



Educar em Revista

ISSN: 0104-4060

ISSN: 1984-0411

Setor de Educação da Universidade Federal do Paraná

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Parque Infantil: a singularidade e seus componentes<sup>1</sup>

Educar em Revista, núm. 77, 2019, Setembro-Outubro, pp. 223-244

Setor de Educação da Universidade Federal do Paraná

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/0104-4060.68371>

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# Parque Infantil: The Singularity and its Components<sup>1</sup>

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## *Parque Infantil: a singularidade e seus componentes*

Moysés Kuhlmann Jr.\*

### ABSTRACT

This article intends to problematize the attribution of originality to the non-school institution called *parque infantil* (childhood park), which was integrated into the Department of Culture of the city of São Paulo in 1935. We present articulations and propositions of similar institutions with different denominations. The text approaches the North American playground and its history. We also list and analyze the elements which form these propositions. The text relies on articles and books with research results about the subject and on documentary sources such as news stories, reports and communications to congresses, magazines and books of the studied period, which goes back to the first half of the nineteenth century. Inspired by an evidentiary methodology, both historiographic critique and historical interpretation aim to place the study of history of education within the framework of social relations. Historiographic critique identifies the adoption of narratives made by individuals who acted during the period, or the use of sources without problematization, which simplifies historical processes. Interpretation avoids valuing institutions, whether positively or negatively. It considers that it is not enough to characterize them as promoters of culture and citizenship, or, to the contrary, as forms of control and discipline, since both dimensions can be identified in the elements present in the propositions. Heliotherapy and open air schools, landscaping and urban parks, physical education as a driving force for active educational

1 Sponsored by a National Research Council (CNPq) productivity grant for the Project titled *Historiografia da educação no quadro das relações sociais: infância e instituições*. Translated by Fernando E Mello. Contact: feffori@gmail.com.

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environments and cultural activities and the propositions from British Infant School make up the outline of *parque infantil*.

**Keywords:** Parque Infantil. History. Education. Brazil. United States of America.

## RESUMO

Este artigo tem como intenção problematizar a atribuição de originalidade da instituição extraescolar denominada parque infantil, integrado ao Departamento de Cultura da prefeitura da cidade de São Paulo em 1935. Apresentam-se articulações e propostas de instituições congêneres, com diferentes denominações. O playground norte-americano e sua história são focalizados no texto. Elencam-se e analisam-se elementos constitutivos dessas propostas. O texto se apoia em artigos e livros com resultados de pesquisas sobre o tema e em fontes documentais, como reportagens da imprensa diária, relatórios e comunicações a congressos, revistas e livros do período estudado, que retrocede à primeira metade do século XIX. Inspiradas em uma metodologia indiciária, a crítica historiográfica e a interpretação histórica têm como perspectiva situar o estudo da história da educação no quadro das relações sociais. A crítica historiográfica identifica a adoção de narrativas feitas pelos sujeitos que atuaram no período ou o uso das fontes sem problematização, simplificando os processos históricos. A interpretação se distancia de atribuir valor às instituições, seja de forma positiva ou negativa. Considera-se que não basta adjetivá-las como promotoras da cultura e da cidadania, ou ao contrário, do controle e da disciplina, pois ambas as dimensões podem ser identificadas nos elementos presentes nas propostas. A helioterapia e as escolas ao ar livre, o paisagismo e os parques urbanos, a educação física como impulsionadora dos ambientes educacionais ativos e das atividades culturais, as propostas da escola infantil britânica compõem a configuração do parque infantil.

**Palavras-chave:** Parque Infantil. História. Educação. Brasil. Estados Unidos da América.

## Introduction

*Parque Infantil* (Childhood Park) was the name given in the city of São Paulo, in 1935, to a non-school institution that served a child population aged 4 to 12 years, linked to the then newly created Municipal Department of Culture. This denomination remained until 1975, when it was replaced by *Escola Muni-*

*pal de Educação Infantil* (Municipal School of Early Childhood Education). By then, the maximum age for the children served had been restricted to 6 years.<sup>2</sup>

In Brazil, especially since the 1940's, the *Parque Infantil* was disseminated to several municipalities in the state of São Paulo, as well as to other states. There is a singularity about this institution which refers to the adoption of this denomination in a generalized way, and also to the process of change from a non-school to a school institution, thus becoming *Escola Municipal de Educação Infantil*.

