They are free to choose the activities they desire and to continue the activity for as long as they deem needed; they are responsible for their own learning and empowered to direct their own education; and they participate in town meetings with the faculty and staff to decide upon issues concerning the overall functionality of the school.¹⁰⁰ The democratic/free schools value independence and autonomy and hold trust and respect for the individuality of each individual as essential requisites for a pedagogy based on free and democratic values.

2.3. Open Schools

The Open Schools were part of a new group that emerged parallel to the democratic/free school movement in the late 1960s. They shared very similar values with the democratic/free schools, in the sense that they too, were established on the principles of freedom, independence, trust, autonomy, and democracy.* The main characteristic that differentiates the Open Schools from the free/democratic schools is their non-graded system and the absence of rigidly prescribed curriculum programs. The Open Schools are usually defined as having “classrooms without walls.” Students from all ages interact and study together based on their interests instead of their grade levels. The theory of Open Schools is that children learn in different ways, at different times, at different paces, and according to their interests.¹⁰¹ The teacher is expected to act as a guide and resource person encouraging students to work independently, to progress at their own pace, and to develop independent thought. They also work as advisors helping students in their choices of courses, activities, and with their educational goals. Most learning activities are carried on individually or in small groups. The form of assessment in Open Schools usually includes a comprehensive evaluation of the academic performance of the student as well as an assessment of his/her overall development.

Although most literature about Open Schools comes from the 1970s, we can still find Open Schools operating in the United States, England, Canada, India, Latvia,

* Several Open Schools are listed under the Democratic Schools' list at AERO.

Slovenia, and Poland, reports Muir.¹⁰² There is also a very successful K-8 public school in Portugal (Escola da Ponte), which does not designate itself as an open school but is very much aligned with the principles and pedagogical concepts endorsed by this movement. In the United States, the most successful and well-documented schools are the Jefferson County Open School (K-12) in Colorado and St Paul Open School (K-12) in Minnesota. Both schools are public schools and have been in existence for more than 35 years.¹⁰³

2.4. Quaker/Friends Schools

Different from the previous groups, the Quaker Schools distinguish themselves for their spiritual orientation. The Friends Schools, as they are also called, emerged out of “The Religious Society of Friends”, originated in the UK.¹⁰⁴ The core belief of the Quaker or Friends’ Society is that religion should start from personal experience and not from doctrine. In their belief, all individuals have “that of God” in them and through contemplation and silence they can have access to the God within.¹⁰⁵ In addition to this core belief, Quakerism also places honesty, truth, integrity, simplicity, community, peace, and respect for the individual, as their fundamental values. They also distinguish themselves for their refusal to confine truth to one creed, their openness to other views, and their insistence on equal rights for all people.

The Quaker Schools were first founded in England in the late 1600s and shortly after they were established in the United States, Pennsylvania. These types of schools

were distinguished for their attention to diversity and equality. They were one of the first educational institutions to provide schools for both boys and girls and the first schools in the U.S. to accept black Americans in their classrooms.¹⁰⁶ Today there are 95 Quaker Schools worldwide, 82 in the U.S., 9 in the UK, and 4 in Australia, Canada, Palestine, and Lebanon.¹⁰⁷ Although every Quaker School is unique in its pedagogical approach, all schools share the same beliefs and values endorsed by the Quaker movement. In general, Quaker Schools are characterized by an atmosphere of friendliness, openness, cooperation, and participation. There is a strong sense of community in their schools and relationships are formed on the basis of respect and care for the other. Pedagogically, Quaker Schools claim to support the overall development of the child and respect the students' different learning styles; however, a close investigation of their schools reveals strong emphasis on academic preparation.*

Most Quaker Schools are boarding schools and have a strong international outreach. Their popularity is not limited to the members of The Society of Friends; in fact the great majority of their students and staff are not even Quaker themselves.

* There seem to be a contradiction between Quaker Schools' claims and their actions. Several Quaker Schools in the United States (though not all) use standardized test scores as a requirement in their admission process (I e-mailed several of them). For a school that values the differences amongst subjects and their wholeness, it seems unusual that the selection of candidates is dependable upon a test that only measures one aspect of the individual.

2.5. *Krishnamurti Schools*

The Krishnamurti Schools are distinct and unique in their “methodless” approach to education.¹⁰⁸ Teachers in Krishnamurti Schools, reports Peterson, are most of the time “creatively free to come up with their own methods and ideas, corresponding with age, needs and aptitudes of their students.”¹⁰⁹ Jiddu Krishnamurti, the founder of this movement, deplored specific methods of instruction.¹¹⁰ He thought teachers should have the autonomy to develop and create their own lessons and activities. In fact, he insisted that teachers free themselves from all theories and educational methodologies in order to discover their own ideas and their own ways of educating. Krishnamurti viewed education as primarily an act of self-discovery (including teacher and student), of awakening one’s mind, one’s intelligence.* He believed most individuals were psychologically conditioned by internal (internalized discursive patterns) and external authorities (religion, nationalism, class distinctions, etc.) and lived in conformity to a set of values established by society without questioning them. Education, therefore, in his view, was to free human’s mind from its own conditioning. Its role was to help individuals investigate their thoughts, question their values and beliefs, and examine the competing forces shaping their minds; and not merely teach academic knowledge. In a talk he gave in Ojai, California, Krishnamurti explained his vision of education:

* Krishnamurti used the word intelligence and mind interchangeably, defining it as “the capacity to perceive the essential, the what is...” (Krishnamurti, *Education and the Significance of Life*, 14)

Education in the modern world has been concerned with the cultivation not of intelligence, but of intellect, of memory and its skills...Surely a school is a place where one learns about the totality, the wholeness of life. Academic excellence is absolutely necessary, but a school includes much more than that. It is a place where both the teacher and the taught explore not only the outer world, the world of knowledge, but also their own thinking, their own behavior. From this they begin to discover their own conditioning and how it distorts their thinking. This conditioning is the self to which such tremendous and cruel importance is given. Freedom from conditioning and its misery begins with this awareness. It is only in such freedom that true learning can take place. In this school it is the responsibility of the teacher to sustain with the student a careful exploration into the implications of conditioning and thus end it.¹¹¹

The freeing of human mind is the core principle guiding all Krishnamurti Schools. Although there is “no communicable method or system of education” amongst the schools,¹¹² they all share the philosophical ideas expressed by Krishnamurti. Namely, all Krishnamurti Schools are committed to foster the spirit of inquiry in the students, to make them think critically, to encourage them to pursue their own knowledge and discoveries, and to engage them in self-reflection.¹¹³

Currently there are 9 Krishnamurti Schools, in which 6 of them were founded by Krishnamurti himself (California, USA (1975), England (1969), and 4 in India (1931-1973) and 3 by the Krishnamurti Foundation in India. There is also a handful of

Krishnamurti-inspired schools spread worldwide (Brazil, USA, India, Argentina, and New Zealand), which are not sponsored by the Foundation.¹¹⁴

2.6. *KPM Schools*

Another model of schools, which is not large in number but very significant in its method, is the KPM Approach to Children, named after its founder Sri K. Padmanabha Menon. There are only two schools in the world that model this approach, one in southern India (founded in 1987) and one in Texas, USA (founded in 1995). Both schools are sponsored and supported by Atma Vidya Educational Foundation, located in India.¹¹⁵

The KPM Approach to Children was developed by Sri K. Padmanabha Menon, an Indian sage, who envisioned an education that would honor to the highest extent, the “dignity of [each] individual.”¹¹⁶ He argued that the “role of the adult [was] to take the child's expressions seriously, as genuine, and respond to him in the belief that his thoughts and feelings matter.”¹¹⁷ Menon believed that children needed a foundation of self-worth and confidence during their upbringing; they needed to feel empowered in their ideas and initiatives in order to grow into integrated, self-assured adults. His profound trust on the children’s potential to think, create and learn, led him to develop a real learner-centered approach to education.

In KPM Schools, children are truly respected, valued, and “unconditionally” accepted by their teachers.¹¹⁸ They are encouraged to initiate their activities, express

their thoughts and ideas, and seek their own discoveries. Moreover, they are expected to surpass their own teachers' knowledge. As Borich states, what makes the KPM Approach unique is the teacher's "unconditional acceptance of the child in promoting self-initiated inquiry that encourages, indeed expects, the child to go beyond the teacher without limits."¹¹⁹

In terms of its pedagogical method, KPM Schools have a very holistic approach to teaching and learning. They view learning as an integrated process of "envelopment", wherein understanding and knowledge evolves from a "series of nests of knowledge" woven from various directions.¹²⁰ The KPM approach tries to incorporate the child's interests, Nature, the school environment, and all subjects in an interlaced thread of learning. Borich provides an excellent summary of the learning process involved in the KPM Schools:

KPM educators believe that true education must come from first-hand experience, from an active engagement with the lessons of Nature, conveyed through conversation, demonstration, investigation, problem-solving, and physical activity that promote the discovery of interconnections while encouraging the learner's imagination and self expression. Learning arises from self-initiated activity. The role of the teacher is to awaken, invigorate and support [the child's] courses of thought. It is to heighten the child's awareness of self and environment and to awaken the production and exercise of integrative thought... The teacher enters the child's world—to feel the learner's mind, where

it is going and where it wants to take the teacher.¹²¹

This “unconditional” acceptance of the child’s leadership in the learning process is what makes the KPM Approach to Children so uniquely learner-centered.

2.7. The Robert Muller Schools

The Robert Muller School, founded in 1990, in Texas, USA, is a fully accredited school from birth through high school. The school was named after a former United Nations official and peace activist who outlined the “World Core Curriculum for Global Education,” which was fully implemented by the school. In his curriculum, Muller outlined two main areas of study: the universe, our planet and its family and the role of the individual within the cosmic evolution.¹²² He proposed four main segments as a framework for his curriculum:

Our Planetary Home and Place in the Universe – Furthering knowledge of planet Earth, from the infinitely large (the Universe, the stars and outer space) to the infinitely small (microbiology, chemistry, nuclear physics).

The Family of Humanity – Learning about our story in the planet, the unfolding of our existence.

Our Place in Time – Interconnecting our knowledge of humanity and our planet and finding our place in it, our responsibility to it.

The Miracle of Human Life – Furthering human growth through the development of: a) good physical lives (teaching to see, to hear, to observe, to create, to do, to use well our senses); b) good moral (emotional) lives (teaching truth, understanding, humility, liberty, reverence for life, compassion, altruism, and teaching to love); c) good mental lives (teaching to question, think, analyze, synthesize, conclude, communicate and to focus from the infinitely large to the infinitely small, from the distant past and present to the future); and d) good spiritual lives (spiritual exercises of interiority, meditation, prayer, communication with the universe, eternity, and God.¹²³

The vision embedded in the World Core Curriculum is fully embraced by the staff running The Robert Muller School. They view their work as an opportunity to serve the world and contribute to the evolution of the planet. They deeply believe that the “World Core Curriculum is one every human child on this planet deserves and should experience as a foundation for life.”¹²⁴ In their view,

The World Core Curriculum, when implemented correctly, will cause a student to have a picture of her/himself as one Cosmic Unit, part of the human species, existing for a limited period of time on the planet Earth, and contributing to the entire planetary scheme. The student will have a clear realization that he/she plays a definite part, however minuscule, in creating or damaging harmonious relationships in this magnificent interdependent system!¹²⁵

To complement the World Core Curriculum, The Robert Muller School developed a program (GEMUN) that models the United Nations assemblies to further children's knowledge about current issues concerning the world and human's responsibility towards it. Once a year elementary and middle school students from all over the world meet in Texas for a Two-day Model United Nations session to discuss and propose possible solutions for world problems.¹²⁶

The Robert Muller School serves as a model and resource center for others who intend to adopt the curriculum.¹²⁷ There are no records of how many schools have implemented the curriculum, however according to the president of the school, Gloria Crook, more than 700 groups or individuals around the world have purchased a copy of the "World Core Curriculum" with stated intention to begin schools or use the curriculum in existing schools.¹²⁸

2.8. Selecting the School Movements

Thus far I have examined seven alternative school movements carrying holistic pedagogical practices. Some of them are more humanistic oriented, others are more spiritually centered, while others have elements from both strands in their education. Depending on the philosophical orientation of each movement, the presence of holistic elements in their educational approach increases or decreases. Overall, they all have some aspects of a holistic education.

Nonetheless, none of these seven school movements were selected for the analysis because they did not seem to meet the criteria I applied in this study. As explained in Chapter 1, I used two criteria to select the school movements: 1) school movements that most approximate to the philosophical ideas advocated by the holistic education movement, and 2) large school movements operating at local and international levels.

The homeschooling movement was excluded right from the start. The reasons for homeschooling and the educational principles adopted by each family are so diverse that it is impossible to even determine how close the homeschooling movement is to holistic education. As Robin Martin says, the “goals of homeschooling vary as widely as the goals and purpose of schools around the world.”¹²⁹ The diversity involved in the homeschooling movement, therefore, was the decisive factor for not selecting them for the analysis.

The free/democratic schools and Open Schools are very large school movements, however, of all school movements, they are the ones that least incorporate the holistic education principles. These school movements have a very strong humanistic orientation that values freedom, autonomy, and democracy, however they lack the spiritual aspects of holistic education. As discussed earlier, the concepts of spirituality and interconnectedness are central aspects holistic education; they are their major defining characteristics. Therefore, the free/democratic and Open Schools were also not included in the selection of school movements.

The Krishnamurti Schools are moderately well represented worldwide, and unlike the two school movements discussed above, they do carry the spiritual element in their approach to education. Additionally, Krishnamurti Schools place great emphasis on “freedom of mind” and self-transformation, which is an important aspect of the holistic education movement, particularly Eastern holistic education.¹³⁰ Nonetheless, the fact that Krishnamurti Schools have a “methodless” approach to education,¹³¹ makes it very difficult to determine whether the other principles of holistic education are present or not in their pedagogy. This fact alone added to the impossibility of analyzing a pedagogy that varies from school to school, eliminated Krishnamurti Schools from the selection of school movements.

The Quaker Schools represent a fairly large movement and like the Krishnamurti Schools, appear to be very holistically oriented. They tend to integrate both, the humanistic and the spiritual aspects of holistic education. Spirituality is at the core of Quaker philosophy while cooperation, participation, openness, equality, and respect for diversity guide their educational approach. Nonetheless, a close investigation of Quaker Schools reveals that they are not as holistically centered as they appear. The first issue that distances them from the ideals of holistic education is their emphasis on academic preparation.* As discussed earlier, the primary goal of holistic education is the development of the *whole* individual; academic preparation is regarded as important but it is only one of several aspects of intellectual growth. Another factor that positions

* Although Quaker Schools value the overall development of the individual, there is strong emphasis on academic preparation. The fact that most Quaker Schools are high schools may be the reason why there is so much emphasis on academic preparation.

Quaker Schools further away from holistic education is the requirement of standardized tests in their admission process. Standardized tests disregard individual differences (using the same standard measure for all subjects) and measures only academic knowledge. Holistic education, on the other hand, values individual differences in all its aspects and regards all knowledge (artistic, social, kinesthetic, spiritual) as valid and important. These two contradictory aspects of Quaker Schools excluded them from the list of selected school movements.

The KPM Approach to Children and The Robert Muller Schools, in comparison to the five school movements thus far discussed, are the school movements that appear to be the most aligned with the principles advocated by the holistic education movement. The learner-centered approach of KPM Schools emphasizes freedom, autonomy, individuality, and caring relationships. Additionally, they have a very integrated view of learning, analogous to Clark's "integrated curriculum," discussed in Chapter 1. The Robert Muller Schools, on the other hand, have the principle of interconnectedness and spirituality at the heart of their curriculum ("The World Core Curriculum"). Like contemporary holistic educators, they also hold the vision that we are all divine beings, interconnected and interdependent, and part of an "intricate web of life,"¹³² involved in a purposeful and continuous plan of evolution. Nonetheless, although these two school movements appear to be very aligned with the principles of holistic education, they are the smallest movements of all discussed so far. The KPM Approach to Children has only two schools worldwide and The Robert Muller School stands on its own (as seen earlier, there is no record or control of schools implementing

their curriculum). Having not met the second criterion, these two school movements were also not included in the analysis of this study.

Concluding, none of the seven school movements so far described meet the two criteria assigned for selection. The four school movements that have not been described yet (Waldorf, Montessori, Reggio Emilia, and Neohumanist Schools) were the only ones that met both criteria. First, all of them are large school movements spread worldwide. The Waldorf system has about 900 schools and 1500 kindergartens in operation throughout the world, the Montessori Society has over 1,100 affiliated schools across several countries, the Neohumanist Schools and Centers around the world amount to nearly 1050 establishments, and the Reggio Emilia system has close to 50 preschools and centers located in Italy besides several hundreds preschools spread worldwide that have been inspired by the Reggio approach. In addition to the magnitude of the outreach of these four school movements, the four of them also hold a very holistic approach to education. Waldorf and Montessori Schools are often recognized in the field of holistic education as authentic examples of holistic educational practices.¹³³ Neohumanist Schools, although relatively unknown in the West, have also been identified by leaders in the field as an example of a holistic education.¹³⁴ These three school movements have their philosophy embedded within a spiritual paradigm and they embrace most of the principles advocated by contemporary holistic educators. Reggio Emilia Schools, however, are usually not associated with the holistic education movement, mostly because of their social constructivist view of human identity, which

tends to deny the spiritual vision held by contemporary holistic educators.^{*} Nonetheless, a close investigation of Reggio Emilia Schools revealed that although they may not apparently share the spiritual paradigm of holistic education, they have most of the principles advocated by the holistic education movement present in their approach to education. As the criterion was to choose school movements that most approximate to the overall principles of holistic education, Reggio Emilia Schools were also included.

Having defined and explained the selection of the four school movements included in this study, I shall now describe in detail each school movement.

2.8.1. *Waldorf Schools*

The first Waldorf School[†], *die Freie Waldorfschule (The Free Waldorf School)* was established in 1919 in Stuttgart, Germany, by the Austrian philosopher, Rudolf Steiner. After World War 1, a German industrialist, Emile Molt, invited Steiner to create a school for the children of the workers at his Waldorf-Astoria factory. Concerned about the damage caused by the war, Molt asked Steiner to introduce a new approach to education, which would attend to the social, economic, and political life of Europe.¹³⁵ Upon Molt's request and using his spiritual-inspired theory of human development (Anthroposophy) as a basis, Steiner developed the curriculum for the

^{*} The sociocultural perspective views human identity as socially and culturally constructed. Although they may recognize human agency, they usually deny any theory that conceives humans as spiritual entities that unfold from within.

[†] The schools following Steiner's system of education are either called Steiner or Waldorf schools. For clarity purposes, in this dissertation, I will only use the term "Waldorf School."

school.* He then recruited and trained the teachers, and for several years supervised the operation of the school. This first school became the model for the subsequent schools. Today there are nearly 900 Waldorf Schools in over 58 countries, about 1500 Waldorf Kindergartens worldwide, and more than 110 teacher-training centers for Waldorf education spread in 34 countries.^{136†} In addition, there are more than 550 residential and day schools for special children scattered throughout several countries.¹³⁷ Most Waldorf Schools are within the private sector. However, there are some scattered public schools, mostly in Europe, that have adapted the Waldorf pedagogy for their educational system.

Most Waldorf Schools are comprehensive schools, from preschool through high school. All of them are independent of external control (with the exception of the public schools that adopted their pedagogy) and run as a self-governing administrative unit. Teachers are in charge of the administration of the school and they usually elect a faculty member or an outside individual to manage school finances. All decisions regarding students, faculty, curricula, enrollment, finances, etc., are brought to the “college of teachers” (or faculty council) for discussion and resolution.¹³⁸ Each school has a physician trained in Anthroposophical medicine (a strand of medicine based on the spiritual science developed by Steiner), who visits the school periodically and often attends the faculty council meetings.

* Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) founded the Anthroposophical Movement in 1912 when he broke away from the Theosophical Society. Most of his theories, though, are based on his knowledge of Theosophy, (see Steiner, *Theosophy*) a spiritual philosophy founded by Madame Blavatsky, Olcott, and Judge in 1875. *The Secret Doctrine* (1888) written by Blavatsky is the most important work within the Theosophical field.

† The numbers above refer only to schools that are members of the Worldwide Association of Waldorf Schools. Of 894 schools listed worldwide, 639 are located in Europe.

Waldorf teachers are usually required to undertake a two-year teacher-training course prior to teaching. In some countries (Canada), the training program is completed within one year. Besides thoroughly studying Steiner's spiritual-inspired theory of learning and human development, student teachers also undergo intensive artistic training. Steiner considered it essential that every teacher developed the artist within, arguing that all subject matter had to be rendered into artistic experience before being presented to the child.¹³⁹ Additionally, teachers are expected to apply themselves to the study of Anthroposophy (the spiritual science developed by Steiner) throughout their teaching lives in Waldorf Schools.*

The goal of Waldorf education is to develop creative, intelligent and well-rounded individuals. It is based on the belief that with right guidance and proper nurturing, the child will naturally unfold at the appropriate stage of development. There is significant emphasis on the spiritual aspect of human development and teachers are endowed with the task of bringing the child's soul-spiritual nature into harmony with its corporeal nature.¹⁴⁰ The arts are at the center of the Waldorf curriculum and are regarded as one of the chief mediums for harmonizing the spiritual and physical dispositions of the child. All lessons are permeated with artistic activities, be it math, science, or history. Additionally, students take separate classes in drawing, painting,

* Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) founded the Anthroposophical Movement in 1912 when he broke away from the Theosophical Society, a spiritual movement founded by Blavatsky, Olcott, and Judge. Anthroposophy is a human oriented spiritual philosophy born out of Steiner's philosophy of freedom, his own spiritual experiences, and his knowledge of Theosophy.

modeling, woodcarving, singing, instrumental playing, and Eurythmy.* ¹⁴¹ They also participate in several performances throughout their school years.

Waldorf education is divided into three distinct periods: early childhood (0-7), middle childhood (7-14), and adolescence (14-21). The keynote of early childhood is “imitation”. Teachers, parents, and caregivers are considered responsible for creating an environment that is worthy of the child’s unquestioning imitation. They are expected to provide an environment that offers the child plentiful opportunities for meaningful imitation and creative play activities. In Waldorf nursery-kindergartens, children play at cooking, become mothers, fathers, kings, and queens, they sing, paint, and color. They hear stories, model beeswax, bake bread, make soup, and build houses out of boxes, sheets, and boards. In short, the nursery-kindergartens are designed to mirror the home environment and any formal academic learning (reading, writing) is strictly avoided until the child enters first grade.¹⁴²

Middle childhood is characterized by the appreciation of beauty, the discovering of truth, and the power of the child’s imagination. All teaching is done through pictorial means to work on the children’s imagination, feelings, and desire to learn. Folk tales, legends, and mythology are central learning tools during this period to address moral issues. Middle childhood in the Waldorf system spans grades 1-8. The class teacher usually takes the class in the first grade and continues with it until the eighth grade. S/he is responsible for the main subjects (reading, writing, arithmetic, history, geography,

* Eurythmy is an art of movement originated and developed by Rudolf Steiner himself. It is a system of rhythmic movement performed to verse or music for artistic or therapeutic purposes.

etc.), which are taught in the “main lesson”— a two-hour period at the beginning of each day. Specialized teachers teach other subjects, such as foreign language, music, craft, and Eurythmy. The class teacher is in charge of the academic achievement and progress of each pupil and s/he maintains close contact with parents to discuss the child’s overall development.¹⁴³

The adolescent period is marked by the development of thinking, reasoning, and the abstract power of the intellect. Steiner did not design a curriculum for this period (neither for early childhood); he only indicated what was needed for the proper development of the adolescent during this phase. The secondary school or high school, therefore, is an adaptation of Steiner’s educational teachings with the regular curriculum offered in mainstream education. High school students no longer have a class teacher; they attend different classes taught by specialized teachers. They still have, though, a tutor who watches over their academic progress and individual development throughout their high school years. The same group of students, which began in the first grade, continues as a group through the final year of high school.

Parents have an important role in the community life of Waldorf Schools. They take part in committees; they are responsible for organizing, planning, and working in the festivals promoted by the Waldorf system; and they maintain close contact with teachers. They also often attend lectures sponsored by the school to further their understanding of Anthroposophy and Waldorf pedagogy.

While internally inclusive, the Waldorf movement is very isolated from all other educational groups.¹⁴⁴ Teachers are usually so immersed into Steiner’s view of human

development that they often seclude themselves from other educational views, and sometimes even from the ‘outer world’ itself. ¹⁴⁵

2.8.2. Montessori Schools

The Montessori method emerged from a “scientific” pedagogical experience with young children that Maria Montessori led in Rome, Italy. After developing a methodology for working with children with disabilities, Montessori was given the opportunity to work with “normal” children ages 4 through 7 in a poor area of Rome. ¹⁴⁶ In 1907 she started the first Casa dei Bambini (Children’s House) with 60 children of working parents from the district of San Lorenzo, in Rome. Grounded upon her scientific observations of these children’s ability to absorb knowledge from the environment and their interest in manipulating materials, Montessori created her innovative educational methodology along with a series of educational materials. Every activity, equipment, and material Montessori developed, “was based on what she observed children to do “naturally”, by themselves, unassisted by adults.”* ¹⁴⁷

There is no record of how many Montessori Schools are operating around the world. Basically, any school can call itself Montessori because there is no trademark on the name. ¹⁴⁸ It is estimated that in the United States alone, there are more than 5,000 schools calling themselves Montessori. ¹⁴⁹ Additionally, there are hundreds of programs

* Although Montessori indeed developed her whole method based on her observations, it is important to state that she also studied in detail the works of Itard and Seguin about educating “defective” children, and the writings of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel. She was deeply influenced by all of them (Ahmadi, “The Montessori Method”).

in public and charter schools in the U.S. that have adapted the Montessori method to their curriculum.¹⁵⁰ There are, however, two major accrediting organizations, one in Italy (The Association Montessori Internationale – AMI) and one in the U.S. (The American Montessori Society – AMS), which have some control over the movement around the world. These two associations promote the application and propagation of Montessori’s *original* ideas and provide support to their member schools. There are over 1,100 member schools in the private and public sector across the world affiliated with either of the two organizations.¹⁵¹ In the United States, there is a large number of public schools affiliated with the American Montessori Society. They receive support from the Society through annual conferences, on-line bulletin boards, tutoring symposiums, and visits to schools.¹⁵²

All Montessori teachers are required to take a one-year-full-time teacher-training course to teach at the member schools. There are more than 110 accredited Montessori teacher-training centers operating in 24 countries, out of which 78 are located in the United States.¹⁵³ Adults taking the program are required to study Montessori’s philosophy in theory and practice, her view of child development, and the special materials she developed. They are specially trained in the use of Montessori materials because of the particular aspects of each piece and its functionality in the total scheme of the Montessori Prepared Environment. The courses prepare adults to work with children at three levels: Assistants to Infancy (0-3 years old), Casa dei Bambini (3-6 years old) and Elementary (6-12 years old).

The purpose of Montessori Schools is to provide the best possible environment to develop balanced, independent beings, participant in the adult community. Central to Montessori philosophy is the deep faith in the child's spontaneity and potential to discover, learn, and create knowledge. It is a philosophy based on the belief that the child must develop naturally and in accordance with its possibilities.¹⁵⁴ Teachers are thus expected to guard, protect, assist and allow the child to develop spontaneously and independently. The special materials developed by Montessori and the "prepared environment" for each group level are the trademark of Montessori Schools and the foundation for the whole Montessori pedagogy. They are the primary means from which the child develops its autonomy and independence, two qualities mostly praised in Montessori Schools.

Montessori education is divided into three broad periods ("planes of development") of approximately six-year intervals, each of which is further subdivided into three-year segments.¹⁵⁵ The first "plane of development" (0-6 years old) is considered to be the period of transformation, where children explore the world through their senses and develop their intellects through their interaction with the environment.* Children in this age group are regarded as "sensorial explorers." They are grouped into multiage classrooms (0-3 years old –Infancy Room and 3-6 years old–Casa dei Bambini) and usually there is one teacher and one assistant responsible for each group.

The "Infancy" room (0-3 years old) provides a nurturing environment where children are guided in their motor coordination, independence, and language

* The first plane of development is sub-divided into the unconscious "Absorbent Mind" (0-3) – the environment is absorbed unconsciously, and the conscious "Absorbent Mind" (3-6) – the environment is absorbed consciously.

development. The materials used in this age group include home-based utensils for cooking, washing, cleaning, as well as puzzles, games, and other objects to aid the children in their sensorial and motor skill development.¹⁵⁶

The next sub-age group (3-6 years old), ‘Casa dei Bambini’, is the hallmark of Montessori education; it is the “plane of development” in which Montessori devoted most of her studies. Children in this group explore independently the especial materials displayed purposefully around the classroom. They are free to seek their learning activities but are disciplined to keep on task. Literacy and numeracy are introduced through the materials when the child indicates readiness to it. Children progress at their own individual pace and some of them may master reading and writing before the age of six. There is great emphasis on work over play, following Montessori’s belief that children at this age are far more interested in “working” than in “playing.”¹⁵⁷

The second “plane of development” (6-12 years old) is viewed as an intermediate period of uniform growth, where children “develop their powers of abstraction and imagination, and apply their knowledge to discover and expand the worlds further.”¹⁵⁸ Children at this stage are regarded as “conceptual or reasoning explorers,” going through intense development of their intellect. They are also grouped in multiage classrooms (6-9 years old and 9-12 years old) and usually one teacher is responsible for the group. The curriculum is geared to develop the children’s reasoning abilities, and to support their thirst for knowledge.¹⁵⁹ The course of study is highly individualized and students progress at their own pace and academic ability. To introduce new topics, the teacher presents demonstration lessons to small groups or sometimes to a single student.

After the instruction, students disperse to work independently or in small groups. They are allowed to work on their projects for long periods of time without being interrupted. Usually all work is done in the classroom and unless students cannot finish their work in class, there is no homework. In addition to the academic curriculum, children (from infancy till high school, varying according to each grade level) also participate in practical life activities, which include: cooking, doing the dishes, cleaning the classroom, watering the plants, as well as exercises of grace and courtesy towards all members of the community.

The third plane of development (12-18 years old) is also regarded as a period of intense transformation, where adolescents transit from childhood to adulthood. It is considered the age of social development, of critical thinking, and is regarded as a period of self-concern and self-assessment.¹⁶⁰ Adolescents are regarded as “humanistic explorers,” “seeking to understand their place in society and their opportunity to contribute to it.”¹⁶¹ Montessori has never developed a specific curriculum for this period. She even asked those who consulted her on this stage not to call the school Montessori.¹⁶² Nevertheless, despite her request, several Montessori Schools have extended their curriculum and included the latter grades in their programs. The courses offered are adapted to accommodate the standard curriculum and Montessori’s pedagogy. The curriculum is still highly individualized and students progress at their own pace and academic ability.

Finally, Montessori Schools, contrary to Waldorf Schools, are often very open to the wider arena of education and to the field of public research in general. There are

several studies involving Montessori Schools, especially in the area of child learning outcomes.¹⁶³

2.8.3. Neohumanist Schools

Neohumanist Education is firmly rooted in the principles of Neohumanism, a philosophy based on spirituality, ecology, and social change introduced by Indian philosopher Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar in 1982 in his book *Liberation of Intellect: Neohumanism*. Drawing on multiple traditions, from eastern (Tantra philosophy) to western philosophical views, Sarkar sought to blend the “oriental introversial philosophy (subjective approach) with the “occidental extroversial science (objective adjustment).”¹⁶⁴ His philosophy is grounded on notions of: Ontology (Oneness of existence), Epistemology (Absolute and relative knowledge), Axiology (Cardinal human values), Psychology (Expanded view of the mind), Metaphysics (Cycle of creation), and Spiritual Practice (Yoga practices). The base of Neohumanism is universal love, including love for plants, animals, and the inanimate world. Neohumanism is essentially a set of principles for living through the ethic of universal love.¹⁶⁵ At its core is the notion that humanity is “one universal society with one universal ideology and one cosmic goal.”¹⁶⁶

The first Neohumanist educational center was founded in India, in 1963, under the direction of Sarkar.¹⁶⁷ The movement grew rapidly nationally and abroad and in 1990, Ánanda Marga Gurukula, a university based entirely on Neohumanist principles,

was founded in Ánanda Nagar, India. Today there is a network of schools spread in 50 countries, serving students in privileged areas as well as in less affluent regions. There are around 850 kindergartens and primary schools, 22 secondary schools, and 150 children's centers (including orphanages) scattered throughout the world.¹⁶⁸ All Neohumanist Schools, which will be referred from now on as NHE Schools, are within the private sector and are supervised by Ánanda Marga Gurukula University, the headquarters of Neohumanist Education.¹⁶⁹ Ánanda Marga offers distance-learning programs in neo-humanist teacher education, a mandatory program for NHE teachers.¹⁷⁰ There are currently two programs offered at the institution, the NHE Introductory Certificate Program (minimum 3 months) and the NHE Early Childhood Diploma Program (1-2 years). These two degrees focus on personal development (with strong emphasis on self-analysis), interpersonal competence, ethics, social responsibility, and universal love. The NHE Introductory Certificate Program offers an introduction to the fundamental ideas of Neohumanist Education. The NHE Early Childhood Diploma Program (1-2 years) is designed to provide teachers with a solid basis of Neohumanist Educational theory and practice for early childhood education. Teachers applying for the NHE Early Childhood Diploma Program are required to have a 45-day-spiritual-lifestyle-training prior to the beginning of the course. After completion of the program, teachers are expected to improve what they have learned through regular training periods.¹⁷¹

The aim of NHE Schools is to provide an ideal learning environment where each child can develop its physical, cognitive, creative, social, emotional, and spiritual

potential to its highest possible level.¹⁷² The focus in NHE Schools is on personal growth (moral development, integrity, self-confidence, self-discipline, cooperation), human values, self-knowledge, the development of universal love, and service to humanity. More than any of the other school movements, spirituality is at the center of NHE Schools, in the sense that it is openly practiced through meditation, contemplation, visualization, yoga, etc. The ultimate aim of Neohumanist education is self-realization through self-knowledge and the development of universal love, which they believe is only possible through spiritual practice.¹⁷³ The role of the teacher is of primary importance in NHE Schools. They are expected to be exemplary role models, embodying the highest human qualities, and to guide and lead the child into the path of self-realization and service to humanity.¹⁷⁴

Different from Waldorf and Montessori education, Neohumanist Education does not have a fixed predetermined methodology (however, they are not “methodless” either, as the Krishnamurti Schools are). NHE Schools usually adapt their pedagogical methods according to the customs and needs of each particular culture, particularly in their approach to teaching and learning.¹⁷⁵ Although NHE Schools may differ in their teaching methodologies (though the philosophical principles of Neohumanist education are firmly fixed), they do have some pedagogical activities which are common to all of them. For example, in all schools, students participate in the “Morning Circle” (which may be a whole school or an individual class morning circle), an activity designed for students to explore their inner selves and expand their feelings to universal love.¹⁷⁶ “Morning circle” usually include the following activities: quiet time, yoga, singing,

dancing, guided imagery, meditation, story telling, drama, sharing, or listening. Also common to all schools is the presence of the arts at the center of their curriculum and the use of stories (fairy-tales, fables, myths), as a means to convey ethical and universal values and to expand students' mental and spiritual potential.¹⁷⁷

Similar to Waldorf and Montessori Schools, NHE Schools also define three main periods in education: early childhood, primary, and secondary school.¹⁷⁸ The emphasis on early childhood is on maximizing the child's full potential as well as establishing a solid foundation for life, based on cooperation, sharing, generosity, and equality. Nurturing kindness to self, others, and the created world are central themes in the early childhood program. All activities in this age group are geared to personal and spiritual growth rather than academic development. Children are usually involved in activities such as play, dramatization, stories, songs, and art. They might be introduced to formal literacy and numeracy or not, it depends on the profile of each school.

