The cell phone dilemma: from prohibition to pedagogical mediation and the challenge of digital skills

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Abstract: We aim to analyze the dilemma of cell phone use in Basic Education. Through forms applied to educators of Elementary School levels 1 and 2 in the municipal network of Niterói, we examine how digital culture transforms education, focusing on the clash between legal prohibitions and the demand for digital skills from the National Common Curricular Base and the curricular references of Niterói. We conclude that the simple prohibition of cell phones is ineffective and contradictory with the need to form critical digital citizens. The key to solving this dilemma lies in qualified pedagogical mediation, in the

Resumo: Objetivamos analisar o dilema do uso de celulares na Educação Básica. Por meio de formulários aplicados a educadores do Ensino Fundamental 1 e 2 da rede municipal de Niterói, examinamos como a cultura digital transforma a educação, focando no embate entre proibições legais e demanda por competências digitais da Base Nacional Comum Curricular e dos referenciais curriculares de Niterói. Concluímos que a simples proibição do celular é ineficaz e contraditória com a necessidade de formar cidadãos digitais críticos. A chave para a resolução desse dilema reside

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continuing education of educators and in the creation of collaborative school policies.

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na mediação pedagógica qualificada, na formação continuada de educadores e na criação de políticas escolares colaborativas.

Palavras-chave: comunicação; educação; celular; mediação pedagógica; Base Nacional Comum Curricular.

1. INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution—which permeates almost every aspect of contemporary society—has been particularly transformative in the field of education. The ubiquitous technological devices in the lives of young people and in schools have emerged as a phenomenon that redefines the interaction between educators, students, and content, creating a new educational landscape. This new digital reality—characterized by the continuous flow of information, instantaneity, and interactivity—poses a complex challenge to educational systems: how to integrate this tool productively into the teaching-learning process, avoiding its potential drawbacks and maximizing its benefits?

It is worth noting that, with the COVID-19 pandemic, the dependence on and role of cell phones in the educational environment intensified. In this context, the cell phone became a central pedagogical tool and, often, the only bridge to the continuity of learning. This change revealed the urgency of the debate on technological integration, exposing the versatility of mobile devices and the gaps in school infrastructure, teacher training, and pedagogical strategies. From this point, the discussion about the inclusion of digital technologies in education reaches a new level of complexity and priority.

From a Freirean perspective, understanding the impact of digital culture on schools requires recognizing that "[...] teaching is not transferring knowledge, but creating the possibilities for its own production or construction" (Freire, 1996, p. 47, our translation). It is not just about introducing or prohibiting technologies in the school environment, but about building practices that enable students to be active subjects in the production of knowledge and aligned with their socio-technical and cultural realities.'

Thus, we intend to review the relationship between Communication and Education, analyzing the transformations in the school environment with the increasing presence of cell phones. We discuss how digital culture impacts educational practices, proposing reflections on the critical mediation of cell phone use in the classroom, articulating the perspectives of the BNCC – Brazilian National Common Curricular Base (Brasil, 2018) and current legislation, as well as the references of the Municipal Education Foundation of Niterói (FME).

To further this discussion, the study integrates contributions from recent studies and analyses of data collected through questionnaires applied to educators in Elementary School (EF) levels 1 and 2 (Early Years and Later Years) in the municipality of Niterói (RJ). Although the study adopts a descriptive qualitative-quantitative approach, educational research in cyberculture is not limited to data collection, but is also a formative process. We approach the research-training proposed by Santos (2005), who understands research as a practice of implication and shared learning, in which the subjects are co-authors in the construction of knowledge about the use of digital technologies. This perspective broadens the methodological scope of the study, paving the way for us to understand the cell phone as a formative device and to propose strategies for… Teacher training that goes beyond simply acknowledging the "mismatch" identified in the results.

Action research in public schools indicates the critical pedagogical appropriation of cell phones. Alves and Vieira (2015) report that the guided use of cell phones in interventions—recording and sharing via WhatsApp —favored collaborative learning and the communicative practices of students. This underscores that the pedagogical success of cell phones depends on teacher planning aligned with the research-training proposal, which integrates investigation and training.

2. THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN RESTRICTING AND PROMOTING DIGITAL CULTURE

In contemporary times, the classroom has become a hybrid environment where digital and face-to-face learning intertwine. The integration of digital technologies—such as educational platforms, applications, and social networks—not only enhances learning but also brings significant challenges to traditional education. The classroom is transformed into a space for the collaborative construction of knowledge, in which the student is no longer a passive recipient of information but also a producer of content, interacting with diverse means and sources of knowledge. This necessary revision of pedagogical methods directly dialogues with Freire (1996, p. 25, our translation), when he states that "[…] there is no teaching without learning," highlighting that meaningful learning is only achieved when the student ceases to be a mere receiver and becomes a protagonist in the collective construction of knowledge—an essential role in facing the challenges of digital culture.

The persistence of the debate about attention in the classroom, however, predates the digital revolution. As Cortella points out, What "distracts" the student in the classroom is a recurring debate in the history of education (Cell Phones […], 2025). He recalls that previously the concern was with magazines like Capricho, which competed for the students' attention. This historical parallel reinforces the idea that the focus should not be on the object, cell phone or

magazine, but on attention management, on intentionality. The use of and the school's ability to mediate the student's relationship with external stimuli are crucial, since education is, in essence, a communicative act.

Razzo (2025) argues that interconnectivity has robbed young people of "the right to be bored"—an essential condition for the development of thought. The author, citing social psychologist Jonathan Haidt (2024), correlates the exponential increase in anxiety and depression among adolescents with the rise of a childhood based on cell phones, where the real world is overprotected and the digital world lacks limits. For Haidt (2024), the logic of hyperconnectivity—which does not tolerate silence or emptiness—has reconfigured childhood, making the school a hostage to the "pedagogy of pleasure." This view challenges the idea that class should be entertainment and argues that learning requires effort, attention, and, paradoxically, the ability to endure boredom, which precedes curiosity and meaning.

3. THE CHALLENGE OF PROHIBITION AND THE PERSPECTIVES OF RECENT STUDIES

Recent discussions reinforce the idea that banning cell phones in schools tends to shift the focus away from real problems, such as the lack of teacher training and inequalities in access to technology. Mesquita (2025) argues that institutional prohibition functions as a disciplinary mechanism that silences creative practices and ignores the cultural role of the device in the socialization of young people. The author proposes that educational policies should replace the logic of restriction with a formative approach, centered on educommunication and the construction of critical digital skills. The school should be seen as a territory of technological mediation and authorship, not of surveillance.

However, Law No. 15.100/2025, by restricting the use of cell phones in Basic Education, is based on the need to maintain students' concentration and prevent cyberbullying (Brasil, 2025). Such concerns are legitimate, considering the real impact that the unmediated use of devices can have on the learning process and school life. Razzo's proposal (2025, p. 1, our translation)—to remove cell phones from schools for public health reasons—is aligned with this concern of the legislation, suggesting that "[…] where cell phones are removed, sleep improves, performance increases, and anxiety decreases."

> Article 1. This Law aims to regulate the use of personal portable electronic devices, including cell phones, by students in public and private basic education schools, with the objective of safeguarding the mental, physical, and psychological health of children and adolescents.
>
> Sole paragraph. For the purposes of this Law, classrooms are considered to be all school spaces in which pedagogical activities are developed under the guidance of education professionals.

> Article 2. The use of personal portable electronic devices by students is prohibited during class, recess, or breaks between classes, for all stages of basic education.
>
> § 1 In the classroom, the use of electronic devices is permitted for strictly pedagogical or didactic purposes, as directed by education professionals.
>
> § 2. The prohibition in the main clause of this article does not apply to situations of danger, necessity, or force majeure.
>
> Article 3. Students are permitted to use personal portable electronic devices, regardless of their grade level or location of use, inside or outside the classroom, for the following purposes:
>
> I - Guarantee accessibility;
>
> II - Guarantee inclusion;
>
> III - to meet the health needs of the students;
>
> IV - Guarantee fundamental rights (Brasil, 2025, our translation).

A reading of Law No. 15.100/2025 reveals a predominantly prohibitive approach that treats cell phones as an external element and potentially harmful to the educational environment. The legal text makes no mention of strategies for the pedagogical use of cell phones, nor of proposals for teacher training for the critical mediation of technologies (Brasil, 2025). This stance contradicts the principles expressed in the most recent curricular documents such as the BNCC (Brasil, 2018), given that many schools and educators have adopted cell phones as an innovative pedagogical tool, allowing access to online educational content, learning applications, and collaborative platforms. Furthermore, the prohibition of cell phone use can be seen as a conservative response to the technological challenge that schools face when trying to effectively integrate digital technologies into the school curriculum.