After establishing a preschool education system, the São Paulo State Education Secretariat projected its origin into the past and established 1935 as the initial year of municipal preschool education in São Paulo, with anniversary celebrations, although the *parque infantil* had had for a long time a different outline, since it served a wider age group than preschool (ESCOLA MUNICIPAL, 1985; MAGISTÉRIO, 2015).

Part of the research on the history of *parque infantil* in São Paulo considers Mário de Andrade as its creator, sometimes inflating his role in defining its propositions to the point that some texts often bring the phrase "Mário de Andrade's parks" (ABDANUR, 1994; DANAILOF, 2006; FARIA, 1995; FONSECA; FERREIRA; PRANDI, 2015; GOBBI, 2012, among others). Other studies emphasize the role of Nicanor Miranda, who was directly responsible for the *Parque Infantil* section (later called Division of Education, Assistance and Recreation) until 1946 (FILIZOLLA, 2002; GOMES, 2013; SILVA, 2008).

The former interpretation is based on the narratives produced by those involved in creating and implementing the Department of Culture, such as Paulo Duarte, in his memoirs, as well as some writings by Mário de Andrade on childhood and culture, which are indirectly related to the organization and formulation of proposals for these parks.

As to the latter, Nicanor Miranda himself promoted his role as a protagonist by attributing to himself both the institution's denomination and the creation of a proposition that differed from similar institutions.

This article intends to problematize the attribution of originality to *Parque Infantil* regarding both its name and its educational proposals and concepts. Interpretation avoids valuing institutions, whether positively or negatively. It considers that it is not enough to characterize them as promoters of culture and citizenship, or, to the contrary, as forms of control and discipline, since both dimensions can be found in the elements present in the propositions.

2 The agency's name has undergone changes: initially, Department of Culture, then Secretariat of Education and Hygiene, then Secretariat of Education and Culture and Secretariat of Education.

## From Playground to *Parque Infantil*

With regard to the denomination, Nicanor Miranda, in an interview to *Escola Municipal* magazine, in a commemorative issue for the 50th anniversary of municipal preschool, in 1985, said he was responsible for the term:

Municipal decree 767/35 reads: “considering that the *parques de recreios e jogos* [parks of recreation and play (or games)]...” That was the name Fernando de Azevedo gave them instead of “playgrounds” (...). People mistook *parques de recreios* for amusement parks, and *jogos* for gambling. So I proposed the name *Parques Infantis*. I filed a procedure in this respect and the mayor issued a decree changing the name *Parques de Recreios e Jogos* to *Parques Infantis* (p. 58).

This justification acknowledges that the institution’s proposition was created by Fernando de Azevedo, inspired by the American playground. Fernando de Azevedo used an almost literal translation of playgrounds since the 1933 Code of Education, with the term *campos de recreio e jogos* (fields of recreation and play). Azevedo’s contribution was critical in creating the proposition of the São Paulo Department of Culture, where he detailed the organization and architectural program of the *praças de recreio* (recreation squares) (ABDANUR, 1992; FILIZZOLA, 2002; NIEMEYER, 2002).

The procedure referred to by Miranda regarding the change of names was not found, but it is plausible that it was filed, considering his justification. However, Miranda did not create the term, which had been used in 1932, in accounts about the first year of activities of the Department of Physical Education of the state of São Paulo (DEF-SP). Two news stories published in newspapers, one in *O Estado de São Paulo* and the other in *Folha da Manhã*, mentioned that the DEF-SP conducted a “selection of places for the installation of *parques infantis* in various parts of the capital”, and that propaganda was disseminated to other municipalities in the state about the installation of *parques infantis* (DALBEN; GOIS JUNIOR; LIMA; PALMA, 2019, p.279).

The *Folha da Manhã* story indicated that the idea was to create spaces with the participation of teachers. The text reported that the DEF-SP was primarily concerned with childhood, that it selected locations and equipment to fit out the parks, but it also considered educational games for children and gave them “more appropriate lyrics and music”, in addition to providing a physical educa-

tion course for the improvement of members of the General Board of Education: “It made very many young ladies capable to teach profitable lessons to children in our schools and *parques infantis*” (ANNIVERSARIO, 1932, p. 12).

Although the text uses the plural form of the term, as far as we know, there was, at the time, only one *parque infantil* in the city of São Paulo, inaugurated in December 1930 under the name of “Play-ground” of D. Pedro II Park (DALBEN; GÓIS JUNIOR; LIMA; PALMA, 2019).