For the primary and secondary years, the focus is on developing ethical and universal values with the intent of developing a compassionate and responsible member of the world community. All academic subjects are directed towards this goal. For example, in Science, students are introduced to ecological and environmental instruction, as a way to foster their understanding and appreciation for the interdependence of all creation. In Social Studies, students examine history through universal and non-discriminatory lenses (as opposed to biased history), in order to learn about the course of human history and the interconnectedness and interrelation of all

events and their role in it.¹⁷⁹ Finally, in Language Arts, students are introduced to selected literature that conveys and explores ethical values.

The arts are present in all grades. Teachers are encouraged to integrate the artistic element into their instruction and to seek foster a sense of the aesthetic in students. Foreign language is usually introduced in the first grade but the schools in India have adopted English as the medium of instruction, believing that for the building of “One Human Society,” it is necessary to have one common language.¹⁸⁰

Finally, parents at NHE schools are usually active participants in the community life of the school. They are often required to do voluntary work at school. They attend classes and/or workshops and they maintain close contact with their children’s teachers.*¹⁸¹

2.8.4. Reggio Emilia Schools

Unlike Waldorf, Montessori, and NHE Schools, which arose from the ideas of one particular thinker, the Reggio Emilia System emerged from a joint collaboration of educators and parents. In face of the destruction caused by World War II, a group of parents in the small city of Reggio Emilia, in Italy, began working together to build new schools for their young children. They envisioned a school that would foster their children’s critical thinking as well as community and democratic values. The ideal and purpose of these parents inspired the visionary educator, Loris Malaguzzi, to join in this

* NHE Schools offer workshops for parents to help familiarize them with the philosophy and principles of Neohumanist Education.

collaborative effort.¹⁸² Under his leadership the Reggio system evolved from a parent-cooperative movement into a public-city-run system of preschools and infant-toddler centers. The first municipal preschool was founded in 1963 followed by the launching of infant-toddler centers in 1970. Today the city supports 23 preschools, 13 infant-toddler centers, and 10 affiliated centers.¹⁸³ Similar to Montessori education, the Reggio approach also emerged from practice and experience. Nonetheless, different from the former, the latter never evolved into a specific model of education with defined methods. In fact, Reggio educators have always hesitated in writing down the principles of their approach, fearing that their descriptions would be taken as prescriptions.¹⁸⁴ According to them, education is to be viewed as a process of constant transformation and adaptation to existing situations and never a model to be followed.

Reggio preschools became internationally recognized in 1991, when a board of experts assigned by *Newsweek* magazine identified the preschools as the most avant-garde early childhood institution of the world.¹⁸⁵ Their popularity grew rapidly worldwide and in 1994, leaders of the movement founded the Reggio Children and the International Association Friends of Reggio Children, in response to the international demand for exchange opportunities and professional development, as well as to protect and enrich the educational practice and theory developed in the Reggio infant-toddler and preschool centers.¹⁸⁶ Since then, more than 13,000 people from 72 countries have participated in seminars, professional development, and conferences promoted by the organizations.¹⁸⁷ Today there are contact-people, organizations and universities spread throughout the world disseminating the Reggio approach to early childhood education

through courses, seminars, professional development, and conferences.¹⁸⁸ Countless public and private preschools and infant-toddler centers around the world have adopted the Reggio approach to their educational system and the movement continues to grow.

The preschools and infant-toddler centers in Reggio Emilia are administered by a *pedagogical-didactic coordinating team*, composed of the Director of Education, the Director of the infant-toddler centers and preschools, and a group of *pedagogistas* (curriculum team leaders), who coordinate and are responsible for the schools and centers assigned to them (five to six centers). Each center has two teachers per classroom, one *atelierista* (an arts teacher who works directly with classroom teachers in curriculum development and documentation), and the support staff. There is no head of school; all teachers share equal status.¹⁸⁹ Children are grouped according to their age (12 children in infant classes, 18 in toddler classes, and 24 in preschool classes) but they usually stay with the same teachers for three years.¹⁹⁰ School staff meets every week for approximately two and half hours to discuss the children's progress. There is strong sense of community and the environment of all centers is carefully prepared and aesthetically pleasing.

The Reggio centers have as their primary goal, to cultivate and guide carefully each child's intellectual, emotional, and social potential.¹⁹¹ At the core of their philosophy is the image of the child as competent,¹⁹² with active and lively minds and great potential for development,¹⁹³ and an inherent desire to learn and grow.¹⁹⁴ The Reggio approach is a system of education based on relationships, integration, and interactions. Learning is viewed as emerging from the interactions amongst children,

adults, and the environment.¹⁹⁵ Reggio educators draw upon various arts mediums (speech, movement, drawing, painting, modeling, play, singing, among others) as a means to explore and develop the child's ideas, feelings, and thoughts. It is an educational system that recognizes, values, and encourages the children's "hundred languages" of expression.¹⁹⁶

Although there is hesitation to adhering to theories and models, the Reggio approach, reflects the socio constructivist perspective to early education. Thinkers such as Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner, and specially John Dewey were widely read by the educators at the Reggio centers and their influence is noticeably present.¹⁹⁷ The curriculum is emergent, involving the active collaboration of children, parents, and educators. It is based on long-term, open-ended projects, where children can work through large blocks of uninterrupted, unscheduled time, depending on their will and motivation.¹⁹⁸ As in Montessori Schools, the school environment plays a special role in educating the child. It is carefully prepared and materials are purposefully positioned to attract the child's curiosity and stimulate its cognitive potentials. Reggio leaders often refer to the environment as "the third educator."¹⁹⁹ Teachers work in pairs with the help of the *atelierista* to aid children to express their ideas through different media and symbol systems. They often follow the children's interest, creating learning opportunities that engage the children's attention and motivation. Teachers also serve as "resources and guides to the children" by carefully observing, listening, facilitating, and documenting their work.²⁰⁰ They meet on a daily basis to discuss the children's

progress, to evaluate the project they are engaged in, and to plan activities to further their learning.

Families play a vital role in Reggio centers. They not only participate in the community life of the school but they also take part in the pedagogical aspects of their child's education. Parents often help with the projects carried on at the centers; they discuss pedagogical issues with Reggio educators, and they frequently talk to teachers about their child's progress.²⁰¹

A final point to illustrate is the value placed on research in the Reggio system. Research is a tool used by all educators in the center on a daily basis. It is regarded as a permanent learning strategy for both children and adults. It is viewed as a means of questioning, reflection, and re-evaluation, a medium for discovering new possibilities.²⁰²

CHAPTER 3

THE FOUR SPIRITUAL/HOLISTIC-BASED PRINCIPLES AND THEIR PEDAGOGICAL APPLICATION SPIRITUALITY, REVERENCE FOR LIFE/NATURE, INTERCONNECTEDNESS AND HUMAN WHOLENESS

The principle of *spirituality*, as discussed in Chapter 1, is a central theme in holistic education. It is the primary factor that differentiates holistic education from all other alternative approaches to education.²⁰³ The view of spirituality endorsed by the holistic movement is grounded in theories and worldviews (perennial philosophy, indigenous worldview, life philosophy, and ecological worldview) that value oneness, wholeness, interconnectedness, reverence for nature and life, integration, divinity, and multiple dimensions of reality. It is a view that regards every life in the universe as sacred, interconnected to an “intricate web of life,”²⁰⁴ and part of a purposeful evolutionary plan. Human beings are regarded as primarily spiritual beings, as “individual expressions of a transcendent creative source,”²⁰⁵ who have a purpose and a meaning “that transcends [their] personal egos and particular physical and cultural conditioning.”²⁰⁶

The broad and inclusive spiritual orientation of the holistic education movement guides its educational philosophy, a philosophy that is concerned with relations,

interconnections, and integration. Overall, the eight principles selected in this analysis express in one way or another various aspects of a spiritual orientation of holistic education. Even the more humanistic principles (individual uniqueness, caring relations, freedom/autonomy, and democracy) are rooted in the spiritual paradigm underpinning the holistic movement. Given the broadness of the principle of *spirituality*, in the first section of this chapter, I focus the discussion on the holistic *view of spirituality in relation to human beings* and I examine the implications of this view for holistic education. The other spiritual aspects of the holistic philosophy are addressed in the subsequent sections when I discuss the other three spiritual/holistic-based principles (*reverence for life/nature, interconnectedness, and human wholeness*). From now on, therefore, the principle of *spirituality* will be referred to as *human spirituality*.

The structure of this chapter is organized in the following order. I first examine the holistic view of the principles. I then discuss the philosophical perspective of each school movement about the principles and their pedagogical application. Finally, I examine the correspondence between the school movements' perception of the principles and the holistic view and I compare the pedagogical application of the principles across the school movements. Each principle will be discussed separately. A comparative analysis between the findings related to the pedagogical application of all principles in the four school movements is presented in Chapter 5, after all principles have been discussed.

3.1. Human Spirituality

As stated above, contemporary holistic educators regard humans as primarily spiritual beings, as manifestations of a divine source. Each individual is recognized as a complex and unique being, influenced by subjective and objective realities. Wilber's integral theory of consciousness is an example of how human spirituality is interpreted in the field of holistic education.²⁰⁷ Wilber draws on Plotinus and Aurobindo's theory of the "*Great Chain of Being*" to suggest that the inner self "is composed of a *spectrum of consciousness*," which ranges from subconscious to self-conscious to superconscious; from pre-personal to personal to transpersonal; from instinctual to mental to spiritual; or from instinct to ego to God.²⁰⁸ Additionally, Wilber argues that human consciousness operates at four different levels or dimensions: subjective (individual/interior or intentional), objective (individual/exterior or behavioral), intersubjective (collective/interior or cultural), and interobjective (collective/exterior or social). In Wilber's theory,

...consciousness is not located merely in the physical brain, nor in the physical organism, nor in the ecological system, nor in the cultural context, nor does it emerge from any of those domains. Rather, it is anchored in, and distributed across, all of those domains with all of their available levels.²⁰⁹

In sum, in Wilber's theory, humans are viewed as manifestations of a complex interrelation of consciousness operating at different levels. Human individuality is not a construct of the sociocultural environment neither a pure manifestation of a divine source. Rather, it is an expression of both, manifested in unique ways.

While contemporary holistic educators recognize the complexity of human individuality, as argued by Wilber, they still give primacy to the idea of the child as "creatively unfolding from within."²¹⁰ At the heart of holistic education is the image of the child as a spiritual being, "seeking expression in the form of a human body."²¹¹ For contemporary holistic educators, the child is born with inherent potentials, which naturally unfold at the right stages of development. In their view, the role of education is to allow the child's "self-unfolding" to take place gradually and naturally.²¹² More specifically, the function of education is to nourish, guide, and bring forth that which is already potentially present within each child.

This vision of education advocated by contemporary holistic educators echoes the educational views of various Western thinkers, who are usually referred to in the movement of holistic education, particularly those who have been identified as the pioneers of holistic education (Plato, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel).²¹³ Plato, for instance, also viewed humans as spiritual entities connected with the universal principle of life.²¹⁴ He identified the universal and human realities as composed of two ultimate entities, spirit/soul and form/body.²¹⁵ He believed the soul or mind was free and universal and lived in the transcendent and abstract world of ideas, disentangled from the world of senses.²¹⁶ The mind, Plato argued, contained all knowledge and wisdom

and only needed the right guidance to reveal itself. The role of education, in Plato's view, was just a matter of drawing out this inherent knowledge.²¹⁷

In Rousseau's educational philosophy we also find this emphasis in bringing forth humanity's inherent potential (although Rousseau never discussed this matter in spiritual terms). To begin with, Rousseau had deep faith in the goodness of "man."²¹⁸ He believed the child was born morally good. He maintained that human virtue would naturally flourish as long as the child's heart was secured from vice and error, prejudice and opinions, habits and judgments.²¹⁹ Additionally, Rousseau had a profound trust on the child's capability to learn, create, and act. For him, proper nurturing and guidance was all the child needed to unfold its intrinsic potentials. In short, for Rousseau, if the child was guarded from destructive conditioning and correctly guided and nourished, her inherent potentials would naturally unfold.

This stress on allowing the natural unfolding of the child's innate potential is also present in the education of Froebel and Pestalozzi. Froebel viewed humans as reflections of divine will, endowed with blissful qualities and tendencies.²²⁰ He saw education as a means to bring forth and lift into consciousness one's inner divinity. In his view, the purpose of education was to encourage and guide the individual as a conscious, thinking and perceiving being in such a way that s/he would become the pure and perfect image of his/her divine inner self. Pestalozzi, not as devotional as Froebel, would not define the child in such religious language. Instead, he referred to the inner self of the child as the child's "inner powers."²²¹ For Pestalozzi, the role of the educator was to ensure that no outer influence would disturb the child's natural course of

development. Education, in his view, ought to always start with the child and be based on an act of love. Without love, he argued, the child's "inner powers" would never naturally unfold.

The same emphasis on nurturing and guiding the self-expression of the child's inherent potential is also found in the works of several other educators (William Channing, Ralph Emerson, Bronson Alcott, Francis Parker, Leo Tolstoy, Maria Montessori, Rudolf Steiner), who are commonly associated with the evolution of the holistic education movement.²²²

Among Eastern holistic educators, there is also attention to nourishing the child's intrinsic essence; however, there is not as much reference to the child's "self-unfolding," as there is in Western holistic thinking. The focus in Eastern holistic education is on spiritual realization, on the transformation of the total being as a means to realize the "higher self", the "formless self."²²³

Concluding, holistic educators in general, regard humans as spiritual beings endowed with inherent knowledge and capabilities. Usually they advocate for an education that values the child's inner potential, nourishes its possibilities of development (to the point of spiritual realization), and allows its "self-unfolding" to naturally take place. Hence, rather than seeing the individual as an empty vessel ready to be filled and shaped (Locke),²²⁴ which underlines the foundation of mainstream education,²²⁵ holistic educators view each child as a unique being already endowed with its own divine essence, which only needs proper guidance and nourishment in order to come into manifestation.

3.1.1. *The Principle of Human Spirituality in the Four School Systems*

Of the four school systems, Reggio is the only one that does not share the holistic view of *human spirituality*. Reggio's educational philosophy is grounded on sociocultural perspectives,²²⁶ which views the self as socially and culturally constructed instead of spiritually unfolding from within. Although Reggio educators acknowledge and recognize the individuality and subjectivity of each child, they still view the individual as a "construction (self-constructed and socially constructed)... defined within a specific context and culture."²²⁷ As the Reggio approach is not grounded on the principle of *human spirituality*, Reggio Schools are not discussed in the first part of this section.

Contrary to the Reggio system, the other three school systems, Waldorf, Montessori, and NHE have their educational philosophy deeply rooted within a spiritual paradigm. Even Montessori Schools, which do not appear as particularly spiritually oriented, nonetheless embody a deep spiritual foundation. These three school systems are grounded in the belief that humans are essentially spiritual and physical manifestations of a divine source. In Waldorf and Montessori Schools, the idea that the child is a "spiritual embryo," who unfolds its faculties through a gradual process of incarnation, is at the center of their philosophy.²²⁸ Both school systems have their entire pedagogy built upon this assumption. In NHE Schools, however, the emphasis is more

on spiritual realization (such as the Eastern holistic view) than on the unfolding process of incarnation. Following the Eastern tradition, NHE Schools regard humans as divine expressions of an “Infinite Universal Consciousness.”²²⁹ Each individual is viewed as a diversified unique manifestation of the same Cosmic Mind, who, under adequate spiritual guidance and practice, can come to reveal Its knowledge and wisdom.²³⁰

Although Montessori, Waldorf, and NHE Schools embrace fully the principle of *human spirituality* (with slight variations in their conceptualization of it), they differ in their approach to implementing this concept. In the following sections, I examine how the principle of *human spirituality* is manifested in each of these three school systems and what activities they offer that are explicitly related to spiritual development.

3.1.1.1. Waldorf Schools

Waldorf Schools usually stand out for their strong spiritual values. As explained in Chapter 2, the Waldorf pedagogy was built upon Steiner’s spiritual-inspired theory of human development (Anthroposophy). Steiner conceived the individual as a threefold being of body, soul, and spirit. The body (including the physical, etheric, and astral body, and the ego),* he claimed, is the entity through which one perceives the world and belongs to it.²³¹ It functions as the basis for the soul’s life. The soul is the means through which one constructs for oneself, one’s own world. It is the vehicle between the body and the spirit, operating therefore, as the basis for the spiritual life. The spirit is

* Steiner conceived human individuality as composed of four bodies: the physical body, the etheric body, the astral body, and the ego.

the highest entity through which a world, exalted above both the others, reveals itself to the individual.

Steiner interpreted the growth and development of the child as a process of gradual incarnation, “as the descent of a spiritual entity into a material sheath fitted for existence in a world of matter.”²³² In his theory, the process of spiritual incarnation occurs in four broad stages: the moment of birth, from 0-7, 7-14, and 14-21.²³³ For each of these stages, Steiner associated the unfolding of one of the bodies that integrate the individual (0 = physical body; 0-7 = etheric body; 7-14 = astral body; 14-21 = ego). According to him, with the exception of the physical body, which is fully born with the infant, the other three bodies unfold gradually at different periods of the child’s development, finding fuller expression at the end of each cycle. Additionally, he claimed that in each of these seven-year periods there is the predominance of one aspect of human character. Namely, during the first septennium (0-7), he argued, willing is the most dominant aspect; during the second period (7-14), feeling is the prevailing characteristic; and in the third septennium (14-21), thinking dominates the life of the individual.

Based on his spiritual view of human incarnation added to his conception of cosmic evolution, Steiner developed the Waldorf curriculum. He designed the entire program as a means to support the gradual unfolding of the child’s spiritual nature. He gave specific guidelines for each year of instruction, particularly for the middle childhood (7-14) program. Broadly speaking, in Waldorf education, early childhood (0-7) focuses on strengthening the child’s will and its vital (etheric) body; all activities are

designed with that purpose in mind. In middle childhood, the emphasis is on working with the feeling aspect (predominant in this stage) of human character. Instruction is expected to draw on imagination, beauty, and truth in order to reach the students' feelings and engage them in the learning activity. Finally, in the last septennium, the curriculum is planned to foster the adolescent's reasoning and analytic thinking.²³⁴

3.1.1.2. Montessori Schools

Unlike Waldorf Schools, Montessori Schools do not appear to be particularly spiritual. Montessori Schools are more recognized by the structure of their methods than by the spiritual orientation that guided their founder.²³⁵ The emphasis appears to be more on emotional, physical, and intellectual development than on spiritual development. Nonetheless, despite the lack of apparent evidence of a spiritual orientation in the Montessori Schools, Montessori education is unquestionably spiritually grounded.²³⁶ As discussed to earlier, the education conceived by Montessori was built upon the belief that the child is a spiritual "embryo", whose faculties unfold through a gradual process of incarnation, from birth to the end of puberty.²³⁷ Similar to Steiner (though different in length period), Montessori also interpreted the unfolding of the child's spiritual nature as occurring into three periods, or rather, three "planes of development" of approximately six-year intervals, each of which further subdivided into three-year segments.²³⁸ Additionally, Montessori identified certain periods of the child's development as most favorable to creating and refining particular human

characteristics. She called these special periods “sensitive periods” describing them as stages of intense interest and activity toward a particular sensibility, such as language acquisition, motor skills development, etc. Different from Steiner’s theory, Montessori’s “planes of development” emerged from her intense observation of the natural spiritual unfolding of the child.

Generally speaking, in the first “plane of development”, where children are regarded as “sensorial explorers”, the emphasis is on nurturing the child’s senses. The school environment is carefully prepared with adequate materials to aid the children in their sensorial, motor, and intellectual skill development.²³⁹ In the second “plane of development,” where children are viewed as “conceptual or reasoning explorers,” the focus is on developing their powers of abstraction, imagination, and reasoning. Montessori elementary programs often begin the school year with the telling of the “Great Lessons” (a set five stories about the Universe and human civilization written by Maria Montessori). These “Great Lessons” present a holistic vision of knowledge, drawing on material from the various disciplines. They are meant to spur the imagination of elementary students, thus initiating exploration into the curriculum. In the last “plane of development,” where adolescents are regarded as “humanistic explorers,” the aim is to foster their critical thinking and guide them in their search to understand themselves and their place in the world. During this period, students are encouraged to pursue long-term group projects of their interest where they can explore the outside world and put into practice the practical life skills they have acquired through their Montessori education.

Unlike Steiner, Montessori did not outline a specific curriculum for each year of the child's development. Although she developed a pedagogical method for attending to each plane of development (with the exception of the last one, see chapter 2), she did not determine the curriculum content for each year, as Steiner did. Her "planes of development" are used as a guideline for *observing* the children's growth and serving them to succeed in their progress rather than for *teaching* a determined curriculum. The central idea in Montessori education is to let the child grow from inside out at its own natural pace; to permit its soul to freely create its own individual instrument.²⁴⁰ The purpose is to protect as well as allow the child's spiritual energy, which is seeking to express itself, to naturally manifest at its own time.

3.1.1.3. NHE Schools

Of the three school systems discussed in this chapter, NHE Schools are unquestionably the most open and outspoken about spiritual issues. While Waldorf and Montessori Schools, have *human spirituality* embedded in the context of their curriculum (specially the Montessori Schools), NHE Schools, have *human spirituality* explicitly articulated in their curricula. From a very early age children are introduced to the spiritual vision that they are more than their bodies and minds, that they are first and foremost eternal and precious beings, part of a divine creation, of an "Infinite Universal Consciousness."²⁴¹ Additionally, students in NHE Schools participate in various spiritual activities (meditation, yoga, visualizations, dancing, singing, drama)

specifically geared to develop spiritual awareness throughout their education. As stated earlier, the ultimate aim of Neohumanist education is self-realization through self-knowledge and development of universal love, which they believe is only possible through spiritual practice.²⁴² Hence the reason for the insistence of NHE Schools in including spiritual activities in their curriculum.

Besides the daily practice of spiritual exercises as a means to foster *human spirituality*, NHE Schools also place great emphasis on the right guidance of the child's personal nature. They position the development of morality, integrity, cooperation, self-knowledge and universal love as essential requirements for spiritual development. From early childhood till latter grades, NHE educators strive to develop these values in the heart and mind of each of their students.

In regards to the unfolding of the child's nature, Neohumanist education does not follow specific age periods of development. Instead, they use the term "layers of mind" to explain the child's spiritual unfolding.²⁴³ They describe the nature of mind as a system of five levels. Each level is subtler than the other and in each "there is an increasing awareness and depth to inner knowledge."²⁴⁴ The five layers are: sensorial (perceives and responds to the world through sensory and motor organs); intellectual (analyses and interprets the world); creative (expands its view of the world); intuitive (has the qualities of discrimination) and spiritual (has the sense of oneness). According to Neohumanist educators, the teacher must know in depth each layer of mind and be constantly attentive to the developmental stages of each child in order to guide its

education accordingly. The aim is to carry students to the highest levels, yet never disregarding the lowest ones.

3.1.2. Pedagogical Features that Foster Human Spirituality

In addition to the pedagogical approaches described in the preceding section, the three school systems discussed in this chapter also draw on specific practices to nurture *human spirituality*. The activities that most stand out as particularly oriented to spiritual development are: the development of morality, the arts, and the exercise of meditation and/or religion.

3.1.2.1. Development of Morality

Waldorf and NHE Schools are the two institutions that most emphasize the development of morality. Both Steiner²⁴⁵ and Sarkar²⁴⁶ considered the acquisition of moral values as an essential step for spiritual growth.* In Waldorf Schools, the reading of stories (fairy-tales, myths, fables, or legends) and the teacher's exemplar behavior are the two main vehicles employed to transmit ethical values to children.²⁴⁷ Waldorf teachers are required to act as role models, as moral leaders. They are supposed to carefully watch what they think and do (as Steiner claimed that children could perceive

* Most religions also regard moral development as a means to spiritual realization. For Buddhism, for example, the development of morality is the primary requisite into the path of enlightenment (Watson, *The Lotus Sutra*). This same emphasis on the development of morality or virtue is found in Plato (*The Republic*) and Aristotle's (*Nicomachean Ethics*) works. Both philosophers placed ethics and moral development at the center of their philosophy of education.

morality beneath action and thought) and to strive to display an ideal behavior worth of imitation.²⁴⁸ In NHE Schools, there is similar emphasis on the role of the teacher as an exemplary model of ethical principles. NHE teachers are expected to lead a life inspired by moral values and to pass them on to their students in their daily interaction with them.²⁴⁹ In the academic curriculum, literature is one of the primary means by which morality is brought on to children. Unlike Waldorf Schools, the literature used in NHE Schools is not limited to fairy-tales, myths, fables, or legends; it also includes modern stories, biographical narratives, or any literature rich in ethical values. Finally, in NHE Schools, morality is also addressed through drama, singing, or dancing, and most often is a theme for contemplation in meditation. In short, morality is at the center of the Neohumanist curriculum in all grade levels.

3.1.2.2. *The Arts*

The practice of the arts is also central to both Waldorf and NHE Schools. Steiner as well as Sarkar considered the arts as an essential element to place the individual in rapport with his/her inner self. Steiner even more than Sarkar, positioned the arts as a connector between the spiritual and the earthly world.^{*250} He believed that through the arts the individual could connect with his/her own spiritual source as well as with the spiritual realm itself. In Waldorf Schools, the entire curriculum is permeated with the

* Several other philosophers have also linked arts with the spiritual world. Some regarded art as a representation of the supreme (Plato, Plotinus), others as a path of return to God (Eckhart), as a form of contemplation (Schopenhauer), as the ultimate expression of nature (Goethe), as belonging to the realm of ideal (Hegel), or as the road to beauty and to freedom (Schiller). (Steiner, *The Arts and their Mission*; Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*).

artistic element. Children experience the arts through painting, drawing, modeling, music, singing, playing instruments, drama, etc. All the arts activities are carefully guided according to Steiner's instructions for each grade level. In addition to these regular artistic activities, students in Waldorf Schools also practice Eurythmy, an art form especially developed by Steiner.²⁵¹ Eurythmy is a movement art performed to verse or music, in which each vowel and each consonant has a spiritual significance and a specific movement attached to it.

In NHE Schools, the practice of arts is also a core element in their curriculum, especially in the earlier grades. The arts are viewed as a means to help children delve into their subtle minds and make them more sensitive to the wonders of nature and the mysteries of the created world.²⁵² It is considered as an avenue to discover beauty and to develop a sense of subtle aesthetics. Finally, the arts are regarded as a powerful instrument to enable the youth to "look upon everything of the world in a spiritual sense, to realize in everything the blissful, transcendental entity".²⁵³ Like in Waldorf Schools, children in NHE Schools also participate in a variety of artistic activities (painting, drawing, singing, dancing, drama, etc). However, unlike the former, the activities are spontaneously generated in class instead of being based on a specific structured model.

In Reggio Schools, the arts are also at the center of their curriculum. It is present in all learning activities and regarded as the primary means of expression for young children. However, in Reggio Schools, the arts are viewed as a language of expression and a medium for learning and not a vehicle to develop subtlety or to connect the child

with its spiritual self.²⁵⁴ Nonetheless, although Reggio Schools may not consider the arts in the same manner as the other two school systems, children may be developing subtlety or connecting with their inner selves if Sarkar, Steiner, and others' (Goethe, Schiller) argument is taken into consideration.²⁵⁵ Hence, although Reggio Schools apparently are not spiritually oriented, they offer a pedagogical practice that indirectly promotes this principle.

As for Montessori Schools, a similar argument can be drawn. They too, do not appear to interpret the arts in the way NHE and Waldorf Schools do but they also offer artistic activities in their schools. However, in Montessori Schools, the arts are not integrated throughout their curriculum as the other three systems are. They are offered as a separate subject for the elementary and upper grades (the early childhood program normally does not have the arts included). Elementary students usually have art classes once a day, whereas upper grade students have art classes once a week.

3.1.2.3. Meditation and/or Religion

Waldorf, Montessori, and NHE Schools use meditation or religious lessons as a vehicle to further human spirituality. In NHE Schools, an Eastern-based school system, meditation is the regular practice. Most eastern traditions claim that meditation is an indispensable practice for spiritual development and the road to enlightenment.²⁵⁶ In NHE Schools, children meditate on a regular basis. Through meditation (as well as contemplation, yoga, and visualization) they are invited to connect with their deepest

self, to further their sense of belonging to the universe, and to develop their love for all creation.²⁵⁷ In other words, they are encouraged to maintain an inner connection with the spiritual world.

In Montessori Schools, a version of meditation is included in their daily activities, termed the moment of “silence.” Montessori believed that silence was a crucial activity for bringing humans in connection with their soul.²⁵⁸ Hence, in Montessori Schools, children are taught to sit or lay still and listen to silence. They are trained to practice quietness and to appreciate the value of stillness. Nonetheless, despite Montessori’s stress on the spiritual aspect of this activity, its emphasis appears to be more on appreciating quietness than on fostering spiritual connection.²⁵⁹

In Waldorf Schools, religious lessons are the common spiritual practice; these are usually offered as an optional activity. Depending on the magnitude and the diversity of the school population, the range of choices (Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, etc.) for religious lessons may vary. Additionally, every Waldorf School offers “free” religious education, based on Steiner’s nondenominational view of Christianity. The lessons usually include: acknowledging the divine expressed in nature (grades 1-4); understanding the historical side of religion through love (grades 5-8); reflecting on Christ’s endeavors (grades 9-10); and studying comparative religion along with concepts of cause and effects (grades 11-12).²⁶⁰ These lessons are taught by one of the regular Waldorf teachers carefully selected by the college of teachers.

In addition to religious lessons, Waldorf Schools also draw on “rituals,” which include morning verse, singing, rhythmic movements, lighting candles, etc. These rituals are used as a means to bring the child close to its spiritual nature.

In Montessori Schools, religious lessons are also optional and most often follow the Catholic faith. However, not all Montessori Schools offer religious education.

3.1.3. *Evaluative Summary*

Waldorf, Montessori, and NHE Schools share the holistic view that humans are spiritual beings, manifestations of a divine source, endowed with inherent knowledge and potentialities. Like most holistic educators, the three school systems also claim that education must nourish and guide the child’s inherent possibilities of development and allow its self-unfolding to naturally take place. Montessori and Waldorf Schools are more aligned with the Western holistic view of education (emphasis on the self-unfolding). Through their theories of development, each school system, in its particular way, seeks to attend the natural unfolding of the child’s spiritual nature. NHE Schools, on the other hand, follow the Eastern holistic perspective (emphasis on spiritual realization). Their focus is on *orienting* the child’s spiritual development through spiritual practices (meditation, visualization), with the ultimate aim of realizing the “higher Self.”²⁶¹ In short, the three school systems are aligned philosophically either with the Eastern or the Western holistic view about education and they all share the holistic view of *human spirituality* (with slight variations about its conceptualization).

In regards to the pedagogical application of this principle, table 3.1 summarizes the findings across the four school systems.* As the table indicates NHE and Waldorf Schools appear to be the most committed to applying pedagogically the principle of *human spirituality*. Perhaps NHE Schools apply this principle more openly (*human spirituality* is a subject openly discussed with children from a very early age in NHE Schools, while in Waldorf Schools, only adults discuss this matter)[†] and intensively (through the daily practice of meditation) than Waldorf Schools but on the whole the two school systems appear to give primacy to the spiritual development of the child. The arts, moral education, spiritual practices, religious education, and their theories of development (which includes the Neohumanist conception of the “five layers of mind”) are the main pedagogical means by which these two school systems foster *human spirituality* in their schools.

*As explained in Chapter 1, I assigned the level for each pedagogical feature according to the following rationale:

Very high = the pedagogical feature is extensively applied (e.g. development of morality is a constant theme in the NHE and Waldorf curriculum).

High = the pedagogical feature is not applied as extensively as it is applied in the other school system(s) (e.g. in Waldorf Schools, religion/rituals are not practiced as extensively as meditation is practiced in NHE Schools) or the pedagogical feature is not directly applied to foster that particular principle (e.g. Reggio Schools have the arts at the center of their curriculum, however, the arts are not used as a means to connect the child with its spiritual nature. In Waldorf Schools, for example, the arts are used as a means to nurture the child’s contact with its inner self (among other usages). Steiner has given several guidelines to introduce children into artistic experiences with that vision in mind. Hence, in regards to the principle of *human spirituality*, the arts are applied more extensively in Waldorf Schools than Reggio Schools).

