




TEACHING PRACTICE AND PLAYFULNESS: PEDAGOGICAL REFLECTIONS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This article reflects on teaching practice and playfulness focusing on the pedagogical actions used for the socialization and learning of children in an early childhood education center. The theme under study aims to highlight the importance of play in an early childhood education center, specifically in the first and second periods of this level of education. Our interest in the theme consists of questioning how the pedagogical practices developed by teachers in this phase of education have contributed to the significant learning of children. Thus, our objective was to analyze how teachers use playfulness in their teaching practices as pedagogical tools. The pedagogical practice through playfulness is a dynamic action in constant movement, requiring planning to ensure the realization of the proposed intentionalities. This study is qualitative in nature, and the subjects of the research were 10 teachers from an Early Childhood Education Center in Lagoa Grande do Maranhão. Open questionnaires were applied and the results revealed that the pedagogical practice through playfulness is indispensable to enhance the teaching work and allow the integral development of the child in a pleasurable way.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education. Playfulness. Teaching Practice.

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INTRODUCTION

Reflecting on Early Childhood Education in the institutional space is very important, because at this stage of basic education, children are having their first contacts with school, where they will have the opportunity to interact with other people outside their family cycle, as well as explore, discover and experiment, which allows the little students to have an expanded development in physical aspects, motor, cognitive, social and emotional through various activities that involve playfulness.

Playfulness in early childhood education involves games in general, games, stories and activities that pass through the children's ludic universe. They contribute to the child's development occurring in a pleasurable way, it should be considered of paramount importance for the child's development to express their feelings, fear, problems, anguish and happiness. Everyone who is part of the educational process must also be involved in the ludic world.

The games can be both collective and individual. Therefore, the teacher can and should diversify his way of working with playfulness. At the time of fun, the child spares no effort to participate physically or mentally in the game, thus strengthening learning within the children's educational field. From his imagination, the child builds his process of commitment to the other, trusting in his abilities.

The children's universe is full of playful activities, playing in early childhood education is fundamental for their development. The child is always creating fantasies, playing make-believe, thus awakening his creativity, making the learning process easier and more pleasurable.

In the educational environment at all levels of education, pedagogical practices are present. It is necessary to clarify that this practice is comprehensive and complex, as it extrapolates the daily routine of the teacher in practice, but there is a whole theoretical intentionality that needs to be analyzed according to the conception that will be developed in the classroom

The classroom is a space permeated by diverse practices which refer to the work of the teacher who foresees different possibilities of guiding learning tasks in a creative way, having as a starting point knowledge, experiences, contextual experiences, thus putting into practice the conduction of the teaching process. extrapolating from simple practice and assuming teaching as a reflective and critical pedagogical practice.

The theme in focus is the result of a monographic work by one of the authors, an early childhood education teacher, who experiences child development in the classroom based on playfulness in pedagogical practice. The following objectives were outlined: to

reflect on the teaching practice involving playfulness in early childhood education in the I and II period in a Municipal School of Lagoa Grande do Maranhão; to identify the contributions of playfulness in early childhood education; to analyze the teaching practices involving playfulness for the teaching of children.

Teaching practices involving playfulness in child development were analyzed, with reference to the authors: Paulo Freire (1996), Maria Amélia do Rosário Santoro (2016), Paloma de Andrade Alves (2015); Eliete Lemos Cardoso (2010); Alexandre Sant'Anna and Paulo Roberto do Nascimento (2011); Gisele Mariotti Putton and Pollyanna Santos da Cruz (2021) among others.

The field research was developed in a municipal school in the urban area of Lagoa Grande do Maranhão, through the application of a questionnaire with open questions, where data were collected from the teachers of the referenced school. Next, the results will be presented through tables and supported by the authors who deal with the theme. Here we will focus on the most significant answers presented by the teachers.

TEACHING PRACTICES INVOLVING PLAYFULNESS FOR TEACHING CHILDREN

The education of young children is a complex process made up of evolutionary phases, whose development should be accompanied by parents and teachers who have the knowledge and technical competence to educate, socialize, and insert them into the world of knowledge in an appropriate way to the different stages of development, privileging interests, curiosities, imagination, indispensable characteristics for their integral development, so we will reflect on what the authors say about teaching practice and playfulness.