A few months before that text was published, in November 1931, the term *parques infantis* was used in a news story published in *Jornal do Brasil*, which spoke of another institution that preceded the one in São Paulo, i.e., the *Jardim de Recreio* (Recreation Garden) in Porto Alegre: “Founded in 1926 at the initiative of Mayor Octavio Rocha and under the technical direction of Mr. F. G. Goelzer, there are in Porto Alegre five *jardins de recreio* or *parques infantis*, which are true centers of modern physical education” (JARDINS DE RECREIO..., 1931).

Therefore, *Parque Infantil* was not a term created by Nicanor Miranda, having been used as an equivalent to Playground, *Praça* (Square), *Parque de Jogos* or *Campo de Jogos*, all of which are denominations used in different situations and referring to the implementation of this type of non-school institution; moreover, in 1931, the Playground of D. Pedro II Park received a new name: *Escola de Saúde* (Health School).

In 1930, Maria Antonieta de Castro, secretary-director of the Crusade for Childhood Association, whose director-general was Pérola Byington, developed a model program for children aimed at reducing child mortality and promoting education for children’s physical and moral health. The proposal was directed to making the Playground of D. Pedro II Park more efficient. In March 1931, Mayor Anhaia Melo established a partnership with the Crusade, which started managing the Playground under the new name (BRITES, 1999; MOTT; BYINGTON; ALVES, 2005). Castro wrote in a report for the Association:

In 1931, the Crusade organized and operated, in D. Pedro Park, the “*Escola de Saúde*”, for the physically weak, with a special regime of physical exercises, hydro and heliotherapy, in which it also organized the first Children’s Library of Sao Paulo, with 500 books. In 1936, absorbed by the Municipal Government, this School became the *Parque Infantil* that still exists (CASTRO, 1956, p.2).

The propositions for implementing the playground in the city of São Paulo date back to the 1920’s. In 1922, the municipal government granted a conces-

sion to Doctor Edmundo de Carvalho, MD – who later became head of the State Institute of Physical Education – in the Água Branca district, in which he was to install the Institute of Physical Culture of Childhood, under Law No. 2553 (DALBEN, 2016, p.19). In 1929, Law No. 3371, Article 1, provided the Institute with funds – 120 *contos de réis* – for the construction of the playground in D. Pedro II Park. Carvalho was then president of the Rotary Club of São Paulo (SÃO PAULO, 1929).

Understandings for this initiative developed during 1928 and 1929, at Rotary meetings which were attended by future mayor Luiz Ignacio de Anhaia Mello, a urbanist who advocated the proposition of active and organized recreation places in modern cities (DALBEN, 2016).

But the state capital was not the only place where this was done. The city of Santos, on the coast of São Paulo, also emerged as a model not previously identified as a precursor. The Health School in Santos, under the aegis of the city's Rotary Club, was inaugurated on February 23, 1931, to be later incorporated into the municipal government under the name of *Parque Infantil*, in 1942 (CUNHA, 2018).

In a report to Mayor Elias Machado, the Santos Rotary board of directors praised the support it now received from the local government, and said that the proposition was inspired by the “example of São Paulo, where Dr. Edmundo de Carvalho, the president of the Rotary Club, organized the first *Escola de Debeis* [School for the Weak]”. The text also mentioned homeland secretary Arthur Neiva, who had committed himself to appointing “the state health educators, who will be in charge of school discipline and of instructing the assistants” (ESCOLA DE DEBEIS, 1931).

It is worth noting that the news about the Escola de Saúde in Santos was published in the *Diário Nacional*, a newspaper of the Democratic Party for which Nicanor Miranda worked as a copywriter since 1928, having been invited by Paulo Duarte. In the interview he gave in 1985, Miranda said that when the Rotary club was founded, he was appointed to write news about their meetings. At one of them, he attended a lecture by the then mayor of São Paulo, Pires do Rio, who highlighted the importance of playgrounds. Touched by what he heard, Miranda said that the speech reminded him of his visit to the *Plazas de Juegos para Niños* (Squares of Games for Children) in Argentina, and that he wrote about the lecture, mentioning that Argentina and Uruguay were ahead of Brazil in that matter (ESCOLA MUNICIPAL, 1985, p.57).