Moderate = the pedagogical feature is applied to a lower extent in comparison to other school systems or it may not be constant across the schools of a school system (e.g. religious lessons are not offered in all Montessori Schools).

Low = the pedagogical feature is occasionally applied (e.g. the arts in Montessori Schools are offered as a separate subject daily or weekly (depending on the age group), in contrast to Waldorf, NHE, and Reggio Schools, where art is at the center of the curriculum).

N/P = the pedagogical feature is not present

[†] Although Steiner’s spiritual theories are openly discussed among teachers and parents, children go through their twelve years of school almost practically unaware of Steiner’s Anthroposophical theories.

Pedagogical Features	Waldorf Schools	Montessori Schools	NHE Schools	Reggio Schools
Developmental theories	Very high	Very high	Very high	N/P
Development of morality	Very high	N/P	Very high	N/P
The arts	Very high	Low	Very high	High
Meditation and/or religion	High	Moderate	Very high	N/P

Table 3.1 Summary of the pedagogical application of *human spirituality* in the four school systems

In Montessori Schools, this principle is applied to a much lesser extent than the other two systems. Apart from their theory of development, which is aimed at the natural/spiritual unfolding of the child, Montessori Schools do not draw on additional pedagogical features to nurture *human spirituality* as much as NHE and Waldorf Schools. Although they offer artistic activities and the practice of silence (religious education is not offered in all Montessori Schools), which are activities that promote human connection with the spiritual realm, they do not offer them as extensively as the other two school systems. Artistic activities, for example, are limited to elementary and upper grades and offered as a separate subject once a day (elementary grades) or once a week (upper grades), and the practice of silence is used more as means to appreciate quietness than to foster spiritual connection. Hence, even though Montessori's educational philosophy is very aligned with the holistic view of *human spirituality*, the pedagogical practices of Montessori Schools do not reflect this vision as much as the other school systems do.

Finally, in Reggio Schools, the principle of *human spirituality* is more indirectly addressed than explicitly applied. Although Reggio Schools do not share the spiritual

vision advocated by contemporary holistic educators (at least explicitly), they indirectly promote children's connection with the subtle (spiritual) world through the medium of the arts.

3.2. Reverence for Life/Nature

In holistic education, there is special attention to how humans relate to the natural world.²⁶² Rather than trying to dominate or control it, contemporary holistic educators seek to understand the natural world through a sense of reverence. In their view, every life (animal, vegetable, human) is sacred, it has a purpose, it is part of the same web of creation, and hence, deserves respect and admiration.²⁶³ Influenced by the indigenous and ecological worldviews and the philosophy of life,²⁶⁴ contemporary holistic educators advocate a worldview that fosters a sense of reverence for life, the Earth, and the Universe,²⁶⁵ respects the natural world and its inhabitants,²⁶⁶ acknowledges the sacredness and purposefulness of life,²⁶⁷ and recognizes the interdependence of our ecosystem.²⁶⁸

In holistic education, the emphasis is on developing ecological awareness, establishing Earth connections, and nurturing a feeling of reverence for the natural world. John Miller, for instance, proposes a curriculum to restore the students' relation to the Earth and the created world.²⁶⁹ He argues that humans have lost the connection they used to have with the natural world and that education needs to reestablish this lost connection. Clark, on the other hand, advocates for an education that challenges "*the*

way people think about their relationship to” the natural world (italics in original).²⁷⁰

He proposes an environmental education that investigates our relationship with nature as well as “the relationships that exist among *everything that is part of our planetary ecological system*” (italics in original).²⁷¹ Finally, Nava suggests an “eco-education” aimed at developing ecological awareness and educating for a sustainable culture.²⁷² More than just advocating for a regular scientific environmental education, which he argues, is usually “limited to transmitting technical information about the environment,”²⁷³ Nava calls for an education that fosters children’s respect, love, and reverence for the natural world, that develops an awareness of the interdependence of nature, and that prepares them to live in a sustainable society, “one that satisfy its needs without diminishing the [resources] for future generations.”²⁷⁴

Holistic education then, aims to reawaken young minds to the wonders and sacredness of the natural world and the universe, to teach them about the relationships and interdependences of our planetary ecosystem, to develop in them a feeling of reverence for all forms of life, and to form responsible young adults who understand, respect and care for the environment in which they live.

3.2.1. The Principle of Reverence for Life/Nature in the Four School Systems

The four school systems have the principle of *reverence for life/nature* in their approach to education. Among them, NHE Schools are the one that gives most primacy to this principle. Neohumanist educators recognize all parts of the Universe, from the

tinest atom to the largest star, as sacred and divine. They regard the natural world as important as humans and argue that all animals, plants, trees, birds, etc. deserve the same level of respect and reverence as given to humans.²⁷⁵ Similar to contemporary holistic educators, Sarkar, the founder of the movement, also claimed that humans are deeply connected with all life in the universe and part of the same web of creation.²⁷⁶ In NHE Schools, the emphasis is on developing ecological awareness of our relationship with the universe, expanding children's love of the little creatures, the animals, the plants, the planet, the stars, and so forth, and fostering an attitude of respect and care for the living bio-community.²⁷⁷

Waldorf Schools also give great prominence to this principle, although not as intensely as NHE Schools. Like Sarkar and the contemporary holistic educators, Steiner too, regarded all forms of life as sacred and intrinsically interconnected.²⁷⁸ Nonetheless, rather than emphasizing *awareness* of our interconnection with universal life, Steiner focused on *cultivating* the innate relationship children have with nature. Based on his spiritual sense of the cosmic world and the Earth rhythmic processes, * Steiner advocated for an education that would nurture humans' inherent connection with Earth and its "life rhythms."²⁷⁹ Hence, in Waldorf Schools, primacy is given to nurturing children's relation with nature and its processes, fostering a feeling of respect and reverence for all life on Earth, and developing a sense of gratitude for nature's gift.²⁸⁰

* Steiner's spiritual knowledge of cosmic energies and the Earth rhythms led him to develop the biodynamic agriculture, which is a form of farming based fundamentally on the interrelationship between planetary and cosmic energies. Most Steiner Colleges offer courses in biodynamic farming. Today there are many farms spread throughout the world following this agricultural orientation.

In Montessori Schools, *reverence for life/nature* is also an important aspect of their education. Montessori developed a special curriculum for the junior grades (6-12 years old), the “cosmic curriculum,” with the intention to awaken the children’s minds to the wonders of life, the interconnectedness of the Universe, and the thread of cosmic evolution. Montessori’s view about the cosmic and the natural world was very similar to that of Steiner, Sarkar, and contemporary holistic educators. Montessori too, considered all life in the Universe as divine, interconnected, and part of the same process of cosmic evolution.²⁸¹ In Montessori Schools, the focus is on fostering respect and caring for the natural world, and promoting awareness of the interdependence mid humans, the Earth, and the Cosmos.

In Reggio Schools, the principle of *reverence for life/nature* is also present in their educational approach, even though they do not share the spiritual view often associated with this principle. Reggio educators do not refer to the natural world as sacred neither do they discuss the interdependence of the Earth and the Universe; yet, they still foster the children’s connection with nature. They encourage direct contact with the natural life at the school and they support research projects that further understanding of the natural world.

3.2.2. Pedagogical Features that Fosters Reverence for Life/Nature

The four school systems have several pedagogical features that foster reverence for the natural world. Four main themes integrate the pedagogical features identified

across the school systems that promote this principle: Earth connection, environmental education, cosmic awareness, and the arts.

3.2.2.1. *Earth Connection*

The four school systems promote, in one way or another, the child's connection with life on Earth. Direct contact with nature is the most common pedagogical approach across the four systems to foster this connection with the natural world. Although they might differ in their pedagogical intention with this practice and in the degree to which it is applied, they all encourage children to experience nature on a regular basis.

In Montessori and NHE Schools, the emphasis is more on *caring for* the environment whereas in Reggio and particularly Waldorf Schools, the stress is on *being in* the environment (emphasis added). For example, in Montessori Schools, young children are required to water the plants in the classroom, feed the animals, and work in the vegetable garden. Montessori believed that children should be encouraged to appreciate the natural development of plants and realize that animals (that is domestic animals) need our care to survive.²⁸² In addition to looking after the natural environment, students (elementary and middle school) in Montessori Schools often go on trips to wild nature.

In NHE Schools, there is also great emphasis on looking after the environment. Children of all ages are involved in planting (usually a vegetable garden), watering the seeds, looking after the animals in their schools, recycling waste, etc.²⁸³

In Reggio Schools, children are more often *in* nature than looking after the natural world. They are constantly playing out in the garden and exploring nature's gifts.²⁸⁴ Inside the building, there are enough plants for them to observe, explore, and look after. There is no requirement, however, to take care of the plants, as in Montessori or NHE Schools. A child that waters a plant does that from its own will rather than from a sense of duty.

In Waldorf Schools, the emphasis is primarily on *being in* the nature. Most Waldorf Schools are surrounded by a yard with trees and plants. Young children spend considerable time playing outdoors, climbing trees, digging holes, talking to the little creatures, and so forth. They often bring to their classrooms, twigs, autumn leaves, rocks, or other earth elements they find in the nature. Older children usually work in the vegetable garden and often go on trips to wild nature.²⁸⁵

Besides fostering direct contact with nature, Waldorf and NHE Schools also draw on other pedagogical practices to nurture the child's connection with life on Earth. In NHE Schools, the most frequent activity is meditation/visualization. Through the practice of meditation, students are led to contemplate about the Earth and the Universe; they are guided to visualize their connection with the created world, and to feel at one with the trees, the birds, and the Earth.²⁸⁶ NHE educators believe that acquiring this feeling of connection, of oneness is a fundamental step in developing love, respect, and admiration for all living creatures.

Waldorf Schools offer a series of activities to nourish the child's connection with the natural world. The most common and regular activities include: listening to

stories, reciting verses, and singing songs about the elements and the life on Earth as well as drawing, painting, and modeling nature themes.²⁸⁷ Additionally, Waldorf Schools give special attention to the celebration of the seasons of the year. Throughout the year, children participate in the celebration of each season through specific stories, rhymes, rhythmic movements, songs, food, and special events.²⁸⁸

3.2.2.2. Environmental Education

Of the four school systems, NHE Schools are the ones that most emphasize environmental education in their curriculum. Through a combination of experiential learning (gardening, recycling, collecting trash), lectures, research, projects, and discussions, students learn about environmental issues and means of sustainability (organic agriculture, waste recycling, renewable energy, forestry and wildlife care).²⁸⁹ Although primacy is given to direct contact with the natural world, Neohumanist educators complement students' experiential learning with academic and scientific knowledge about the environment.

In Reggio Schools, environmental education happens informally through the children's research projects. Themes about the natural world typically arise from their contact and interaction with nature.²⁹⁰ Through their research projects, children learn about the "life" they are inquiring or the environmental issue they are investigating.

In Waldorf Schools, the emphasis of their curriculum is more on learning (experientially as well as academically) about the elements of the natural world (in

geology, botany, zoology) than on discussing environmental or sustainability issues.²⁹¹ Nonetheless, their schools do offer environmental education, particularly for the later grades. Attention to this issue, however, varies according to each school.

In Montessori Schools, environmental education is mostly experiential. “Going out” is a regular practice in the Montessori curriculum. From elementary through high school, students go regularly on field trips. For environmental education, students visit farms, the zoo, the aquarium, parks, lakes, rivers, environmental centers, recycling centers, and so forth. They are usually required to take notes of their observations and then discuss in class their discoveries.²⁹²

3.2.2.3. *Cosmic Awareness*

Of the four school systems, NHE Schools are the ones that most emphasize the development of cosmic awareness. In NHE Schools, the development of cosmic awareness is fostered primarily through meditation/visualization.²⁹³ In the same way that students are guided to meditate about the created world, they are led to contemplate the Universe, to visualize their connection with it, and to feel one with it. Songs, verses, dance, and literature are other means used in NHE Schools to promote universal consciousness.²⁹⁴

In Montessori Schools, cosmic awareness is promoted through Montessori’s “cosmic curriculum,” which she developed for the junior grades (6-12 years old).²⁹⁵ It is not a detailed curriculum for the full academic year but a set of five imaginative epics

about the evolution of the universe and human civilization. Montessori's aim with these "Great Lessons," as she called them, was to lead children into the wonders of creation and the universe, teach them about the evolution of humanity, and bring awareness to the thread of cosmic evolution and our role in it.²⁹⁶ These lessons are usually read to children in the beginning of the school year. They are meant to spur the students' imaginations and lead them into new areas of study.

In Waldorf Schools, cosmic awareness appears to be fostered primarily through the astronomy classes of the middle school curriculum.²⁹⁷ However, the focus in those classes is more on studying the interrelation of the planetary system rather than on promoting awareness of our connection with the cosmic world.

3.2.2.4. The Arts

The arts are another pedagogical practice identified across the school systems that foster a sense of reverence for the natural world. In Chapter 3, we saw that both Neohumanist and Waldorf educators position the arts as an essential element for spiritual development. They also view the arts as a means to develop admiration, respect, and appreciation to the created world. Both Sarkar and Steiner considered the arts as a means to enable children to perceive the subtlety of things, to appreciate beauty, and to make them more sensitive and reverential to the magnificence of the natural world.²⁹⁸ Both viewed the arts as an expression of the realm of beauty and

argued that our experience with beauty helps us “rediscover our connection with the world.”²⁹⁹

As discussed earlier, the practice of the arts is at the center of the curriculum of NHE, Reggio, and, Waldorf Schools. It is a pedagogical domain that children experience on a daily basis in the three school systems. Although in Reggio Schools, the arts are interpreted differently from Waldorf and NHE Schools (as a language of expression and a medium for learning), children experience the arts as extensively as Waldorf and Neohumanist children. Hence, considering Sarkar and Steiner’s argument, Reggio Schools indirectly foster appreciation for aesthetics and for the natural world. Similar argument can be made for Montessori Schools but to a much lesser extent, as the arts in their schools are offered as a separate subject few times a week, depending on the age group.

3.2.3. *Evaluative Summary*

Table 3.2 summarizes the findings relative to pedagogical application of the principle of *reverence for life/nature* across the four school systems. As the table indicates, of the four school systems, NHE Schools are the most committed movement to apply the principle of *reverence for life/nature* in their educational approach. Besides sharing the holistic philosophical perspective about this principle, NHE Schools also endorse most of the educational ideas suggested by contemporary holistic educators. They foster Earth and Universal connection through meditation and direct contact with

nature (Earth connection and cosmic awareness). They promote ecological awareness of the interdependence of our planetary ecosystem through experiential and academic learning (environmental education). They nurture the children’s feeling of reverence for the natural world through a variety of activities; and finally, they seek to develop responsible young adults who understand, respect and care for the environment in which they live (environmental education).

Pedagogical Features	Waldorf Schools	Montessori Schools	NHE Schools	Reggio Schools
Earth connection	Very high	Moderate	Very high	Moderate
Environmental education	High	High	Very high	Low
Cosmic awareness	Moderate	Moderate	Very high	N/P
The arts	Very high	Low	Very high	High

Table 3.2 Summary of the pedagogical application of *reverence for life/nature* in the four school systems

Waldorf Schools also share the holistic view about this principle; however, their application of it is not as intensive and comprehensive as NHE Schools. Although there is a series of activities designated to foster reverence for the natural world in their curriculum (artistic activities, literature, extensive direct contact with nature), Waldorf Schools do not place much emphasis in developing awareness of humans’ interconnection with universal life neither do they give as much primacy to environmental education, in terms of sustainability, as NHE Schools do. In sum, Waldorf Schools do not apply the principle of *reverence for life/nature* as extensively as NHE Schools.

In Montessori Schools, the principle of *reverence for life/nature* is applied to a lower extent than NHE and Waldorf Schools. Although Montessori's view about the cosmic and the natural world echoes the contemporary holistic educators,³⁰⁰ Montessori Schools do not apply this principle as much as Waldorf and NHE Schools (similar to the findings of the first principle discussed). Namely, to promote earth connection, Montessori Schools draws only on direct contact with nature, whereas Waldorf and NHE Schools offer additional activities (meditation, literature, the arts). The contact children have with nature is also limited in comparison to Waldorf Schools. In regards to environmental education and the development of cosmic awareness, Montessori Schools appear to give similar attention to this matter as Waldorf Schools but relatively less than NHE Schools. Universal consciousness, for example, is a central theme in NHE Schools, addressed on a regular basis through various means (meditation, the arts, literature, discussions) whereas in Montessori Schools the main vehicle that fosters cosmic awareness ("cosmic curriculum") is introduced once a year. Finally, in Montessori Schools, the arts are experienced a few times a week, whereas in the other school systems, the entire curriculum is embedded with the artistic element.

Of the four school systems, Reggio Schools are the ones that least apply the principle of *reverence for life/nature*. Although Reggio educators apparently do not embrace the holistic thoughts about this principle, they still appear to apply the principle of *reverence for life/nature* in their approach to education. They encourage earth connection through direct contact with nature, they support the children's investigation of the environment and its natural life through projects (environmental education), and

they indirectly foster sensibility and a sense of aesthetics through their intense use of arts in the curriculum. Hence, even though Reggio Schools do not embrace the spiritual paradigm often associated with this principle, they ultimately nurture the children's feeling of reverence for the natural world through the various activities they provide.

3.3. *Interconnectedness*

The concept of *interconnectedness* is the most distinguishing aspect of holistic education.³⁰¹ It is present in most theories and worldviews (perennial and Life philosophy, indigenous and ecological worldviews, systems theory) that underpin the holistic movement and it is the foundation of the holistic educational paradigm.³⁰² The basic underlying assumption of holistic education is that everything is integrated, interrelated, interdependent, interconnected, and part of the same *whole*.³⁰³ The “universe and all that exists within it are one interrelated and interdependent whole”³⁰⁴ and every life is viewed as “rooted in the same universal life-creating reality.”³⁰⁵ In other words, every living organism in the universe is regarded as part of an “intricate web of life,” connected at deep levels and dependent upon each other to grow and maintain itself.³⁰⁶ A phenomenon is always understood in relation to other phenomena and never in isolation. Thus, instead of classifying phenomena into distinguished categories, the holistic view seeks to understand them within a large “set of relationships.”³⁰⁷

Contemporary holistic educators seek to foster this sense of wholeness, interconnectedness, and integration in all areas of the curriculum. They call for an education that gives young people this vision of unity and interconnectedness of the universe, that acknowledges the interdependence of phenomena, and that prepares citizens to live “cooperatively at peace in the global village.”³⁰⁸ They advocate for a curriculum that seeks to integrate the various domains of knowledge,³⁰⁹ connects mind and body, and linear and intuitive thinking; establishes connections with the community; fosters students’ relationship with the Earth; and encourages them to connect to their “transpersonal Self.”³¹⁰ Finally, they argue for an education that recognizes that “intelligence, thinking, and learning are inseparable processes”³¹¹ and part of a “single, dynamic, multi-faceted, functional capacity that is inherent in human consciousness.”³¹² Learning, they claim, occurs naturally and inevitably as one interacts with the world, draws connections, seeks relations, and constructs meaning.

This view of learning advocated by contemporary holistic educators echoes the constructivist perspective of learning as well as the works of several educators (Aristotle, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Steiner, Montessori, Dewey, Rogers, amongst others) who have advocated for experiential learning. Among them, Dewey was one of the most adamant advocates for learning through experience. Similar to contemporary holistic educators, Dewey also considered learning and thinking as an inseparable process that emerges as a result of experiences, connections, and meaning making.³¹³ For Dewey, learning was an act of thinking; and thinking, he defined as a process of making connections and forming relationships; a process of making “connecting links

explicit in the form of relationships.”³¹⁴ Dewey regarded experiential learning as the best educational means to foment thinking. Experience, he argued, awakens students’ curiosity and incites them with a desire to understand the phenomenon, which in turn, can only be understood through a process of connections; which, in Dewey’s view, is the whole process of thinking.

Similar to Dewey, although more holistically oriented, contemporary holistic educators also call for experiential learning in education. In their view, “education is a matter of experience,” of engaging the learner with the world, with life, and with the reality in which s/he lives.

To summarize, contemporary holistic educators endorse a “relationalist worldview,”³¹⁵ which regards life and all phenomena as intrinsically interconnected, interrelated, interdependent and part of the same *whole*. They call for an education that fosters this perception of the world, prepares citizens to live in a *global* society, nurtures connections and relationships (between mind and body, linear and intuitive thinking, individual and community/Earth, personal and transpersonal self),* promotes the integration of various domains of knowledge, and recognizes learning and thinking as one inseparable process. Finally, similar to other philosophers and educators, contemporary holistic educators also consider experiential learning a fundamental process in the act of educating.

* The themes illustrated in brackets will not be discussed in this section as they will be addressed, or they have already been addressed (Earth connections), in other segments (human wholeness, caring relations).

3.3.1. *The Principle of Interconnectedness in the Four School Systems*

Waldorf, Montessori, and NHE Schools share the holistic view about the principle of *interconnectedness*. As discussed earlier, Steiner, Montessori, and Sarkar believed that everything in the universe is interconnected, interdependent, and part of an inseparable whole. Like contemporary holistic educators, the three thinkers also claimed that we all come from the same cosmic unity and that we are all intrinsically interrelated and part of the cosmic evolution.³¹⁶ They also supported the notion that a phenomenon should never be studied in isolation but always in relation to other phenomena.³¹⁷

Although Steiner, Montessori, and Sarkar appear to share very similar views about this principle, the three respective school systems differ in their application of it.

In NHE Schools, the vision of cosmic unity is at the basis of their curriculum. As discussed elsewhere, Neohumanism is based on a philosophy of universalism, which views humanity as “one universal society with one universal ideology and one cosmic goal.”³¹⁸ From early childhood through high school, NHE Schools strive to foster among students an awareness of our relationship with the Universe. For young children, the emphasis is on furthering their sense of connection with the cosmic world through love (primarily through meditation, stories, songs), whereas for older students the focus is on expanding this feeling of connection through knowledge (through literature, social studies, scientific investigation).³¹⁹

In Montessori Schools, awareness of this principle is fostered primarily through their “cosmic curriculum.” As discussed previously, Montessori created this curriculum

for the junior grades (6-12 years old) to awaken their minds to the wonders of creation and the universe and to develop awareness of the thread of human and cosmic evolution.³²⁰ Additionally, she sought to provide a curriculum that would integrate knowledge from various areas into single lesson units. Hence, through her “cosmic curriculum,” Montessori envisioned an educational approach that would have all school subjects correlated around themes and centered in the knowledge of the cosmic plan.³²¹

In Waldorf Schools, the emphasis is more on developing Earth connection (which was discussed earlier) than on fostering awareness of universal interconnection. Nonetheless, there is still great emphasis in Waldorf Schools to foster awareness of the principle of *interconnectedness*. Their focus is on developing understanding of the interrelation and interdependence of all things, teaching students about the connections between cause and effect, and bringing awareness to the consequences of human actions.³²²

In addition to their philosophical perspective about *interconnectedness*, the three school systems also apply this principle in their pedagogical approach to teaching and learning. Like holistic education, they regard experiential learning as a fundamental aspect in education and they try to integrate knowledge from various disciplines as much as possible.

Reggio Schools, different from the other three school systems, do not seem to share the spiritual vision of *interconnectedness* advocated by contemporary holistic educators. As pointed out earlier, Reggio educators do not discuss universal interconnections neither they talk about cosmic evolution. Nonetheless, they still have

the concept of *interconnectedness* at the heart of their education. The Reggio approach is based on the notion of relationships.³²³ Education is viewed as a result of encounters, interactions, and relations. Learning is understood as a “co-creation of knowledge” evolving at any point in time through the interaction among people and the people’s interaction with the environment.³²⁴ Experiential learning is at the center of Reggio Schools and its regarded as an essential educational process to address the *wholeness* of the child.³²⁵ Finally, in Reggio Schools, the curriculum is emergent, constructed around themes, which means knowledge from various domains is integrated into thematic units instead of being studied separately through distinct disciplines.

3.3.2. Pedagogical Features that Foster Interconnectedness

As seen in the foregoing, the principle of *interconnectedness* is present in the pedagogical approach of the four selected school systems. Although each school system has its own approach to addressing this principle, overall they share similar pedagogical features that foster the principle of *interconnectedness*. Six pedagogical themes were identified as conducive to promoting this principle: awareness of the principle of interconnectedness, experiential learning, transdisciplinary/interdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning, the arts, documentation, and the physical space.

3.3.2.1. Awareness of the Principle of Interconnectedness

The three school systems that endorse the spiritual values of this principle (Waldorf, Montessori, and NHE Schools) offer pedagogical practices that foster awareness of *interconnectedness*. The most common practice across the three school systems to develop understanding of this principle is the teaching of curricular content. Montessori Schools have a specific curriculum to bring awareness to this principle (“cosmic curriculum”), whereas NHE and Waldorf Schools seek to foster awareness of *interconnectedness* through the various subjects of their curriculum. Overall, the three school systems devote special attention to teaching about the interrelation and interdependence of life and reality. The main curricular themes across the three school systems to address this principle are: the trajectory of human history, the interrelation of all life-societies, the relation between cause and effect, the interdependence of human endeavor and its effects on the natural, cultural, social, and economic world, and the interdependence of our ecosystem.³²⁶ Their aim is primarily to demonstrate through curricular content how everything is deeply interconnected and how consequential our actions are.

Meditation/visualization is another activity, offered by NHE Schools, which is aimed at developing awareness of the principle of interconnectedness.³²⁷ The focus of this activity, however, is to establish a sense of connection with the cosmos. According to the leaders of the movement, only through spiritual practice can one achieve a true sense of belonging to the Universe; only through a contemplative and disciplined way

can one truthfully reach a feeling of connection with the cosmos.³²⁸ In NHE Schools, as already discussed, students meditate on a regular basis. From a very early age they are led to contemplate about the Universe, to visualize their connection with it, and to feel one with it.

3.3.2.2. Experiential Learning

The four selected school systems give primacy to experiential learning in their educational approaches. In the early childhood program across the four school systems, children “learn by doing” literally the entire time they spend in the school. For the later grades in Waldorf, Montessori, and NHE Schools, children also have the opportunity to “experience” academic content on a regular basis (through the arts, cooking, gardening, trips, etc.). Overall, the goal of the four schools is to connect what students learn in the classroom with real life situations or vice-versa.³²⁹ Their aim is to help students see the connection between academic learning and the world they live in. More than just focusing on integrating student’s personal experiences in the learning process, the four school systems try to a great extent to incorporate the world in their curriculum.

3.3.2.3. Transdisciplinary/Interdisciplinary Approach

The four school systems support either a transdisciplinary or an interdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning. A transdisciplinary approach is usually defined as a

method where content from different disciplines are blended and explored through thematic units, mostly through projects.³³⁰ The interdisciplinary approach, on the other hand, typically incorporates knowledge from one discipline into others.³³¹

The NHE system argues for the transdisciplinary approach but their schools do not necessarily follow this methodology.³³² As described in Chapter 2, NHE schools do not have a fixed methodological approach to teaching and learning. They usually adapt their pedagogical methods according to the customs and needs of each particular culture. The literature shows examples of schools striving to implement this approach as well as cases of schools using very traditional methods of teaching.³³³

Montessori Schools usually have both approaches in their pedagogical methods; however the transdisciplinary mode appears to dominate. Maria Montessori was a strong advocate of research-project-based learning. She urged teachers to never present isolated facts to children in lessons but to group them together in a logical unit in order to form center of interests to students.³³⁴ She recommended initial lessons as a means to open several “rays of interest” to students to lead into “lines of research.”³³⁵ Throughout the year, students in Montessori Schools are engaged in research projects either individually or in groups. Sometimes their projects are centered on just one or two disciplines but in general, they seek to integrate knowledge from various areas as much as possible.³³⁶

In Waldorf Schools, the interdisciplinary approach is the most predominant method. Although subjects are taught separately, there is constant effort to integrate

content of one discipline into the teaching of the other.^{*337} Sometimes, academic content is taught through themes and knowledge from various disciplines are integrated into a lesson unit. But overall, the interdisciplinary mode is the most characteristic of the Waldorf pedagogy.

The Reggio approach is entirely transdisciplinary. Reggio Schools do not have a pre-determined program of study; the curriculum emerges along with the learning situations. Almost all learning activities are integrated into projects.³³⁸ A project may start from an idea posed by a child, an event experienced by another one, an initiative by the teacher, or a discussion in a group. It might begin with a graphic representation or a verbal exploration.³³⁹ The project evolves based on the questions and comments raised in the discussions and on the interests of the children involved.³⁴⁰ These projects are open-ended, often moving to unanticipated directions, and they may last for few days or several months. They include a variety of themes and they integrate knowledge from diverse areas.

3.3.2.4. *The Arts*

As discussed previously, Waldorf, NHE, and Reggio Schools make extensive use of the arts in their approach to education. Besides using the arts as a vehicle to foster *human spirituality* (Waldorf and NHE Schools) and *reverence for life/nature*, the

* The fact that there is only one teacher (during the eight years of middle childhood education) teaching all core subjects facilitates this integration. But even in high school, where there is a teacher for each subject matter, there is still an effort to integrate knowledge from different disciplines.

three school systems also use the arts as means to facilitate learning.³⁴¹ Through the medium of the arts, children experience the content of the lesson (particularly in Waldorf Schools), express their feelings and thoughts about it, process the knowledge embedded in it, and create new meaning. The arts are therefore used as a connector amongst knowledge, experience, expression, thinking and learning.

Of the three school systems, Reggio is the one that most emphasizes the arts as a medium for learning.* The arts are used as the primary vehicle for all the projects created in their schools. It is used as a means for children to communicate their thinking, develop ideas, create meaning, and construct their projects.³⁴² Every school has a mini-atelier in each classroom and a centrally located atelier with an abundance of materials to engage children in learning activities. Thus, in Reggio Schools, rather than experiencing the content of the lesson through the arts, children create the lesson with the arts.

3.3.2.5. *Documentation*

Documentation is another pedagogical practice that fosters the principle of *interconnectedness*, which is characteristic of Reggio Schools (none of the other school systems have this feature in their pedagogical approach). It is an activity in which

* Waldorf and NHE Schools use the arts more as medium to foster spirituality, subtlety, and sense of aesthetic than as a medium for learning. Hence, of the three systems, Reggio Schools are the ones that most use the arts as a medium for learning. In Montessori Schools, the arts are not used as a medium for learning. They are offered as a separate subject and, therefore, they are not included in this section.

teachers document (through note taking, tape recording, photograph taking, and/or video recording) the process of children's research projects.^{*343} Documentation works as an agent connecting the entire process of inquiry from beginning to end. It is a resource that allows teachers to identify areas of interest that arise in group-conversations, to interpret and analyze group-discussions, to plan new cycles of inquiry, to frame questions to stimulate the project, to re-evaluate the process, to reframe questions, to re-plan, and so on. Furthermore, it is an instrument that makes the process of learning (with all its intrinsic relationships) visible. In sum, documentation is a tool that links the whole cycle of research and demonstrates how interrelated learning is.

3.3.2.6. *Physical Space*

The physical space is also a characteristic of Reggio Schools and a significant element that promotes the principle of *interconnectedness*. The physical space of Reggio Schools is especially designed (from a collaboration between architects and educators) to support the interweaving of relationships among children, between children and adults, among adults, and between children and the environment.³⁴⁴ There is a central piazza, located at the center of the building and open to all classrooms, to facilitate encounters and group interactions. The kitchen is wide-open to allow children

* Documentation is a very important aspect of Reggio centers. Teachers spend entire afternoons examining children's drawings, photographs, and conversations. Their system of documentation serves various purposes. It functions as a memory to guide adults in planning the project work, evaluating the direction of the work, and finding new strategies for next steps. It works as a research tool to interpret the children's thinking, learning, and their different languages of expression. It serves as a professional development tool. And it is used as a form of assessment of the child's development.

to communicate with the staff. Each classroom has a mini-atelier and designated spaces for large- and small-group work to facilitate learning interaction. Each center has a centrally located atelier open to all classrooms, so children can have easy access to it and all classrooms are connected by wall-size windows to provide a sense of integration between spaces.³⁴⁵ In sum, the physical space in Reggio Schools embodies the principle of *interconnectedness* in its own structure, and from its configuration it fosters interrelation among people and integration of people with the environment.

In regards to Waldorf, Montessori, and NHE Schools, there is no reference in the literature about using the physical space as a means of promoting interactions neither to facilitate relationships.

3.3.3. *Evaluative Summary*

Table 3.3 summarizes the findings relative to the pedagogical application of the principle of *interconnectedness* across the four school systems. As the table indicates, of the four school systems, Reggio Schools most apply the principle of *interconnectedness* in their pedagogical approach to education. Although Reggio educators do not appear to embrace the spiritual values advocated by contemporary holistic educators about *interconnectedness*, they do agree with most of the holistic thoughts in regards to education (integrated and experiential learning, education based on relationships and connections). In comparison to the other three school systems, Reggio Schools have the most transdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning (emergent curriculum) and

most of the pedagogical features identified across the school systems to foster *interconnectedness* (five out of six). Again, although Reggio Schools do not explicitly teach about *interconnectedness*, they inevitably bring awareness to this concept (without the spiritual aspect) through their interconnected approach to education.

Pedagogical Features	Waldorf Schools	Montessori Schools	NHE Schools	Reggio Schools
Awareness of interconnectedness	High	Moderate	Very high	N/P
Experiential learning	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high
Transdisciplinary/interdisciplinary approach to learning	High	High	Moderate	Very high
The arts	High	N/P	High	Very high
Documentation	N/P	N/P	N/P	Very high
Physical space	N/P	N/P	N/P	Very high

Table 3.3 Summary of the pedagogical application of *interconnectedness* in the four school systems

Contrary to Reggio Schools, Waldorf and NHE Schools fully share the holistic view about *interconnectedness*, philosophically and educationally. However, their pedagogical application of it is not as extensively as Reggio Schools.’ Waldorf and NHE Schools have fewer pedagogical features than Reggio to promote *interconnectedness* (four instead of five); their approach to learning is not as integrated as Reggio Schools’ and they do not use the arts as a medium for learning (as a connector) to the same extent as does the Reggio approach. In comparison to each other, both Waldorf and NHE Schools appear to apply the principle of *interconnectedness* to a similar extent. Although NHE Schools give more primacy to developing awareness of this principle (through meditation and the curriculum) than Waldorf Schools, the latter

compensates for this gap by providing an interdisciplinary approach across all schools (not a constant practice in NHE Schools).

