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## THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

### AUTHORS

**Ery Lira Leite:** Specialist in School Management from UNICID – SP and Specialist in Football Training from – IBGM; Master’s student in Educational Sciences – UNIDA – PY. Graduated in Full Degree in Physical Education - UPE. Physical Education Teacher in the Municipality of Lajedo-PE and Management Assistant at the Reference School in High School - Deolinda Amaral – Pernambuco.

**Contact:** [eryneno@gmail.com](mailto:eryneno@gmail.com) / (87) 98134-3171

**Rosemary Ramos e Silva:** POST-DOCTOR in Educational Sciences in progress at UNIDA-PY; PhD in Educational Sciences from UNIDA-PY; Master of Science in Education from Columbia – PY; MBA in educational management and distance learning management in progress at UNINASSAU; Graduated in Literature from the Educational Authority of Belo Jardim – FABEJA; Pedagogy from the Faculty of Philosophy, Science and Letters of Boa Esperança. Postgraduate degree in pedagogy: Management and Planning.

**Contact:** [rs.rosemary@hotmail.com](mailto:rs.rosemary@hotmail.com) / (81) 99983-8173

### ABSTRACT

This article aims to study the importance of play in early childhood education with a bias towards an investigation that addresses childhood and the phenomena that comprise it and should be studied by teachers. Based on this assumption, Early Childhood Education is a rich and privileged space within the school environment, as it is the essential basis for leveraging other educational modalities. Therefore, the guiding problem of this study consists of discussing how educators think about the context of Early Childhood Education regarding playful activities, games and games, and what contributions these make to the effective learning of students in the process that precedes literacy. Finally, all playful activities should have the purpose of developing the child’s learning, and the educator should always be in the process of training with attention focused on the various areas in the field of playfulness that lead him to constant reflections regarding the context of play and games in Early Childhood Education classes. Childish.

**Keywords:** Play; Early Childhood Education; Teacher; Teaching and Learning.

## INTRODUCTION

The importance of playing in early childhood education is a comprehensive topic and should be guided by an investigation into childhood and the phenomena it encompasses and should be studied by teachers, Bujes (2005, p.187): "Considering that it is not an easy topic, since childhood has several meanings for certain cultures".

Each culture and people have their own way of viewing Early Childhood Education and teaching their children. Playing is important for the integral development of human beings in the physical, social, affective, emotional and cognitive aspects. In literature, play is seen as a resource that can stimulate child development and provide means that facilitate school learning.

Games and Toys in Childhood are the basis of early childhood education. Playing is a way of communicating. It is through play that children enter the world of make-believe, learning rules, values, and behaviors that they will carry into their adult lives. Early childhood education teachers have the great challenge of molding a new product or polishing a jewel. The tools for this work are found in games and play, toys, and playfulness.

When activities involving play and games are brought to the fore in the teacher's pedagogical work, in lesson planning, and in curricular guidelines, many questions arise about the activities that will be offered to children, as it is necessary that they actually promote learning.

Based on this premise, Early Childhood Education is a rich and privileged space within the school environment, as it is the essential basis for leveraging other educational modalities. Educating by teaching using methods that contemplate fantasy, playfulness, play and games is bringing innovation to contemporary times to achieve the proposed objective, which is nothing more than learning and moving towards literacy.

Thus, it can be stated that routine and repetition of educational exercises make a class monotonous and, as a consequence, empty. Searching for new methodologies and a new approach generates tools that will enable the child to awaken interest in the use of games, making the child discover a new way of learning in a pleasurable way. The world of children is magical, and bringing these moments into the classroom is essential

to make the class very satisfactory and, consequently, an attractive and effective literacy environment.

According to Velasco (1996, p. 78):

When children play, they develop their physical, verbal and intellectual abilities. When children do not play, they fail to stimulate and even develop their innate abilities, and may become insecure, fearful and aggressive adults. When they play willingly, they have a greater chance of becoming balanced, conscious and affectionate adults.

According to the author above, it is important to perceive and encourage children's creative capacity, since this constitutes one of the ways of relating to and recreating the world, from the perspective of children's logic. Playing is seen seriously in the development of children, where they will be encouraged to learn in a pleasurable and meaningful way. Through play and games, children can experiment, discover, create and recreate spaces and experiences, and build knowledge. The child is a "sponge", as he absorbs and retains everything very easily. This is a phase of development that must be stimulated. He should be inserted in a literacy environment, in a happy coexistence with the world of letters.

The use of procedures that involve games tends to contribute more easily to the child's teaching and learning process, in the formation of social attitudes such as cooperation, socialization, mutual respect, interaction, which favor the construction of the child's knowledge and personality.

## METHODOLOGY

The research bias emerged in accordance with authors who portray the importance of play in the school institution.

Initially, a survey of scientific material produced on the theme "The Importance of Play in Early Childhood Education" was conducted, which was available in indexed journals, books, Municipal Plans for Early Childhood, UNICEF Guides, magazines and articles. Through the bibliographic survey, it was found that these tools contribute to the promotion and strengthening of public policies for Early Childhood Education and its dimensions. These instruments were selected according to their relevance to contribute to this study.

## PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The project's thematic axis is based on theorists who addressed the content in question, drawing a parallel, with the main focus being the importance of play in early childhood education.

Early childhood education should promote the development of knowledge, attitudes and skills, and it is the teacher's responsibility to broaden the child's experience with the environment, since playing is a right written in the Universal Declaration of the Rights of the Child (approved by the United Nations General Assembly in 1959). In article seven, alongside the right to education, it emphasizes the right to play. "Every child shall have the right to play and have fun, and society and public authorities shall be responsible for ensuring that the child fully exercises this right."

In this way, when a child plays, many things happen, he or she immerses himself or herself in an enchanted world, revealing his or her worldview, sharing and exchanging experiences simply by using the will to experiment. A child needs to play, to be free to create, and it is through creativity that the individual discovers his or her self. For a child, playing and having fun is not a pastime, nor is it just fun, but rather a serious moment where he or she is learning and discovering the world around him or her.

As indicated by research carried out with children for the construction of Municipal Plans for Early Childhood (PMPI), this research supports results and their analyses in the context that the study focuses on when contemplating the importance of playing in Early Childhood Education.

Based on this assumption, in the PMPI of the city of Recife-PE, through the speech, "A child is someone who studies, plays, uses their cell phone a lot and when they get tired, they sleep." (Yana, 5 years old – Dois Rios School – Ibura) 2020, through a research that brings to the document the basis for the legality of the child's right in their early childhood to play and spaces that make them feel like the protagonist of their own learning.

Based on this principle, it is in early childhood education that all these requirements that are indispensable for the development of autonomy, self-knowledge and identity of the child are found, preparing them for the strong future demands and

contributing to the formation of young people and future adults with good social, family and professional relationships. Early childhood education is the true foundation of learning, the one that leaves the child ready to learn and live, corroborating Kishimoto (2001:3) who tells us:

Being a child means having identity and autonomy, and being able to express your emotions, your needs, it means forming your personality, it means expressing yourself in contact with sign language, it means expressing your understanding of the world through sign language, artistic languages, as well as oral and written languages.

In the school environment, children go through enriching experiences: they share, cooperate with each other, expand their vocabulary, make new friends, learn the rules of coexistence, are introduced to ethical values, respect, diversity, the environment, timetables, and learn good eating habits.

At the São Paulo PMPI, one of the children interviewed was asked: What is good for children? "A park, a slide, a swing, a seesaw, a merry-go-round, clowns, games, picnics, playhouses, grocery stores, fairs... There has to be art, modern art, beautiful art. For something to be beautiful: beautiful art, fruits, flowers, vases, trees, lamps... Activities? Stickers, reading..." "João Eduardo - 6 years old, (2018)

Games and toys in early childhood education are important elements for the cognitive, physical and emotional development of children, as it is through play that they experience reality, in line with Goés' statement (2008, p. 37), even though:

(...) playful activities, games, toys, and games need to be improved, understood, and given more space to be understood as education. As teachers understand their full potential to contribute to child development, changes will occur in education and in the subjects involved in this process.

The educator, as the main person responsible for organizing learning situations, must understand the value of play and games for the development of a student, as they must provide an environment that is favorable to learning, fostering feelings of joy, pleasure, movement, and values of solidarity and mutual respect in the act of playing. Playing is an act that happens spontaneously; situations must be planned and organized so that play occurs in a diverse

manner.

Therefore, as a mediator of learning, the teacher must use new methodologies, always seeking to include games in their practice, as their objective is to form students who are participatory, critical and capable of facing challenges.

According to the PMPI of Sobral-CE, a research tool and support for this study, after listening to children in the various neighborhoods and districts of Sobral, work was carried out to systematize their cognitive perception. After questioning two children about the importance of playing, the following responses were obtained: "I don't like going inside the house because I like to stay outside playing ball. I play ball with my friends. I don't like cars "stepping" over the ball. There are a lot of cars passing by there (Gabriel – 6 years old; Davi – 5 years old; 2022)".

Corroborating Piaget's findings, which discusses development, which is the search for balance as a constant process, and according to Piaget, human development occurs through stages, phases, for all individuals. The phases of development according to Piaget are:

- Sensorimotor Period (0 to 2 years);
- Pre-operative period (2 to 7 years);
- Period of concrete operations (7 to 11 or 12 years);
- Period of formal operations (11 or 12 years onwards).

Jean Piaget was a pioneer in the study of children's intelligence. He believed that human behavior is not innate, nor does it result from conditioning. Rather, it is the result of interaction between the individual and the environment. Piaget's theory states that the construction of knowledge occurs when physical or mental actions are followed by the assimilation of these actions, and an educational balance is automatically achieved.

Piaget: (1896-1980):

Both play and games are essential to contribute to the learning process. When launching an unfamiliar activity, whether a game or a play, the student will feel conflicted. However, as soon as he becomes aware and understands the ideas better, he will be assimilating and adapting to the new knowledge.