The *Diário Nacional* of June 8, 1929 features a news story about that Rotary meeting, mentioning that after a lecture by Anhaia Mello on recreation in modern societies, Mayor Pires do Rio spoke about the construction works of the first playground in São Paulo, in D. Pedro Park, and about plans of creat-

ing playgrounds in “locations such as Luz Garden, the springs of Ipiranga, the Ibirapuera croft and the Tamanduatehy banks”, and emphasized the importance of “park management” (ROTARY, 1929). The text on the *plazas de juegos* was not found in the newspaper.

In his writings, Miranda refers to precedents and the history of playgrounds in various countries, but the historical process appears in a fragmented way. He lists pedagogical concepts and experiences that supposedly founded the proposition of the *Parque Infantil*. According to him, the institution was an idea “recommended by the most eminent contemporary sociologists, physicians and educators and experienced by some of the most civilized nations on the globe.” (1938, p.8). But the text is silent about the past in São Paulo and other locations, and treats other national initiatives in a laconic and sometimes deprecatory way. Thus, the idea seems to have sprung from these external models and only materialized in our country from 1935 onwards. His work would thus mark an inaugural time, which brought about radical changes in existing experiences, as he said in a lecture at the inauguration of the Park in Santo Amaro:

In early 1935, Mayor Fabio Prado created the Childhood Park Service, and invited us to organize and manage them. (...)

The parks were then game fields, with shelters, sheds and recreation equipment. They would become what we idealized in our concept: public places where, through recreation and organized games, one seeks to educate the child, while providing it with all the necessary care (MIRANDA, 1938, p. 19).

According to him, care was divided into medical, dental and nutritional care. Education encompassed physical, intellectual and social development through physical education, games, library, newspapers and clubs. Likewise, recreation consisted of music, theater, drawing, crafts and excursions (MIRANDA, 1938).

In a book about the dissemination of *parques infantis*, their singularity in the city of São Paulo was justified by citing a contact with the person responsible for organizing these parks in Paris:

As we told Dr. Le Meé about the organization of *Parques Infantis* in São Paulo, which provided full health care, free meals, organized physical education, hygienic education and recreation services, treats given by the



City of São Paulo to the small residents of the proletarian neighborhoods, he looked at us with some astonishment, as though he could not believe that in Brazil there was a city with organized parks of a kind he had not often seen even in the United States.

We do not know if, upon receiving a collection of photographs sent by us three years ago, his French nobleman's look took on another expression and his noble gestures waived in admiration or enthusiasm before such documents which proved the materialization, by the city of São Paulo, of an ideal of which he was the most ardent supporter and the most faithful apostle (MIRANDA, 1941, p. 10).

Apart from his exaggeration in using use of word 'full' to refer to health care, as well as the need to identify what was actually provided as a meal, we must consider the restricted number of seven parks and one *recanto infantil* (childhood nook) in the city of São Paulo, at the time the book was written. Medical, dental and nutrition care were not created by the *Parque Infantil* either. The report about the inauguration of the *Escola de Saúde* in Santos already mentioned that children received this type of care (ESCOLA DE SAÚDE..., 1931).

Miranda attributed the presence of a professional body and organized games as a differential of parks in São Paulo. He used this argument to express his negative opinion about the parks in Rio Grande do Sul:

There are 37 Parks in Rio Grande do Sul. 1 in Porto Alegre and 26 in other cities in the state.<sup>3</sup> We have not had the opportunity to visit them yet, but we suppose that current ideas in Uruguay, where there are organized parks with specialist personnel and parks with no management, have influenced the Rio Grande do Sul administration that created them (MIRANDA, 1941, p. 22).

The author justified his judgment, even without having visited the parks, by referring to the budget of the municipality of Porto Alegre, considered "derisory" to "meet even the needs of a rudimentary service". At the same time, he omitted in his text the information that the parks of Porto Alegre had been precursors in relation to the São Paulo experience. According to Feix and Goellner (2008),

3 The incorrect number is likely to have been a misprint, it would be 11 in Porto Alegre, because in his lecture in 1938, Miranda mentioned that recreation equipment for children was installed in 13 squares in Porto Alegre (p. 17).

the first Jardim de Recreio was made up of kindergarten rooms, a library and various outdoor equipment.