Article 3 of the Law mentions the creation of clear policies for the use of devices, offering schools the opportunity to develop customized protocols aligned with the specificities of the school community. This allows for flexibility in the Law, adapting it to consider the use of technologies for educational purposes and the implementation of media literacy activities that address ethics and digital security. However, given that digital skills are fundamental, continuous training is necessary so that educators can guide students in building responsible and critical usage practices.

The need for training and pedagogical planning is central, according to Santos (2025), who defines pedagogical intentionality as a key element for learning. He states that the cell phone only becomes a means of engagement and authorship through intentional planning, not through the technology itself. Therefore, the legal exception for pedagogical purposes only works with robust training policies and institutional support, underlining the importance of critical teacher mediation.

According to Alves (2023), technology is not neutral, and simply restricting it does not empower individuals for the conscious and critical use that digital

society demands; on the contrary, it can deprive students of the opportunity to develop essential skills for navigating an increasingly connected world, such as digital literacy and the ability to discern information in virtual environments.

Comparative research reinforces that the debate is not restricted to Brazil. Santos (2025) points out that policies restricting cell phones in schools in France, Spain, and Denmark have yielded distinct results, depending on the degree of pedagogical involvement and teacher training. In all cases, simply prohibiting them was insufficient to address the challenges of attention, coexistence, and digital citizenship, proving more effective when combined with mobile learning strategies and critical media literacy.

In the national context, Mesquita (2025) warns that restrictive measures can reinforce exclusions and hinder media literacy, especially when not accompanied by infrastructure policies and teacher training. Prohibition tends to widen digital inequalities, particularly for students who depend on cell phones as their main access to the Internet. This criticism converges with the understanding that legislation—by transferring the burden of regulation to the school—does not address the structural roots of the problem, such as the lack of continuing education and the disconnect between technological and pedagogical policies.

Following the enactment of the law, the Ministry of Education published guides and lesson plans aimed at the balanced and conscious use of cell phones in schools, focusing on the development of digital skills and responsible pedagogical mediation. While these materials represent progress in recognizing the formative potential of mobile technologies, they emerge reactively to the prohibition and delegate to schools the responsibility for implementation and teacher training, without guaranteeing structural policies for capacity building or ongoing support for educators.

4. THE BNCC AND THE CURRICULAR FRAMEWORKS OF NITERÓI: ALIGNMENTS AND DIVERGENCES IN DIGITAL CULTURE

In dialogue with Maddalena (2025), it is possible to understand that Law No. 15.100/2025 expresses a contradiction inherent to our time: the same society that largely depends on cell phones to mediate learning and connections now prohibits them in the name of concentration and discipline. The author calls this paradox "between prohibitions and inventions," emphasizing that technologies are cultural artifacts of cyberculture and not simply instruments. Thus, the dilemma of cell phones in schools is also a dilemma of cultural policy and teacher training, going beyond the control of devices.

The BNCC (Brazilian National Curriculum Base) does not directly address the issue of cell phone use in schools, but it does discuss the skills and abilities necessary for the education of students in contemporary society, considering

digital technologies and media literacy (Brazil, 2018). It mentions the need for students to be able to navigate the digital environment critically and safely. Therefore, cell phone use in schools should be mediated so that students develop digital citizenship skills and responsible use.

> General Competency 5 of the BNCC (Brazilian National Curriculum): Understand, use, and create digital information and communication technologies in a critical, meaningful, reflective, and ethical way in various social practices (including school practices) to communicate, access and disseminate information, produce knowledge, solve problems, and exercise protagonism and authorship in personal and collective life (Brasil, 2018, our translation).

This excerpt from the BNCC (Brazilian National Curriculum Base) emphasizes the critical and ethical competence that should be developed in students when using digital technologies, including cell phones as a tool for empowerment and authorship. The BNCC sees technology as something that needs to be integrated into learning, in a way that allows students to interact responsibly and creatively in the digital environment.

> Specific language competence: To understand the functioning of different languages and cultural practices (artistic, bodily and verbal) and to mobilize this knowledge in the reception and production of discourses in different fields of social activity and in various media, in order to broaden forms of social participation, understanding, and possibilities for critical explanation and interpretation of reality, and to continue learning (Brasil, 2018, our translation).