Montessori Schools are the ones that least applies the principle of *interconnectedness* in their pedagogical approach in comparison to the other three school systems. Although Montessori's philosophical and educational view about the principle of *interconnectedness* was very aligned with the holistic perspective, Montessori Schools do not apply this principle as extensively as the other school systems. Namely, of the six pedagogical features identified across the schools that foster *interconnectedness*, Montessori Schools offer only three. Of these three activities, their approach to teaching and learning appears to be very integrated (maybe even more than Waldorf Schools), although not as much as Reggio Schools; however their attention to bring awareness to *interconnectedness* is not as extensive (once a year through the cosmic curriculum) as Waldorf Schools (across the curriculum throughout the year) and NHE Schools (through the curriculum and meditation). In regards to experiential learning, there appear to be no difference among the four school systems.

3.4. *Human Wholeness*

The principle of *human wholeness* is based on the same idea of *unity* embedded in the concept of *interconnectedness*, where nothing exists in isolation. Thus, rather than considering the individual as an assemblage of units, the concept of *human wholeness* recognizes the person as one inseparable, integrated *whole*. Therefore, body,

mind, heart, and soul are all regarded as interconnected elements of one indivisible unit. Feeling, thinking, sensing, and willing are so deeply connected and dependent upon each other that one does not exist without the presence of the other.

The principle of *human wholeness* is also central to holistic education. Usually contemporary holistic educators define *human wholeness* as comprising five essential elements: intellectual, emotional or affective, physical, social, aesthetic (creativity), and spiritual.³⁴⁶ They regard these elements as equally important and co-dependent upon one other.

Contemporary holistic educators fiercely argue for the development of the *whole* person. They call for an education that values the intellectual as well as the emotional, social, physical, creative, intuitive, and spiritual potentials of the child. They call for an education that nurtures the child's overall growth.³⁴⁷ Alongside advocating for *whole* child development, contemporary holistic educators also call for an education that seeks balance.³⁴⁸ Balance between the intellect and the feelings, logic and creativity, analytic and intuitive thinking, content and process, individual and group learning, concept and experience, learning and assessment.³⁴⁹ The goal of holistic education to “integrate objective achievement with the subjective, personal, interior, spiritual aspects of life.”³⁵⁰

In regards to learning, contemporary holistic educators also interpret it as a *whole*, integral process.³⁵¹ In their view, learning is not “merely a cognitive function” that takes place only in the head.³⁵² “It is a social, physical, emotional, cognitive, aesthetic, and spiritual process. It is a *whole*, transforming act.”³⁵³ Contemporary

holistic educators advocate for experiential learning, which they claim as the best means to address the *wholeness* of the child. Through experience, they argue, the *whole* person is immersed in the process of learning. Experience, in their view, not only connects the learner with the world and the reality they live in but also draws on all human aspects to make learning happen.³⁵⁴

The holistic education's advocacy for experiential learning is anchored in the work of earlier philosophers and educators (Aristotle, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Dewey, Francis Parker, Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, among many others) who also argued for an education aimed at the development of the *whole* individual. Overall, these thinkers shared the same concern, that education must nurture all aspects of the individual, it must constantly seek to engage the *whole* child in the learning process, and it must be centered on experiential learning.³⁵⁵ They all condemned mainstream education for addressing excessively the “head,” neglecting the “hand” and the “heart.”³⁵⁶ Like contemporary holistic educators, they also viewed learning as a *whole* act involving the *whole* person and not an isolated function that happens in the mind alone.

Concluding, holistic educators in general (as well as humanistic educators), value *human wholeness* and argue for an education that nurtures the development of the *whole* child. They call for a “balanced” education (particularly contemporary holistic educators); they fully support experiential learning; and finally, they view learning as an intrinsic act involving all human faculties and not merely a function of the brain.

3.4.1. *The Principle of Human Wholeness in the Four School Systems*

The four school systems have the concept of *human wholeness* at the heart of their philosophy of education. Like holistic education, they also recognize all human faculties as equally important and intrinsically interconnected. Although they identify developmental periods (with the exception of Reggio Schools) where one human aspect dominates more than the other, overall the four school systems consider all areas of human activity as deeply connected. The Waldorf system is perhaps the only one that does not fully support this sense of *wholeness*. Steiner overly emphasized the predominant periods of willing, feeling, and thinking and made too clear cuts between them.³⁵⁷ His insistence in this matter is reflected in the excessive attention given in Waldorf Schools to the development of each human aspect in each developmental period, and their resistance in promoting any activity that would access a faculty (e.g. intellectual faculty) not yet developed (such as that demanding that writing can only be introduced at the age of seven).*

Also similar to holistic education, the four school systems are concerned with the development of the *whole* individual. The four systems are committed to nurture the growth of each child's physical, cognitive, creative, social, emotional, and spiritual potential (Reggio Schools usually do not refer to spiritual side of the individual).³⁵⁸

* Although Steiner stressed that each aspect should be developed at the "appropriate" time, his ultimate goal was to harmonize the child's threefold nature (willing, feeling, thinking) and thus develop a balanced and well-rounded adult (Steiner, *The Education of the Child in the Light of Anthroposophy*).

Additionally, following the holistic view, the four systems also endorse an education that balances objective achievement and subjective/personal development. Although the focus in Waldorf, Montessori, and NHE Schools appears to be on personal development, they are also concerned with cognitive development and academic accomplishment.

Finally, in respect to teaching and learning, the four school systems share the holistic educators' advocacy for experiential learning and their emphasis in involving the *whole* child in the educational activities instead of only its "head." Namely, in Waldorf, Montessori, and Reggio Schools, writing, for example, is an organic process that either emerges from the *wholeness* of child (Montessori and Reggio) or is absorbed by its *wholeness* (Waldorf).³⁵⁹ In Montessori Schools, children manipulate the letters of the alphabet with their hands, internalize their sounds, and compose words, as they feel ready for it. In Reggio Schools, children write words as they find the need for them; that is, words that have meaning for them. In Waldorf Schools, children experience the letters and the words through stories, drawing, and movement, that is, they absorb the letters or words with their *whole* being.*

3.4.2. Pedagogical Features that Foster Human Wholeness

As stated in the previous section, the four school systems value the *wholeness* of the child and they are committed to nurture its overall development. Their approach to

* There are no specific guidelines in NHE Schools for the introduction of literacy. It varies according to the system of each culture or country.

education provides several pedagogical practices as a means to address the *whole* child. They offer a variety of supplementary activities in addition to the regular academic classes; they draw extensively on experiential learning; they have a comprehensive form of assessment that evaluates the *whole* child; and they provide a balanced and nutritious diet to children.

3.4.2.1. Supplementary Activities, Environment, and Nutrition

The four school systems provides and/or supports various activities in addition to the regular academic classes to foster the overall growth of the child. In Montessori Schools, children participate in music, visual arts, drama, cooking, gardening, and physical education.³⁶⁰ In Waldorf Schools, students also practice music, drama, gardening, and physical education, besides handwork, woodwork, metal work, weaving, sculpture, painting, eurythmy, etc.³⁶¹ In NHE Schools, dance^{*}, singing, gardening, drama, play, physical activities, and spiritual practices are essential components of their curriculum.³⁶² In Reggio Schools, free play, make-believe, movement, and singing integrate their overall approach to learning.³⁶³

Also common to all school systems, is their emphasis on providing a natural outdoor environment and a balanced and nutritious diet to children. All of them support the belief that children need a healthy diet and proper outdoor facilities to develop and

^{*} In NHE schools, children practice “Mudra” dance, a form of movement that seeks to communicate ideas and feelings in a very subtle way. Mudra dance is often combined with some of the 5,000 songs Sarkar has composed. The themes include, devotion, empathy, love, nature, among others.

maintain their physical body strong and well. Of the four school systems, only the NHE Schools follow a vegetarian diet, claiming it to be essential for spiritual development.³⁶⁴ The other three approaches limit themselves to the nutritional aspect alone.

3.4.2.2. Experiential Learning

As already discussed, the four selected school systems give primacy to experiential learning in their educational approaches. In the past section I explored their emphasis on connecting academic content with real life situations through diverse activities experienced in and out of school. In this section, I examine how the school systems employ experiential learning as a means to engage the *whole* child in the learning process. Four main pedagogical elements were identified as conducive to involving the *whole* child in the learning experience: appropriate materials, learn by doing, imagination, and the arts.

3.4.2.2.1. Appropriate Materials

The four school systems use diverse materials to engage the child in *whole* learning experience. Montessori and Reggio Schools, however, are the ones that most emphasize the role of a *prepared environment* with *appropriate materials* as a means of learning. Both school systems draw extensively on these two resources to engage young children in *whole* learning experiences. In the two school systems, the school

environment is carefully prepared to promote and facilitate children's learning. In Montessori Schools, the emphasis is more on preparing the environment with suitable materials to foster children's independence whereas in Reggio Schools, the focus is on creating an environment that nourishes the children's sensory perceptions, stimulates their imagination, awakens their thinking, and gives them joy.³⁶⁵

In regards to the materials, Montessori Schools use "sensorial materials," especially designed to teach children cognitive concepts, whereas Reggio Schools use *raw* materials to allow children to create its own concepts. In both school systems, the materials are used as a means to engage children in the learning activity, to stimulate their will to learn, and to integrate their *whole* being in the process. The materials also serve the function to transform abstract thoughts or ideas into concrete form. In Montessori Schools, the material itself conveys the idea embedded in it (e.g. wooden materials composed of sets of ten objects representing the basis of the decimal system) while in Reggio Schools, the materials are the vehicle to convey the *children's* ideas (e.g. paper, paint, wood, plastic, etc. are used to represent how the fax system operates).³⁶⁶

3.4.2.2.2. *Learn by Doing*

The four school systems emphasize *learn by doing* in their approach to education. In the early childhood program of the four school systems, young children learn by doing literally the entire time they spend in school. Depending on the type of

school, they may be involved in free play, make believe, art, cooking, games, singing, movement, dancing, or meditation. In Montessori and Reggio Schools, young children also *learn by doing* through the materials they manipulate and the projects they develop.³⁶⁷

For the higher grades, Waldorf, Montessori, and NHE Schools also try to incorporate *learn by doing* in their pedagogical approach. In Montessori and Waldorf Schools, there is strong emphasis on making children experience concepts in a concrete way. In reading, mathematics, history, or geography, children in both types of schools are always experiencing content lesson concretely (through appropriate materials, experiments, project-work, cooking, gardening, expeditions, etc.).³⁶⁸ In both school systems, the concrete tends to precede the abstract, so children can make the connections themselves through their own perceptions instead of learning it through their “heads.”³⁶⁹

In NHE Schools, there is an effort to use “hands-on projects” as much as possible.³⁷⁰ However, because of their flexible methodology to teaching and learning, we cannot affirm that *learn by doing* is a constant approach for the latter grades across all their schools.

3.4.2.2.3. Imagination

The four selected school systems draw on the children’s imagination to engage them in the learning experience. Montessori and Waldorf Schools focus on the role of

the imagination particularly during middle childhood. Both Montessori and Steiner recommended that during this period, all teaching should steer the imaginative faculties of the child.³⁷¹ When teaching involves the child's imagination, they claimed, the whole child is involved in the process. It touches the child's emotions, it stimulates its desire to learn, it steers its intellect (Montessori's argument), and it works on its creativity.* In Montessori Schools, imagination is nurtured primarily through literature and the manner in which themes are introduced to children (usually through narration of stories). In Waldorf Schools, the entire middle school curriculum is taught through pictorial means (the telling of stories, and artistic activities of painting, drawing, and modeling) and every work the student produces (throughout all grades) is permeated with the artistic element. In NHE Schools, literature, drama, and meditation are the main vehicles to nurture the child's imaginative faculties. Neohumanist educators often use drama as a means of instruction, as a way to engage students experientially with academic content.³⁷² In Reggio Schools, the environment, the materials, and the arts are all features that are utilized to stimulate the children's imagination.³⁷³

* Steiner's emphasis on drawing on imagination during this period was also a way to avoid stimulating the intellectual aspect of the child, of whom he believed as not yet fully awoken at this stage. Through pictorial means, he argued, the child's "intellect would assimilate only what it is capable of;" and would therefore not be burdened to premature development (Childs, *Steiner in Theory and Practice*, 95)

3.4.2.2.4. *The Arts*

The arts are another pedagogical practice, extensively used in Waldorf, NHE, and Reggio Schools (and partially employed in Montessori Schools) that foster *whole* learning experience. Of the three systems, Waldorf and NHE Schools are the ones that most emphasize the arts as a vehicle to engage all human faculties in the learning experience. Namely, Steiner considered the arts as an essential element to connect thinking, feeling, and willing.³⁷⁴ He argued that the arts harmonize the human aspects because it works on all of them simultaneously. Steiner vehemently recommended that all teaching and schoolwork be embedded with the artistic element. No instruction, in his view, should remain in the purely intellectual realm.³⁷⁵ Sarkar had similar view and also insisted that the arts should be at the core of the curriculum.³⁷⁶

Although Waldorf and NHE Schools may place more emphasis in using the arts as means to engage children in *whole* learning experience, the three school systems are equally committed to integrate the arts in their curriculum.* In Montessori Schools, as

* In the previous sections, I made some distinctions about the application of the arts among the school systems. For example, for the principle of *human spirituality* and *reverence for life/nature*, I interpreted Waldorf and NHE Schools' application of the arts as "very high," whereas Reggio Schools' application of it, I interpreted as "high." The opposite happened when I addressed the principle of *interconnectedness*. I interpreted Reggio Schools' application of this principle as "very high" and Waldorf and NHE schools' application of it as "high." This distinction was made because of the ways in which the arts are used in these three school systems (medium for spiritual development, medium for learning). In the case of *human wholeness*, I argue, the situation is different. Regardless of how the arts are used, as a medium for learning or for spiritual development, the *whole* child is always involved in the process of artistic creation. Hence, as the three school systems are equally committed to integrate the arts in their curriculum, I argue, they are also equally committed to promote *human wholeness*.

discussed previously, the arts are offered as a separate few times a week, depending on the age group.

3.4.2.3. Meditation/Visualization/Yoga

The practice of meditation/visualization/yoga is another pedagogical activity that fosters the integration of the *whole* being. Of the four school systems, NHE Schools are the only ones that offer this activity. Neohumanist educators use meditation/visualization/yoga as a means to nurture the children's physical body (yoga), to encourage their imagination (through visualization), to cultivate their feelings of love (through practicing universal love—see Chapter 4, *caring relations*), and to connect them with their inner selves (“super conscious mind”).³⁷⁷

3.4.2.4. Assessment

The last pedagogical feature identified as conducive to nurturing the development of the *whole* child is the form of assessment employed in these school systems. Waldorf, Montessori, and Reggio Schools evaluate and assess each child as a *whole* instead of focusing on its academic achievement alone.³⁷⁸ Tests and grades are usually avoided and replaced by daily evaluation of students' academic performance, assignments, and behavior in class. Parents receive descriptive evaluations of their children's progress reporting their academic achievements as well as their emotional,

social, and physical growth. In Reggio Schools, the assessment is even more detailed and comprehensive. Teachers keep a diary, where they trace the daily experience of the child. They also tape-record and video-record all discussions in class and take photographs of the children's work, which they later share with parents. Most often parents come to the centers to discuss their children's overall progress with teachers and to receive the documentation of their child's work.³⁷⁹

In regards to NHE Schools, there is no reference in the literature about the forms of assessment employed in their schools.

3.4.3. *Evaluative Summary*

While the four school systems appear to fully endorse the concept of *human wholeness* in their approach to education, they present some variations in their application of this principle pedagogically. Table 3.4 summarizes the findings relative to the pedagogical application of this principle across the four school systems. As the table indicates, of the four school systems, Waldorf, NHE, and Reggio Schools appear to be the ones that most apply the principle of human *wholeness* in their approach to education. Although the Neohumanist and Reggio approach seem more aligned with the holistic view of *human wholeness* than the Waldorf system (the latter emphasizes the distinction amongst thinking, feeling, and willing), the three school systems appear to have similar pedagogical commitment to nurture the overall growth of the child.

Pedagogical Features	Waldorf Schools	Montessori Schools	NHE Schools	Reggio Schools
Supplementary activities/ environment/nutrition	Very high	High	Very high	High
Appropriate materials	High	Very high	High	Very high
Learn by doing	Very high	Very high	High	Very high
Imagination	Very high	Moderate	Very high	Very high
The arts	Very high	Low	Very high	Very high
Meditation/yoga	N/P	N/P	Very high	N/P
Assessment	Very high	Very high	N/P	Very high

Table 3.4 Summary of the pedagogical application of *human wholeness* across the four school systems

Waldorf, NHE, and Reggio Schools have the artistic element embedded in their pedagogical activities and most of the activities draw on the children’s imagination.

Waldorf Schools may not emphasize the use of appropriate materials for *whole* learning experience as much as Reggio Schools neither they have meditation/yoga in their schools but they offer a wider variety of supplementary activities than the other school systems, they promote *learn by doing* as much as possible, and they have a very comprehensive form of assessment. Reggio Schools do not have meditation/yoga as part of their curriculum either and they may not offer as many supplementary activities as Waldorf Schools do but, on the other hand, they draw extensively on appropriate materials and *learn by doing*, and their form of assessment is the most comprehensive of all school systems. NHE Schools do not emphasize the use of appropriate materials as Reggio Schools and we do not know if *learn by doing* is constant across their schools in the latter grades. Additionally, there is no reference in the literature about the form of assessment in NHE Schools (considering the values embedded in the Neohumanist

philosophy of education, it is hard to conceive that students will be assessed with traditional methods based only on grades). Nonetheless, NHE Schools offer daily practice of meditation/yoga and continual involvement in complimentary activities (they may not offer the same variety of activities as Waldorf Schools but they appear to employ them with as extensively as Waldorf Schools). Hence, the three school systems appear to be equally committed to nurture the overall development of the child.

Montessori Schools appear to apply the principle of *human wholeness* to a less extent in comparison to the three school systems discussed above. Although they fully agree with the holistic view of *human wholeness*, their pedagogical method to address this principle is not as inclusive as the other systems. Of the pedagogical practices identified across the four school systems, Montessori Schools emphasize *learn by doing* as much as Reggio and Waldorf Schools; their form of assessment is as comprehensive as these two school systems; and they use appropriate materials for *whole* learning experience more extensively than Waldorf and NHE Schools. However, in Montessori Schools, the arts are practiced to a much less extent; their stress on imagination is limited to middle childhood alone; they appear to offer fewer supplementary activities in comparison to Waldorf Schools, and they do not have meditation/yoga as a regular practice in their schools. In sum, overall Montessori Schools do not appear to apply the principle of *human wholeness* to the same extent as the other three school systems.

CHAPTER 4

THE FOUR HUMANISTIC-BASED PRINCIPLES AND THEIR PEDAGOGICAL APPLICATION INDIVIDUAL UNIQUENESS, CARING RELATIONS, FREEDOM/AUTONOMY AND DEMOCRACY

In the previous chapter, I explored the more spiritually and holistically oriented principles that integrate holistic education and I examined how the selected school systems applied these principles in their pedagogy. In this chapter, I investigate the other four principles selected in this study, the ones that comprise the humanistic ideas embedded in holistic education: *individual uniqueness, caring relations, freedom/autonomy, and democracy*.

Following the same structure used in the previous chapter, I begin by examining the holistic view about these principles. I then discuss the philosophical perspective of each school movement about the principles and their pedagogical application of them. Finally, in the last section, I examine the correspondence between the school systems' perception of the principles and the holistic view and I compare the pedagogical application of the principles across the school systems. Again, each principle is discussed separately.

Reiterating once more, a comparative analysis between the findings related to the pedagogical applicability of all principles in the four school systems is presented in Chapter 5, after all principles have been discussed.

4.1. Individual Uniqueness

Contemporary holistic educators recognize every person as a unique being with inherent qualities, potentialities, and needs, and with a singular way to interact and respond to reality.³⁸⁰ In acknowledging *human uniqueness*, contemporary holistic educators do not deny the influence of the sociocultural environment; rather, they understand it as a contributing factor to human singularity. As discussed in the previous chapter, contemporary holistic educators view each individual as a complex and unique being, influenced by subjective and objective realities. In the holistic view, human individuality is not merely a construct of the sociocultural environment neither a pure manifestation of a divine source. Rather, it is an expression of both, manifested in unique ways.

In addition to acknowledging the *uniqueness* of each individual, contemporary holistic educators also bring attention to the diversity of humanity as a whole.³⁸¹ They advocate for a culture that acknowledges the multiple layers of diversity (cultural, racial, religious, gender, ethnic, etc.) but does not transform the *diverse categories* into means of separation between humankind. In other words, they call for a “culture of

peace,” one that honors differences but does not separate humans into distinct clusters, a culture that nurtures mutual understanding, tolerance, respect and cooperation.³⁸²

Contemporary holistic educators advocate for a curriculum that begins with the child, with the “living reality” of each individual.³⁸³ They reject any form of standardized approach to education (which assumes that everyone is capable of displaying the same aptitude and skills) and call instead for an individualized approach that accommodates the needs and particularities of every child.³⁸⁴ They recognize that there are different learning styles, multiple ways of knowing, and “multiple kinds of intelligence” and they acknowledge all of them as equally important.³⁸⁵ Finally, for contemporary holistic educators, every individual develops differently at a singular pace. The educator, therefore, must respect the natural unfolding of each child, attend to its particular needs, and provide support for the growth of its inherent potentialities.³⁸⁶

This emphasis of holistic education to always have the child as the starting point in the educative process is rooted in Rousseau’s thoughts about education.³⁸⁷ The latter was the first philosopher to advocate for a child-centered education and to point out the need to understand and respect individual qualities, differences, and aptitudes in the act of educating. Rousseau emphasized that the role of the educator is to constantly observe and study his/her pupils in order to respond to them accordingly. In every teaching, he argued, the teacher must carefully watch the child, anticipate where the child’s interest might lead, and then be prepared to guide him/her in the best possible way. The child, he wrote, “ought to be wholly involved with the thing, but [the teacher] ought to be wholly involved with the child.”³⁸⁸

Rousseau's emphasis on allowing the child to lead the way is echoed in the works of various holistic and humanistic educators, who have also argued for the child-centered approach to education. Most advocates in this area (including contemporary holistic educators) recognize the *uniqueness* of each individual and the majority of them believe that every child is a competent learner, who only needs proper guidance and support in order to develop and thrive.

On the whole, holistic educators recognize that each human being is a complex, competent, and unique individuality (influenced by subjective and objective competing forces) that develops differently, learns differently, and unfolds his/her faculties at a distinctive pace. Contemporary holistic educators reject any standardized method of education and call instead for an individualized approach that accommodates the needs of each individual, an approach that begins with the "living reality" of each child. Finally they call for a culture that fosters understanding, tolerance, and respect for the diversity of humankind.

4.1.1. The Principle of Human Uniqueness in the Four School Systems

Waldorf, Montessori, NHE, and Reggio Schools recognize, value, and respect *human uniqueness* in their approach to education. Waldorf, Montessori, and NHE Schools place more emphasis on the inherent inner self as the dominant factor in their view of human individuality whereas the Reggio system highlights the influence of the sociocultural environment in the formation of the individual.³⁸⁹ Nonetheless, all four

systems recognize each person as a unique being, with inherent qualities, potentialities, and needs.* Teachers in the four school systems are expected to have a deep understanding of their pupils (cognitively, emotionally, and physically) and a firm disposition to nurture the development of each child.

Every school system approaches this principle in distinct ways. In Montessori Schools, the emphasis is on observing and following the child's *developmental/cognitive* needs. Teachers are trained to carefully observe each child's cognitive development and guide him/her according to his/her readiness for learning.³⁹⁰ In Reggio Schools, the focus is on knowing how children learn and what is the best means to assist them to express their ideas.³⁹¹ Reggio educators are also trained to methodically observe the children's cognitive progress and to guide them accordingly. In NHE and Waldorf Schools, the primary concern is the inner, overall development of each student. In the Waldorf system, particularly, teachers are expected to know each of their pupils intimately and profoundly.³⁹² Steiner was very emphatic that teachers should have a thorough understanding of their students to guide them in their overall development.³⁹³ He claimed that only through a deep understanding of the child's individuality could teachers truly educate individually.

Similar to contemporary holistic educators, Waldorf, Montessori, NHE, and Reggio Schools also reject standardized methods of education. However, only Montessori and NHE Schools advocate for an individualized approach to learning. Both

* Although Reggio educators value each child's individuality, they never consider the child in isolation. For them, the child is always seen in relation to other children, to adults, to the environment, to the community, and to the society as a whole.

systems claim that lessons should be created on the basis of each child's ability and level of development.³⁹⁴ Between the two, Montessori is unquestionably the most individualized approach. Maria Montessori was adamant that the child is the one who indicates the course of learning; the role of the teacher is to observe, study each child, and then lead him/her to the next learning step.³⁹⁵ In Reggio Schools, children also indicate the course of learning and teachers direct the activities based on their contributions. However, in Reggio Schools, learning is always a social act and it happens primarily in groups.

In regards to accommodating different learning styles and multiple means of expression, Reggio Schools pay most attention to this matter. Reggio educators claim that children have a "hundred different languages" to express themselves.³⁹⁶ In their view, children's "expression through many media is not a separate part of the curriculum but is inseparable from the whole cognitive/symbolic expression in the process of learning."³⁹⁷

In general, the four school systems share the holistic advocacy for an education that fosters understanding, tolerance, and respect for the diversity of humanity. With the exception of NHE Schools, this concept is usually more implicit in the relationships established in their schools than explicitly discussed in classrooms. Neohumanist educators insist on celebrating diversity with children in their schools to help them appreciate the *uniqueness* of humankind represented in the various world cultures.³⁹⁸ Their aim, however, is not to be limited to the differences alone. Their goal is to help

children realize unity in the midst of multiplicity; to help them appreciate the diverse manifestations of the same universal mind.³⁹⁹

4.1.2. Pedagogical Features that Nurture Individual Uniqueness

As seen in the preceding section, the four school systems recognize and cherish *individual uniqueness* in their system of education but each movement appears to approach this matter in distinct ways. Four main pedagogical elements were identified across the four school systems that foster this principle: extended teacher-student relation, child-centered approach to learning, multiple means of expression, and respect to diversity.

4.1.2.1. Extended Teacher-Student Relation

While in mainstream schools, children typically spend a year with a class teacher; in Montessori, Reggio, and Waldorf Schools, children usually stay with their class teacher for at least two to three years. In Montessori and Reggio Schools, children normally spend three years with the same teachers.⁴⁰⁰ In Waldorf Schools, young children have one teacher for two to three years whereas middle school students have one main class teacher for eight years.⁴⁰¹ Through this extended contact, teachers deepen their understanding of each pupil; they follow his/her development for a longer period of time and consequently, they are able to guide each student more appropriately.

In regards to NHE Schools, there is no reference in the literature about the numbers of years children stay with the same teacher.

4.1.2.2. Child-Centered Approach to Learning

Reggio, Montessori, and NHE Schools advocate for a child-centered approach to *learning*. Montessori and NHE Schools offer an individualized method as a means to honor the centeredness of the child in the learning process. In Reggio Schools, the emergent curriculum (see discussion, p.117) is what most distinguishes their child-centered approach to learning.

In Montessori Schools, the entire program, from early childhood through high school, draws on individualized methods to teaching and learning.⁴⁰² Children typically work independently, on their own, in their own rhythm, receiving the guidance from the teacher whenever needed or when the teacher deems appropriate. Older students continue their education in the same “free method” of study.⁴⁰³ They work independently (either in groups or individually) and progress at their own pace. During instruction, they are usually grouped according to their level of development in a particular area rather than by age.

In NHE Schools, the emphasis is more on meeting each child’s needs through an individualized approach than on *following the child’s lead*. Teachers are expected to provide a variety of educational choices to accommodate children’s different learning styles and their interests, talents, and multiple capabilities.⁴⁰⁴ Although there is an effort

in the NHE system to provide an individualized approach, I cannot affirm that this is a constant method across their schools because of the flexibility of pedagogical methodology in their educational system.

In Reggio Schools, the child-centered approach to learning is mostly reflected in the emergent curriculum. In Reggio Schools, the curriculum *literally* emerges from the children. All projects and activities evolve from children's ideas, interests, and curiosity. Similar to Maria Montessori and most holistic thinkers, Reggio educators also argue that it is the children who lead the way.⁴⁰⁵ The role of the teacher is to observe, listen, question, document, interpret, challenge, and guide. It is a "pedagogy of listening", as they call it.⁴⁰⁶ Children take the lead; teachers listen, observe, document, interpret and act. As children move forward, teachers plan, guide, facilitate, challenge, and maximize their possibilities for learning. And hence, the curriculum emerges.⁴⁰⁷

4.1.2.3. Multiple Means of Expression

The four school systems recognize that there are multiple ways of knowing and experiencing the world and multiple means to express ideas, knowledge, and thoughts. Hence, they all offer a variety of learning experiences that nurture the children's multiple intelligences and diverse learning styles.* Nonetheless, among the four approaches, Reggio is the one that most promotes multiplicity of expression. In Reggio

* Although in NHE Schools, teachers are expected to provide a variety of educational alternatives to encourage children's diverse means of expression, we cannot, once again, affirm the consistency of this practice across their schools because of the flexibility of their learning methodology.

Schools, children are encouraged to use multiple means of expression (speech, movement, drawing, painting, modeling, etc.) to communicate their ideas and thoughts.⁴⁰⁸ Every project carried out in their schools draws on different mediums and children have the freedom to choose what suits them better.⁴⁰⁹

4.1.2.4. Respect for Diversity

The four school systems indirectly promote understanding, respect, and tolerance towards diversity through their emphasis on establishing caring and respectful relationships among all members of their school community.⁴¹⁰

In addition to fostering respect for diversity indirectly, NHE Schools also bring attention to this matter directly in their approach to education. Through literature, the arts, discussions, celebration of different cultures, and meditation, Neohumanist educators seek to awaken the children's mind to the richness of diversity. Their goal is to help children see "the other" with an open mind, free of prejudices, biases, dogmas, or stereotypes.⁴¹¹

4.1.3. Evaluative Summary

Table 4.1 summarizes the findings relative to the pedagogical application of the principle of *individual uniqueness* across the four school systems. As the table indicates, of the four school systems, Reggio Schools appear to be the most committed to address

this principle. Although the Reggio approach is known for its emphasis on the social aspects of learning, Reggio educators appear to value *individual uniqueness* almost to the same extent as contemporary holistic educators. Besides sharing most of the holistic ideas about this principle, Reggio Schools appear to be the ones that most attend to *individual uniqueness* in their pedagogical approach. The teacher-student relationship in Reggio Schools may not last as long as in the Waldorf system, and their attention to diversity may not be as intensive as the NHE Schools.’ Yet, the Reggio approach appears to be the one that most accommodates children’s individuality. Along with Montessori Schools, Reggio Schools have the most child-centered approach to learning (through the emergent curriculum); and of the four school systems, it is the Reggio Schools that most pay attention to promoting children’s multiple means of expression. Thus, through the emergent curriculum and their attention to multiple means of expression, Reggio educators provide endless possibilities for children to express their uniqueness.

Pedagogical Features	Waldorf Schools	Montessori Schools	NHE Schools	Reggio Schools
Extended teacher-student relation	Very high	High	N/P	High
Child-centered approach to learning	N/P	Very high	Moderate	Very High
Multiple means of expression	High	High	High	Very high
Respect to diversity	High	High	Very high	High

Table 4.1 Summary of the pedagogical application of *individual uniqueness* across the four school systems

Montessori Schools embrace most of the holistic ideas about *individual uniqueness* and they are almost as committed to nurture this principle as Reggio Schools. Namely, they provide an individualized approach to education (child-centered approach to learning) to accommodate the uniqueness of each individual; their attention to diversity is similar to that found in Reggio Schools; and like Reggio educators, Montessori teachers also spend about three with their students. “Multiple means of expression” is the only pedagogical feature, which is more extensively present in Reggio Schools than in Montessori Schools. The materials used in Montessori classrooms, particularly in the early childhood program, are designed for specific cognitive functions.⁴¹² Thus, rather than allowing multiple means of expression, these materials limit children to specific learning outcomes. Montessori Schools, therefore, appear to apply the principle of *individual uniqueness* slightly less extensively than Reggio Schools.

NHE Schools appear to apply this principle to a lower extent than Reggio and Montessori Schools. Although their view about *individual uniqueness* is very aligned with the holistic ideas, their application of it is not as constant and extensive as the other two systems. There is no reference in the literature about the number of years students and teachers spend together; the individualized approach to learning is not constant across all their schools (child-centered approach to learning). There is also no indication that all their schools accommodate multiple means of expression. Respect to diversity is the only pedagogical feature relative to this principle, which NHE Schools apply to a

greater extent than the other school systems. In sum, overall NHE Schools do not apply this principle as constantly and extensively as Montessori and Reggio Schools.