A news story published in *Jornal do Brasil*, in 1931, mentioned the elements that made up the *Jardins de Recreio*, fitted with gymnastics equipment for the practice of athletics in the boys' section, recreational equipment for girls and boys, "canchas" (courts) for organized games, like basketball, volleyball, baseball and others, under the technical supervision of an instructor and a specialized teacher. But there was also a link with the educational system:

In order to cooperate with the state in the physical education of our children, the City decided to establish each Garden near a public school. (...) Also in order to serve the children in preschool age attending the Gardens, kindergarten classes were organized in appropriate pavillions where, along with special recreational games, Froebelian and Montessorian educational practices were adopted, thus surrounding the little ones with the most favorable influences to their development (JARDINS DE RECREIO...).

The American model was key to their implementation, since Gaelzer had been six years in the United States, from 1916 to 1925, having graduated from the American Young Men Christian Association with internships, after this period, in Mexico and Uruguay. The YMCA was strongly linked to the Playground Association of America, created in 1907 (FEIX; GOELLNER, 2008; GOMES, 2006).

So far, the relationship between the *parque da infância* and its American precedent, the playground, is evident, as proven by the trajectories of those involved and by the historical processes in which the different denominations appear, such as *praças* or *campos de jogos*, *jardins de recreio*, *escolas de saúde*. Next, we will list and analyze the constitutive elements of these proposals within the scope of the social hygiene movement, urbanism, physical education and pedagogy.

## Social Hygiene Movement

The Escola de Saúde in the city of São Paulo, as mentioned in Maria Antonieta de Castro's report, provided physical exercises, hydro and heliotherapy. With regard to the one in Santos, the report to the mayor in 1931 said:

In this place, state health educators will, aided by municipal assistants, provide teaching to the enrolled children on breathing and Swedish gymnastics, educational recreation, civic instruction and notions of things and hygiene, in addition to the practice of heliotherapy (ESCOLA DE DEBEIS, 1931).

The mention of weak children and heliotherapy refers to social hygiene movement propositions, which evoke Open Air Schools or Sunlight Schools, which disseminated since the late nineteenth century to cure or prevent tuberculosis prior to BCG vaccine (AMARAL, 2016).

These propositions appear in Brazil in the *Educação e Pediatria* magazine, founded in 1913 by Franco Vaz, head of the 15th November Premunitory School, and by Álvaro Reis, a physician at the Rio de Janeiro Children's Hospital, and also in the charter of the Children's Department in Brazil, headed by Arthur Moncorvo Filho (NOSSO RUMO, 1913; ARCHIVOS DE ASSISTENCIA Á INFANCIA, 1923).

In 1916, Moncorvo Filho, who also headed the Rio de Janeiro Institute for Child Protection and Care, delivered a communication at the 1st São Paulo Medical Congress in which he dealt with Brazilian initiatives regarding heliotherapy. In addition to his own work, he highlighted the names of "Clemente Ferreira, Alfredo Ferreira de Magalhães, Augusto Paulino, V. Veiga, Jader de Azevedo, Ribeiro de Castro, Oliveira Botelho, Julio Novaes and others", who, three years earlier, had begun to develop the "new naturist method" (MONCORVO Fº, 1917, p. 8). In his text, he referred to the creation of a special heliotherapy service, with the implementation of a solarium in the Moncorvo Dispensary, and presented results of 14 cases of treatment of children and adolescents.

On May 4, 1924, Moncorvo Filho and Alves Filgueiras inaugurated the "Heliotherapium", "an establishment especially dedicated to prophylaxis and the cure of illnesses through sunbathing". In his inauguration speech, Moncorvo said that one of the institute's main objectives was:

(...) to take particular care of feeble, smallish, anemic or rachitic children to be radically transformed in their physique by the wonderful effects of life in the open air, while also learning or playing under the influx of methodically and scrupulously employed rays (MONCORVO Fº, 1924, p. 6-7).

The institute had 3440 m<sup>2</sup>, and a significant part of that space was designed as a "Park" for weak children, which would include:

(...) the teaching of natural gymnastics through the Hebert method, proclaimed with all enthusiasm as one of unparalleled effectiveness by several observers, among which, in leading positions, are Armand Dellille and Paul Carton, Genevrier, Dufestel and Perron, abroad and, among others, Almir Madeira and Fabio Luz in our country (MONCORVO Fº, 1924, p.9-11).

In relation to physical education, Moncorvo Filho's discourse indicates his affiliation with French output and associates the "naturalist method" (mentioned in his 1916 text, which refers to sun therapy) with Hébert's "natural gymnastics".