Thus, we find the importance of using digital technologies such as cell phones for content production and communication. The emphasis is on the diversity of audiences and the need for learners to learn to express themselves appropriately through these devices, respecting different cultural and social contexts.

From this perspective, the BNCC (Brazilian National Curriculum Base) also suggests that educators integrate digital technologies into pedagogical planning in order to enhance student learning. Some recommended strategies include:

- Develop collaborative practices that utilize digital platforms, such as social networks, forums, and educational applications;
- Include digital literacy as part of the curriculum, ensuring that students know how to navigate various digital platforms critically and safely;
- To promote projects involving the authorship and production of digital content, such as podcasts, videos, and blogs, in which students can use cell phones in a creative and educational way.

In summary, the BNCC (National Common Core Curriculum) suggests a mediated, ethical, and critically reflected use of technology in the school context. However, it is crucial to emphasize that the municipality of Niterói did not directly adhere to the BNCC. The Niterói Municipal Education Foundation

(FME) has its own Curricular Guidelines—adapted to local specificities—that include explicit guidelines on technologies and media, reinforcing the relevance of the discussion on the use of cell phones and the development of digital and media literacy skills in the municipal context.

Law No. 15.100/2025, therefore, conflicts with the pedagogical guideline of the BNCC (National Common Core Curriculum), which suggests the use of technologies in a critical and productive way in the teaching-learning process (Brasil, 2025). This divergence and the peculiarity of the Niterói Frameworks highlight the lack of articulation between curricular policy and legislative policy, which generates confusion in schools and hinders the construction of a critical and emancipatory digital culture (Niterói, 2022a).

The proposed law follows a debate that has been ongoing for years in Brazil. The discussion about the use of cell phones in the classroom gained momentum with state and municipal initiatives, highlighting the search for clear guidelines regarding these devices. We highlight State Law No. 12.730/2007, from São Paulo, pioneering the ban on cell phones in public and private elementary schools (São Paulo, 2007). Following this initiative, other states took the lead, such as Rio de Janeiro, which enacted State Law No. 5,222/2008 and prohibited the use of cell phones in classrooms in state schools (Rio de Janeiro, 2008).

Recently, the Rio de Janeiro City Hall published Decree No. 53,918/2024 prohibiting the use of cell phones in municipal schools, including classrooms and breaks, with exceptions for specific pedagogical purposes and special needs (Rio de Janeiro, 2024). In Niterói, the debate also intensified. In August 2023, a Bill was approved in the City Council, aiming to prohibit the use of cell phones in municipal school classrooms (Cidade de Niterói, 2023). This proposal went to the mayor for approval, and its text sought a balance: prohibiting use inside the classroom and outside during teacher explanations or assignments, but allowing use with the teacher's express authorization for pedagogical purposes (research, reading) and for students with disabilities or health needs. This municipal legislation—aligned with broader discussions—reflects an approach that seeks to reconcile the need for focus with the pedagogical potential of technology.

In this way, the debate transcended the classroom, incorporating discussions about the pedagogical potential of technology and the imperative need for the development of digital literacies. The BNCC, by emphasizing the general competencies of Digital Culture and responsibility in the use of technologies, also contributed significantly to maturing this discussion, shifting it from a purely prohibitionist perspective to one that values pedagogical mediation and the development of critical skills (Brasil, 2018).

Considering Law No. 15.100/2025 (Brasil, 2025), its greatest challenge would be reconciling its regulation with the guidelines of the BNCC (Brasil, 2018) and, in the case of Niterói, with its own technological and media frameworks, which advocate digital education as an essential competence in the school

curriculum. Media literacy—concerned with the ethical use of technologies and the development of critical skills—needs to be incorporated into the curriculum dynamically, as restricting the use of cell phones may limit the school's ability to foster an education that prepares students for their conscious use. As Freire (1996) points out, liberating education starts from the principle that it is necessary to "read the world," and today, this world is largely digital and media-driven. From Santos' (2014) perspective, cyberculture transforms the student from a receiver to a co-author and cultural practitioner, capable of producing knowledge and interacting in networks.