Waldorf Schools appear to be the least committed to attend to *individual uniqueness*. Besides differing in some ways from the ideas advocated by contemporary holistic educators (Waldorf Schools do not support individualized approaches to learning or accommodate different learning styles), Waldorf Schools also do not show much attention to catering to each child's individual learning needs. Although Waldorf teachers know their students in depth, watch their development closely through an extended period of time (8 years), provide a variety of activities that nurture the children's multiple intelligences (multiple means of expression), and promote an atmosphere of respect, inclusiveness, and tolerance among all students in the school (respect to diversity), they do not alter their approach to teaching and learning to accommodate students' different learning styles. In Waldorf Schools, instruction is typically performed by the class teacher and directed to the whole class.⁴¹³ All students participate in the same learning activities, regardless of their particular learning styles.* They learn the same content and move forward as a group. If a student is having difficulty to follow the class, special arrangements are made together with the family to help him/her overcome his/her difficulties. However, if a student is advanced in his/her

* The aim of Waldorf education is to develop rounded-balanced adults. They believe that all children should experience a range of activities, even if it is difficult for them (if it is not part of their nature). In that way, they seek to help students overcome their limitations and become more completed and integrated beings (Rocha, *Schools Where Children Matter*).

class in comparison to his/her colleagues, s/he is usually held back to the level of the group.⁴¹⁴

4.2. *Caring Relations*

Caring relations is a concept that has been extensively discussed by Nell Noddings.⁴¹⁵ According to the American philosopher, care is a basic condition in human life toward which everyone longs and strives. *Caring relations*, she describes, begins with the mother and her infant; it is a relation in which the mother responds out of love and natural inclination. This “natural caring,” she adds, is an experience that the infant perceives as good and for the rest of his life seeks in others the recurrence of this special caring relationship.⁴¹⁶ Broadly speaking, *caring relations* involve love, respect, receptive attention, concern, and a genuine interest for the other.

Caring relations are at the heart of holistic education. The relationship teachers establish with their students is regarded as the foundation for learning, social life, and social justice.⁴¹⁷ Holistic educators in general (contemporary and pioneers) believe that only in an atmosphere of mutual affection, respect, empathy, acceptance, and trust, can students thrive; only in “caring learning communities,” will the children’s potentials prosper.⁴¹⁸

Overall, contemporary holistic educators advocate for an education that fosters loving, caring and genuine relationships between teachers and students and among the students themselves.⁴¹⁹ They call for an education in which all members of the

community (teachers, parents, students, and staff) are valued and cared for; an education that fosters friendship, companionship; brotherhood; and meaningful connections.

Contemporary holistic educators also draw attention to what is needed for teachers to establish caring and authentic relationships with their students. A common argument among them is that teachers need first to be able to connect with their deeper selves before they can establish authentic relationships with their students.⁴²⁰ Palmer, for instance, argues that caring and genuine relations are constructed based on a sense of connectedness we establish with the other.⁴²¹ This sense of connectedness, he adds, is dependent upon our ability to reconnect ourselves to our deeper selves, our spiritual sources. In Palmer's view, teachers who are disconnected from their souls cannot connect with their students. If they do not know who they are, he argues, they cannot understand who their students are.

Palmer's argument is echoed in the works of John Miller, Richard Brown, and Rachael Kessler, three leaders in the field of holistic education, who have established holistic teacher-training programs. The three educators have placed "soul connection" at the heart of their programs.⁴²²

4.2.1. The Principle of Caring Relations in the Four School Systems

The four school systems have the principle of *caring relations* at the heart of their pedagogical approach. Similar to holistic educators, they too, see positive and

loving relationships as the foundation for the child's education. They also believe that in order to flourish, students need a safe environment, where they feel loved, respected, understood, and accepted to be able to unfold their qualities and capabilities.⁴²³

Steiner, for example, was very adamant that teachers must love all their students unconditionally and fully accept each one of them as s/he is. Education, he argued, ought to always "be based on love for the child," and teaching and educating must be "approached on the basis of this living experience."⁴²⁴ Montessori too, viewed education as an act of love and urged teachers to try to understand, respect, and accept the individuality of each student.⁴²⁵ She believed children need caring teachers working *together with* them and not authoritarian figures working *upon* them.⁴²⁶

In Reggio Schools we find this same emphasis on respecting, valuing, and accepting each child. Reggio educators are deeply committed to work *with* the children's ideas. Each contribution is valued, respected, and integrated in the projects they create.⁴²⁷

In NHE Schools, love, respect, and empathy are also essential attitudes expected from every teacher, and from every student as well. Neohumanist educators believe children should be taught the values embedded in the principle of Universal love (non-violence, compassion, justice, tolerance, reciprocal respect, friendship, love for all, etc.).⁴²⁸ They claim children from a very early age are already capable of and should have the opportunity to think and meditate upon those values.

In addition to fostering caring and positive teacher-student relationships, the four school systems are also committed to building a sense of community in their

schools. There is a friendly atmosphere among teachers, parents, students, and staff, and parents are usually very active in the community life of the school.⁴²⁹

In regards to the holistic emphasis in helping teachers connect with their deeper selves, only Waldorf and NHE Schools emphasize this aspect. Both Waldorf and Neohumanist educators go through intense spiritual training (through meditation, the arts, readings, etc.) before they take a teaching position.⁴³⁰ They are also required to continuously work on their self-development throughout their teaching career.

4.2.2. Pedagogical Features that Foster Caring Relations

As seen in the preceding section, the four school systems are committed to build *caring relations* in their schools. Two main pedagogical features were identified across the four school systems that contribute to building a caring community: the role of teachers and the role of parents. In addition to these two major aspects, each school movement appears to have one special characteristic that is most accentuated in their approach to this principle. In Waldorf Schools, the strong sense of the community is what most characterizes their method. In Montessori Schools, the atmosphere of friendship and respect is the most highlighted feature. In Reggio Schools, collaboration and cooperation are the elements that most define their approach. In NHE Schools, universal love is their most distinguishing characteristic.

4.2.2.1.a. Strong Sense of Community

Waldorf Schools are characterized by a strong sense of community in their schools. Several aspects contribute to develop this feeling of community. To begin with, the great majority of students in Waldorf schools spend their entire education in the same school.^{*431} From first through eighth grade students remain within the same group and the same teacher. In some countries the class may even go all the way through high school together. During their school-life, students go on several trips with their class teacher and twice a year, parents, students, and teacher go on parent-organized day trips.⁴³²

Another factor that adds to building a sense of community in Waldorf Schools is the range of activities promoted by the latter. Throughout the year, Waldorf Schools celebrate festivals (in which the parents organize), promote seminars, workshops, and lectures, sponsor performances, and frequently invite parents to watch their children's presentations.

In sum, this close, frequent, and intense contact among teachers, students, and parents is what makes their sense of community so strong.

* Most parents choose the Waldorf system because of its unique approach to education rather than because of its locality. As Waldorf schools are usually comprehensive, K-8, and some of them K-12, most families have their children complete their education in the same school.

4.2.2.1.b. Atmosphere of Friendship and Respect

In Montessori Schools, the atmosphere of friendship and respect cultivated in their schools is the distinguishing feature of their system that promotes *caring relations*. Teachers as well as students are expected to build positive, caring, and constructive relationships with all members of the school community.⁴³³ Students are often assigned to work with other students they might have difficulties in relating to, so they can learn to work out their differences. They are often encouraged to assist the younger ones; they are continuously reminded not to disturb their colleagues' independent work; and they are frequently asked to respect each other's different personalities.⁴³⁴

In addition to this atmosphere of respect and understanding cultivated in the daily life of the school, Montessori Schools also promotes a range of trips (daily and week-long trips) throughout the year to strengthen the relationship between students and teachers and between the students themselves. The emphasis is always in developing friendship, understanding, and respect toward the other.

4.2.2.1.c. Collaboration and Cooperation

One of the most distinguishing features of the Reggio approach is the strong sense of collaboration and cooperation among all members of the school community.⁴³⁵ It is present in the way children work, in how teachers, educators, children, parents, and staff relate to one another, and in the support provided by the city administrators. In all

Reggio Schools, teachers work in pairs. All the work they do with children is jointly planned, discussed, and analyzed. They frequently exchange ideas and plan project work with the atelierista and they continuously receive support from the team of pedagogical coordinators. Parents also collaborate with teachers and children in their projects and they often participate in discussions concerning educational issues.

When working with children, teachers take the role of partners.⁴³⁶ They are always ready to follow the children in their discoveries, to learn with them, to reflect on their own practice, and to change. Thus, rather than adopting a hierarchical attitude, Reggio teachers take a cooperative stance, where everyone is subjected to learning and everybody is responsible to make it happen.

4.2.2.1.d. Universal Love

A unique feature of NHE Schools is their emphasis on developing universal love. As discussed previously, Neohumanist educators believe children should be taught values of non-violence, compassion, justice, tolerance, reciprocal respect, friendship, and love for all. Stories, drama, dancing, singing and mediation are some of the means by which children are introduced to think about these themes.⁴³⁷ Singing mantras and meditation, though, appear to be the most common mediums used in their schools to invite children to enter into a state of love. Neohumanist educators believe that chanting mantras and meditation are essential vehicles to arouse feelings of love and to bring unity among people.⁴³⁸ In NHE Schools, teachers and children sing or chant mantras

(words of deep spiritual meaning) several times during the day, usually before meditation and meals. During meditation, children are often invited to contemplate upon the principles of universal love and to expand their feelings of love to those around them, to the wider community, and to humanity as a whole.

4.2.2.2. Teacher's Role

In the four school systems, the role of the teacher is essential in fostering *caring relations*. In general, teachers across all school systems are expected to provide a safe environment to children, where they feel valued, respected, understood, accepted, and cared for. Additionally, teachers are supposed to build positive and friendly relationships with parents and make them feel part of the school community (particularly in Reggio, Waldorf, and NHE Schools).

Although the four school systems appear to share similar views about their expectations for teachers to foster caring relations, they differ in the ways in which they approach this matter.

In Waldorf Schools, teachers are expected to establish a deep and intimate relationship with each student.⁴³⁹ They must attentively observe every one of them, listen to their needs, bring them to their meditation, and develop a deep understanding of them. They are expected to protect, love, and fully accept each one of them.⁴⁴⁰ The intense and close contact teachers have with their pupils inside (eight years with the

same class) and outside the school environment (field-trips, excursions, and home visits)* is what facilitates the development of this intimate relationship.

Montessori teachers are also expected to love, understand, and accept all their students but most importantly, they must respect each one of them.⁴⁴¹ Their role is to strive to establish positive relationships with their pupils based on respect, equality, and love. They are supposed to have an egalitarian relationship with their students, where they respect and support the choices and decisions they make.

In Reggio Schools, the teachers' primary role is to assist children to achieve the best in themselves. That includes, knowing their pupils well, establishing a personal connection with each one of them, respecting their thoughts, contributions, and decisions, assisting them to implement their ideas, and caring for their wellbeing⁴⁴²

In NHE Schools, the emphasis is on practicing the principles of universal love. Teachers are expected to show kindness, generosity, patience, humility, and selflessness toward children, and to be just and fair.⁴⁴³ They must foster cooperation, compassion, and sharing among children. Finally, they must strive to build a loving and caring relation with each child and its family.[†]

* Waldorf teachers usually pay a visit to each new child's home soon after they enter the school.

† Neohumanist teachers also pay a home visit to each new child that comes into their school, as a way to establish a closer rapport with the child and its family.

4.2.2.3. *Parents' Role*

Parents have an important role in the community life of the four school systems. Their participation and dedication to the school are important aspects in the development of *caring relations* in the school community. Although parents' responsibilities vary across the four school systems, and across each school, overall, they share some common roles.

In both Waldorf and NHE Schools, for example, parents help organize and coordinate most school's events and activities, they participate in lectures and workshops offered by the school,* they serve on parent (NHE) or school (Waldorf) committees, and they have a very close contact with their children's teachers.⁴⁴⁴ In both systems, parents take an active role in the community life of the school but inside the classroom their roles are quite different. In NHE Schools, parents are welcomed to volunteer in the classrooms or even to teach some "electives."⁴⁴⁵ In the Waldorf system, parent's participation inside the classroom is practically nonexistent.

In Montessori Schools, parents also help with the school's events and activities; however their participation in the community life of the school does not appear to be as extensive as the parents' in Waldorf and NHE Schools. On the other hand, Montessori parents, as in NHE Schools, are usually welcomed inside classrooms to share their

* Both Waldorf and Neohumanist education offer lectures to parents to help them understand the philosophy of their movement and the education their children are getting at school. The objective of both movements is to assist parents to educate their children in accordance with their philosophy.

expertise or to help with the activities.⁴⁴⁶ They also tend to have a close relationship with their children’s teachers.

In Reggio Schools, parents take an active role inside and outside the classroom. They collaborate with teachers in the projects they develop with children, they assist students in their learning activities, they frequently meet with teachers to discuss the progress of their children, they participate in discussions with Reggio educators and administrators, and they help with the school’s proceedings and activities.⁴⁴⁷

4.2.3. Evaluative Summary

The four school systems appear to be closely aligned with the contemporary holistic view about *caring relations*. The holistic teacher training (helping teachers connect with their deeper selves) is the only aspect that is not shared by all school systems (only by Waldorf and NHE Schools). Nonetheless, in regards to the relationships expected in education, the four approaches support the ideas advocated in holistic education.

Pedagogical Features	Waldorf Schools	Montessori Schools	NHE Schools	Reggio Schools
Teacher’s role	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high
Parents’ role	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high
Distinguishing characteristics: * Strong sense of community * Atmosphere of friendship and respect * Collaboration and cooperation * Universal love	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high

Table 4.2 Summary of the pedagogical application of *caring relations* in the four school systems

In regards to their application of this principle, table 4.2 summarizes the findings across the four school systems. As the table indicates, the four school systems appear to be committed to develop *caring relations* in their schools. Although each system emphasizes one aspect over the other, they are all very firm about the role of the teacher in *caring* for his/her students and the school community. The parents' participation may vary across the four school systems but on the whole they all contribute in one way or another to the development of a *caring* community.

4.3. *Freedom/Autonomy*

Different from the other principles, the concept of *freedom/autonomy* is not a theme widely discussed among contemporary holistic educators. With the exception of a few who have paid more attention to this principle (Ron Miller, Nakagawa, Clark) in their advocacy for holistic education,⁴⁴⁸ the theme of *freedom/autonomy* is more present in the works of former educators (Rousseau, Froebel, Pestalozzi, the American transcendentalists, Dewey, Krishnamurti, Steiner, Montessori, etc.), radical critics (Illich, Holt, Neill), and anarchists (Ferrer), who are commonly referred as pioneers or contributors to the movement of holistic education, than in the works of contemporary holistic educators.⁴⁴⁹

Broadly speaking, in holistic education, the principle of *freedom/autonomy* stands for inner freedom, freedom of mind and expression, and freedom of action. Holistic educators are usually concerned with the attainment of inner/spiritual freedom, through providing an atmosphere that allows freedom of mind and expression, and with an education that fosters freedom of choice and autonomy in the learning process.⁴⁵⁰ Considering the complexity of this subject, I first examine the holistic view about inner freedom and freedom of mind and expression before I explore the holistic arguments about freedom of action.

4.3.1. Inner Freedom

Reaching inner freedom is an important theme in both Western and Eastern holistic education. In Eastern holistic education, inner freedom is usually interpreted as spiritual freedom; freedom from all bondages that inhibits one to reach the “higher Self.”⁴⁵¹ In other words, for Eastern holistic thinking, to reach inner freedom is to realize the “formless Self;” to achieve enlightenment.⁴⁵² Meditation and the arts are usually the primary means used in Eastern holistic education to attain spiritual freedom.

In Western holistic education, inner freedom is commonly associated with “psychological freedom,” freedom “from destructive conditioning, habits, and opinions.”⁴⁵³ To reach inner freedom, in Western thinking, is to free oneself from conformism,⁴⁵⁴ from external authorities,⁴⁵⁵ from internalized discursive patterns,⁴⁵⁶ and from alienation.⁴⁵⁷ It is the ability to think for oneself, to find its own truth, to be

oneself. Critical thinking, deep reflection, investigation of internalized discourses, and sheltering from destructive conditioning are the main themes advocated by Western humanistic/holistic thinkers to reach inner freedom.

Krishnamurti,^{*} for example, who has dedicated his life to free human mind from the conditioning effects of internal (internalized discourse) and external authorities (religion, nationalism, theories, etc.), insisted that only through a process of deep investigation and self-discovery could one reach a state of freedom.⁴⁵⁸ All external authorities, he claimed, are forms of conditioning that imprison one's self into pre-established patterns of thinking and obstruct one's ability to perceive reality as it really is. According to Krishnamurti, only when we are "constantly inquiring, constantly observing, [and] constantly learning," can we "find truth."⁴⁵⁹

Another means for fostering inner freedom, particularly during childhood, which attracted various thinkers in the field of holistic/humanistic education, is sheltering children from external hindrances (harmful authorities, judgments, and opinions). Rousseau, Neill, and Illich were some of the advocates in this area. Rousseau, for example, believed that guarding the child from the pressures and corruptions of a "civilized society" was vital in order to form a free person.⁴⁶⁰ His main concern was with the damaging effects of adults' judgments and opinions upon the child's reasoning. For Rousseau, a young mind would only thrive in an ambience of liberty, free from external authority and from the "passions and opinions of men."⁴⁶¹ Only in freedom, he argued, would a youngster be able to see with his eyes, feel with his heart, and judge

^{*} Although Krishnamurti is originally from India and his ideas reflect his Eastern heritage, his work has greatly influenced Western thinking, especially in the field of psychology.

with his mind. Only in freedom would he be able to become a free man, where “no authority [would] govern him beyond that of his own reason.”⁴⁶²

Neill, too, believed that sheltering the child from external authority was essential in order to raise free individuals.⁴⁶³ In his view, compelled respect to authority and moral discipline *always* implies fear, which wipes out any possibility for real freedom. In his school (Summerhill), Neill sought to provide an environment free of any authority (be it discipline, direction, suggestion, moral training, religious instruction, etc.) and of any adult expectation (to avoid conformity). In that way, he believed children could have a chance to discover themselves, to think by themselves and to ultimately be themselves.

Illich was considerably more radical than Rousseau and Neill in his advocacy for sheltering children from destructive influences. He regarded the “institutions” as the chief destructing forces and he positioned the institutionalization of schooling as the worst of them.⁴⁶⁴ He criticized the schooling system as being the most powerful agent in alienating, shaping, and molding one’s thinking. He argued that the impact of the schooling system on society’s mode of thinking and acting in the world is so powerful that subjects are instructed to believe that competing, possessing, and consuming are the only true reality. Illich proposed the complete eradication of the schooling system as the only way out to terminate the perpetual cycle of alienation and indoctrination.

The radical views reflected in Illich and Neill’s work added to the romantic view of Rousseau and his followers, and the self-inquiry advocated by Krishnamurti, are

examples of the search for “psychological freedom” or inner freedom advocated in the field of holistic education.

4.3.2. Freedom of Action/Autonomy

Western holistic education usually pays more attention to freedom of action or freedom of choice than Eastern holistic education. The latter is primarily concerned with inner freedom, which was discussed in the preceding section.

The advocacy for freedom of action and freedom of choice in Western holistic education is founded on the fundamental premise that children have an inherent motivation to learn and an incredible ability to act and deliver. Most educators and philosophers, who were key thinkers in the evolution of the holistic education movement (Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Rogers, among others),⁴⁶⁵ as well as other thinkers, who have also been linked to the movement (Holt, Neill, Illich, Montessori, among others), had a profound trust on the child’s innate desire to learn and in their potential to make learning happen. They believed children are natural, born learners, who can be trusted in their pursuit for learning “without much adult coercion or interference.”⁴⁶⁶ A common argument among them is that children ought to be afforded enough freedom to seek out their own learning experiences; they need to feel that they are the author and agent in the learning process, that they can make decisions about what and how they want to learn.⁴⁶⁷ It is the children’s interests that should lead the learning activities and not otherwise. Another argument shared by most advocates of

freedom in education is that learning is the result of an independent, voluntary, autonomous act carried out by the child itself and never a product of someone's teaching.⁴⁶⁸ Genuine learning, it is argued, can only emerge from the subject's own discoveries, experiences, and conclusions.

The teacher's role within this atmosphere of freedom usually takes the form of a facilitator. Most advocates in this area argued that the teacher's primary function is to observe, guide, and stimulate children's inquiries. It is the child who leads the way, the teacher follows and supports.⁴⁶⁹

In summary, Western holistic education calls for an education that trusts children's inherent motivation to learn and their potential to make learning happen. An education that gives them freedom of choice in their learning experiences, supports their inquiries (teacher as the facilitator), fosters their independence and autonomy, and places them as the agent in the learning process. In short, they argue for an education that begins with the child. As Ron Miller claims, the child is the "true beginning of holistic education."⁴⁷⁰

An education that starts with standards, with government mandates, with a selection of great books, with lesson plans—in short, with a predetermined "curriculum"—is not holistic, for it loses the living reality of the growing, learning, seeking human being.⁴⁷¹

4.3.3. *The Principle of Freedom/Autonomy in the Four School Systems*

With the exception of Reggio Schools, the other three school systems have the *development of free human beings* as their ultimate goal. Although each approach follows a different path to reach such goal, Waldorf, Montessori, and NHE Schools are committed to provide, what they believe to be, the best means to develop *free individuals*.

In NHE Schools, the emphasis is on attaining inner freedom. Similar to Eastern holistic education, Neohumanist educators are mostly concerned with spiritual freedom, with the realization of the “higher Self.”⁴⁷² The emphasis in their schools is on freeing the mind rather than allowing children too much free choice.⁴⁷³ The goal in NHE Schools is to liberate human consciousness from all bondage that inhibits one to perceive reality and to awaken the young mind to a vision of universalism.⁴⁷⁴ In other words, their aim is to liberate the intellect from narrow-mindedness, from bigotry (commonly reinforced by the media, the literature, and most isms – capitalism, sexism, racism, nationalism) and to inspire it with a more broadminded vision of life to the point that one can perceive unity in the middle of multiplicity.

In addition to being concerned with the attainment of inner freedom, Neohumanist educators advocate for “self-directed learning.”⁴⁷⁵ They believe students should have autonomy in their learning experiences and should be encouraged to pursue their interests and to take ownership of their own learning.⁴⁷⁶ Nonetheless, unlike holistic educators, they do not seem to recognize the child’s inherent motivation to

learn. In NHE Schools, the emphasis is on *awakening* “the thirst for knowledge in the students’ minds,”⁴⁷⁷ instead of *allowing* the child’s innate desire to seek for knowledge.

In Waldorf Schools, the keynote is also the attainment of inner freedom but within a more Western perspective. Rather than seeking spiritual freedom, the aim of Waldorf Schools is to develop free individuals who can find their own truth when they reach adult life.⁴⁷⁸ Unlike most holistic/humanistic educators, Steiner interpreted freedom as a state achieved in the course of adult life rather than a principle to be practiced during childhood.⁴⁷⁹ In fact, he sternly argued against affording undue freedom to children prematurely. He firmly believed that before puberty, children are not ready for independent judgment, for questioning values, for discussing ideas objectively, or for intellectually determining right from wrong. He claimed that what children needed is right guidance and a loving relationship with their teacher based upon trust and respect for his/her authority. Hence in Waldorf Schools, “freedom is a long-term goal cultivated through love, structure, and control.”⁴⁸⁰ In high school however, Waldorf students enjoy some level of freedom. They are encouraged to pursue their interests, to take risks, to make decisions, and to voice their opinions. In short, they are encouraged to invest in their own self-development.

In Montessori Schools, the emphasis is on the development of independence and autonomy. Radically different from Steiner, Maria Montessori believed that the road to inner freedom lies in *providing* freedom to children.⁴⁸¹ She placed independence as the departure point in the path to attaining freedom. She claimed that no one could be truly free without having first achieved independence as a basis.⁴⁸² For Montessori, a “child

who has never learned to act alone, to direct his own actions, to govern his own will, grows into an adult who is easily led and must always lean upon others.”⁴⁸³

Along with her advocacy for independence, Montessori, similar to holistic educators, had deep faith in the child’s inherent motivation to learn. She even claimed that young children favor work in place of play. She sternly argued that children should have the freedom to choose their learning experiences and teachers should support and guide their choices. In Montessori’s view, the more freedom we grant children to be in charge of their own learning, the more independent and autonomous they become, and the more responsible they turn out to be towards their own learning.⁴⁸⁴

In Montessori Schools, therefore, children experience a great extent of freedom (not to the point of the Free Schools). Their educational approach is carefully designed to provide the best possible conditions to foster independence, autonomy, and responsibility, and ultimately to develop free human beings.

Reggio Schools, contrary to Waldorf, Montessori, and NHE Schools, do not state that their goal is to develop *free and independent individuals*. Yet, values of *freedom, autonomy, and independence* are at the heart of their pedagogical approach. Reggio educators believe children should have the right to choose, create, and construct their own learning activities. They have the image of children as competent beings who have “an inherent desire to grow, to know, and to understand things around them.”⁴⁸⁵ Unlike Steiner, Reggio educators regard children as independent thinkers and “producers of original points of view.”⁴⁸⁶ Hence, in Reggio Schools, children as well as educators exercise a high degree of freedom and autonomy in their activities.⁴⁸⁷ As

discussed previously, Reggio Schools have no pre-determined curriculum. Teachers and children are the authors of the curriculum. Jointly, they determine the content, the duration, and the process of each learning activity. The curriculum emerges as the children's interests grow, it develops as teachers plan, it solidifies as research reveals.⁴⁸⁸ In short, in Reggio Schools, children have the freedom and autonomy to co-construct and co-create their own education.

4.3.4. Pedagogical Features that Fosters Freedom/Autonomy

As can be noted from the preceding section, the four school systems have divergent views about freedom and distinctive ways to approach this principle. Likewise, their pedagogical practices that address this principle are also somehow different. Seven main themes integrate the pedagogical features identified across the four school systems that promote freedom and/or autonomy: independence, freedom of choice, freedom of mind and expression, freedom from consumerist values, meditation/the arts, teacher's role, teacher's autonomy.

4.3.4.1. Independence

Of the four school systems, Montessori Schools are the ones that devote most attention to the development of independence. As discussed previously, Maria Montessori regarded independence as the departure point in the path to attaining

freedom. One of the main pedagogical elements in Montessori Schools to foster independence is their “prepared environment” (the teacher’s role and freedom of choice are other features, which will be addressed separately). Montessori believed that only an environment especially prepared for the child’s needs, with appropriate furniture and materials could render the child independent of the adult; only in a “prepared environment” could the child function without adult’s help.⁴⁸⁹ Hence, in Montessori Schools, children from a very young age work independently with the materials they choose from the “prepared environment.” As the majority of materials are self-corrective, children do most of their learning on their own. As they grow older, this independent learning continues through the individualized approach offered in Montessori Schools (discussed earlier).⁴⁹⁰ They are given the authority to make decisions, to govern their learning experiences, and to organize their work. In sum, in Montessori Schools, children are deliberately trained into self-discipline and independence and they are expected to act accordingly.

In Reggio Schools, children also experience a significant level of independence in their learning experiences. They are usually free to explore the schools’ environment, which is also prepared (not with specially designed materials though) to stimulate the children’s independent discoveries. They are encouraged to pursue their interests in the projects they engage themselves, to make decisions, and to take charge of their work. Nonetheless, Reggio children typically work in groups with the collaboration of teachers and/or parents, who are constantly guiding and scaffolding their project work.

Hence, it can be argued that in Reggio Schools, children do not experience the same level of independence as children in Montessori Schools.

In NHE Schools, independence is fostered primarily through their advocacy for an individualized approach to learning and for “self-directed learning.”⁴⁹¹ As discussed previously, Neohumanist educators believe students should have autonomy in their learning experiences and should be encouraged to pursue their interests and to take ownership of their own learning. However, as stated several times, due to the flexibility of the Neohumanist learning methodology, I cannot affirm that this is a constant practice across all NHE Schools.

In the Waldorf system, only high school students experience some independence in their education. Usually at this level, students have more freedom to explore their own interests and to make decisions on their own.⁴⁹²

4.3.4.2. Freedom of Choice

In both Montessori and Reggio Schools, children enjoy a high level of freedom to make choices.⁴⁹³ In Montessori Schools, young children can freely choose their learning activities as well as determine how long they want to spend in each activity.* Older students have the freedom to choose the themes of their projects, to select activities, and to organize and coordinate their independent work, as they deem

* Although children in Montessori schools have great freedom to choose their activities, they are not allowed to do just anything they want. They are expected to do something that is good and useful. The emphasis is on “work”. As long as they are “working” on something purposeful, they enjoy the freedom to be in charge of their choices.

appropriate.* Montessori insisted that students be granted mental freedom to choose and take what they need for their learning and that they should never be questioned in their choices.⁴⁹⁴

In Reggio Schools, all activities begin, grow, and end based on the children's interests and all projects emerge out of their ideas. With the help of adults, they create their projects; they jointly choose the topics; they lead the course of the work, and together they co-construct and co-create their own learning activities.⁴⁹⁵

In NHE Schools, students enjoy some freedom of choice through the individualized approach to learning and self-directed learning.⁴⁹⁶ However, this may vary from school to school.

In Waldorf Schools, only older students (high school) have the liberty to make some choices in their learning experiences (e.g. projects, activities).⁴⁹⁷

4.3.4.3. Freedom of Mind and Expression

Of the four school systems, Reggio Schools are the ones that most promote freedom of mind and expression. In Reggio Schools, children are encouraged to freely voice their thoughts, articulate their ideas, and express their feelings.⁴⁹⁸ All their projects are born out of their ideas, inquiries, and interests, which means what they think and do is recognized and valued. Furthermore, the Reggio approach encourages children to use multiple mediums of expression, allowing them more possibilities to

* Montessori schools do follow a curriculum and students are subjected to it. However, teachers can organize in such a way that students have the freedom to make choices while still attending the standards required by the curriculum.

communicate their ideas and thoughts freely instead of being restrained by one mode of expression.⁴⁹⁹

In Montessori Schools, children (at elementary and upper levels) are also encouraged to communicate their ideas, express their thoughts, and voice their opinions in most discussions, activities, and project work carried out in the schools.⁵⁰⁰ However, in the early childhood program, children are somehow limited in their scope of self-expression. Montessori's "prepared environment" with specially designed materials leaves little room for children to expand their thinking because they are restricted to work only with the materials available, which limits their possibilities to explore and think outside the confines of the material.

In NHE Schools, freedom of mind and expression is fostered primarily through their critical pedagogy approach, or as they call it, their "critical spirituality" approach.^{*501} Neohumanist teachers are expected to constantly examine the sources of their teaching materials; deconstruct biases embedded in books, stories, literature, and songs together with students; raise questions in classrooms about prejudices, injustices, and stereotypes; present various perspectives to students; teach students to analyze, think rationally, and discriminate about facts and events; and help them evaluate a situation in the light of universal welfare.⁵⁰² The goal of NHE Schools is to liberate the young mind from dogmas and narrow-mindedness, to help them develop a broader perspective of things, and to awaken them to a vision of universalism. A limiting aspect

* The critical spirituality advocated by Neohumanist educators is quite similar to Freire's "critical pedagogy" (*The pedagogy of the Oppressed*) and his followers'. The main difference between their approaches is that Neohumanist educators combine critical pedagogy with their "universal" vision of life (Bussey, "The Neohumanist Way").

of the Neohumanist approach is the insistence of Neohumanist educators to convey their vision of universalism to students because it induces them to accept this vision as the truth.

In Waldorf Schools, once again, only high school students enjoy the freedom to express their thoughts and their ideas. Adolescents usually are encouraged to voice their opinions in discussions, to articulate their ideas in their projects, and to express themselves in their artistic creations.

4.3.4.4. Freedom from Consumerist Values

Waldorf and NHE Schools regard materialistic/consumerist values as destructive influences in the development of the young mind.⁵⁰³ Leaders of the two systems believe that consumerism subtly molds the children's minds and drags them away from their true being. Hence, both Waldorf and NHE Schools try to shield students from the influence of consumerist values, or the pressure of "pseudo-culture,"* as Neohumanist educators call it. In NHE Schools, the arts (including literature) are the main vehicles used to distract children's attention from materialistic values. These mediums, Neohumanist educators argue, develop students' taste for subtler and finer modes of expression, and consequently turn them away from the emptiness of "pseudo-culture." In Waldorf Schools, consumerism is avoided at all levels. Television and "artificial" toys are highly discouraged. Children usually have restrictions about what they wear (to

* Neohumanist leaders call "pseudo-culture" all kinds of dance, music, and dress style that are produced with the aim of being "short-term profit making", proliferated basically everywhere through the media, toys, books, etc.

avoid conveying particular messages) and they are not allowed to bring toys or electronics to school. All products and materials in Waldorf Schools tend to be naturally made and most of the projects, activities, and performances usually employ hand-made products. In short, Waldorf educators try their hardest to keep their students free from consumerist values.

4.3.4.5. Meditation and/or The Arts

The practice of mediation and the arts are two other pedagogical features identified across the schools that foster freedom. As discussed earlier, meditation and the arts are the primary means used in Eastern holistic education to attain inner/spiritual freedom.⁵⁰⁴ Although none of the school systems refer to the arts as a vehicle to reach spiritual freedom (Waldorf and NHE do recognize it as a means to connect with one's higher self), the presence of the arts in their curriculum indirectly works in this direction, if we take the Eastern holistic perspective into consideration. As described in the previous chapters, the four school systems have the arts in their curriculum. Waldorf, Reggio, and NHE Schools have their whole curriculum permeated with the arts, and Montessori Schools have artistic activities in the elementary and upper grades as a separate subject.

In regards to meditation, NHE Schools are the only ones that have this practice in their schools (considering that in Montessori Schools the emphasis is on quietness).

Meditation is deliberately used as a spiritual practice with the ultimate goal of spiritual realization or spiritual freedom.⁵⁰⁵

4.3.4.6. *Teacher's Role*

The teacher is another vital element in the pedagogy of the four school systems to foster *freedom/autonomy*. The teacher's role in promoting this principle, though, varies considerably from one system to the other.