Dalben (2009) says that Georges Hébert, a French navy officer, developed his method based on his observation of native Latin peoples and his admiration of their bodies and dexterity. He mentions that Fernando de Azevedo highlighted the natural method as an appropriate complement to school activities, but that Nicanor Miranda had countered Hébert's propositions as he considered, on the one hand, that the result of children's primary instinct would lead to practicing games, rather than gymnastics, thus promoting the propositions of Progressive Education, and, on the other hand, that the propositions of natural exercises, being related to the savage, were inadequate as they were not in keeping with progress and civilization, and assumed that nature would not require correction.

## Urbanism

With regard to architecture, urbanism and landscaping, Gutman and Coninck-Smith consider that:

This transformation – this demarcation of a specialized public landscape for urban children – constituted a radical change to the form of cities. (...) With respect to urban children, heated debates exploded in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when their advocates clashed with public authorities about the architecture and design of purpose-made settings for children, linking physical forms with different social and political purposes. (...) Some child advocates construed the provision of playgrounds to be part of a wider urban critique, taking them to be havens for children, focused on health, nature and human potential. Others held didactic and

disciplinary ambitions; they expected physical space to direct mental and physical development (2004, p. 133).

As mentioned earlier, debates were held at Rotary Club meetings which determined the implementation of parks and playgrounds in the state capital and other municipalities, as studied by André Dalben (2016). Niemeyer (2002) discussed the relationship between modern urbanism and recreation, and suggested that the American park movement, which started with the projects of Frederick Law Olmsted, possibly led to the proposition of organized playgrounds.

Olmsted's designs for Fort Green Park in 1867 and Buffalo Park in 1872 already included spaces denominated as playgrounds, the former with separate spaces for boys and girls (PETTENA; ALEX, 1996).<sup>4</sup>

However, playground historiography in the US often adopts the narrative disseminated by the Playground and Recreation Association of America in 1925, which views the beginning of the recreation movement as a result of Marie Zakrzewska's visit to Berlin, where she saw gardens with sand for children, implemented by a political leader named von Schenkendorf. Later, the narrative says, she described the initiative to members of the Massachusetts Emergency and Hygiene Association, which built a large sand box in the gardens of the Children's Mission in Boston in 1885 (HANSAN, 2013).

## Physical Education

The American playground movement encompassed a variety of modalities installed in public parks, in schools or in neighboring buildings, kindergartens or for preschool children, whether with free activities (albeit with the presence of a teacher or supervisor) or with more targeted activities such as those organized for school vacations (PLAYGROUND ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA, 1909).

Linked to the area of Physical Education, the movement also involves the organization of school recreation, which included courtyards built for sports and recreation. These propositions are associated with Scouting, the organization of holiday or summer camps, the formulation of rules for sports and the building of courts and game squares.

4 The design can be consulted at <http://historicfortgreene.org/history-of-fort-greene/fort-greene-park>

Niemeyer (2002) emphasized Miranda's exchange experiences with the American association, but suggested that the parks in São Paulo were different as

they did not have purely hygienic or disciplinary objectives (...) the objective was to attach a series of cultural initiatives aimed at serving *parqueanos* [park users] not only physically but, mostly, by expanding educational and cultural processes since an early age. Not surprisingly, their educational program was supported by prominent educators such as Fernando de Azevedo (...); a factor that distinguished it from its foreign counterparts, which were more inclined to a pedological service [sic] (p. 107).

However, the American playground was not a movement for hygienic or disciplinary purposes only, since it encompassed educational and cultural purposes to which Nicanor Miranda himself paid tribute:

Modern physical education in its new and broad American concept, and not in the narrow concept of some European schools, contains, involves and implies health care, periodic health checkups, nutrition centers, dietary regimens, social work and scientific research concerning the student, his family and their mesological conditions. All the work in *Parques Infantis* in São Paulo aims at realizing those modern ideals of education that some contemporary scientists summarize as health, beauty, kindness and wisdom, or vitality, courage, sensitivity and intelligence, both formulas ultimately meeting (MIRANDA, 1941, p. 21).

An editorial in Playground magazine, in June 1907, following the first convention of the Playground Association of America (PAA), deals with play schools from the perspective of their philosophy or educational values. According to the text, play schools combined playgrounds, play farms, vacation schools and their stores:

Play Schools are necessary for the development of expression, power, personality – one-half of the work of public elementary education, unrecognized or undeveloped in the present system of education, which confines its attention largely to work of impression, refinement, culture. (STEWART, 1907, p. 7).

