




THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PLAYFUL LEARNING AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT IN THE EARLY GRADES FROM THE PSYCHOLOGY OF LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

The study involves the relevance of playful activities, clarifying the progress in learning and child development, bringing to discussion the cognitivist theory, focusing on the analysis of the improvement of mental process, relating learning with social interaction and adaptation to the environment in which the individual lives. Playfulness is present in the child's life and brings with it important benefits, including educational ones. The objective of the research is to examine how games and play influence the cognitive development of children in the early grades, which involve memory development, problem solving and logical reasoning. The research method is structured in a bibliographic review in the scenario of a qualitative approach and is also characterized as descriptive, in which articles, books, magazines by specific authors were reviewed, reflecting on the meaning of playful activities as an educational procedure, in order to perceive the impact on learning and child development. According to the results, the studies of playful activities improve educational teaching. The analysis indicates that by including playful resources in the teaching methodology, there is an improvement in learning and cognitive skills.

Keywords: Learning. Ludic. Development. Infantile.

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INTRODUCTION

Playfulness is a tool that, from the twentieth century onwards, began to be studied by great theorists, including Piaget, who highlighted the importance of working with playfulness in the early grades, and this pedagogical strategy has become indispensable in children's learning. Piaget (1970) describes that recreational activities are fundamental for the construction of the child's knowledge about the environment in which he lives, expanding interest in educational activities.

Cognitivist theory highlights learning as an active and interactive process in which individuals build knowledge through critical and reflective thinking, encouraging active participation and reflection in the transmission of knowledge. For Santos and Pereira (2019), playful learning has established itself as an important theory in the field of teaching that defends a process of knowledge construction and critical thinking, so that there is a balance between playing and learning through pleasurable activities.

Thus, the objective of the research is to examine how games and play influence child development in the early grades, based on the cognitivist theory. Based on this objective, a study was carried out based on the bibliographies and literature related to the subject addressed, which showed the positivity of learning through play, because nowadays this strategy is essential to strengthen the child's learning. Since the use of games and games in the educational space stimulates memory, helps in problem solving and logical reasoning.

Through observations made during the practices developed in public schools during the academic training period, it was noted that teachers show great interest in working with playfulness in educational activities. This approach, when implemented, promotes significant developments in the teaching and learning process. Thus, due to the facts pointed out, the following question arises: is there a relationship between playful learning and child development in the cognitivist theory in the early grades?

It is inferred that playfulness in the early grades enables not only moments of entertainment in the classroom, but also plays a crucial role in learning. With this, it is understood that games and games such as: puzzles, reasoning games or dynamics that involve challenges, favor the development of cognitive skills, such as critical thinking, memory, concentration and problem solving. Kishimoto (2017) emphasizes that the educational environment must be attractive, innovative and it is necessary to encourage the student to explore their curiosities, invent and reinvent themselves.

Playfulness is not a way to entertain the child, it is a pedagogical mechanism that helps to build knowledge in an independent and pleasurable way, creating links between

social experiences and educational development. According to Kishimoto (2016), play is an activity that is maintained by the child himself, leaving them free to explore the world in a creative way, even if disorganized.

This research is of a bibliographic nature, investigates works already published on the subject, and is classified as qualitative, since it is interested in the depth of real experiences that cannot be quantified. In addition, it is characterized as descriptive, by virtue of working with more specific and detailed information.

The relationship between playful learning and child development in the early grades in the cognitivist theory proved to be essential, because the research done on the authors related to the proposed theme, showed that games and playful activities make learning more attractive and strengthen the child's development. These activities stimulate curiosity, creativity, and problem-solving, as well as social knowledge such as empathy and collaboration. Thus, playfulness strengthens the child's integral development and promotes more effective learning.

METHODOLOGICAL PATH

This work has a qualitative approach, since it is interested in the depth of real experiences, which cannot be quantified, and of a bibliographic nature that investigates works already published on the subject, tracing the initial path through a preliminary bibliographic research that favors the understanding of the proposed problem (Marconi; Lakatos, 2022).

The research is also characterized as descriptive, which is a method in which more detailed information of facts and phenomena is collected with the purpose of establishing relationships between the investigated variables, analyzing the characteristics and effects involved (Gil, 2007). To carry out the research process, specific keywords were used to catalog the articles and other sources that served as the basis for the study, meeting the proposed objectives in which it was sought to understand learning through new playful methodologies and their applicability in child development.