In Montessori Schools, the teacher's role is to foster the children's autonomy and independence. Teachers are expected to carefully balance their assistance to children. They must strive to remain in "the background, only preparing for the children to work by themselves."⁵⁰⁶ The role of Montessori teachers is to provide guidance and encouragement, but only to the point that elicits the children's interest; the rest should be left to children themselves.⁵⁰⁷ In short, in Montessori Schools, teachers are supposed to "help the child to act for himself, will for himself, [and] think for himself."⁵⁰⁸

In Reggio Schools, teachers take a more dynamic role. Although they are also very cautious about the assistance they provide to children (carefully listening, observing, and deciding the right moment to intercede), they are, on the other hand, very active in promoting opportunities to stimulate the children's learning experiences.⁵⁰⁹ Reggio educators work as facilitators, "scaffolding" children to create their own projects.⁵¹⁰ They give children freedom to exercise autonomy in their work

but they strive to provide the best possible assistance, so children can accomplish what they might have not been able to if they were on their own.⁵¹¹

In NHE Schools, the teacher's role is to free student's mind from narrow-mindedness and bigotry and to inspire it with a more broadminded vision of life.⁵¹² They are expected to foster critical inquiry in their classrooms through an atmosphere of respect, mutual affection, and trust, so students can express their ideas freely without criticism. Additionally, Neohumanist teachers are entrusted to carefully guide their students into a spiritual lifestyle and to gently lead them to liberate their true selves.⁵¹³

Finally in Waldorf Schools, the role of the teacher is to guide, protect, and control, so their students can safely tread the path to inner freedom. Waldorf teachers are instructed to be role models for the young children, to provide direction and authority to the elementary and middle school students, and to support the adolescents' journey towards self-development. They are supposed to shield their students from the influences of materialism and from the harsh reality of the real world (poverty, hunger, abuse, violence). Waldorf teachers are also expected to protect their students from judgments and opinions. They must present all subject matter completely free of any ideological biases and they must restrain children from premature judgment (avoiding discussions in class in the early grades).⁵¹⁴

4.3.4.7. *Teacher's Autonomy*

The final element identified across the school systems that furthers *freedom/autonomy* is the level of autonomy that teachers have to carry out their work.

Of the four school systems, Reggio Schools are the ones that afford most autonomy to teachers/educators to design, organize, and plan their work with children. Despite the fact that Reggio Schools are part of the public school system, which could limit their autonomy to plan and teach, Reggio educators still appears to have more freedom and autonomy to develop their work than teachers from the other school systems. In addition to having the freedom to co-create (together with children) their own curriculum, Reggio educators also have the autonomy to author the entire pedagogical process.⁵¹⁵ They create learning opportunities, as they deem appropriate. They document the children's work and discuss new courses of action. They plan projects based on their observations and analysis. They guide children as they progress. They research, investigate, question, and learn with the students; and they re-orient the educational activities as they discover new possibilities.

In Montessori Schools, teachers also enjoy significant freedom and autonomy in the planning and management of their teaching, particularly in the elementary and upper grades.⁵¹⁶ However, they have to follow the Montessori method (especially in the early childhood program, where the method has been thoroughly described), which inevitably limits their freedom to create new possibilities.

In NHE Schools, teachers do not have a pre-specified pedagogical methodology to follow, which affords them more autonomy to plan and create their own lesson plans.⁵¹⁷ However, Neohumanist teachers have to follow the Neohumanist educational philosophy, which is fixed and well defined in terms of its educational goals (which includes, development of morality, development of universal love, critical spirituality, and so forth). Hence, although Neohumanist teachers have autonomy to create their learning activities, they have to follow philosophical curriculum of Neohumanist education.

In Waldorf Schools, teachers have considerable less autonomy in their work in comparison to the other systems. They have to follow the strict guidelines of the Waldorf curriculum and they are expected to follow the values embedded in the spiritual science developed by Steiner (Anthroposophy). Nevertheless, Waldorf teachers appear to have some freedom in the creation of their lessons and they seem to exercise full autonomy (or control) to lead and guide their students.⁵¹⁸ In Waldorf Schools, teachers have sole responsibility to guide their students' path of development, as there are no directors or principals in the Waldorf system (every teacher works under the supervision of another teacher).

4.3.5. Evaluative Summary

Of the four school systems, Montessori's philosophy appear to be the most aligned with the ideas and values of holistic education. Although Montessori educators

do not refer to psychological freedom or spiritual freedom, they do share the holistic quest for inner freedom and its advocacy for the children's autonomy in education.

Reggio Schools support most of the ideas about freedom and autonomy in education, which holistic educators argue for. However, they do not have as a goal in their education, the development of inner freedom or the pursuit for psychological freedom.

NHE Schools, on the other hand, share the holistic quest for inner (spiritual) freedom as well as its advocacy for psychological freedom. Nonetheless, they do not appear to value freedom of choice and autonomy to the same extent as holistic educators. The Waldorf system appears to be least aligned with the holistic ideas about freedom and autonomy. Although, they have the development of inner freedom as their primary goal in education and they share some of the ideas argued by holistic educators in regards to psychological freedom (protection from destructive influences), they, on the other hand, strongly disagree with the idea of affording extensive freedom to children prematurely.

In regards to the pedagogical application of this principle, table 4.3 summarizes the findings across the four school systems. As the table indicates, NHE and Reggio Schools appear to be the most committed to foster *freedom/autonomy* in comparison with the other two school systems. Although Reggio educators provide greater freedom (of choice, mind, and expression) and autonomy (independence) to children in their learning experiences, and they appear to have more autonomy in their work in comparison to Neohumanist educators; the latter compensates this difference with their

high commitment to guide the child into the path of inner/spiritual freedom (through meditation, art, critical pedagogy, and freedom from consumerist values). Hence, Reggio and NHE Schools appear to have the same level of commitment to foster *freedom/autonomy*.

Pedagogical Features	Waldorf Schools	Montessori Schools	NHE Schools	Reggio Schools
Independence	Low	Very high	Moderate	High
Freedom of choice	Low	Very high	Moderate	Very High
Freedom of mind/expression	Low	High	High	Very high
Freedom from consumerist values	Very high	N/P	Very high	N/P
Meditation and/or the arts	High	Low	Very High	High
Teacher's role	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high
Teacher's autonomy	Moderate	High	High	Very high

Table 4.3 Summary of the pedagogical application of *freedom/autonomy* across the four school systems

In Montessori Schools, the principle of *freedom/autonomy* appears to be applied at a lower extent in comparison to Reggio and NHE Schools. Although Montessori Schools are very committed to foster the children's autonomy and independence, and to give them freedom to make choices, they do not appear to devote as much attention to freedom of mind and expression as the other two school systems (the limiting aspect of their "prepared environment" and no reference to freedom from materialism), neither do they offer many opportunities for the development of inner/spiritual freedom (meditation is not part of their curriculum and artistic activities are offered few times a week). Montessori teachers also seem to have less autonomy in their work in comparison to Reggio educators.

Waldorf Schools appears to be the least committed of all systems to foster *freedom/autonomy*. That Waldorf educators have such a different conception in how to guide the child into the path of inner freedom, in comparison to the other three systems as well as the field of holistic education, helps to explain my findings about their schools. Although Waldorf educators are very devoted to guide the child into the path of inner freedom such as Neohumanist educators (through guidance, structure, and control, art, and protection from destructive influences), the level of freedom and autonomy they grant to children before they reach high school is practically non-existent. In NHE Schools, children have some freedom of choice, mind, and expression. In Waldorf Schools, from early childhood through middle school, children are constantly under direction and control.⁵¹⁹ Elementary school teachers “direct students step by step throughout almost all their experiences at school.”⁵²⁰ There is hardly any opportunity for children to engage in independent activities in class or to participate in discussions, as most instruction is teacher-centered and discussions are highly discouraged. Students are not allowed free composition because it is believed that they are not mature enough to express original thoughts yet.⁵²¹ Their artistic activities are also structured and directed by the teacher, following Steiner’s indications. In sum, in Waldorf Schools, children have basically no freedom or autonomy in their education until they reach high school. Finally, in addition to the students’ lack of freedom and autonomy, Waldorf teachers also have less autonomy in the planning of their lessons in comparison to the other three systems.

4.4. *Democracy*

The principle of *democracy* is also an important element in holistic education. Contemporary holistic educators refuse to accept rigid, authoritarian systems ruled by economic, social, and cultural power. Instead they call for a democratic system, which values cooperation, group participation, shared-decision making, and egalitarian structures.⁵²² They call for “participatory democracy,” where citizens feel “empowered to participate in meaningful ways in the life of the community and the planet.”⁵²³

The term “participatory democracy,” reports Ron Miller, was first used by the “New Left in the 1960s (e.g. the Port Huron statement of 1962) as a way of reclaiming the essence of democratic idealism in a society that believed had grown over-organized, hierarchical and authoritarian.” Nonetheless, prior to the New Left movement, John Dewey was one of the most important advocates in this area.⁵²⁴ Dewey thought that a democratic social organization is the best culture for ensuring the fullest development of each person.⁵²⁵ He believed that individuals need to feel that they are valuable participants in a community. Additionally, he argued, in a democratic society, individuals have the freedom to express their thoughts and ideas, the choice to participate, and the power to create and transform; yet, they still have the social responsibility towards the group and the society.⁵²⁶ In a *democracy*, he claimed, individuals have to learn to adjust their needs to meet the interests of the group and be flexible to meet the demands of “the new situations produced by varied intercourse;”⁵²⁷ it is a joint participation and a joint decision-making.

In education, the principle of *democracy* is applied in similar way. Members of the community participate in the management and in the decisions regarding the social institutions they are affiliated. A democratic education, argues Ron Miler (one the most adamant advocates of democracy in the field of holistic education) enables young people “to experience or practice meaningful participation in the social institution with which they are most intimately involved.”⁵²⁸ A democratic school, he continues, “is *not* one that treats children as if they were already adults,” but one that teaches them to engage in collaborative problem solving and prepares them “to exercise a mature sense of social responsibility.”⁵²⁹

In addition to advocating for “participatory democracy,” contemporary holistic educators also call for open, democratic, and egalitarian teacher-student relationship.⁵³⁰ Eisler’s “partnership education,” is an example of a democratic model of education that values egalitarian relationships, which has been embraced by the holistic education movement.⁵³¹ In “partnership education”, teacher and students’ knowledge and experience are valued, cooperation among individuals and groups are facilitated, decisions are shared and everyone is invited to participate. It is an approach to education in which both students and teachers jointly discuss and make decisions about the process, content, and structure.⁵³²

4.4.1. *The Principle of Democracy in the Four School Systems*

Similar to holistic education, the four school systems also reject authoritarian organizational systems and dictatorial relationships. In response, they too, advocate for a mode of living based on democratic principles. In Each school system, this principle is manifested differently.

In the Reggio approach, the most apparent indicator of their commitment to democratic values is their emphasis on group work, cooperation, and collaborative learning. In Reggio Schools, almost all activities involve the participation of two or more individuals. Children work in groups, teachers work in pairs, and educators work in teams.⁵³³ Interaction, discussion, cooperation, and co-construction set the tone of Reggio's environment. Everyone is considered competent and every idea is regarded as important.⁵³⁴

In the Montessori system, the principle of *democracy* is most evident in the mode of social living fostered in their schools. Montessori educators place great emphasis on social education. From a very early age through high school, students in Montessori Schools are educated to live as members of the class community.⁵³⁵ They are instructed to always balance their individual freedom with the needs of the group. They are encouraged to be themselves and to act freely but they must simultaneously restrict their individual "freedom for the sake of adjustment to the group."⁵³⁶

In Waldorf Schools, the exercise of *democracy* is manifested primarily in the administration of the school and limited to adults. As described in Chapter 2, every

Waldorf School is self-governed by a collective body of teachers. All decisions concerning curricula, students, faculty, enrollment, and resources come before the college of teachers for discussion and determination.⁵³⁷ They all share equal rights in decision-making and they are all equally responsible for the various issues concerning the functioning of the school and the well being of students.

In NHE Schools, Eisler's "partnership education" is the best descriptor of their advocacy for democratic values.⁵³⁸ What most attract Neohumanist educators is Eisler's critique of authoritarian structures, hierarchies of domination, gender inequalities, and cultures of power. Neohumanist educators, even more than contemporary holistic educators, repudiate authoritarian systems ruled by economic, social, and cultural power. At the heart of NHE Schools is the urge to awaken human mind to the social injustices, prejudices, and bias reinforced by capitalism, sexism, racism, nationalism, etc. The Neohumanist vision is to build a new culture based on democratic, egalitarian, and cooperative values.⁵³⁹

4.4.2. Pedagogical Features that Foster Democracy

As seen in the previous section, the four school systems include, in one way or another, the principle of *democracy* in their schools. Nonetheless, the extent by which this principle is applied varies considerably across the four systems. Two main themes integrate the pedagogical features identified across the school systems that foster democratic principles: *democracy* in the classroom and *democracy* in the school.

4.4.2.1. *Democracy in the Classroom*

Democracy in the classroom refers to issues related to the students' daily learning experiences which includes teacher-student and student-student relationships, decisions concerning students' work, and group work.

Of the four school systems, the Reggio approach appears to be the one that most applies this principle in their classrooms. In Reggio Schools, children's work is always the result of a joint collaboration among teachers, parents, and children.⁵⁴⁰ In every project work, everyone participates as partners and all voices are heard, respected, and valued.* Children are encouraged to share their ideas, to discuss their opinions, and to jointly make decisions. As they co-construct and co-create group projects, they learn to listen to each other, to adjust to each other's thoughts, and to incorporate each other's ideas. Teachers too, share a similar level of *democracy* in their work. As described earlier, in Reggio Schools, teachers always work in pairs. Together, they plan, interpret, and guide the children's projects. Moreover, they think *together* and co-construct "*together* towards a common interpretation of educational goals."⁵⁴¹

In Montessori Schools, *democracy in the classroom* is mostly evident in the relationships among students and between teacher and students, in group-work, and in the decisions concerning students' work (only in the elementary and upper grades

* In Reggio schools, parents are also valued as competent. They are trusted to be "informed and productive members of a cooperative educational team". They are regarded as active subjects, contributors of "complementary and necessary knowledge".

though). As stated previously, students in Montessori Schools are continuously reminded to refrain their “freedom for the sake of adjustment to the group.”⁵⁴² They are expected at all times to respect the interests of the group and to “help maintain the existing social order.”⁵⁴³ Hence, during group-work (which is a common practice in Montessori Schools), group discussions, and in their daily relationships with colleagues and teachers, students are invited to share their ideas and express their opinions but they are required to respect and consider each other’s points of view, ideas, and contributions, and to jointly make decisions. The same kind of behavior is also expected of teachers in their interactions with students and with each other. In regards to students’ work, teachers are supposed to consider their ideas, evaluate their choices, and jointly reach a decision with them about the work in question (not doing the work is not an option in Montessori Schools).

In NHE Schools, the emphasis is more on cooperation, understanding, and collaboration than on shared-decision making. Group-work and teacher-student and student-student relationships are the primary means by which democratic values are practiced in their classrooms. NHE Schools tend to favor group-work as a practice for learning (although it is not constant across all schools).⁵⁴⁴ They view group-work as a means to facilitate cooperative learning and understanding among students. This emphasis on cooperation, collaboration, and understanding is also present in the relationships between students and teachers and between the students themselves.

In Waldorf Schools, only high school students experience some *democracy in the classroom*.⁵⁴⁵ As discussed previously, students in the earlier grades have hardly

any freedom or autonomy in their education, which precludes any possibility for democratic participation. In high school, the primary means by which democratic values are practiced are through group-discussions. Other than that, there is not much opportunity for students to experience *democracy in the classroom*.

4.4.2.2. *Democracy in the School*

Democracy in the School refers to issues related to school management, students' general education, and the community life of the school (activities, festivals, etc.). It usually involves shared participation, management, and decision-making of all those who are affected by the social institution.

In none of the selected school systems, do students participate in the decisions regarding their general education or in issues related to the school. "Town meetings" or "self government," a common practice in democratic/free schools to allow students democratic participation in their education, is not employed by any of the four school systems.

The degree of participation of parents in the management and decisions concerning the school and the students' education is mixed across the four school systems. In Waldorf Schools, parents may serve in school committees (usually related to school management) and participate in the organization of school activities.⁵⁴⁶ Issues related to the students' general education is restricted to teachers. In Montessori Schools, parents take similar role but their participation in the school appears to be less

intense than the parents' in Waldorf Schools.⁵⁴⁷ In NHE Schools, parents are usually *required* to contribute to the school. They may engage in some school activities (serving on parent committee, organizing festivals, etc.), develop and teach “elective” units of study, or they may help with behavioral management strategies.⁵⁴⁸ Parents' participation in NHE Schools, however, varies considerably from school to school. Educational issues, though, are usually limited to teachers.⁵⁴⁹

In Reggio Schools, contrary to the other three systems, parents are very active in all areas of the school. Besides participating in several activities concerning the community life of the school, parents are also invited to discuss educational issues inside and outside the school. Every Reggio School has a Community Early-childhood Council comprised of parents, community members, teachers, staff, and the pedagogista.⁵⁵⁰ This Council is elected every There years to give opportunity to several parents to participate and have an active voice in the educational projects of the centers and preschools.

The teachers' role in the school also varies across the four approaches. In Waldorf Schools, teachers run a system of self-government. They are responsible for all issues concerning curricula, students, and school management and they share equal rights in all decision-making.⁵⁵¹ Montessori Schools usually follow the regular hierarchical system with a principal, a body of teachers, and administrators. In Reggio Schools, all educators (teachers, atelierista, pedagogista, and administrators) work in collaboration with each other.⁵⁵² Together they discuss pedagogical issues, educational outcomes, the implementations of new ideas, the welfare of the children and the

community, and so forth. As for NHE Schools, there are no references in the literature about how educational issues are managed amongst teachers neither how schools are normally run.

4.4.3. Evaluative Summary

Table 4.4 summarizes the findings relative to the pedagogical application of the principle of *democracy* across the four school systems. As the table indicates, Reggio Schools appear to be the most committed to applying democratic principles in comparison to the other three school systems and the most aligned with the holistic advocacy for “participatory democracy” and “partnership education.” In Reggio Schools, there is shared participation and shared decision-making among educators, parents, and children in almost all issues concerning the children’s education. Although children do not discuss educational and community problems in “town meetings” (one might argue they are too small for this (2-6 years-old), they do participate in all decisions concerning their daily learning experiences.

Pedagogical Features	Waldorf Schools	Montessori Schools	NHE Schools	Reggio Schools
Democracy in the classroom	Low	High	Moderate	Very High
Democracy in the school	Moderate	Low	Low	High

Table 4.4 Summary of the pedagogical application of *democracy* across the four school systems

In Montessori Schools, the principle of *democracy* is applied to a lower extent in comparison to Reggio Schools. Although inside the classroom, students and teachers participate democratically in most decisions concerning students' learning experiences, outside the classroom, there is very little opportunity for members of the school community to practice *democracy*.

In NHE Schools, similar to Montessori Schools, the principle of *democracy* also appears to be more present inside the classroom than outside. In NHE Schools, the participation of parents in the school activities appears to be more extensive than in Montessori Schools. However, there is no other apparent evidence of democratic participation, particularly in regards to management and educational issues. Inside the classroom, however, students do not seem to experience the same level of democratic participation as students in Montessori Schools. As discussed earlier, the emphasis in NHE Schools is more on cooperation than on shared decision-making. Although both elements are important in the exercise of *democracy*, the key factor of a democratic ideal is shared decision-making. Without this element one cannot really affirm that *democracy* is present.

Waldorf Schools appear to be the least committed to applying the principle of *democracy* in their schools. Although the democratic ideal is present among adults, particularly amongst teachers (in their management of the school), the opportunity even high school students have to practice "participatory democracy" appears to be minimal.

Thus, even though the four school systems advocate for a mode of living based on democratic and egalitarian principles, only Reggio Schools appear to be fully committed to applying pedagogically these principles in their approach to education.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Throughout this study I explored the ideas and thoughts advocated by the holistic education movement and I analyzed their pedagogical application in four approaches to schooling. I selected eight broad principles, which I argued embrace most of the philosophical ideas advocated by the holistic education movement. Four of these principles (*spirituality, reverence for life/nature, interconnectedness, and human wholeness*) encompass the spiritual/holistic orientation of holistic education whereas the other four (*individual uniqueness, caring relations, freedom/autonomy, democracy*) embrace the humanistic ideas embedded in their educational paradigm. For every principle, I examined the philosophical perspectives of holistic education and the four school systems relative to that principle. I then, investigated and evaluated the ways and extent to which the selected school systems apply each principle in their educational approaches.

In this chapter, I synthesize the findings of all eight principles. I first discuss the philosophical agreement between the ideas advocated by the holistic education movement and the perspectives of the four school systems relative to the eight principles. I then discuss and evaluate the results concerning the pedagogical

application of the eight principles in the four selected school systems. In the subsequent sections, I discuss in greater depth the findings concerning the application of the eight principles in the four selected school systems, describe the limitations of this study, address the implications for future research, and present a final conclusion.

5.1. Philosophical Agreement Between Holistic Education and the Four School Systems

Table 5.1 summarizes the findings relative to the philosophical agreement between the ideas advocated by the holistic education movement and the perspectives of the four school systems relative to the eight principles. I assigned the levels of agreement shown in table 5.1 according to the following rationale:

Very high = the school system reflects almost all ideas advocated by the holistic education movement about that particular principle.

High = the school system reflects most of the ideas advocated by the holistic education movement about that particular principle.

Moderate = the school system reflects partially the ideas advocated by the holistic education movement about that particular principle.

Low = the school system reflects one or two ideas advocated by the holistic education movement about that particular principle.

N/R = there is no explicit reference in the school system's literature to the ideas advocated by the holistic education movement about that particular principle.

	Waldorf Schools	Montessori Schools	NHE Schools	Reggio Schools
Human Spirituality	Very high	Very high	Very high	N/R
Reverence for life/nature	Very high	Very high	Very high	N/R
Interconnectedness	Very high	Very high	Very high	Moderate
Human Wholeness	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high
Individual Uniqueness	High	Very high	Very high	Very high
Caring	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high
Freedom/Autonomy	Low	High	Moderate	Moderate
Democracy	Low	Moderate	Low	Very high

Table 5.1 Philosophical agreement between holistic education and the four school systems

As the table indicates, Montessori, Waldorf, and NHE Schools' perspectives about *human spirituality, reverence for life/nature, interconnectedness, human wholeness* are the most aligned with the holistic ideas. These three school systems have their philosophies grounded in the belief that humans are spiritual beings, manifestations of a divine source, endowed with inherent knowledge and potentialities. Like most holistic educators, they too, claim that education must nourish and guide the child's inherent possibilities of development and allow its self-unfolding to naturally take place. Additionally, the three school systems share the holistic perspective about life, the natural world, and the universe. They recognize all life in the universe as sacred, divine and intrinsically interconnected. They believe education should cultivate in children a feeling of reverence for the natural world, teach them about the interconnectedness of life, and develop responsible adults who care about the environment. In regards to learning, the three school systems also share the holistic advocacy for experiential learning and for interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and

learning. Finally, like contemporary holistic educators, the three school systems are also deeply concerned with the overall development of the child.

Reggio Schools, in contrast to the other three systems, agree only partially with the holistic view about the spiritual/holistic-based principles. Reggio Schools do not appear to share the spiritual paradigm of holistic education. Their philosophy is grounded in sociocultural perspectives,⁵⁵³ which views the self as socially and culturally constructed rather than spiritually unfolding from within. Additionally, Reggio educators do not refer to the natural world as sacred; neither do they discuss universal interconnections or cosmic evolution. Nonetheless, although Reggio Schools apparently do not share the spiritual orientation of holistic education, they embrace most of the ideas advocated by the holistic education movement in regards to learning. They have experiential learning at the heart of their educational approach and they fully endorse the holistic quest for integrating knowledge from various domains. Also similar to holistic educators, Reggio Schools are very committed to the overall development of the child.

In regards to the humanistic-based principles (*individual uniqueness, caring relations, freedom/autonomy, democracy*), of the four school systems, Reggio Schools most reflect the holistic ideas about these principles. Similar to holistic educators, Reggio educators also have deep trust in the children's inherent motivation to learn and in their capability to discover and construct knowledge. Reggio educators regard children as competent learners who have the right to freely choose their learning activities, jointly determine their curriculum, and democratically discuss their ideas.

They too, value the uniqueness of each child and respect its different languages of expression. The holistic quest for inner/psychological freedom is perhaps the only factor in which Reggio Schools appear to differ from holistic education.

Montessori Schools appear to be the second most aligned with the holistic view of the humanistic-based principles. Similar to Reggio Schools, Montessori Schools also have deep trust in the child's inherent motivation to learn and in its ability to make decisions. Of the four school systems, Montessori Schools most evidently advocate for the child's independence and autonomy in the learning process. Montessori Schools also have the most individualized approach to education to attend the uniqueness of each student. Nonetheless, Montessori Schools do not appear to give as much primacy to *democracy* as Reggio Schools and they do not seem to share the holistic concern for psychological freedom.

NHE Schools also appear to embrace several ideas argued by the holistic education movement relative to the humanistic-based principles. They fully endorse the holistic advocacy for *individual uniqueness* and *caring relations*. They advocate for individualized approaches to learning, for self-directed learning, and for cooperative learning. Of the four school systems, NHE Schools are the most concerned about respecting diversity, encouraging critical thinking, and promoting spiritual freedom. NHE Schools, however, appear to differ in some respects from the holistic view about *freedom/autonomy* and *democracy* in education. They do not seem to value freedom of choice and the child's inherent motivation to learn as much as do holistic educators and

they do not appear to give much attention to “participatory democracy” in their educational approach.

Finally, Waldorf Schools least reflect the holistic view about the humanistic-based principles. Although Waldorf Schools fully share the holistic advocacy for *caring relations*, they differ considerably from the holistic view about the role of *freedom, autonomy and democracy* in education. The Waldorf system strongly disagrees with the idea of affording undue freedom to children before they reach puberty. Accordingly, they provide very little opportunity to children to exercise autonomy or make decisions about their learning. Waldorf Schools also appear to differ to some extent with respect to some ideas argued by contemporary holistic educators about *individual uniqueness*. They do not endorse individualized approaches to learning neither do they appear to support the idea of creating activities that attend to each child’s different learning styles.

5.2. Pedagogical Application of the Eight Selected Principles in the Four School Systems

Table 5.2 summarizes the findings relative to pedagogical application of the eight principles in the four school systems. The levels shown in table 5.2 represent my attempt to provide a summary statement of the levels assigned to the individual pedagogical features identified for each principle for each school system.

As the table indicates, NHE Schools are the ones that most foster the spiritual/holistic-based principles (*human spirituality, reverence for life/nature,*

interconnectedness, human wholeness) in their pedagogical approach in comparison to the other three school systems. Although they do not appear to apply the principle of *interconnectedness* as extensively as the Reggio Schools, they appear very committed to applying the other three principles, *human spirituality, reverence for life/nature*, and *human wholeness*.

	Waldorf Schools	Montessori Schools	NHE Schools	Reggio Schools
Human Spirituality	Very high	Moderate	Very high	Low
Reverence for life/nature	High	Moderate	Very high	Low
Interconnectedness	High	Moderate	High	Very High
Human Wholeness	Very High	High	Very High	Very High
Individual Uniqueness	Moderate	High	Moderate	Very high
Caring	Very high	Very high	Very high	Very high
Freedom/Autonomy	Low	High	Very High	Very High
Democracy	Low	Moderate	Low	Very high

Table 5.2 Summary of the pedagogical application of the eight selected principles across the four school systems.

Waldorf Schools also appear to be very committed to applying the spiritual/holistic principles in their approach to education. Although Waldorf Schools may not apply the principle of *interconnectedness* as extensively as Reggio Schools and their attention to *reverence to life/nature* is not as intensive as NHE Schools, their commitment to fostering *human spirituality* and *human wholeness* is very high.

Of the four school systems, Montessori and Reggio Schools least apply the spiritual/holistic-based principles in their pedagogical approach. Although Montessori Schools appear to be committed to applying the principle of *human wholeness*, their

application of the other principles (*reverence for life/nature, interconnectedness, human wholeness*) is limited in comparison to Waldorf and NHE Schools. Reggio Schools, on the other hand, appear to be very committed to applying the principle of *interconnectedness* and *human wholeness*, however their application of the principle of *human spirituality* and *reverence for life/nature* is considerably low in comparison to the other three systems.

The findings relative to the spiritual/holistic-based principles show significant inconsistency between the *philosophical* perspectives of Reggio and Montessori Schools about these principles and their *pedagogical* application of them. Namely, Montessori Schools appear to share the same ideas advocated by the holistic education movement about these principles. However, they are the least committed of the four school systems to applying these principles in their pedagogical approaches. Reggio Schools, on other hand, are the least aligned with the holistic view about these principles yet still have several pedagogical features in their approach to education that promote these principles.

In regards to the principles that are more humanistically based, Reggio Schools appears to be the most committed of the four school systems to applying these principles in their educational approach, whereas Waldorf Schools appear to be the least committed to applying them. With the exception of the principle of *caring relations*, which all systems are equally devoted to promoting it, Reggio Schools appear to be the most committed to fostering *individual uniqueness, freedom/autonomy, and democracy* whereas Waldorf Schools appear to be the least committed to applying them.

Between Montessori and NHE Schools, Montessori Schools appear to apply the humanistic-based principles more extensively than NHE Schools. Although NHE Schools have more elements in their pedagogical approach that foster *freedom/autonomy* in comparison to Montessori Schools, the latter are more committed to applying the principles of *individual uniqueness* and *democracy* than NHE Schools.

Finally, in contrast to the findings concerning the spiritual/holistic-based principles, there seem to be no inconsistency between the school systems' philosophical perspectives about the humanistic-based principles and their application. Overall, the four school systems appear to apply the principles of *individual uniqueness*, *caring relations*, *freedom/autonomy*, and *democracy* in accordance with their philosophical perspectives of them. Reggio Schools, for example, appear to be very aligned with the holistic perspectives about the humanistic principles and also very committed to promoting them. Waldorf Schools reflect partially the holistic view about the humanistic principles and they appear to apply these principles partially as well. NHE and Montessori Schools too, appear to follow similar pattern.

5.3. Discussion

According to the analysis summarized in the previous section, there appears to be some tension in accommodating pedagogically the spiritual- and humanistic-based principles within one system of education. The school systems that reflect the highest commitment to fostering the spiritual/holistic-based principles (Waldorf and NHE

Schools) appear to be the least committed to promoting the humanistic-based principles. The ones that presented the highest commitment to fostering the humanistic principles (Reggio and Montessori Schools) appear to be the least committed to promoting the spiritual/holistic-based principles.

Similar tension is found within the Montessori system. Philosophically, Montessori Schools are very spiritually and humanistically oriented, but pedagogically, they demonstrate greater commitment to the humanistic- than the spiritual-based principles. Namely, In Montessori Schools, apart from their theory of development, which is aimed at the natural/spiritual unfolding of the child, they do not draw on additional pedagogical features to nurture *human spirituality* to the same extent as NHE and Waldorf Schools. They also appear to apply the principles of *reverence for life/nature* and *interconnectedness* to a lower extent in comparison to the other systems. Children in Montessori schools do not have as much contact with nature as children in NHE and Waldorf Schools. The “cosmic curriculum,” which is a strong spiritual feature of Montessori Schools, is introduced once a year. Religion is not constant across all their schools and the arts are limited to elementary and upper grades and offered once a day or once a week (depending on the age group) as a separate subject. *Human Wholeness* is the only spiritual/holistic-based principle, which Montessori Schools appear to apply to a high extent. In regards to the humanistic-based principles, Montessori Schools appear to apply all of them extensively, with the exception of *democracy*, which is applied to a moderate extent (although Montessori Schools apply the principle of *democracy* to a high extent inside the classroom, there is little

opportunity for members of the school community to practice democracy outside the classroom). Montessori Schools have an individualized approach to learning in order to attend the uniqueness of the child. There is a strong atmosphere of friendship and respect in their schools. Children exercise great autonomy and independence in their activities and they are encouraged to democratically discuss their plans and projects with the teacher. Hence, although philosophically, Montessori Schools seem to embrace both paradigms, pedagogically, they appear to apply the humanistic principles to a higher extent than the spiritually oriented principles.

The tension in applying these two groups of principles does not seem to involve all principles. As table 5.2 indicates, there seem to be no apparent conflict across the school systems to apply the principles of *caring relations*, *human wholeness*, and *interconnectedness*. The principle of *caring relations*, for example, is extensively applied by the four school systems. Although each system applies this principle in slight different ways, the four systems appear to be committed to fostering *caring relations* in their schools. The principle of *human wholeness* is also extensively applied by the four school systems. Montessori Schools may not apply this principle to the same extent as Waldorf, NHE, and Reggio Schools (primarily because the arts are not central to their curriculum) but they still appear to be committed to promoting *human wholeness* in their schools. Namely, the four school systems offer supplementary activities to foster the overall growth of the child. They try to provide a natural outdoor environment and a nutritious diet to children. They give primacy to experiential learning in their approach to education and they have a very comprehensive form of assessment. In short, the four

school systems try to provide a comprehensive education that nurtures the *wholeness* of the child.

These two principles, *human wholeness* and *caring relations*, do not seem to be conflicting principles in themselves. They seem to be easily adaptable to either paradigm, humanistic or spiritual. Although I placed the principle of *human wholeness* in the spiritual/holistic group principles (due to the spiritual element attached to it and the concept of wholeness being central to holistic education), educating the whole child has always been a concern of humanistic educators as well.

The principle of *interconnectedness*, which could have caused some tension in its application because of the spiritual values attached to it (within the holistic view), presented no major conflict across the school systems. Reggio Schools, for example, a system that apparently does not endorse the spiritual paradigm advocated by contemporary holistic educators, applies the principle of *interconnectedness* very extensively. Of the four school systems, Reggio Schools have the most integrated and transdisciplinary approach to learning. They have an emergent curriculum based on project themes and a system of documentation that connects the whole cycle of inquiry involved in the children's projects. They use the arts as a medium to enable children to communicate their thinking, develop ideas, create meaning, and construct their projects. Reggio Schools also have their physical space specially designed to facilitate the interrelation among students, educators, staff, the community, and the natural environment. Hence, although Reggio Schools do not appear to explicitly teach about the principle of *interconnectedness* to children, as the other three school systems do

(such as the cosmic curriculum in Montessori Schools), they extensively apply this principle through their interconnected approach to education.

