

The school garden is a daily teaching space that can guarantee diversity to the educational setting through the organisational variation that can characterise it, in particular as regards outdoor education.

Firstly, its seasonal look alone presents a variation which children can experience discovering many aspects connected to the natural cycles (seasonal) or to weather conditions that modify the state of the plants, soil and of the animals that inhabit it.

Secondly, it presents structured aspects, such as large fixed furnishings (swings, castles, slides, etc.) and de-structured aspects (trees, grass, hills, bushes, etc.) which can be emphasised by teachers by cornered-off settings. For example: unknown to the children all the fixed furnishings are cornered off by nylon building tape (white-red) and the story is told of the gardener gnome who doesn't want the furnishings which have been cornered off to be used. In this way, the children know that on that particular day they cannot go on the swings, slides, castle, but only use the natural part of the garden like the grass, the plants, bushes, soil and so on.

The building tape can also be used, tying it several times from tree to tree or to a fixed furnishing item, to create labyrinths which make the garden completely different from normal. In other cases, in late spring, the gardener can be asked not to mow the grass in some areas of the garden, to make them different from the mowed parts and create diversity of spaces that make them different from normal.

With similar methods, it is possible to vary the organisational framework of the courtyard, making it ever different and interesting to the children.

Educators and teachers are often unaware of the possibilities to organise the outdoor space of the school with countless variations, also based on the particular goals they are pursuing within the class. Dry leaves in autumn, for example, become an interesting educational setting to work on the diversity between sound and noise, if manipulated, trod on or closed inside a bag that becomes a special container.

In this way, the school garden is not only experienced as pedagogical object, namely a configured space like many other school gardens, but also as pedagogical¹ subject, namely a space which mutates and changes due to the presence of variables that make it different and consequently active, dynamic and provocative with respect to the possibilities of working in it.

Educators and teachers have the task of acting on the school garden to structure it as an educational setting with a high level of organisational variation in which the layout of furnishings, the diversified use of fixed furnishings and the access to special

zones, can influence the educational processes, the explorative approach of the child and, finally, the learning methods.²

Educational care must also be characterised by the intention with which the characteristics of the educational³ setting are accurately determined, making it more or less structured or completely de-structured. Modifying the space from pedagogical object to pedagogical subject means relaunching the explorative action of children towards ever different and motivating orientations.

¹Gennari M. (1997) *Pedagogia degli ambienti educativi*. Roma: Armando

² Lolli L. (2007) L'organizzazione dello spazio nella scuola dell'infanzia: una ricerca esplorativa. *Infanzia*, 5, 243-245

³Ceciliani A. (2007) *La presenza/assenza dei giocattoli/attrezzi nel gioco spontaneo*. In *La cura in educazione*. Roma:Carocci pp.221-223