Thus, articles published between five and ten years ago, books that make the historical cut of the relationship between playful learning and child development in the early grades in the cognitivist theory, were used for the theoretical and methodological foundation of this research. As an exclusion criterion, articles outside the temporality presented in the inclusion criteria were removed.

Through bibliographic research, platforms such as *Google Scholar*, *Scielo*, as well as searches in books and specialized magazines were used. In order to expand knowledge

and theoretically support the research, the following descriptors were used: "learning" and "playful" and "development" and "infantile", taking into account articles that dealt with the investigated theme, facing challenges such as the scarcity of updated studies.

The work used files to detail information relevant to the research, highlighting main ideas and reflecting on the works in relation to the hypotheses formulated. In addition, a critical analysis of the bibliographic material was made, evaluating the quality and scientific significance of the works. The work logically organized the ideas that helped to solve the research problem.

The objective is to examine how games and play influence cognitive development in the early grades, which involves memory, problem solving and logical reasoning. It was confirmed through this approach that learning through playful practices improves educational teaching, creates an environment where children explore new information with pre-existing knowledge and promotes changes in cognitive structures such as: the stimulation of imagination, logical reasoning and facilitates child development.

RESULTS

By analyzing the information collected during the work, it was possible to identify that the proposals for games and play are essential for the construction of learning and cognitive development of children in the early grades. These observations directly answer the problem of the research, which aims to understand how play can be explored in a productive way, to stimulate the child's evolution. With this action, there was a stimulus of reasoning, awakening interest in problem solving, sharpening imagination, language and strengthening short and long-term memory. In this way, play not only provided fun, but also contributed to the holistic growth of the child.

Through the readings carried out, based on authors such as Kishimoto (2017), Franco (2018), Santos Pereira (2019), Vygotsky (1998), Lukesi (2014), Rau (2013), Santos (2014) and Montessori (2018), it was noted that the use of playfulness, when implemented in educational methodologies, contributes to the integral development of the child and causes the formation of full citizens. Games are great examples to stimulate educational advancement, inserted correctly, allows the exploration of new discoveries, helps in the way of thinking and interacting with others.

This integration is also fundamental for the teacher, since he is no longer just a transmitter of content and becomes a facilitator who guides and stimulates the child's curiosity and interest through playfulness. In this new role, the teacher is not limited to observing the evolution of each student, he also develops a learning environment in which

children feel comfortable and encouraged to explore, question and acquire knowledge in an active way. Thus, the teacher becomes an indispensable intermediary in the learning process, driving a more meaningful and engaging education for children.

It was also possible to perceive that learning and cognitive development in fact occurs in a lighter and more relaxed way when the ludic is incorporated with educational activities. This tool boosts more motivation, engagement, and interest on the part of children to learn more. By linking play to learning, an encouraging environment is created that helps not only the understanding of content, but also in the integral improvement of the child, offering a richer and more diversified learning experience.

After many discussions about the literature of the authors Vygotsky and Piaget, it was possible to understand that cognitive development is a gradual and interactive process, strongly influenced by the environment where individuals live. This development is a process built collectively with social interaction, playing a fundamental role in the formation of cognition. Vygotsky (1984), specifically, emphasizes the meaning of the zone of proximal development, which deals with space in the context in which the person already knows and what he can learn with the help of others. Piaget (1976), on the other hand, highlights the active construction of knowledge, in which the person, through his own acts, reorganizes and modifies the world around him.

In this context, based on the authors selected for the research, it was understood how essential the relationship between playful learning and child development in the early grades is, from the perspective of the cognitivist theory, because, when analyzing the literature referring to the proposed theme. It was confirmed through this approach that learning through playful practices improves educational teaching, creates an environment where children explore new information with pre-existing knowledge and promotes changes in cognitive structures such as: the stimulation of imagination, logical reasoning and facilitates child development.

DISCUSSION

Methodologies that involve teaching in a playful way in the early grades are indispensable strategies for the development of learning. Resources such as games used in this process help the child better assimilate the contents, creates a more interactive, dynamic, cooperative environment, with rules and commands essential for life. Kishimoto (2017) points out that children need a dynamic space with games and games, as it favors communication and interaction.

of one with the other. With this, the teacher provides a differentiated methodology for everyday life, transforming it into a more pleasurable class.

The National Common Curriculum Base - BNCC (Brazil, 2017) confirms that by the end of the 2nd year of Elementary School, the child should be literate. And at this point, it is essential that the professional uses the playful resource to obtain good learning results. This contributes to the construction of knowledge and develops important skills for the child's cognitive life. With this, the use of play helps the child to build stronger connections with the subjects acquired, making it more interesting and meaningful.

The Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education, Law No. 9,394/96, states that early childhood education is the initial phase of basic education, aimed at the development of children from zero to six years old, covering cognitive, emotional, affective and social aspects. To improve their development and promote their social and cultural inclusion, it is essential that every child has access to early childhood education, with varied learning. In the first phase of basic education, the activities carried out in educational institutions must be, above all, pedagogical. In this environment, children explore, question and progressively begin to understand the cultural forms in which they are inserted, shaping their own reality.

Educational games are significant instruments in teaching, since they involve students and connect the contents worked in the classroom through playfulness. These resources used by teachers can have positive results in teaching, as they stimulate students in the construction of teamwork, in problem solving, forming critical and active beings in learning. For Franco (2018), contributions with educational playful tools are effective in making the class more enjoyable, engaging, fun, motivational and productive.

It is essential that the teacher is prepared to deal with different cultures, recognizing and respecting the differences present in the school environment. As a result, it is up to him the commitment and dedication or even the mission of the teacher to create new approaches to classes, with differentiated methodologies for the development of children's learning. According to Kishimoto (2000, p.34), "the child is a being in the process of appropriating culture, needing to participate in games in a spontaneous and creative way".

The game is a resource that contributes to educational learning, such as the physical one that develops motor coordination and the ability to move, the cognitive one that refers to the knowledge of perception of reasoning, memory, thought and communication that the child has, and also the psychological one that encourages intellectual growth by inducing knowledge and facilitating the child's learning. This resource is seen as a teaching strategy that fixes attention, arouses the interest and curiosity of students in the activities. This

contributes to the relationship between playful learning and child development in the early grades. In view of this, Vygotsky (1998) states that

The creation of an imaginary situation is not something fortuitous in the child's life; on the contrary, it is the first manifestation of the child's emancipation from situational constraints. The first paradox contained in the toy is that the child operates with an alienated meaning in a real situation. The second is that, in play, the child follows the path of least effort – he does what he likes to do most, because the toy is united to pleasure – and at the same time he learns to follow the most difficult paths, subordinating himself to rules and, consequently, renouncing what he wants, since subjection to rules and renunciation of impulsive action constitute the path to the pleasure of toy (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 130).

Playfulness is a tool that helps in the learning process, which was previously used only as a meaningless distraction in teaching, currently the teacher uses this resource as a strategy, which guarantees more engagement, communication and interaction in their classes. Thus, it provides socialization and the acquisition of knowledge. For Santos and Pereira (2019, p. 486), playfulness is important in the educational development process, as games and games offer fun and entertainment, which facilitates the construction of the student's knowledge.

As for studies on teaching methodologies, playfulness should not be limited only to applying games and games in a vague, decontextualized way that does not make sense in the child's learning. On the contrary, playfulness should be seen as a pedagogical tool that needs to be carefully elaborated and inserted into the curricular content. According to Luckesi (2014), Rau (2013) **and** Santos (2014), **it** is essential that this pedagogical practice is transmitted by playful knowledge, which needs to be aligned with the individual needs of the child, building a more meaningful and engaging educational environment that collaborates in child development.

Play leads the child to learn without fear of making mistakes, allowing him to explore knowledge in a natural and pleasurable way. Currently, they express themselves and do their educational tasks spontaneously, that is, for their desire to study and the pleasure of learning. Leaving aside traditional teaching, which before the teacher was seen as the center of attention and students were pressured to follow the command given by him. In this way, teaching is not limited to mechanical content, but is transformed into a more pleasurable and engaging learning routine (Santos Pereira, 2019). In this sense,

One of the pillars of Montessori pedagogy is self-education: the child is free to choose his activities according to his (developmental) needs and, thus, educate himself in the practice of activities. This does not mean that it is an anarchic and disordered process, since the educator will continue to be present, but he will be the passive being in the face of the resourceful activity of his student (Rossi, 2015, p. 03).

Montessori (2018), with its emphasis on self-education, promotes a vision of learning in which children are active agents in their own educational process. This method recognizes and respects the individual rhythm of each child, stimulates an integral and balanced development. As opposed to an anarchic or disordered process, the underlying structure and deliberate role of the educator who builds an environment where freedom of choice leads to effective and meaningful self-education. In this way, the student becomes a mediator of teaching that instigates curiosity, independence and constant engagement of the child.