In regards to the principle of *individual uniqueness*, there appears to be some tension within the more spiritually oriented school systems (Waldorf and NHE) to accommodate this humanistic principle. As table 5.2 indicates, Waldorf and NHE Schools do not appear to apply the principle of *individual uniqueness* very extensively. In Waldorf Schools, for example, teachers know their students deeply, watch their development closely through various years, and try to guide and assist each student according to their needs. However, they do not alter their approach to teaching and learning to accommodate students' different learning styles. In Waldorf Schools, instruction is typically performed by the class teacher and directed to the whole class. All students participate in the same learning activities, regardless of their particular learning styles. In NHE Schools, the scenario is somehow different. Like Waldorf Schools, NHE Schools also appear to apply the principle of *individual uniqueness* to a moderate extent. However, unlike the former, NHE Schools advocate for individualized approaches to learning to attend the uniqueness of each child. The main factor, therefore, that affected NHE Schools' level of application of this principle was not that they do not endorse (or apply) the principle of *individual uniqueness* but the fact that not *all* their schools have individualized approaches to learning (due to the flexible methodology of NHE Schools). As the constancy of a pedagogical feature was an index that I took into consideration in my interpretation of the extent of each application, the findings of some pedagogical features of NHE Schools were affected (see limitations).

Had this factor not been present, NHE Schools would have demonstrated higher level of application of this principle. Thus, the principle of *individual uniqueness* does not seem to be a conflicting principle as it is indicated in table 5.2. The fact that NHE Schools, a very spiritually oriented school system, can extensively apply this principle in some of their schools indicates that there is no tension in applying the principle of *individual uniqueness* alongside spiritual principles.

The principle of *freedom/autonomy* is complex because the holistic education movement incorporates both humanistic and spiritual perspectives of freedom. In holistic education, the principle of *freedom/autonomy* represents inner freedom, freedom of mind and expression, and freedom of action. Contemporary holistic educators value both freedom of choice (a more humanistic orientation) and the attainment of inner/spiritual freedom (a spiritual orientation). As a result, with the exception of Waldorf Schools, three of the school systems appear to be very committed to applying the principle of *freedom/autonomy* in their approach to education. NHE and Reggio Schools appear to be more committed than Montessori Schools to apply this principle. In Reggio Schools, children (as well as teachers) have high level of freedom and autonomy in their learning experiences and they are constantly encouraged to freely express their ideas and thoughts. Although, Reggio Schools do not appear to be concerned with the attainment of inner/spiritual freedom, the presence of the arts (regarded an essential element for spiritual freedom in Eastern thinking) throughout their curriculum and the freedom children have to express themselves in their learning experiences indirectly promote the development of inner freedom. NHE Schools,

contrary to Reggio Schools, are highly committed to guiding the child into the path of spiritual freedom through the practice of meditation, the arts, and “critical spirituality.” Additionally, children in NHE Schools also enjoy some level of freedom and autonomy in their learning activities. Hence, overall, both Reggio and NHE Schools appear to apply this principle at very high extent. The high commitment of NHE Schools to apply the principle of *freedom/autonomy*, therefore, indicates that this principle can be pedagogically applied alongside spiritual principles.

We are now left with three principles, which seem to be the most conflicting principles across the four school systems, *human spirituality*, *reverence for life/nature*, and *democracy*. None of the four school systems appear to fully apply these three principles in their approach to education. NHE and Waldorf Schools appear to apply the principle of *human spirituality* and *reverence for life/nature* extensively but their application of *democracy* is very low. Both Waldorf and NHE Schools have their curriculum oriented to fostering the child’s spiritual development (through their developmental theories, meditation, religion, development of morality, and the arts). They are also very committed to nurturing the children’s connection with the natural world, to fostering a feeling of reverence for life and nature in children, and to developing responsible young adults who care about the environment. Nonetheless, in Waldorf and NHE Schools, there is very little opportunity for children to practice democracy. In Waldorf Schools, only high school students experience some democratic participation in their learning experiences and in NHE Schools, the emphasis appears to be more on cooperation than on shared decision-making. In both schools systems, but

particularly in Waldorf Schools, *democracy* appears to be a principle shared by adults rather than an activity practiced by children.

In Reggio Schools, the level of application of these three principles is exactly the opposite. Reggio Schools appear to be very committed to applying the principle of *democracy* but their application of the principles of *human spirituality* and *reverence for life/nature* is very low. Reggio Schools do not appear to endorse the spiritual paradigm advocated by the holistic education movement, which could be a reason for the limited application of these principles in their schools. Although they have some pedagogical features that indirectly promote these principles (the arts, the contact children have with nature, and the nature projects), overall, Reggio Schools appear to apply these two principles to a low extent. In regards to *democracy*, however, Reggio Schools apply this principle to a very high extent. Almost all issues concerning the children's education are democratically discussed among Reggio educators and parents. Children are constantly involved in shared decision-making as they participate in all decisions concerning their learning experiences.

Montessori Schools appear to apply the three principles, *human spirituality*, *reverence for life/nature*, and *democracy*, to a moderate extent. Although Montessori Schools have their theory of development, which is aimed at the natural/spiritual unfolding of the child, they do not draw on other activities to foster *human spirituality* as much as NHE and Waldorf Schools (meditation, development of morality, the arts). Additionally, Montessori Schools appear to promote earth connection, environmental education, and cosmic awareness to a lower extent than Waldorf and NHE Schools. The

principle of *democracy*, however, is applied to a higher extent in Montessori Schools than in Waldorf and NHE Schools. Although Montessori Schools appear to apply the principle of *democracy* to a moderate extent in comparison to Reggio Schools (that is, there is little opportunity outside the classroom for members of the school community to practice democracy), children still participate in democratic decisions about their learning experiences.

Hence, none of the four school systems appear to fully apply the principles of *human spirituality*, *reverence for life/nature*, and *democracy* in their approach to education. Reggio Schools do not appear to share the spiritual paradigm advocated by the holistic education movement, at least explicitly, which might be a reason for what appears to be their low application of the two spiritually oriented principles. In regards to Montessori Schools, further investigation of their schools is required in order to examine why their *pedagogical* application of the spiritually oriented principles does not reflect their spiritual *philosophical* orientation. In reference to the principle of *democracy*, Montessori Schools appear to be more committed to providing children with opportunities to practice *democracy* in their daily activities than to promoting the principle of *democracy* in a larger scale (e.g. involving all members of the school community to discuss management or educational issues). As a result, Montessori Schools appear to apply this principle to a moderate extent.

With respect to NHE and Waldorf schools, I wonder why both school systems appear to have such low commitment to foster *democracy*. What is embedded in the principle of *democracy* that may preclude these two school systems to fully embrace

this principle? To answer these questions, I want to revisit the concept of *democracy* again.

Democracy,* according to Dewey, is essentially “a mode of associated living,” where individuals have to learn to adjust their needs to meet the interests of the group.⁵⁵⁴ It is a conjoint experience, which involves the participation of all members in the production and management of the social institutions of which they are part.⁵⁵⁵ In a democratic system, individuals have the freedom to introduce new ideas, propose changes, and make decisions. Power is no longer in the hands of a few, but is equally distributed across all those involved in the social experience.

Having *democracy* in education literarily means giving students equal authority to make decisions, change rules, and implement new ideas. In free/democratic schools, students have the power, together with adults, to create and transform the school community rules, to produce and manage school’s policy (with certain limitations), and to determine the activities in which they want to participate. In Reggio Schools, children may not enjoy that extensive degree of *democracy*, but they do have the freedom to choose the activities they want to engage in and they have the authority along with teachers to determine the curriculum of their own education. Similarly, in Montessori Schools, children also have great level of autonomy to plan and choose their

* *Democracy* is a very complex and debatable concept, especially when referred to governmental and political issues. For this study, therefore, I limit my discussion of democracy to issues that are directly related to education. More specifically, I concentrate on issues that are related to *children’s* education. There is a difference between applying democratic ideas among children and practicing it among adults. Adults do not require the same kind of guidance as children, as they have already passed through the “growth process.” Hence, allowing *democracy* to children in schools (or even at home) is rather more complicated than promoting it in higher education. As the focus of this study is the education of the child, I will limit the discussion of *democracy* to school age children.

learning activities. In both school systems, children are in charge of their learning experiences, either individually (Montessori Schools) or in groups (Reggio Schools). There is a profound trust in the children's inherent potential to learn and in their competence to guide their own learning.

In Waldorf and NHE Schools, the scenario is different. Children may be allowed some freedom of choice in their learning experiences (particularly in NHE Schools) but there is a preset curriculum to be followed, even for young children. Both school systems have a fixed philosophical curriculum and firm beliefs about the practices needed in education for the overall development of the child. They offer yoga, meditation, rituals, singing, eurythmy, painting, drawing, drama, and so forth in their curriculum because it is believed that these activities are critical to the development of the child. They teach morality and/or universal values because they are regarded essential to the children's spiritual development. The arts are at the center of their curriculum because they are considered an important medium to connect children with their inner selves, to develop a sense of aesthetic, and to make children more sensitive to the wonders and the mysteries of the world. In short, both Waldorf and NHE Schools have a curriculum, which *they* believe is the best for children. In a democratic school, however, or any school that fully incorporates the democratic ideal, it is the *children* who determine what is best for them. It is the *children* who know what they need and how best they can meet their needs.⁵⁵⁶ The central belief underpinning the democratic movement is that

Children are born with a very accurate inner guidance system, an inner wisdom. They know better than anyone else what they need and are perfectly capable of making the right choices.⁵⁵⁷

In Waldorf and NHE Schools, it is the *adult* who knows how to best guide the education of the child. If Waldorf and NHE Schools allow the democratic ideal to be fully implemented in their schools, they run the risk of having an entire different curriculum. Children may decide that meditation or eurythmy should be optional or eliminated because they do not find much relevance in it; or they could decide that they should choose the stories (main vehicle for teaching moral values in both school systems) to be read in the classroom. In other words, children would have the potential to make changes that would deeply affect the philosophical curriculum of both school systems.

Thus, I argue that neither Waldorf nor NHE Schools could fully apply the principle of *democracy* in their approach to education because it would interfere with their vision of education, with their pedagogical ideology. In Reggio Schools, it is possible to apply the principle of *democracy* because there is no preset curriculum. Educators, parents, and children jointly decide the content and the process of the curriculum. Together they create the opportunities for learning and growth.

5.4. Limitations

The first limitation of this study that may have affected the findings concerning the pedagogical application of the principles is the flexible methodology of NHE Schools in their approach to teaching and learning. Because of the inconsistency in learning methodology across NHE Schools, they did not manifest high commitment in certain areas (transdisciplinary approach, learn by doing, individualized approach, independence, and freedom of choice). As the purpose of this analysis was to examine the extent to which each principle is applied, I took into account the inconsistency of a particular feature. Had this factor not existed, NHE Schools would have shown higher level of commitment in the areas referred to above. Consequently, there would be a relative increase in their overall pedagogical application of the following principles: *interconnectedness, human wholeness, individual uniqueness, and freedom/autonomy.*

The second limitation of this study, which might have also influenced the results concerning the pedagogical application of the principles, is the fact that Reggio Schools are limited to early childhood education whereas Waldorf, Montessori, and NHE are comprehensive schools. Although it can be argued that the quality of learning in Reggio Schools can be applied in the upper grades, we cannot deny that their early childhood program facilitates investment in certain areas (transdisciplinary approach, learn by doing, emergent curriculum) because they do not have to meet the same level of demand the upper grades are obliged to follow (curriculum, academic skills). As a result, Reggio Schools demonstrated high level of commitment in some areas

(transdisciplinary approach, learn by doing, child-centered approach to learning), which in turn, determined their overall outcome related to the principles of *interconnectedness*, *human wholeness*, and *individual uniqueness*.

The third limitation of this study concerns the literature I used for the analysis of the school systems. Most of the literature employed in this study is conceptual in nature, with the exception of the literature about the Reggio Schools, which is primarily empirical research. Thus, the analysis of the pedagogical approach of these school systems was primarily drawn from their “ideal practice” rather than from descriptions of their “actual practice.” In the case of Waldorf and Montessori Schools, I used my personal experiences with these two school systems to validate the information provided in the description of their pedagogical practices. I am a former Waldorf teacher, my children were educated in both systems of education, and I observed instruction at few Montessori Schools in the United States.

With respect to Montessori Schools, I noticed some variation in their pedagogical approach across the schools I observed, particularly in the elementary and upper grades (Maria Montessori did not give specific guidelines for these grade levels as she did for her early childhood program) but nothing that would compromise what has been discussed about their school system.

With regards to Waldorf Schools, there appears to be very little variation in their pedagogical approach across schools. Teachers might differ in the way they handle their classes and lessons but they must follow the Waldorf curriculum and its pedagogy, which is the same for all schools around the world. Hence, the pedagogical practices

representing Waldorf Schools in this study are very similar to what I have observed and experienced about Waldorf education.

With respect to NHE Schools, I used their bi-annual newsletters as a source to supplement my knowledge about their school system. As all their literature is conceptual in nature and written by the leaders of the movement, the newsletters were an important source that helped me evaluate whether the “ideal practices” they advocate are in fact constantly present in their schools.

The fourth limitation of this study is the unavoidable disconnect between what is “explicit” in the literature and the actual practice in the schools. Every teacher, regardless of the institution in which s/he works, leads and guides his/her class of students differently. Every school, regardless of the system it follows, manages its educational environment uniquely. Thus, some of what is referenced in the literature might not actually be present in a school. Likewise, some pedagogical activities may be present in a school but they are not referenced in the literature. Even in the case of Reggio Schools, in which I used mostly empirical studies, there might be many other activities in their schools that are not documented. Hence, in interpreting the pedagogy of each school system according to the literature, I might have missed pedagogical activities that are present in the school but are not documented.

The fifth limitation of this study concerns the identification of pedagogical features. To make this study feasible, I had to limit the identification of the features to the general curriculum or the general practices of the school systems, which was explicit in the literature. One may imagine how many possibilities there are, for

example, to promote *human wholeness* or *caring relations*. Anyone who reads this work and has some knowledge of these four school systems could think of different pedagogical features, which I have not identified. Thus, by limiting the identification of the pedagogical features to the general curriculum or the general practices, I limited the possibilities for including other features.

The sixth and final limitation of this study concerns the researcher's subjectivity in the process of data generation and analysis. As discussed in Chapter 1, this work involved a great measure of subjectivity and inference. I analyzed and interpreted the holistic education movement and selected eight principles that I judged encompass most of the philosophical ideas advocated by the theorists of the movement. I selected the school systems and identified the pedagogical features relative to each principle according to my interpretation of the literature. Finally, I interpret and evaluated the school systems' pedagogical application of the principles based on my interpretation of the literature.

Although I tried to foreground my subjectivity by describing the pedagogical features with reasonable detail so the analysis would be transparent, and by explaining the method of analysis used to interpret each pedagogical feature so the reader could evaluate my own interpretation, this study still reflects my subjective interpretation of the literature gathered.

5.5. Implications for Future Research

This study revealed that there is some tension in accommodating what emerged as competing principles into a single approach to education. The recurrence of the findings in the four selected school systems suggest that there is indeed tension in pedagogically accommodating spiritual principles with democratic principles. Yet, the findings of this study are the result of my interpretation of the literature. To further investigate the findings of the present study, we need to conduct research in these schools to examine whether my findings are borne out in empirical studies of practices as observed over time. Other future research might also include empirical studies in other schools with similar assumptions and/or individual practices. Finally, my interpretation of the literature indicated some inconsistency between the spiritual philosophy of Montessori education and its application. Further investigation of the literature and the organizations supporting the movement, as well as empirical research and interviews with educators and leaders of the movement are needed to examine this finding. That is, one needs to examine first, whether my interpretations are indeed warranted.* If they are, one could investigate why the spiritual principles of Montessori philosophy are not very apparent in their pedagogical practices.

* Montessori educators or other advocates of the movement might disagree with my interpretation of the literature and claim that Montessori Schools are very spiritually oriented (Ron Miller, "Nourishing the Spiritual Embryo"). They may argue that Montessori's theory of development, the "cosmic curriculum," or the care children have for the environment are strong indicators of spiritual practices in Montessori Schools. Adams, for example, in her dissertation "Education: From Conception to Graduation," argues that the Montessori curriculum is very conducive to promoting "spiritual intelligence." She draws her analysis from interviews that she conducted with high school seniors and their parents. Her dissertation is a good starting point for further investigation in this area.

5.6. Conclusion

In this dissertation, I examined, interpreted, and evaluated the pedagogical application of the philosophical ideas advocated by the holistic education movement in four approaches to schooling. The findings, according to my interpretation, indicated tension in the application of three principles of holistic education in the school systems selected for this study. None of the four school systems appeared to fully apply the two spiritually oriented principles (*human spirituality, reverence for life/nature*) and the democratic principle in their approach to education. Although the findings reflect the philosophy and pedagogy of each school system, the recurrence of the findings in four school systems supports my argument that there is tension in accommodating spiritual and democratic principles in one approach to education.

As I argued previously, neither Waldorf nor NHE Schools could fully apply the principle of *democracy* in their approach to education because it would interfere with their vision of education, with their ideology. Both school systems have very firm beliefs about the practices needed in education to guide the child through the process of development. The full implementation of a democratic ideal would threaten their pedagogical practices and would potentially undermine their philosophical curriculum. In Reggio Schools, the principle of *democracy* is more easily applied because there is no pre-specified curriculum and their pedagogical practices are not fixed but are jointly

and continuously constructed and reconstructed as members of the school community interact with each other.

Nevertheless, although this study indicates that there might be some tension in fully applying these two principles pedagogically in one single system of education, this does not mean that they cannot be applied at all. A school may be very spiritually oriented, I argue, and still allow a substantial measure of democratic participation without risking its philosophical curriculum. The exercise of *democracy* in Montessori Schools, for example, does not appear to generate conflict to their philosophical curriculum. In Montessori Schools, students practice shared-decision making while they work in groups or participate in discussions. They are encouraged to discuss their plans of study and projects with their teacher and jointly reach decisions. There also several opportunities for group discussion, in which students are invited to share their ideas, express their opinions as well as respect and consider each other's points of view, ideas, and contributions. Hence, in Montessori Schools, although students participate democratically in their learning experiences, they are not given the authority to change the philosophical curriculum of the school.

A spiritually oriented school could also have "town meetings," where students and adults (educators, staff, and parents) would participate in the decisions about the community life of the school. Students would be allowed more opportunities to participate democratically in the decisions concerning their life at school without altering the philosophical curriculum of the school (e.g. discussions would not include curriculum decisions).

Hence, there are ways to reconcile spiritual and democratic principles in pedagogical practices. However, some adjustments need to be made in order to accommodate both principles. This leads me to conclude that the educational paradigm advocated by contemporary holistic educators is not a *utopian* paradigm impossible to apply. Rather, it is a *challenging* educational paradigm that, I believe, is well worth pursuing.

Notes

¹ Miller, "Educational Alternatives."

² Nakagawa, *Education for Awakening*, 71.

³ Clark, "Holistic Education: A Search for Wholeness," 55.

⁴ Nakagawa, *Education for Awakening*, 71.

⁵ Miller, "Defining a Common Vision," 21.

⁶ Miller, *What are Schools for?*, 201.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ In addition to the *Holistic Education Review*, Miller has also launched other publishing ventures, including *Holistic Education Press*, the *Resource Center for Redesigning Education*, and the *Foundation for Educational Renewal*.

⁹ Ibid., 205.

¹⁰ Miller, *New Directions in Education*; "Making Connections to the World;" Nakagawa, *Education for Awakening*; Nava, *Holistic Education: A Pedagogy of Love*; Forbes, *Holistic Education*; Flake, *Holistic Education: Principles, Perspectives, and Practices*.

¹¹ Paths of Learning. *Holistic Education*. <http://www.pathsoflearning.net/> (accessed Dec 20, 2007).

¹² Both Ron Miller in *What are Schools for?* And Scott Forbes in *Holistic Education*, claim that Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel were the first educators to express the ideas embedded in holistic education.

¹³ Building on the work of Hadot (*What is Ancient Philosophy?*) and McEvilley (*The Shape of Ancient Thought*), John Miler in "Ancient Roots of Holistic Education," argues that the ancient Greeks already held holistic practices in their form of education.

¹⁴ Nakagawa, *Education for Awakening*, 73-90.

¹⁵ Miller, *The Holistic Curriculum*; Palmer, *To Know as We are Known; The Courage to Teach*.

¹⁶ Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*; Wilber, *The Eye of the Spirit*; Lemkow, *The Wholeness Principle*.

¹⁷ Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*, 2.

¹⁸ Ibid., vii.

¹⁹ Kessler, *The Soul of Education*; Cajete, *Look to the Mountain*.

²⁰ Nakagawa, *Education for Awakening*, 78.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 79.

²³ Miller, *What are Schools for?*, 79.

²⁴ Ibid.

- ²⁵ Nakagawa, *Education for Awakening*, 78-79.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.
- ²⁷ Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*; “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-range ecology movements; Capra, *The Web of Life; The Turning Point*; “Ecoliteracy.”
- ²⁸ Nakagawa, *Education for Awakening*, 80.
- ²⁹ Clark, *Designing and Implementing and Integrated Curriculum*; “How do you design an ecoliteracy curriculum?”; Orr, *Ecological Literacy: Education and the Transition to a Postmodern World*; “Ecological Literacy: Education for the Twenty-First Century; Nava, *Holistic Education: A Pedagogy of Love*.
- ³⁰ Nakagawa, *Education for Awakening*, 84
- ³¹ *Ibid.*
- ³² *Ibid.*
- ³³ Miller, *Caring for New Life*, “Holism and Meaning.”
- ³⁴ Clark, *Designing and Implementing and Integrated Curriculum*.
- ³⁵ Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics & Moral Education; To Challenge to Care in Schools*.
- ³⁶ Eisler, *Tomorrow’s Children*.
- ³⁷ “Education 2000: A Holistic Perspective,” 240-241.
- ³⁸ Nakagawa, *Education for Awakening*; Forbes, *Holistic Education*.
- ³⁹ Nakagawa, *Education for Awakening*.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 68.
- ⁴¹ Forbes, *Holistic Education*, 17; “What Holistic Education Claims About Itself.”
- ⁴² Miller, *What are Schools for?*; Miller, “Introduction: Holistic Learning,” 2; Nava, *Holistic Education: Pedagogy of Universal Love*, 46.
- ⁴³ Taggart, “Dewey and the Romanticism of Holistic Education”.
- ⁴⁴ Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*, 2.
- ⁴⁵ Hill, “Changes of the Human Mind”.
- ⁴⁶ Clark, “Holistic Education: A Search for Wholeness,” 53.
- ⁴⁷ Clark, *Designing and Implementing an Integrated Curriculum*.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.
- ⁴⁹ ⁴⁹ Clark, *Designing and Implementing an Integrated Curriculum*, 35.
- ⁵⁰ Nakagawa uses this expression when defining the worldview underlying contemporary holistic education, *Education for Awakening*, 72.
- ⁵¹ Miller, *The Holistic Curriculum*.
- ⁵² Miller, *What are Schools for?*; *Caring for New Life*.
- ⁵³ Miller, *What are Schools for?*, 83.
- ⁵⁴ Miller expresses his view in a dialogue with Koegel in “The Heart of Holistic Education,” 15.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁶ Gang, “Holistic Education.”
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 87.
- ⁵⁸ Adapted from “Education 2000: A Holistic Perspective,” 240-247.

- ⁵⁹ Miller, *The Holistic Curriculum; Worldviews, Educational Orientations, and Holistic Education*.
- ⁶⁰ Miller, *The Holistic Curriculum*; "Making Connections Through Holistic Learning."
- ⁶¹ Nava, *Holistic Education: Pedagogy of Universal Love*, 44-46.
- ⁶² Ibid., 46.
- ⁶³ Paths of Learning. *Holistic Education*. <http://www.pathsoflearning.net/> (accessed July 1, 2007).
- ⁶⁴ Miller, *Caring for New Life*, 102.
- ⁶⁵ Miller, Introduction to *New Directions in Education*; "Philosophical Foundations;" "Introduction: Holistic Learning," 2-3.
- ⁶⁶ Miller, *What are Schools for?*, 221.
- ⁶⁷ Miller, *Holistic Curriculum*; Miller, *Caring for New Life*, *New Directions in Education*; Flake, *Holistic Education: Principles, Perspectives and Practices*.
- ⁶⁸ Rocha, *Schools Where Children Matter*; Flake, *Holistic education: Principles, perspectives, and practices*; Ruenzel, "A school with balance;" Looper, "Metanoia" for Montessorians."
- ⁶⁹ Miller, "Introduction: Vital Voices of educational Dissent," 20.
- ⁷⁰ Nava, *Holistic Education: Pedagogy of Universal Love*; Clark, "Environmental Education as an Integrative Study."
- ⁷¹ "Education 2000: A Holistic Perspective," 245-246.
- ⁷² Miller, *Holistic Curriculum*, 162-177; *Education and the Soul*, 93-108.
- ⁷³ Miller, *Caring for New Life*, 23-24.
- ⁷⁴ "Education 2000: A Holistic Perspective," 241; Miller, *What are schools for?*; "Making Connections to the World," 21.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid.
- ⁷⁶ Forbes, *Holistic Education*; Nakagawa, *Education for Awakening*; "Education 2000: A Holistic Perspective;" Miller, *Caring for New Life*.
- ⁷⁷ Miller, "Making Connections to the World;" "Partial Vision;" *Caring for New Life*; "Nourishing the Spiritual Embryo;" Nakagawa, *Education for Awakening*; Clark, *Designing and Implementing an Integrated Curriculum*.
- ⁷⁸ Miller, *What are schools for?* Miller, *The Holistic Curriculum*; Forbes, *Holistic Education*.
- ⁷⁹ Forbes, *Holistic Education*.
- ⁸⁰ Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics & Moral Education; The Challenge to Care in Schools*.
- ⁸¹ Nava, *Holistic Education: Pedagogy of Universal Love*; Eisler, *Tomorrow's Children*; Miller, *Caring for New Life*; "Philosophical Foundations;" Koegel, "The Heart of Holistic Education."
- ⁸² "Education 2000: A Holistic Perspective," 244.
- ⁸³ Eisler, *Tomorrow's Children*.
- ⁸⁴ Martin, "Alternatives in Education;" Miller, "Educational Alternatives."
- ⁸⁵ NCES, *Homeschooling in the United States: 2003*.

⁸⁶ France, “A Class of Their Own.”

⁸⁷ In 1995 it was estimated that in Australia some 20,000 families are homeschooling their children whereas in Canada about 20,000 students are homeschooled. Several other countries have also reported initiatives of homeschooling.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homeschooling> (accessed Jan 5, 2007)

⁸⁸ Holt, *How Children Fail*

⁸⁹ Ibid, 167-9.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Farenga, “John Holt and the Origins of Contemporary Homeschooling,” 3.

⁹² Ron Miller in “Educational Alternatives” and *Free Schools, Free People*, classify this trend in education as “the free school movement”, while Martin in “Alternatives in Education,” uses both terminologies to address these kinds of schools. A third position comes from The Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO - an organization dedicated to support the educational alternatives around the world)

(<http://www.educationrevolution.org/>), which lists all these schools under “democratic schools.”

⁹³ *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_school (accessed Jan 5, 2007)

⁹⁴ A detailed and historical account of the free school movement is provided by Ron Miller in his book *Free Schools, Free People*.

⁹⁵ Neill and Lamb, *Summerhill School*.

⁹⁶ Miller, *Free Schools, Free People*.

⁹⁷ For a complete list of the democratic schools registered with AERO, visit <http://www.edrev.org/lisofdemscho.html> (accessed Nov 3, 2006).

⁹⁸ Miller, “Educational Alternatives.”

⁹⁹ A list of Sudbury schools can be found at

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Sudbury_Schools

¹⁰⁰ The Website of AERO – The Alternative Education Resource Organization. *Democratic Education*. <http://www.edrev.org/demschool.html> (accessed Nov 3, 2006).

¹⁰¹ Bader and Blackmon, *Open Education*.

¹⁰² In a research brief submitted to *The Principals’ Partnership and the Union Pacific Foundation* on July 11, 2005, Mike Muir provides a summary of findings about the Open Schools, which also includes a list of Open Schools in the United States. For more information visit <http://www.principalspartnership.com/openschools.pdf>

¹⁰³ Information about the last three schools can be found online directly from their website.

¹⁰⁴ Friends Council on Education. *What Does a Friend School has to Offer?: Beginnings*. <http://www.friendscouncil.org/> (accessed November 08, 2006).

¹⁰⁵ Quaker Schools in England. *Education in a Quaker School*. <http://www.quakerschools.co.uk/qeducation.htm> (accessed October 20, 2006)

¹⁰⁶ Friends Council on Education. *What Does a Friend School has to Offer?: Beginnings*. <http://www.friendscouncil.org/> (accessed November 08, 2006).

- ¹⁰⁷ A list of Quaker schools throughout the world can be found at <http://www.friends.org.uk/quakers/qschools.htm>. For a complete list of Quaker schools in the United States visit <http://www.friends.org.uk/quakers/qschools.htm>.
- ¹⁰⁸ James Peterson describes Krishnamurti Schools as *methodless* in his article “The Methodless Approach.” His visits to several Krishnamurti schools and his interviews with various teachers are reported in this article.
- ¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 55.
- ¹¹⁰ Jiddu Krishnamurti, *Education and the Significance of Life*, 21.
- ¹¹¹ Krishnamurti gave this talk in 1984 in Ojai, California. Most of Krishnamurti Schools use this talk as an illustration of the intent of Krishnamurti Schools. For a full text go Krishnamurti Foundation India. *Journal Of The Krishnamurti Schools: Intent of the Krishnamurti Schools*. <http://www.journal.kfionline.org/intent.asp> (accessed November 15, 2006).
- ¹¹² Peterson, “The Methodless Approach,” 55.
- ¹¹³ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁴ The list of Krishnamurti schools can be found at http://www.kinfonet.org/Community/Schools/School_Listings/. To learn more about the activities involving Krishnamurti schools, you can access *The Journal of Krishnamurti Schools* online at <http://www.journal.kfionline.org/>
- ¹¹⁵ For more information about the KPM Schools visit <http://www.kpmapproach.org/>
- ¹¹⁶ KPM Approach to Children: Atma Vidya Educational Foundation. *History*. <http://www.kpmapproach.org/index.php?/pages/44> (accessed November 16, 2006)
- ¹¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁸ Borich, *Vital Impressions*. This is an excellent book to learn about the KPM Approach to Children and their integrated method of learning.
- ¹¹⁹ Ibid., 145.
- ¹²⁰ Ibid., 30.
- ¹²¹ Ibid., 25.
- ¹²² Muller, “Spiritual Education.”
- ¹²³ Framework adapted from Robert Muller’s “World Core Curriculum.” A summary of his vision can be found in his article “Spiritual Education,” 7-15.
- ¹²⁴ Gloria Crook, e-mail message to author, Oct. 20, 2006.
- ¹²⁵ Robert Muller Schools International Coordinating Center. *How to Start a Robert Muller School: Is There any Special Training Necessary?* <http://www.unol.org/rms/trng.html> (accessed Oct. 1, 2006).
- ¹²⁶ More information about the GEMUN can be found at <http://www.unol.org/gemun/>
- ¹²⁷ More information about The Robert Muller School in Texas can be found at <http://www.unol.org/rms/index.html>
- ¹²⁸ Gloria Crook, e-mail message to author, Oct. 19, 2006.
- ¹²⁹ Martin, “Alternatives in Education.”
- ¹³⁰ Nakagawa, *Education for Awakening*.
- ¹³¹ Peterson, “The Methodless Approach.”

- ¹³² Hill, “Changes of the Human Mind”.
- ¹³³ Although Waldorf Schools are the most cited schools in the holistic education movement (John Miller, *Holistic Curriculum*; Ron Miller, *What are Schools for?* Trosti, “Educating as an Art: The Waldorf Approach”), Montessori schools have also been listed as representatives of the holistic movement (Ron Miller, *What are Schools for?*; Martin, “Alternatives in Education”).
- ¹³⁴ Miller, “Educational Alternatives.”
- ¹³⁵ Earl Ogletree, “Waldorf Schools”
- ¹³⁶ For information on Waldorf/Steiner schools and international associations worldwide, visit <http://www.waldorfschule.info/index.71.0.3.html>. For information on teacher-training centers for Waldorf education around the world, go to <http://www.waldorfschule.info/index.52.0.3.html>. Information about Steiner schools and institutes within North America, can be obtained at the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) website, <http://www.members.awsna.org/Public/SchoolListPage.aspx>.
- ¹³⁷ Ogletree, “Waldorf Schools.”
- ¹³⁸ Ogletree, *The Comparative Status of the Creative Thinking Ability of Waldorf Education Students*.
- ¹³⁹ Childs, *Steiner Education in Theory and Practice*, 68.
- ¹⁴⁰ Steiner, *The Education of the Child in the Light of Anthroposophy*.
- ¹⁴¹ For more information on the Art of Eurythmy developed by Steiner, see Steiner, *Eurythmy as Visible Music*; and Steiner, *Eurythmy as Visible Speech*.
- ¹⁴² Information about the Waldorf curriculum can be found at AWSNA, <http://www.awsna.org/education-k12.html>
- ¹⁴³ Ogletree, “Waldorf Schools.”
- ¹⁴⁴ Ogletree, “Waldorf Schools,” 5.
- ¹⁴⁵ Coulter, “Montessori and Steiner.”
- ¹⁴⁶ Edwards, “Three Approaches from Europe, 2.
- ¹⁴⁷ American Montessori Society. *Maria Montessori*. <http://www.amshq.org/montessori.htm> (accessed April 9, 2007).
- ¹⁴⁸ American Montessori Society. *History of Movement*. http://www.amshq.org/montessori_history.htm (accessed April 9, 2007).
- ¹⁴⁹ Edwards, “Three Approaches from Europe,” 3.
- ¹⁵⁰ American Montessori Society. *History of Movement*. http://www.amshq.org/montessori_history.htm (accessed April 9, 2007).
- ¹⁵¹ Further information on affiliated schools, accredited teacher-training centers, the history of the movement and published resources, can be obtained in the websites of the American Montessori Society at <http://www.amshq.org/> or the Association Montessori Internationale at <http://www.montessori-ami.org/>.
- ¹⁵² American Montessori Society: Public School Montessori. *AMS Supports Public Montessori Schools*. http://www.amshq.org/schools_public.htm (accessed April 10, 2007).