The modern ideals of education mentioned by Miranda seem to have been taken from a diagram in that editorial, which matched each character feature developed in schools to another, more active one developed in play schools, based on fundamental principles related to the individual's sensitivity, habits or fundamental intellectual components and elements of will or determination. The developed half corresponded to the path from literacy (ABC classes) to secondary education (Grammar Schools), while the backward half comprised from kindergarten to *kinderwelten* (children's world). Active educational environments could be added to the contributions of elementary education, with its passive educational environments, to the necessary complement of character building (STEWART, 1907).

Folklore was one of the features recommended by the PAA. At the Second Annual Playground Congress, held in 1908 in New York, the national and folk dance festival was considered the most beautiful event in the meeting. The folk dances performed by the children came from various nationalities: Italian, Polish, Spanish, Irish, Bohemian, Russian, Swedish, Hungarian, Scottish, German and "negro" (sic) (PLAYGROUND ASSOCIATION, 1908, p. 48-49).

Folk dance was supposed to provide controlled situations in which recognition of the cultural differences of the immigrant population should be a means for their integration into American society. By feeling that their cultural heritage was appreciated, newcomers could more easily develop loyalty to their new nation. Dancing together was supposed to make them less attached to their differences and more aware of their individual efforts as subordinates to the interests of the group (MOONEY-MELVIN, 1983).

PAA president Luther Halsey Gulick considered that it was not enough to regard games and dances as a safety valve, as something of moral value that should provide an opportunity for innocent consumption of joyful energy:

They constitute, we believe, a positive moral force, a social agency, having had in the past and are destined to have in the future a great function in welding into a unified whole those whose conditions and occupation are exceedingly diverse (1909, p. 433).

The association had its name changed to Playground and Recreation Association of America in the mid-1910's and to National Recreation Association in the 1930's. Removing the Playground name possibly marked the end of the advocacy of playgrounds organized for children, with a shift of emphasis towards playground as a space for exercise or gymnastics in schools or public parks,

although its original proposition remained within early childhood education schools (FROST; WOODS, 1998).

## Pedagogy

In addition to the modern concept of physical education, Miranda considers Froebel's ideas for kindergarten as a remote model for the playground. But there are indications pointing to an earlier proposition.

The American playground historiography disseminated a print of the English Infant School which was probably first published in the 1840 book *A System for the Education of the Young*, by Samuel Wilderspin, founder of the Infant School Society, in 1824 (KUHLMANN JR., 2001; STEWART; MCCANN, 1967, p. 259). The Infant School propositions spread throughout Europe and were even adapted for the implementation of the Salles d'Asile in France (CROOK, 1999; KUHLMANN JR., 2010; LUC, 1999).

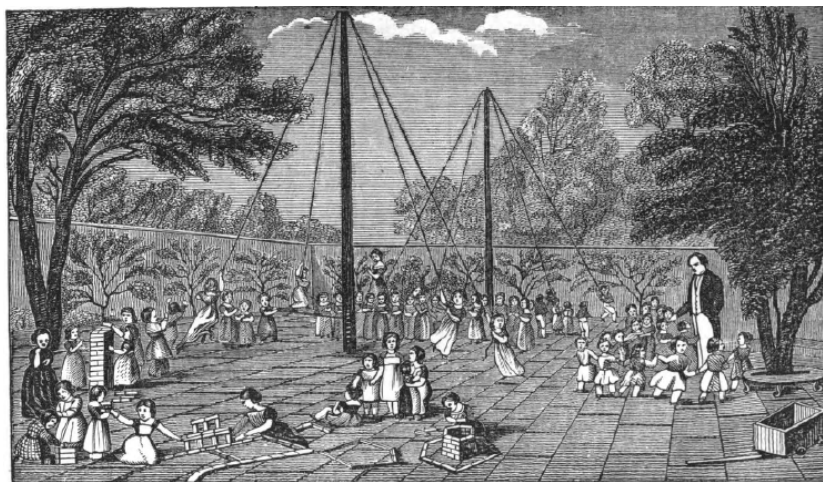
In 1993, the image appeared in a publication titled *The Complete Playground Book*, but in its appropriation it was no longer associated with the British institution. In a chapter on the historical development and evolution of playgrounds in the United States, it said that its beginnings remained obscure, but that in old sources of architecture, such as an 1848 book by Henry Barnard on school architecture, there was an illustration of a playground of an early childhood or elementary school. The text says that, according to Barnard, the presence of teachers in the playground was "absolutely essential", but it also recognized the importance of free play in this environment, thus adding excerpts of their own propositions. The authors comment that the description and illustration indicated the degree of evolution of the playground since the mid-nineteenth century. According to them, Barnard, one of the pioneers of the American Common School Movement, essentially described a recreation courtyard, while the modern playground, with its slides, swings, seesaws and cages, was created only in the early decades of the twentieth century (BRETT; MOORE; PROVENZO, 1993, p.17-19).