The teacher's work consists of a set of activities that materialize in the classroom in the form of orientations, experiences and practical examples, always directed to the students, with a view to learning in a meaningful way, in this perspective, Cruz (2007) states, teaching practice is

An experience that takes into account the fact that teachers produce in their practices a wealth of knowledge that needs to be, together with their experiences, assumed as the starting point of any process of improvement of their work and curricular change. (Cruz, 2007, p. 195)

The author highlights the importance of recognizing and valuing the wealth of knowledge produced by teachers in their practices, along with their experiences. This appreciation is fundamental for the improvement of teaching work and for the promotion of significant curricular changes. By considering the experiences and knowledge of teachers



as a starting point, it is possible to develop educational practices that are more aligned with the needs and realities of students, as well as to enhance the work of educators and contribute to the quality of the educational process.

The educational practice at all levels of education continuously needs critical reflection on the daily work that occurs within the school institution, where diverse practices are present, but the practices performed by the teacher are planned, have as their objective the learning of the students, therefore pedagogical practices, specific to the teaching field, that is, tools of the teaching practice, in this understanding, Franco (2016) states that:

[...] a class or an educational meeting will become a pedagogical practice when it is organized around intentionalities, as well as in the construction of practices that give meaning to intentionalities. It will be pedagogical practice when it incorporates continuous and collective reflection, in order to ensure that the proposed intentionality is made available to all; will be pedagogical as it seeks the construction of practices that ensure that the referrals proposed by the intentionalities can be carried out. Franco (2016, sp).

Franco's approach emphasizes the importance of intentionality, planning, and continuous and collective reflection for pedagogical practices to be effective. This view places the student as the protagonist of learning, which is fundamental to form critical and emancipated subjects.

It is known that the concept of pedagogical practice may vary depending on the approach with which we share, and it is notorious that non-critical approaches, of pedagogical practice that only reproduce knowledge in a mechanical way centered on repetition do not meet the demands of training a critical subject. Critical and emancipatory pedagogical approaches seek to use active and contextualized methodologies to place the student as the protagonist of the learning process, the practice of teachers is also innovative, reflective and critical, which will allow the constant improvement of the teaching process.

It is essential to understand that education goes beyond a simple act of transmitting knowledge, it influences the lives of human beings in a broad way, while the process of knowledge production allows man to be inserted through social and educational processes to seek his own autonomy. The local school institution for the production of knowledge must offer conditions so that the student can develop his or her potential in a welcoming, pleasurable and rich environment of possibilities to experience and apprehend socialization and education situations that are basic to awaken imagination, creativity, curiosity, autonomy that must be worked on dynamically, Especially in the first years of Early



Childhood Education, thus playfulness becomes a basic tool to boost the pedagogical practice of teachers at this level of education

The insertion of playfulness in education from childhood to higher education is, without a doubt, a practice that can make teaching lighter and more dynamic, contributing to the integral development of students. I believe that it is important to promote an educational environment that involves pleasure, joy, and happiness, as this will certainly positively impact the development of skills and the formation of more critical and conscious citizens.

We can see that the pedagogical practice through playfulness is something that is in constant movement, so it can be said that there is no ready-made formula or recipe, but a practice that involves a lot of planning, creativity and boldness on the part of the teacher. When planning his teaching activities, the teacher does so based on theoretical and methodological knowledge to ensure the efficiency of the teaching-learning process in a qualified way. Dallabona, Mendes (2004) state:

Educating playfully is not throwing packaged lessons for the learner to consume passively. Educating is a conscious and planned act, it is to make the individual conscious, engaged and happy in the world. It is to seduce human beings into the pleasure of knowing. And to rescue the true meaning of the word "school", a place of joy, intellectual pleasure, satisfaction and development. (DALLABONA, MENDES, 2004, p. 110).

The authors above reinforce the idea that educating playfully goes beyond simply offering playful activities, but rather involving students in a conscious, planned and pleasurable way in the learning process.

The teacher in early childhood education must create an environment conducive to the development of children, where playfulness is an important tool to stimulate curiosity, creativity and pleasure for knowledge. The conscious and planned approach to playfulness contributes to rescuing the true meaning of school as a place of joy, learning built in an interactive way where the child feels pleasure in attending it.

In this way, the teacher needs to carefully plan his playful activities, as well as any other activity, so that he does not only insert games, toys and games in his pedagogical practice, but also inserts intentional practices, with objectives to be achieved, making the students develop and learn, *playing*.