The Curriculum Guidelines of Niterói (Niterói, 2022a), although not dedicating an exclusive chapter to "cell phone use," address the issue intrinsically to General Competency 5 of the BNCC: Digital Culture (Brasil, 2018). They presuppose that the cell phone—as one of the most accessible TDICs (Digital Information and Communication Technologies)—should be considered both an object of study and a learning tool. The pedagogical perspective of the Curricular Guidelines, therefore, transcends the mere prohibition or permission of the device in the classroom, being directed towards fostering a conscious and strategic educational use.

From this perspective, the cell phone is seen as a potential resource for: research and access to information in real time, expanding sources of knowledge; production of multimedia content (texts, images, and videos), developing communication and expression skills; collaboration and interaction, facilitating collective construction; and the development of Critical thinking about the flow and veracity of digital information. The focus is always on pedagogical intent, with qualified mediation from the teaching staff.

Additionally, the Frameworks—in line with the premises of digital culture—point to the imperative of developing a solid digital citizenship in students (Niterói, 2022a). This implies education for the ethical, safe, and responsible use of cell phones—addressing crucial themes such as the protection of personal data—online privacy, the fight against misinformation and cyberbullying, and the importance of a healthy balance between screen time and other social and developmental activities. The formation of digital literacy—understood as the ability to critically analyze, interpret, and produce information in digital environments—emerges as a fundamental pillar to empower students to navigate the contemporary digital landscape autonomously and safely. This curricular approach challenges educators and managers to rethink their pedagogical practices and cultivate an educational environment that prepares students for the challenges and opportunities of the digital society (Santos, 2014, p. 55-56, our translation) understands that:

> Even though teachers and students have access to ubiquitous mobility, the teacher remains responsible for the production and transmission of knowledge; pedagogical practices end up considering people as mere recipients of information; education continues to be, even on the screen of a tablet connected to broadband, bureaucratic repetition and transmission of packaged content. If we do not change the

> educational and communicational paradigm, Web 2.0 and ubiquitous mobility will end up serving to reaffirm what is already being done. For these and other reasons, we need to activate research devices that bring forth formative environments that allow the mobilization of knowledge in articulation with digital culture and teaching practices at the city-cyberspace interface.

Implementing this balanced approach faces practical challenges, such as the need for investment in infrastructure (quality Wi-Fi) and, fundamentally, in teacher training. Building collaborative school policies is another pillar, involving the entire community—students, parents, educators, and management—in creating clear and agreed-upon rules.

5. PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING PRACTICE IN NITERÓI: CHALLENGES AND POTENTIALS OF CELL PHONES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Seeking to investigate how elementary school teachers in the Niterói public school system perceive and interact with mobile devices in the classroom—identifying challenges and opportunities—we conducted a qualitative-quantitative study involving 11 teachers from 10 elementary schools in the Niterói municipal school system—equivalent to 20% of the 50 elementary schools in the municipality or 10.5 of the 95 schools in the total municipal network, including early childhood education and adult education (Niterói, 2022b). Data were collected through a questionnaire via Google Forms —distributed by WhatsApp The survey, conducted on Instagram from May 8th to June 22nd, 2025, consisted of 21 questions—12 closed-ended, 3 conditional, and 6 open-ended. Participant characterization indicates that 90.9% work in the Early Years of Elementary School[1] and 9.1% in the Later Years[2]. Regarding experience, 9.1% have less than 5 years of experience, 36.4% between 5 and 10 years, and 54.5% more than 10 years. This age and experience distribution is relevant because different profiles can influence perceptions of pedagogical and technological approaches.

Before Law No. 15.100/2025, policies regarding the use of cell phones by students in Niterói schools already showed diversity (Brasil, 2025). Research indicated that institutions already adopted a total ban. However, specific reports from educators also revealed more flexible practices—such as cell phones "not being used" or allowed "only during recess" and "at dismissal time"—for communication with parents and even for "conducting group research in the classroom." This variety suggests that the Law may have been experienced in different ways, with less impact in some schools.

Given this, the section of the questionnaire that investigated educators' perceptions of the challenges of cell phone use in the classroom revealed a complex picture. The main concerns affecting communication and attention

1 This refers to classes from 1st to 5th grade.

2 Regarding classes from 6th to 9th grade.

in the classroom are: inattention and non-pedagogical use (both 72.7%); difficulty with rules (54.5%); equity and safety: unequal access (36.4%); and cyberbullying/online conflicts (27.3%). No educator indicated the absence of significant challenges, reinforcing the widespread perception that cell phone use presents obstacles.