- ¹⁵³ See note 152 above.
- ¹⁵⁴ Montessori, *Education for a New World*; Montessori, *Education for Human Development*.
- ¹⁵⁵ Montessori, *The Montessori Method*.
- ¹⁵⁶ Lillard, *Montessori Today*, 29.
- ¹⁵⁷ Standing, *Maria Montessori*.
- ¹⁵⁸ Association Montessori Internationale. *Montessori Approach*.
<http://www.montessori-ami.org/> (accessed April 10, 2007).
- ¹⁵⁹ Lillard, *Montessori Today*.
- ¹⁶⁰ See note 159 above.
- ¹⁶¹ Ibid.
- ¹⁶² Lillard, *Montessori Today*.
- ¹⁶³ Edwards, "Three Approaches from Europe," 7.
- ¹⁶⁴ Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 92.
- ¹⁶⁵ Bussey, "Neo-Humanist Philosophy."
- ¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 84.
- ¹⁶⁷ Arete Brim (international coordinator of NHE schools), e-mail message to author, April 13, 2007.
- ¹⁶⁸ Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 85.
- ¹⁶⁹ Brim, e-mail message to author, April 13, 2007.
- ¹⁷⁰ Information about the programs offered at Ánanda Marga Gurukula can be obtained at their website at http://www.gurukul.edu/instit_distancelearning.php
- ¹⁷¹ Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 23.
- ¹⁷² Ibid., 78.
- ¹⁷³ Ibid., 7-10.
- ¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 20-21.
- ¹⁷⁵ Anandarama, "Neohumanist Education for All," 47.
- ¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 30-31.
- ¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 41, 50.
- ¹⁷⁸ General information about NHE schools' curriculum can be found at <http://nhe.gurukul.edu/curriculum.htm>
- ¹⁷⁹ Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 70.
- ¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 48.
- ¹⁸¹ Ibid., 77.
- ¹⁸² Rebecca New, *Reggio Emilia: Catalyst for Change and Conversation*, 1.
- ¹⁸³ *40 Years: Reggio Emilia one city many children*.
- ¹⁸⁴ Bredekamp, "Reflections on Reggio Emilia," 15.
- ¹⁸⁵ North American Reggio Emilia Alliance. *Schools of Reggio*.
<http://www.reggioalliance.org/schools/index.html>
- ¹⁸⁶ Edwards, "Three Approaches from Europe", 3; See also note 184 above.
- ¹⁸⁷ See note 184 above.

- ¹⁸⁸ For information about professional development, conferences, Reggio Emilia schools, etc. visit the Reggio Children website at <http://zerosei.comune.re.it/inter/reggiochildren.htm>.
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- ¹⁹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹⁹¹ Rabitti, “An Integrated Art Approach in a Preschool,” 76.
- ¹⁹² Bredekamp, “Reflections on Reggio Emilia,” 13.
- ¹⁹³ Lilian Katz, “Images from the World.”
- ¹⁹⁴ Edwards, Gandini, and Forman, *The Hundred Languages of Children*, 44.
- ¹⁹⁵ Malaguzzi, “For an Education Based on Relationships.”
- ¹⁹⁶ Edwards, “Three Approaches from Europe”, 5.
- ¹⁹⁷ Ibid; Gandini, “Fundamentals of the Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education,” 5.
- ¹⁹⁸ Krechevsky, “Form, Function, and Understanding in Learning Groups,” 248.
- ¹⁹⁹ Gandini, “Educational and Caring Spaces,” 177.
- ²⁰⁰ Edwards, “Three Approaches from Europe”, 6.
- ²⁰¹ Gandini, “Fundamentals of the Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education,” 5-6.
- ²⁰² Rinaldi, “Staff Development in Reggio Emilia.”
- ²⁰³ Miller, *What are Schools for?*; Miller, “Introduction: Holistic Learning, 2; Nava, *Holistic Education: Pedagogy of Universal Love*, 46.
- ²⁰⁴ Hill, “Changes of the Human Mind”.
- ²⁰⁵ Miller, *New Directions in Education*, 2.
- ²⁰⁶ Miller, *What are Schools for?*, 79.
- ²⁰⁷ Wilber, “An Integral Theory of Consciousness.”
- ²⁰⁸ Ibid., 80.
- ²⁰⁹ Ibid., 81.
- ²¹⁰ Miller, *What are Schools for?*, 58.
- ²¹¹ Although Ron Miller uses this expression in “Nourishing the Spiritual Embryo,” 18 to explain Montessori’s spiritual vision, the same idea is found in contemporary holistic education.
- ²¹² Miller, *Education and the Soul*.
- ²¹³ Forbes, *Holistic Education*; Miller, *What are Schools for?*
- ²¹⁴ Plato, *The Republic*; Barnes, *Aristotle*.
- ²¹⁵ Ibid.
- ²¹⁶ Poletti, “Plato’s Vowels,” 2-3.
- ²¹⁷ Miller, “Ancient Roots of Holistic Education,” 2.
- ²¹⁸ Rousseau, *Émile*
- ²¹⁹ Ibid., 93.
- ²²⁰ Froebel, *The Education of Man*.
- ²²¹ Pestalozzi, *The Education of Man: Aphorisms*
- ²²² Miller, *What are Schools for?*; Miller, *The Holistic Curriculum*.

- ²²³ Nakagawa, *Education for Awakening*, 68.
- ²²⁴ Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.
- ²²⁵ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*; Gatto, *Against School*; Illich, *Deschooling Society*.
- ²²⁶ Edwards, “Three Approaches from Europe”, 5.
- ²²⁷ Rinaldi, “Infant-toddler Centers and preschools as places of culture,” 39.
- ²²⁸ Montessori, *Peace and Education*, 14; *To Educate the Human Potential*; Steiner, *The Education of the Child in the Light of Anthroposophy*.
- ²²⁹ Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 13.
- ²³⁰ Glassman, “Universalism;” “What is Universalism Really About?”
- ²³¹ See Steiner, *Occult Science* for a general outline of his view.
- ²³² As described by Childs in *Steiner Education*, 31.
- ²³³ Steiner, *The Education of the Child in the Light of Anthroposophy*.
- ²³⁴ Childs, *Steiner Education in Theory and Practice*.
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- ²³⁶ Ibid.
- ²³⁷ Montessori, *To Educate the Human Potential; Peace and Education*.
- ²³⁸ Montessori, *The Montessori Method*.
- ²³⁹ Lillard, *Montessori Today*.
- ²⁴⁰ Standing, *Maria Montessori*.
- ²⁴¹ Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 13; Alister, “Weaving the Magic Circle: Teaching Spirituality to Children.”
- ²⁴² Ibid., 10.
- ²⁴³ Ibid., 16-17.
- ²⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁴⁵ Steiner, *The Roots of Education*, 56; “The Science of Spirit, Education and Practical Life,” 60-62.
- ²⁴⁶ Sarkar, *Discourses on Neohumanist Education*.
- ²⁴⁷ Childs, *Steiner Education in Theory and Practice*
- ²⁴⁸ Ibid., 69.
- ²⁴⁹ Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 66-67.
- ²⁵⁰ Steiner, *The Arts and Their Mission*, 45.
- ²⁵¹ Childs, *Steiner Education in Theory and Practice*, 188.
- ²⁵² Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 50-51.
- ²⁵³ Ibid., 51.
- ²⁵⁴ Giudici, Rinaldi, & Krechevsky, *Making Learning Visible*.
- ²⁵⁵ Sarkar, *Discourses on Neohumanist Education*; Steiner, “Anthroposophy and the Visual Arts;” Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*; Goethe, *Essays on Art and Literature*.
- ²⁵⁶ Sogyal, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, Doumoulin, *Zen Buddhism*; Burley, *Hatha Yoga*.
- ²⁵⁷ Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 30-31.

- 258 Standing, *Maria Montessori*, 226.
- 259 Author's observational notes from visits and talks to Montessori teachers.
- 260 Ibid., 175-177.
- 261 Nakagawa, *Education for Awakening*, 68.
- 262 Miller, *New Directions in Education*, 2; Flake, *Holistic Education: Principles, Perspectives and Practices*, 245.
- 263 Miller, "Introduction: Vital Voices of Educational Dissent", 20.
- 264 Nakagawa, *Education for Awakening*.
- 265 Miller, *What are Schools for?*
- 266 Nava, *Holistic Education: Pedagogy of Universal Love*; Clark, "Environmental Education as an Integrative Study."
- 267 Miller, "Introduction: Vital Voices of Educational Dissent"
- 268 Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*; "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-range ecology movements; Capra, *The Web of Life; The Turning Point*; "Ecoliteracy."
- 269 Miller, *Education and the Soul; The Holistic Curriculum*.
- 270 Clark, "Environmental Education as an Integrative Study," 42.
- 271 Ibid., 44.
- 272 Nava, Nava, *Holistic Education: Pedagogy of Universal Love*.
- 273 Ibid., 95.
- 274 Ibid., 96.
- 275 Sarkar, *Discourses on Neohumanist Education*.
- 276 Sarkar, *The Liberation of the Intellect*.
- 277 Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*.
- 278 Steiner, *Universe, Earth, and Man*.
- 279 Childs, *Steiner Education in Theory and Practice*.
- 280 Ibid., 124-125.
- 281 Montessori, *To Educate the Human Potential*.
- 282 Montessori, *The Montessori Method*.
- 283 Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 52-53.
- 284 Strozzi, "Daily Life at School."
- 285 Childs, *Steiner Education in Theory and Practice*.
- 286 Alister, "Why Teach Meditation?"
- 287 Childs, *Steiner Education in Theory and Practice*
- 288 Steiner, *The Festivals and their Meaning*.
- 289 Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 52-53.
- 290 Krechevsky, "Form, Function, and Understanding in Learning Groups."
- 291 Barnes, "Learning that Grows with the Learner."
- 292 Agnew, *The Universe is a Horse*; NAMC (North American Montessori Center) <http://montessoritraining.blogspot.com/>
- 293 Alister, "Why Teach Meditation?"
- 294 Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*
- 295 Montessori, *To Educate the Human Potential*.

²⁹⁶ Lillard, *Montessori Today*.
²⁹⁷ Barnes, "Learning that Grows with the Learner."
²⁹⁸ Steiner and Howard, *Art as Spiritual Activity*; Sarkar, *Discourses on Neohumanist Education*.
²⁹⁹ Steiner, "Anthroposophy and the Visual Arts," 271.
³⁰⁰ Montessori, *To Educate the Human Potential*.
³⁰¹ Nakagawa, *Education for Awakening*.
³⁰² Nakagawa, *Education for Awakening*; Miller, "Making Connections to the World;" Miller, *The Holistic Curriculum*.
³⁰³ Clark, "Holistic Education: A Search for Wholeness," 53.
³⁰⁴ Miller, *New Directions in Education*, 62.
³⁰⁵ Ibid.
³⁰⁶ Hill, "Changes of the Human Mind", 58.
³⁰⁷ Ibid.
³⁰⁸ Gang, "Holistic Education," 87; Clark, *Designing and Implementing an Integrated Curriculum*, 47.
³⁰⁹ Clark, *Designing and Implementing an Integrated Curriculum*; Miller, *The Holistic Curriculum*.
³¹⁰ Miller, *The Holistic Curriculum*.
³¹¹ Clark, *Designing and Implementing an Integrated Curriculum*, 29.
³¹² Ibid.
³¹³ Dewey, *Education Today; How we Think*.
³¹⁴ Dewey, *Education Today*, 151.
³¹⁵ Nakagawa, *Education for Awakening*, 72.
³¹⁶ Montessori, *Education for a New World*; Steiner, *Universe, Earth, and Man*; Sarkar, *The Liberation of the Intellect*.
³¹⁷ Ibid.
³¹⁸ Bussey, "Neo-Humanist Philosophy," 84.
³¹⁹ Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 14-15.
³²⁰ Montessori, *To Educate the Human Potential*.
³²¹ Ibid., 82.
³²² Steiner, *The Roots of Education*.
³²³ Malaguzzi, "For an Education Based on Relationships."
³²⁴ Edwards, Gandini, and Nimmo, "Promoting Collaborative Learning in the Early Childhood Classroom," 79.
³²⁵ Rabitti, "An Integrated Art Approach in a Preschool."
³²⁶ Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 70-71; Childs, *Steiner Education in Theory and Practice*, 135-136; Lillard, *Montessori Today*.
³²⁷ Alister, "Why Teach Meditation?"
³²⁸ Bussey, "Neo-Humanist Philosophy."
³²⁹ Jacobson, "Interview with Director of the Progressive School of Long Island;" Lillard, *Montessori Today*; AWSNA (Association of Waldorf Schools in North

America). *The Arts and Practical Skills*. <http://www.awsna.org/education-arts.html> (Accessed May 15, 2007); Edwards, Gandini, and Forman, *The Hundred Languages of Children*.

³³⁰ Bruder, "Working with Members of Other Disciplines;" Linder, "Read, Play, and Learn!"

³³¹ Woods, "Researching and Developing Interdisciplinary Teaching;" Barisonzi and Thorn, "Teaching Revolution: Issues in Interdisciplinary Education."

³³² Bussey, "A Trans-disciplinary Approach."

³³³ Jacobson, "Interview with Director of the Progressive School of Long Island;" Wood, "Ananda Marga Neohumanist school, Korle Gonno, Accra, Ghana."

³³⁴ Standing, *Maria Montessori*, 361-362.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Lillard, *Montessori Today*.

³³⁷ Childs, *Steiner Education in Theory and Practice*.

³³⁸ Gandini, "Fundamentals of the Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Education," 7.

³³⁹ Forman, "Different Media, Different Languages"; Rabitti, "An Integrated Art Approach in a Preschool."

³⁴⁰ Edwards, Gandini, and Forman, *The Hundred Languages of Children*.

³⁴¹ Childs, *Steiner Education in Theory and Practice*; Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*; Edwards, Gandini, and Forman, *The Hundred Languages of Children*.

³⁴² Forman, "Different Media, Different Languages."

³⁴³ Rinaldi, "Documentation and Assessment"; Hendrick, *First Steps Toward Teaching the Reggio Way*.

³⁴⁴ Ceppi and Zinni, *Children, Spaces, Relations*; Strozzi, "Daily Life at School."

³⁴⁵ New, "Reggio Emilia: Some Lessons for U.S. Educators."

³⁴⁶ Miller, *Caring for New Life*, 23-24.

³⁴⁷ Miller, *What are Schools for?* Nava, *Holistic Education: Pedagogy of Universal Love*

³⁴⁸ Miller, *The Holistic Curriculum*.

³⁴⁹ This quest for balance in contemporary holistic education echoes the work of Carl Rogers, who fiercely argued for an integrated approach to learning that would combine our masculine (intellectual and logical) and feminine (intuition and feelings) capacities. (Rogers, *Freedom to Learn*).

³⁵⁰ Miller, *New Directions in Education*, 2.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 53-57.

³⁵² Ibid., 54.

³⁵³ Ibid. Contemporary holistic educators' claim that learning is a whole act is reflected in Goleman's work on *Emotional Intelligence* and *Social Intelligence*, which they often cite in their argument for *whole learning*.

³⁵⁴ Clark, *Designing and Implementing an Integrated Curriculum*.

³⁵⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*; Rousseau, *Émile*; Pestalozzi, *Letters on Early Education*; How Gertrude Teaches her Children; Froebel, Froebel; *The Education of*

- Man; Dewey, *Democracy and Education; Art as Experience*; Rogers, *Freedom to Learn*; Parker, *Studies in Education*.
- ³⁵⁶ Pestalozzi, *Letters on Early Education*;
- ³⁵⁷ Steiner, *The Education of the Child in the Light of Anthroposophy*.
- ³⁵⁸ Edwards, "Three Approaches from Europe;" Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 78.
- ³⁵⁹ Montessori, *The Discovery of the Child*; Childs, *Steiner Education in Theory and Practice*; Edwards, Gandini, and Forman, *The Hundred Languages of Children*.
- ³⁶⁰ Lillard, *Montessori Today*.
- ³⁶¹ AWSNA (Association of Waldorf Schools in North America). *Classroom and Curriculum*. <http://www.awsna.org/education-class.html> (Accessed May 15, 2007)
- ³⁶² Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*.
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- ³⁶⁴ Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 10-11.
- ³⁶⁵ Ceppi and Zinni, *Children, Spaces, Relations*; Montessori, *The Montessori Method*.
- ³⁶⁶ Gandini, "Fundamentals of the Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education;" Forman, "Different Media, Different Languages;" Montessori, *Education for Human Development*, 42-43; Lillard, *Montessori Today*, 35.
- ³⁶⁷ Montessori, *The Montessori Method*; Krechevsky, "Form, Function, and Understanding in Learning Groups."
- ³⁶⁸ Childs, *Steiner Education in Theory and Practice*, 113; Lillard, *Montessori Today*.
- ³⁶⁹ Montessori, *The Discovery of the Child*.
- ³⁷⁰ Jacobson, "Interview with Director of the Progressive School of Long Island;"
- ³⁷¹ Childs, *Steiner Education in Theory and Practice*, 94-97; Montessori, *To Educate the Human Potential*, 14-17.
- ³⁷² Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 40-41.
- ³⁷³ Gandini, "Fundamentals of the Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education."
- ³⁷⁴ Steiner, *Art as Spiritual Activity*
- ³⁷⁵ Childs, *Steiner Education in Theory and Practice*, 84.
- ³⁷⁶ Sarkar, *Discourses on Neohumanist Education*.
- ³⁷⁷ Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*; Bussey, "Mapping Neohumanist Futures in Education."
- ³⁷⁸ Childs, *Steiner in Theory and Practice*; Lillard, *Montessori Today*; Edwards, Gandini, and Forman, *The Hundred Languages of Children*.
- ³⁷⁹ Gandini, "Fundamentals of the Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education," 8.
- ³⁸⁰ "Education 2000: A Holistic Perspective," 241.
- ³⁸¹ "Education 2000: A Holistic Perspective," 241; Miller, *Educating for a Culture of Peace*.
- ³⁸² Miller, *Educating for a Culture of Peace*.
- ³⁸³ Ibid.
- ³⁸⁴ "Education 2000: A Holistic Perspective," 241-242.

- ³⁸⁵ Although holistic educators usually do not support Gardner's emphasis on distinguishing intelligences (*Frames of Mind*), they do endorse his argument that intelligence is not only located in the brain.
- ³⁸⁶ Miller, *What are Schools for?*
- ³⁸⁷ Rousseau, Émile.
- ³⁸⁸ Ibid., 189.
- ³⁸⁹ Rinaldi, "Infant-toddler Centers and preschools as places of culture; Montessori, *To Educate the Human Potential*; Steiner, *The Education of the Child in the Light of Anthroposophy*; Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*.
- ³⁹⁰ Montessori, *The Discovery of the Child*.
- ³⁹¹ Giudici, Rinaldi, and Krechevsky, *Making Learning Visible*; Vecchi, "The Curiosity to Understand."
- ³⁹² Childs, *Steiner Education in Theory and Practice*.
- ³⁹³ Steiner, *The Roots of Education*.
- ³⁹⁴ Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 21; Montessori, *Education for Human Development*, 24-25.
- ³⁹⁵ Montessori, *The Montessori Method*, 80.
- ³⁹⁶ Giudici, Rinaldi, and Krechevsky, *Making Learning Visible*.
- ³⁹⁷ Gandini, "Fundamentals of the Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education," 8.
- ³⁹⁸ Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 10.
- ³⁹⁹ Glassman, "Universalism."
- ⁴⁰⁰ Montessori, *The Montessori Method*; New, *Reggio Emilia: Some Lessons for U.S. Educators*, 1.
- ⁴⁰¹ Childs, *Steiner Education in Theory and Practice*.
- ⁴⁰² Montessori, *Education for Human Development*, 24-25.
- ⁴⁰³ Standing, *Maria Montessori*.
- ⁴⁰⁴ Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 21.
- ⁴⁰⁵ Rinaldi, "The Courage of Utopia," 148.
- ⁴⁰⁶ Rinaldi, "Infant-toddler Centers and Preschools as Places of Culture," 42.
- ⁴⁰⁷ Rinaldi, "Staff Development in Reggio Emilia," Krechevsky, "Form, Function, and Understanding in Learning Groups."
- ⁴⁰⁸ Edwards, Gandini, and Forman, *The Hundred Languages of Children*, 44.
- ⁴⁰⁹ Forman, "Different Media, Different Languages."
- ⁴¹⁰ Montessori, *Peace and Education*; Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*; Steiner, *Roots of Education*; Edwards, Gandini, and Forman, *The Hundred Languages of Children*.
- ⁴¹¹ Glassman, "Universalism."
- ⁴¹² Montessori, *The Montessori Method*.
- ⁴¹³ Edwards, "Three Approaches from Europe."
- ⁴¹⁴ Information collected from various visits to Waldorf Schools.

- ⁴¹⁵ Noddings, *Caring, a Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education; Starting at Home; The Challenge to Care in Schools; An Ethic of Caring and its Implication for Instructional Arrangements*.
- ⁴¹⁶ Noddings, *Caring, a Feminine Approach to ethics and Moral Education*, 4-5.
- ⁴¹⁷ Forbes, *Holistic Education*.
- ⁴¹⁸ Rousseau, Émile; Pestalozzi, *How Gertrude Teaches her Children*; Froebel, *The Education of Man*; Rogers, *Freedom to Learn*, Miller, *What are Schools for?* Koegel, "The Heart of Holistic Education," 11.
- ⁴¹⁹ Miller, *What are Schools for? Caring for a New Life*; Nava, *Holistic Education: Pedagogy of Universal Love*.
- ⁴²⁰ Miller, *The Holistic Curriculum; Soul in Education; The Compassionate Teacher*; Kessler, *The Soul of Education*; Brown, "The Teacher as Contemplative Observer."
- ⁴²¹ Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*.
- ⁴²² See note 418 above.
- ⁴²³ Bussey, "A Trans-disciplinary Approach;" Edwards, Gandini, and Forman, *The Hundred Languages of Children*; Montessori, *Education for Human Development*; Childs, *Steiner Education in Theory and Practice*.
- ⁴²⁴ Steiner, "Education and the Science of the Spirit," 36.
- ⁴²⁵ Montessori, *Education for Human Development*, 27.
- ⁴²⁶ Montessori, *Peace and Education*.
- ⁴²⁷ Hendrick, *First steps teaching the Reggio Way*.
- ⁴²⁸ Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 12.
- ⁴²⁹ Ogletree, "Waldorf Schools;" American Montessori Society. *Parents and the American Montessori Society*. <http://www.amshq.org/parentsPublic.htm> (Accessed June 23, 2007); Cagliari and Giudici, "School as a Place of Group Learning for Parents;" Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*.
- ⁴³⁰ Childs, *Steiner Education in Theory and Practice*; Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 23.
- ⁴³¹ Information collected from the various schools I visited in diverse countries.
- ⁴³² Ogletree, "Waldorf Schools."
- ⁴³³ Montessori, *Education for Human Development*.
- ⁴³⁴ Lillard, *Montessori Today*; Standing, *Maria Montessori*.
- ⁴³⁵ Gandini, "Fundamentals of the Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Education," 5-6.
- ⁴³⁶ Edwards, Gandini, and Nimmo, "Promoting Collaborative Learning in the Early Childhood Classroom," 97; Rinaldi, "Infant-toddler Centers and Preschools as Places of Culture," 44.
- ⁴³⁷ Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 12, 32.
- ⁴³⁸ Ibid; Alister, "Why Teach Meditation?"
- ⁴³⁹ Steiner, *The Roots of Education*.
- ⁴⁴⁰ Childs, *Steiner Education in Theory and Practice*, 67.
- ⁴⁴¹ Montessori, *Peace and Education*; Montessori, *Education for Human Development*.

- ⁴⁴² Edwards, Gandini, and Forman, *The Hundred Languages of Children*; Hendrick, *First steps teaching the Reggio Way*.
- ⁴⁴³ Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 20-21, 54, 76,78.
- ⁴⁴⁴ Childs, *Steiner Education in Theory and Practice*; Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*.
- ⁴⁴⁵ Milojevic, "The River School."
- ⁴⁴⁶ American Montessori Society. *Parents and the American Montessori Society*.
<http://www.amshq.org/parentsPublic.htm> (Accessed June 23, 2007)
- ⁴⁴⁷ New, "Reggio Emilia: Catalyst for Change and Conversation;" Cagliari and Giudici, "School as a Place of Group Learning for Parents."
- ⁴⁴⁸ Miller, "Making Connections to the World;" "Partial Vision;" *Caring for New Life*; "Nourishing the Spiritual Embryo;" Nakagawa, *Education for Awakening*; Clark, *Designing and Implementing an Integrated Curriculum*.
- ⁴⁴⁹ Miller, *What are schools for?* Miller, *The Holistic Curriculum*; Forbes, *Holistic Education*.
- ⁴⁵⁰ Forbes, *Holistic Education*; Nakagawa, *Education for Awakening*; "Education 2000: A Holistic Perspective;" Miller, *Caring for New Life*.
- ⁴⁵¹ Nakagawa, *Education for Awakening*.
- ⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, 68.
- ⁴⁵³ Forbes, *Holistic Education*, 33.
- ⁴⁵⁴ Miller, *Free Schools, Free People*.
- ⁴⁵⁵ Rousseau, *Émile*; Neill, *Summerhill*.
- ⁴⁵⁶ Krishnamurti, *Freedom from the Known; Education and the Significance of Life*.
- ⁴⁵⁷ Illich, *Deschooling Society*.
- ⁴⁵⁸ Krishnamurti, *Freedom from the Known; The Future of Humanity; The First and Last Freedom*.
- ⁴⁵⁹ Krishnamurti, *Think on these Things*, 12.
- ⁴⁶⁰ Rousseau, *Emile*.
- ⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 255.
- ⁴⁶² *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁶³ Neill, *Summerhill*.
- ⁴⁶⁴ Illich, *Deschooling Society*.
- ⁴⁶⁵ Forbes, *Holistic Education*.
- ⁴⁶⁶ Holt, *Growing Without Schooling*, 3-4.
- ⁴⁶⁷ Holt, *How Children Learn; How Children Fail*; Mel Allen, "The Education of John Holt;" Rousseau, *Émile*; Pestalozzi, *Letters on Early Education; How Gertrude Teaches her Children*; Froebel, *The Education of Man*; Montessori, *The Montessori Method*; Rogers, *Freedom to Learn*; Neill, *Summerhill*; Illich, *Deschooling Society*.
- ⁴⁶⁸ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*; Clark, *Designing and Implementing an Integrated Curriculum*.
- ⁴⁶⁹ View note 466 above.
- ⁴⁷⁰ Miller, "Making Connections to the World," 32.
- ⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*

- ⁴⁷² Nakagawa, *Education for Awakening*; Milojevic, "Collective Violence Pedagogy and the Neohumanist Peace," 160.
- ⁴⁷³ Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 7.
- ⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 10, 60-61.
- ⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 68-69.
- ⁴⁷⁶ Milojevic, "The River School," 316.
- ⁴⁷⁷ Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 18.
- ⁴⁷⁸ Steiner was deeply concerned with idea of freedom and the necessary steps to reach that state. The beginning of his work is marked by his effort in conceptualizing freedom, which culminated in his book *Die Philosophie der Freiheit*. This book was first translated as *The Philosophy of Freedom*, however from 1922-1963, English translations of this book were published as *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*.
- ⁴⁷⁹ Steiner, *The Science of Spirit, Education and Practical Life; Discussions with Teachers*.
- ⁴⁸⁰ Rocha, *Schools Where Children Matter*, 127.
- ⁴⁸¹ Montessori, *Education for a New World; The Discovery of the Child*.
- ⁴⁸² Standing, *Maria Montessori*, 281.
- ⁴⁸³ Montessori, *Peace and Education*, 17.
- ⁴⁸⁴ Montessori, *The Discovery of the Child*, 302-307; *The Montessori Method*, 86.
- ⁴⁸⁵ Edwards, Gandini, and Forman, *The Hundred Languages of Children*, 44.
- ⁴⁸⁶ Cagliari and Giudici, "School as a Place of Group Learning for Parents," 136.
- ⁴⁸⁷ Edwards, Gandini, and Forman, *The Hundred Languages of Children*.
- ⁴⁸⁸ Edwards, Gandini, and Nimmo, "Promoting Collaborative Learning in the Early Childhood Classroom."
- ⁴⁸⁹ Montessori, *The Discovery of the Child*.
- ⁴⁹⁰ Lillard, *Montessori Today*.
- ⁴⁹¹ Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 68-69.
- ⁴⁹² Rocha, *Schools Where Children Matter*, 117-128.
- ⁴⁹³ Montessori, *The Montessori Method*; Lillard, *Montessori Today*; Edwards, Gandini, and Forman, *The Hundred Languages of Children*.
- ⁴⁹⁴ Standing, *Maria Montessori*, 364.
- ⁴⁹⁵ Edwards, Gandini, and Nimmo, "Promoting Collaborative Learning in the Early Childhood Classroom."
- ⁴⁹⁶ Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*.
- ⁴⁹⁷ Childs, *Steiner in Theory and Practice*.
- ⁴⁹⁸ Giudici, Rinaldi, and Krechevsky, *Making Learning Visible*.
- ⁴⁹⁹ Forman, "Different Media, Different Languages."
- ⁵⁰⁰ Lillard. *Montessori Today*.
- ⁵⁰¹ Milojevic, "Visions of Education: Neohumanism and Critical Spirituality;" Bussey, "Neohumanism: Critical Spirituality, Tantra, and Education."
- ⁵⁰² Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 60-61.
- ⁵⁰³ Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 58-59; Rocha, *Schools Where Children Matter*.

- 504 Nakagawa, *Education for Awakening*.
- 505 Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 10.
- 506 Montessori, *Education for a New World*, 68.
- 507 Lillard, *Montessori Today*, 60.
- 508 Montessori, *Education for a New World*, 89.
- 509 Edwards, Gandini, and Forman, *The Hundred Languages of Children*.
- 510 The “scaffolding” notion was first introduced by Brunner, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*.
- 511 This concept was first discussed by Vygotsky (*Mind in Society*) in his definition of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).
- 512 Glassman, “Universalism;” Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 60-61.
- 513 *Ibid.*, 7-10.
- 514 Childs, *Steiner Education in Theory and Practice*, 136.
- 515 Edwards, Gandini, and Forman, *The Hundred Languages of Children*.
- 516 Lillard, *Montessori Today*.
- 517 Anandarama, “Neohumanist Education for All,” 47.
- 518 Rocha, *Schools Where Children Matter*.
- 519 Miller, “Partial Vision.”
- 520 Rocha, *Schools Where Teacher Matter*, 120.
- 521 Childs, *Steiner Education in Theory and Practice*, 126.
- 522 Nava, *Holistic Education: Pedagogy of Universal Love*; Miller, *Caring for New Life; Free School, Free People*.
- 523 “Education 2000,” 244.
- 524 Miller, “Toward Participatory Democracy.”
- 525 As discussed by Miller in “Toward Participatory Democracy.”
- 526 Dewey, *Democracy and Education*.
- 527 *Ibid.*, 86-87.
- 528 Miller, “What is Democratic Education?”
- 529 *Ibid.*
- 530 Miller, “Philosophical Foundations,” 78-79.
- 531 Eisler, *Tomorrow’s Children*.
- 532 Eisler, “Partnership Education.”
- 533 Gandini, “Fundamentals of the Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Education,” 5-6.
- 534 New, “Reggio Emilia: Some Lessons for U.S. Educators”, 4; Cagliari and Giudici, “School as a Place for Group Learning for Parents”, 136.
- 535 Montessori, *Education for Human Development*.
- 536 *Ibid.*, 26.
- 537 Ogletree, “Waldorf Schools”; *The comparative status of the creative thinking ability of Waldorf education students*.
- 538 Eisler, *Tomorrow’s Children*.
- 539 Inayatullah, Bussey, and Milojevic, *Neohumanist Educational Futures*.

- ⁵⁴⁰ New, "Reggio Emilia: Some Lessons for U.S. Educators", 4; Cagliari and Giudici, "School as a Place for Group Learning for Parents", 136.
- ⁵⁴¹ Rinaldi, "Staff Development in Reggio Emilia," 56.
- ⁵⁴² Montessori, *Education for Human Development*, 26.
- ⁵⁴³ Ibid., 28.
- ⁵⁴⁴ Milojevic, "The River School;" Jacobson, "Interview with Director of the Progressive School of Long Island."
- ⁵⁴⁵ Rocha, *Where Children Matter*.
- ⁵⁴⁶ Childs, *Steiner Education in Theory and Practice*.
- ⁵⁴⁷ American Montessori Society. *Parents and the American Montessori Society*. <http://www.amshq.org/parentsPublic.htm> (Accessed June 23, 2007).
- ⁵⁴⁸ Milojevic, "The River School."
- ⁵⁴⁹ Rama, *Neo-Humanist Education*, 81.
- ⁵⁵⁰ Reggio Emilia: The municipal Infant-toddler centers and preschools of Reggio Emilia. <http://zerosei.comune.re.it/inter/nidiescuole.htm>
- ⁵⁵¹ Ogletree, "Waldorf Schools"; *The comparative status of the creative thinking ability of Waldorf education students*.
- ⁵⁵² Hendrick, *First Steps Towards Teaching the Reggio Way*.
- ⁵⁵³ Edwards, "Three Approaches from Europe", 5.
- ⁵⁵⁴ Dewey, *Democracy in Education*, 86-87.
- ⁵⁵⁵ Ratner, *Intelligence in the Modern World: John Dewey's Philosophy*.
- ⁵⁵⁶ Mercogliano, "On the Road," 33.
- ⁵⁵⁷ Crain, "Fulfilling One's Calling," 9.

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