In 2006, Moore re-presents the image and says that in the long history of equipped playgrounds, Barnard was the author of the first publication that fully illustrated this concept, which was conceived as "a pedagogical space centered on playing", and presented some elements that described that space (MOORE, 2006, p.87).



As though in a telephone game, further appropriations of the image gained new distortions. In a publication presenting a design for a Portuguese school, it is reproduced from Moore's text, now saying that the first time the concept of playground was proposed and emerged was in 1848, having been created by Barnard (ROUYI, 2018). In Brazil, Niemeyer (2002, p.66) presents the same image (Figure 1) with the caption "Playground in primary school in the USA (1851)", attributing the source to Pettena (1996), who does not have this image in his book. In a paper on the subject, Niemeyer considers the image as an example of a kindergarten and of the introduction of a German-originated typology into American urbanism (NIEMEYER, 2005).

FIGURE 1: WILDERSPIN'S PRINT



Play-Ground for an Infant or Primary School.

SOURCE: Second edition of Barnard's book (1849, p.89).

But, as noted in the first appropriation of the image, Barnard's book is not about the playground. Its 383 pages have considerations on principles of school architecture to be observed in building projects and blueprints for different educational modalities. The preface says that "this contribution to the improvement of school buildings and spaces was originally prepared by the author in 1838" when he was secretary of the Board of Commissioners of Common Schools in Connecticut. Since then, Barnard collected new projects and descriptions of buildings focusing on the cause of popular education which he assembled in 1848 for the publication of his book. The author even says that he "would be glad to

receive from anywhere, projects and descriptions of new school buildings, to introduce them in future editions” (BARNARD, 1849, p. 5-6).

In his considerations on the playground, Barnard said that the figure and its description were copied from a book by Samuel Wilderspin, whom he honored by saying that:

Whatever may be thought of the methods of intellectual training recommended by this pioneer of the infant school system, no one can question the utility of his recommendation, for all schools for young children, of a retired, dry, and airy play-ground, furnished with the means of healthy and innocent recreation, and with flower-borders, shrubbery, and shade-trees, which the children must be taught to love and respect (1849, p. 88).

The proposition of the playground is described in detail in the eighth edition of *The infant system for developing the intellectual and moral powers of all children from one to seven years of age*, of 1852, in which Wilderspin says:

To have one hundred children, or upwards, in a room, however convenient in other respects, and not to allow the children proper relaxation and exercise, which they could not have without a play-ground, would materially injure their health, which is a thing, in my humble opinion, of the first importance (WILSDERSPIN, 1852, p. 101).

In his proposition of the playground, Wilderspin anticipates what was later formulated by Froebel concerning the use of building blocks as the central axis of his pedagogy:

We might provide some woodbricks (...). With these children are exceedingly amused from the variety of forms in which they may be placed, and of buildings which may be erected with them (1852, p. 104-105).

For him, the Infant School’s playground would be complete with the installation of a rotatory swing. This equipment is depicted in Wilderspin’s illustration and was adopted in the American playgrounds, as well as in Brazil,

with the name *passo do gigante* (the giant's step), which can be found in pictures of the *Jardim de Recreio* in Rio Grande do Sul and *parque infantil* in São Paulo (GOMES, 2006, p. 117; NIEMEYER, 2002, cover).

In examining the propositions that converged on the creation of the playground, there are several threads, appropriations and transformations. The aspects of control and discipline, recreational and cultural activities, integral development, physical and mental health involve different components of the proposition: the social hygiene movement, urbanism, physical education and pedagogy.

Historical interpretation could not take documents as the expression of truth, for they are the products of social relationships of their time. It is worth reflecting on the individuals and interests and on the conditions under which the documents were produced, as well as considering how and where they circulated and were preserved (KUHLMANN JR.; LEONARDI, 2017).

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Text received on 07/05/2019.

Text approved on 08/19/2019.