The perception of the 11 educators regarding the impact of digital communication on learning—collected through open-ended responses—reflects the complexity of the opportunities and challenges. However, there is recognition of the positive potential: in general, educators mentioned "quick access to information, ideas, inspiration, sharing of practices, exchanges, and knowledge" and the contribution to collaboration. One educator highlighted that "digital communication has great potential for this generation; the resources, gamification, everything that technology offers can contribute to capturing attention and giving meaning to the content for our students." This perspective suggests that digital communication can democratize access to resources and foster the joint construction of knowledge. On the other hand, educators also express concerns about the negative impacts on students, as "in writing and speaking they become anxious, they don't know how to wait," indicating difficulty with processes that require reflection. Another educator pointed to the tendency towards immediacy and superficiality, in which students "don't want to reflect, think, everything is immediate, a ready-made answer." This pursuit of quick solutions—influenced by digital dynamics—can inhibit critical thinking and in-depth analysis.

Practical experience using cell phones as a pedagogical resource reveals a mixed scenario with diverse examples of intentional use. Educators reported leveraging multimodality and student interest, such as using them for "music research to work with students on lyrics." Others expanded their use to general research, employing cell phones as investigative tools and accessing information, as well as recording activities through "photos and videos" and exploring "interactive research and video." One report highlighted the use of cell phones for "research on endangered animals with a literacy class" with screen projection for collective discussion and the importance of "teaching students about the proper use of cell phones in the classroom" in the process. This approach demonstrates that the pedagogical use of cell phones is seen as an opportunity to develop students' digital responsibility and citizenship, integrating teaching with the conscious use of technology into curricular practice.

However, educators also pointed to significant barriers—such as unequal access to equipment—that often lead them to use their own devices. There was also a preference for tablets and notebooks for certain activities—due to screen size and usability—and concern about unplanned cell phone use, warning of risks of competition, arguments, and decreased face-to-face social interaction, as well as lost opportunities for physical and social development.

Regarding digital communication with students and parents outside of school hours, 63.6% of educators never use these tools, while 9.1% do, and

27.3% use them rarely. Among those who do use them, WhatsApp is used for general communication, announcements, and questions, and Instagram for educational purposes, such as anti-racist actions and dissemination of Law 10.639/2003. This limited adoption, but with strategic uses, raises questions about policies and expectations regarding digital communication and its engagement potential.

Media literacy is viewed with strong consensus as being relevant to student education: 54.5% of educators consider it "very important" and 45.5% "extremely important." The absence of negative responses reinforces the almost unanimous perception of its value. However, this unanimity contrasts with the self-assessed preparedness of educators. While 45.5% feel prepared, 36.4% recognize the need for more training, and 18.2% state that they do not feel prepared to address topics such as fake news, online safety, and critical thinking. This division highlights the importance of investing in continuing education to empower educators as critical and conscious digital citizens.

The integration of digital technologies and media literacy in the educational environment depends on the preparedness and perception of educators. Research reveals a division in continuing education: 45.5% of respondents had specific training, but 54.5% never had this opportunity, pointing to unequal access. Reports indicate that effective training promotes the cautious and intentional use of cell phones, helping educators to weigh benefits and risks and plan activities with clear pedagogical objectives. This critical reflection on responsible integration is crucial.

In a broader context, PISA 2022 indicates that 80% of Brazilian students report distractions from cell phone use in the classroom (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2022). However, UNESCO argues that the focus should be on the purpose of technology use, requiring policies for pedagogical integration and governance in schools (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2023). The data from Niterói—which point to teacher unpreparedness—reinforce that the way forward is the development of intentional mediation.

6. DISCUSSION: CONFLICTS, CONSENSUS, AND PATHWAYS TO DIGITAL EDUCATION

The analysis of the research results reveals a complex and multifaceted panorama regarding the relationship between digital communication, cell phone use in the classroom, and media literacy. This reality significantly echoes and contrasts with the authors, the guidelines of the BNCC (Brazil, 2018), and Law No. 15.100/2025 (Brasil, 2025).

The results confirm that distraction and non-pedagogical use of cell phones are major concerns among educators, corroborating Santaella (2013), who warns of the impact of hyperconnectivity on the ability to concentrate.