During play, children make the same effort they make when learning to walk, talk, eat, and learn other things. This effort is intense and demands concentration. In this sense, it is worth noting that recognizing playful activities, games, and play as tools inherent to the teacher's pedagogical work for teaching and learning in early childhood education must have their real importance in terms of children's overall development. According to the National Curricular Reference for Early Childhood Education (BRASIL, 1998, p. 23, v.01):

Educating therefore means providing situations of care, play and learning guided in an integrated manner and that can contribute to the development of children's interpersonal relationship skills, of being and being with others in a basic attitude of acceptance, respect and trust, and access by children to broader knowledge of social and cultural reality.

In past decades, children played based on the knowledge passed on to them by their grandparents, uncles and aunts or even their neighbors. But over the years, there have been changes in the ways of playing, as well as in the toys themselves. Before, toys were made by parents and grandparents, but now these same toys are made by the industry, which has started to create and produce toys all over the world.

Children, when they learned to make their own toys with the help of their grandparents and parents, developed creativity and reasoning. Today, children no longer need creativity to play and make their toys, since everything is already industrially created for sale. Given this situation, it is clear that games in the past allowed children to discover, invent and seek solutions to problem situations that arise in games. Therefore, for children, playing means obeying the conscious and unconscious impulses that lead to highly significant physical and mental activities. Since playing is of interest to children, it promotes attention and concentration, leading them to create, think and learn new words, situations and skills.

All play activities should aim at the child's development and learning. In motor development, games help to improve motor skills, increasing strength, speed, endurance, flexibility, coordination, laterality, and structuring of notions of time and space. The toy is influenced by age, sex, and the presence of companions, in addition to aspects related to novelty, surprise, complexity, and variability. Children can play alone or with companions, with or without a high degree

of cooperation to achieve a common goal. A ball, for example, suggests a little exercise, a teddy bear can be a great friend; in short, toys serve as intermediaries so that children can better integrate into the world in which they live.

When playing in groups or even alone, children turn their games into a true social practice and through this practice they learn to count, play, distinguish and organize their ideas and their lives. It is worth noting that play can become satisfying when the use of toys seeks imaginary tendencies and the child socializes through their integration with the objects and the cultural environment that surrounds them. Toys should represent challenges for the child and should be suited to their interests and creative needs, as they are invitations to play, as long as the child wants to interact with them.

However, toys have a strong influence on the formation of children's personalities, as they are associated with children's needs during childhood, i.e., a very young child's attempt is to satisfy his or her desires immediately. The characteristics of toys and their relationship with development are addressed in order to emphasize that toys are a product of a society with specific cultural traits, in addition to being objects rich in meaning, and play is considered a form of action and interpretation of the meanings contained in toys, hence its importance for children's intellectual development.

Playfulness includes games, play and toys themselves, both old-fashioned and modern-day play, as they are educational and help students learn and interact with others. It is through interaction that children develop their creativity and freedom. The play activities experienced by children are characterized by involvement, participation, imagination and group participation, and may or may not be supported by toys/objects. They represent play embodied in the child's actions and the sharing of experiences, which can happen individually or in a group.

Kishimoto (1993, p. 15) states:

Games have diverse origins and cultures that are transmitted through different games and ways of playing. The purpose of these games is to build and develop coexistence among children by establishing rules, criteria and meanings, thus enabling more social coexistence and democracy, because "as a spontaneous manifestation of popular culture, traditional

games have the function of perpetuating children's culture and developing forms of social coexistence.

Given the above quote, it is clear that children's games and play bring with them their own identity, promoting not only learning, but also enabling immersion in the world of the cultural and historical roots of the family, community, and society, transforming and enabling knowledge into opportunities.

## CONCLUSION

When carrying out the study on the importance of playing in early childhood education, it is noted that it is in Early Childhood Education that there is a space that brings together possibilities and literacy construction during its process, permeating varied methods to reach the child's learning.

The theme aims to demystify the idea that games and play at school are simply a waste of time that can even be futile. Games and play are essential tools for the development, socialization and communication between children and, at the same time, they form values for life.

Based on this premise, the contribution of children's games portrays the child's own history and culture, and at the same time provides a healthy experience throughout life, passed down from generation to generation. Games and play lead children to constantly challenge themselves, making them realize their capacity for overcoming challenges and creativity over time, which are essential for the development of autonomy and self-knowledge, a preparation for the strong demands of the future, which will contribute to the formation of a young person and an adult with good social, family and professional relationships.

Therefore, it is essential to emphasize that playing, having fun, and living together makes the world in which the child lives real and full of meaning, thus awakening cognitive, motor, cultural, social, sensory, emotional, and creative skills, which are essential for living in society.

Finally, all playful activities must have the purpose of developing the child's learning, and the educator must always be in the process of training with attention focused on the different areas in the field of playfulness that lead to constant reflections regarding the context of play and games in Early Childhood Education classes.