Playfulness is not limited to just a way to entertain the child, but operates as a pedagogical mechanism that promotes the construction of knowledge in an independent and pleasurable way, creating links between social experiences and cognitive development. According to Kishimoto (2016), play is an innate activity that is maintained by the child himself, which provides the autonomy to explore the world in a creative way, even if in an unstructured way. While playing, children are learning how to do things in practice, that is, in know-how.

In the early years, it is crucial to implement good playful strategies to strengthen learning. It is at this stage that the child awakens a taste for reading and writing, this will directly impact certain skills that help in child development and critical and constructive capacity in their life. Cunha (2005) corroborates by saying that games and play play an essential function in the early grades, as they contribute positively to the child's development. These resources are essential to promote learning in different areas, helping the child to evolve in an integral way.

The child's learning begins from birth and extends throughout life. During the process of growth, he acquires knowledge and understandings of the world. However, the relationship between playfulness and child development is acquired when the child starts to have direct physical contact with the object. According to Lev Vygotsky (1984), the support of the educational teacher is indispensable to assist in the use of games as didactic resources, as it promotes complete literacy, and it is necessary to understand the needs of students to promote quality teaching.

Cognitivist theory highlights the role of thinking in learning and behavior. It is emphasized that individuals build knowledge through an active and interactive process, with critical and reflective thinking, which are fundamental elements of this construction. This theory leads educational actions that encourage the active participation of students in the construction of learning, based on methods that stimulate participation and reflection.

Furthermore, it highlights the significance of socialization and the scenario in which learning occurs. Santos and Pereira (2019) state that:

Playful learning has been consolidated as an important theory in the field of learning that defends a process of knowledge construction with commitment and effort without, however, renouncing pleasure and individual satisfaction in obtaining it. This concept thus defends an idea that people can submit to learning in a context where fun and entertainment are facilitating sources of knowledge. (Santos; Pereira, 2019, p. 486).

Cognitivist theories differ from behaviorist theories in that they explore mental processes to understand human learning and development. For cognitivists, knowledge and development occur through a process of accumulation of responses and successive adaptations to the environment in which they live. Learning and development occur when there is a change in cognitive structures, in the way events are understood and organized, providing them with meanings. The ability to learn and develop requires previously established cognitive structures. Vygotsky (1984) shows that human thought has a socio-historical origin, being influenced by the context.

Play resources play a crucial role in children's intellectual development, allowing them to explore and understand the world around them in a creative and active way. These activities strengthen cognitive structures and build educational knowledge at all stages of the child, including their skills involving memory, problem solving and perception. According to Piaget (1970), play becomes a primordial tool for learning, facilitates communication with the environment and the advancement of skills necessary for the educational process.

The diversified resources in the learning process, such as building board games, puzzles, spelling competitions and others, promote skills and direct relationships with the child's learning. For Vygotsky (1984) it is important that the teacher uses games and games as a tool of educational support, because before what was used only as a meaningless distraction, nowadays guarantees more engagement, communication and interaction. Not only does it get distracted or expend energy, but it also develops essential life skills.

One of the important points that Vygotsky (1984) highlights in playing is the fact that toys are not symbolic actions in a broad way. The author emphasizes the significance of understanding the function and meaning of toys. In this context, Vygotsky reports that no toy is exempt from rules, because when playing it is necessary for the child to learn to deal with limits, make collective decisions and know how to interact socially. In this way, playing with rules plays a fundamental role in the formation of essential skills, such as logical reasoning, cooperation and conflict resolution skills. In view of this, the aforementioned author states that:

Whenever there is an imaginary situation in the toy, there are rules - not the rules previously formulated and which change during the game, but those which have their origin in the imaginary situation itself. Therefore, the notion that a child can behave in an imaginary situation without rules is simply incorrect (Vygotsky, 1984, p. 108).

Games and play are effective mechanisms as teaching-learning strategies, thus helping children to understand their reality and daily challenges, in addition to examining different modes of interaction in their social environment. Also, as didactic tools, playful resources are crucial for child development. The National Curriculum Reference for Early Childhood Education (Brasil, 1998) emphasizes that play is a very important mechanism for the construction of children's learning, as it favors self-esteem and helps in the acquisition of knowledge.

The development of the playful aspect favors learning, exploring its various potentialities and abilities. Luckesi (2005) states that games enable experiences of full achievement, in which the individual feels fully engaged. In this way, while a leisure activity is carried out, the greater the possibility that the student will manifest his emotions and feelings, from this, he intensifies his emotional relationships. In addition to this contribution, playfulness enables mutual respect and teamwork.