The anxiety and immediacy of students suggest the direct influence of the culture of instantaneity (Pierre, 1999), echoing Razzo (2025), who warns of the inhibition of deeper reflection processes in an "anxious generation" shaped by hyperconnectivity. This scenario represents a clear point of tension, where the dynamics of digital communication—while facilitating access to information—pose a new challenge to the process of knowledge construction, which historically demands time and in-depth study.

Despite these concerns, there is significant recognition of the pedagogical potential of cell phones, especially for interactive, gamified activities, rapid research, and digital content production. This contrasts with the ban policy in the municipal network that affects media literacy, as the absence of these devices limits interactive practices crucial for critical digital citizenship. Research has shown that total prohibition prevails over legal exceptions for pedagogical use, making permission rare or nonexistent.

This limitation contradicts the BNCC (Brazilian National Curriculum Base), which encourages critical and ethical use (Brasil, 2018). We question how to teach the conscious use of a tool whose presence is predominantly prohibited, preventing the school from being the "space of construction, production, and intervention" envisioned by Santos (2005). In this sense, the lack of technological infrastructure and material resources emerges as a fundamental barrier to the application of knowledge acquired in training and to the exploration of the potential of technologies, exacerbating inequalities of access among students and demotivating educators.

The relevance of media literacy is perceived almost unanimously by educators, aligning with the BNCC (Brasil, 2018) and the Niterói Curricular Guidelines (Niterói, 2022a). However, this unanimity contrasts with the level of self-assessed preparedness and participation in continuing education. Although a significant number feel prepared, the research reveals that many educators recognize the need for more training or do not feel capable of addressing topics such as fake news, online safety, and critical thinking. Similarly, participation in specific training on the subject is divided. This mismatch between understanding the relevance and the effective training of educators weakens the development of digital literacy among students.

Despite the consensus on the importance of media literacy and the pedagogical potential of mobile phones in learning outcomes, the effective integration of technologies is a challenge. To overcome inattention—transforming the mobile phone into a resource—and foster digital citizenship, the development of Digital Teacher Competencies (DTC)—intentional planning, critical mediation, and innovation in assessment, as proposed by Sonego and Behar (2022)—is essential. However, the application of these pedagogical exceptions of Law No. 15.100/2025 is difficult given the current reality of prohibition, precarious infrastructure, and gaps in the continuing education of educators.

7. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The dilemma of cell phones in schools cannot be solved with simple prohibition, but with a balanced approach that reconciles the necessary restriction—to minimize distractions and risks—with intentional pedagogical mediation. This perspective, aligned with the guidelines of the BNCC (Brazilian National Curriculum Base), the Curricular Guidelines of Niterói, and legislation, aims at developing critical digital skills, essential for students to navigate, learn, and communicate meaningfully and responsibly in the digital culture of the 21st century. Our research with elementary school educators in Niterói reinforced that, although distraction and non-pedagogical use are unanimous challenges, there is clear recognition of the potential of cell phones as a tool for interactive activities, research, and content production, aligning with active methodologies. However, the study also revealed a mismatch between this potential and its effective application, evidenced by the low frequency of pedagogical use and the barriers faced by teachers.

Given this complexity, it becomes clear that the solution does not lie in eliminating the device, but in qualified pedagogical mediation. According to Alves (2023), this mediation is necessary for students to develop discernment for the productive use of technology, mitigating risks and taking advantage of benefits. Complementarily, Santos (2005) argues that educators in cyberculture should assume the role of researcher-trainer, continuously reflecting on their practices and adapting them to digital dynamics.

Therefore, ongoing training for educators is fundamental, equipping them with technical skills and the ability to create teaching strategies that intentionally integrate mobile devices in line with learning objectives. The recognition by educators of the importance of media literacy —in contrast to the gaps in training and insufficient resources—reinforces the urgency of educational policies that prioritize professional development in this area. Addressing the issue of material resources is crucial for fully realizing the potential of ongoing training.

The future of education lies in this intelligent and thoughtful integration of technology, preparing students for the challenges of a constantly transforming world, where digital communication must be understood and managed consciously. To move forward, it is It is important that public policies prioritize massive investment in technological infrastructure in schools, ensuring connectivity and adequate devices. Furthermore, it is essential to implement systematic continuing education programs in media literacy for the pedagogical use of technologies, empowering educators. Another point is the development of clear and flexible protocols for the use of cell phones, which consider the pedagogical context and legal exceptions, avoiding rigid prohibitions that discourage educational use.

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