Human development occurs when there is a change in cognitive structures, in the way events are perceived and organized, attributing meanings to them. In the cognitivist theory, Vygotsky (1984) emphasized the historical-social origin that human development must be understood in relation to the historical epoch, society and cultures experienced. The importance of language and signs as mediators of development, as well as the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, which is related to what a person can do alone and with the help of someone.

Piaget's theory (1976) proposes several ways to understand human development, among them is balance, which is an essential category that the organism needs to live in balance with the environment, giving rise to challenges and conflicts. As a result, imbalances are caused that are fundamental for its development. These imbalances cause the need for adaptation and cognitive change, guiding the subject to a mental restructuring. Thus, the body resorts to personal means to achieve stability, adapting to the environment in which it lives.

Human development is a continuous process that goes from birth to adulthood and old age. This cycle is motivated by genetic, social, cultural, and environmental reasons, and is necessary for the preparation of skills and capacities to face life's challenges. For Piaget (2010) and for Vygotsky (1998), human development is linked to constant evolution. This

shows that when playing, the child can build a knowledge base, which will be essential for adult life, as it will reflect the ways of interacting with the world.

Child development implies observing human evolution, its transformations and changes during this process. These changes are associated with cognitive aspects that are motivated by numerous factors, which include family origin, genetics, the way of social interaction, the emotional, habits and customs of the environment in which they live. The family context plays a fundamental role in the child's life, since the attention, affection and support received in the first periods of life directly impact their formation of skills and learning.

For Piaget, the learning process, that is, the way man learns, is built through his interaction with the environment, so we cannot classify him as an innate or environmentalist. For him, the genetic load and the environment in which the person lives directly influence the acquisition of new knowledge. And this acquisition occurs as man is challenged by the conditions of the environment in which he lives, by changes, by problems, which require this man to have a cognitive readaptation to reach balance again. After assimilating this new idea, then return to balance, having his intelligence expanded with new knowledge (Santos, 2014, p.1).

Affective relationships are important for the healthy growth of the child. Emotional contact with parents or guardians plays indispensable roles in the development of teaching, because when a child has strong and healthy affective bonds, he is better able to explore the world around him. In addition, a child who receives support and affection from important people in his or her life tends to develop social skills, such as empathy, cooperation, and respect for each other. According to Papalia and Martorell (2022), the importance of receiving loving care, cognitive stimulation, and emotional support within affective bonds and the family context are essential for child development.

The Montessori method is based on ideas that the child's learning occurs during his experiences with the world, that is, freely, but with limits self-directed by an adult, because security and confidence are important to understand the meaning of life. According to Montessori (2018, p. 18), children develop language, thought and imagination according to the environment in which they live, such as the educational space, their home and the community. With this, the author emphasizes that it is important "the help offered to the child to gain his independence".

In the child development phase, it includes several essential factors for the child's integral growth. Among them, the cognitive aspect is highlighted, which is an action represented by mental structures and makes children increasingly agile in activities, independent, autonomous and solve situations, teamwork discussions and others. For Piaget (2014), these aspects establish social skills such as communication, respect for



others, and also create a sense of responsibility and leadership. Thus, children develop important skills for their future coexistence in society.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research instigates reflections on the relationship between playful learning and child development. From this study, it was identified that playfulness, when inserted in the early grades, has a significant impact on child maturation. According to Piaget (1970), playing and playful activities are crucial for the production of knowledge of cognitive skills, which allows children to explore and organize their ideas in a dynamic way.

In this way, playfulness plays a fundamental role in education, since it facilitates the integral development of students, enabling more meaningful and pleasurable **learning**. However, its implementation faces some limitations, such as the scarcity of updated books, scientific articles, pedagogical supports for diversified activities, as well as investments in continuing education of educators. Despite the problems presented, it is essential to seek viable solutions to the lack of resources, as playfulness is indispensable for pedagogy, as it collaborates directly with the emotional, cognitive and social development of children.

Thus, it is concluded that this research on learning through games and play contributes to new investigations in relation to childhood. Since they are factors that also collaborate to improve children's lifestyles. Based on this understanding, it is expected that new studies will emerge, deepening knowledge about the various aspects of play and the influence of the complete education of children, in addition to stimulating more productive pedagogical approaches aligned with the needs of this phase of development.



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