Playfulness and pedagogical practice are fundamental aspects in the educational context. From a critical perspective, playfulness is used as a tool to promote reflection and social transformation. We will explore how playfulness can be used critically in pedagogical practice, encouraging students' autonomy, critical thinking, and social awareness.



Through playfulness, the student has the opportunity to develop skills and competencies that make him a critical and free citizen. Play, play, and playful expression allow students to learn actively, experiment with different roles, make decisions, solve problems, and collaborate with peers. These experiences contribute to the formation of an individual capable of thinking critically, questioning reality and actively participating in society.

There are numerous ways to integrate playfulness in a critical way into the school environment. One of them is through simulation games that address social and ethical issues. For example, simulation games to challenge children to make immediate decisions about life in society. In addition, the dramatization of real situations are effective ways to promote reflection through playfulness.

Educators play a key role in promoting critical reflection through playfulness. They can do this by creating a learning environment that encourages curiosity and exploration. By introducing playful activities that involve cognitive and ethical challenges, educators encourage students to develop thinking, language and socialization. Oliveira (2022): corroborates by stating

Playfulness is essential for the child, as it helps in the child's formation, in social and physical aspects, enabling development in coordination. In this way, with games and play, the student develops socialization, self-esteem and thinking, among other factors. (COSTA, OLIVEIRA. 2022 sp.)

In addition, by using games, simulations, and role-plays to address relevant and current topics, educators provide students with the opportunity to apply their critical thinking in practice. This helps develop problem-solving, decision-making, and empathy skills.

Playfulness promotes active student engagement, making learning more engaging and memorable. In addition, critical reflection strengthens students' ability to analyze information, understand complex contexts, and make informed decisions. These skills are essential for academic success and for preparing students to face real-world challenges.

This practice also fosters a collaborative learning environment, in which students learn from each other, share ideas, and develop important soft skills.

The toy, or playful activity, allows the child to transcend their usual limits and explore new possibilities. When playing, the child is engaged in meaningful work, in which he develops cognitive, social, and emotional skills in an active and engaged way. "In the toy, the child behaves above his age, above his usual behavior; In toys, the child is always more than himself. The toy is the child's work." Vygotsky (2007).



Considering the above, it is reaffirmed that playfulness is not only a form of entertainment, but a serious and essential work for the integral development of the child. These are just a few of the many benefits of integrating critical playfulness into the school environment. There are many other ways educators can promote teaching tasks through playfulness.

The teaching practice involving playfulness serves as a mediator for the best development of the teacher's work, considering that it will help the student in the acquisition of knowledge, provides interaction, and stimulates cognitive creativity, through playful practice it is also possible to create bonds between student and student and student and teacher. Thus leading the teacher to perform a satisfactory job for both the teacher and the student.

In this sense, Putton, Cruz (2021. sp) states that, "playfulness is very important for children's development, especially when it comes to interactivity, whether between children and adults or with other children." In other words, playful practices must be worked on in an interdisciplinary way, without leaving out any field of education, we can highlight both collective and individual games, as well as those that require physical effort such as dances, such as those that require mental effort such as puzzles and memory games.

Playful practices can be carried out both in the classroom and outdoors with physical activities, running, soccer, in addition to other practices that can be developed according to the activity worked.

Also according to Putton, Cruz (2021)

The teaching-learning process with play offers a healthy and harmonious development. When they play, children become more independent, their visual and auditory sensitivity becomes sharper, they learn to value popular culture, the occurrences of aggressiveness decrease, the imagination improves and with that creativity flows, they balance their emotional intelligence and increase the capacity for mental growth and social adaptation. (PUTTON, CRUZ, 2021. Sp).

It is perceived that playful practices promote several contributions to the development of young children's teaching-learning, thus providing a development not only within the educational scope but as a social being, considering that from playfulness the child will develop rules for social, cultural and religious habits.

When playing, the child engages in an extremely complex psychomotor activity, not only enriching his sensory organization but also structuring his perceptive, cognitive and neuronal organization, jointly elaborating his adaptive motor organization. Thus, it is possible to affirm that through playful practices the child develops several activities, whether



they are simple such as participation and interaction or complex such as the acceptance of rules and imposition of limits.

It is important that the teacher as a mediator plans and elaborates effective playful practices according to the reality of his class, thus seeking to obtain a good development through playfulness and not just play for the sake of playing. It is up to the teacher to analyze each student in his class and develop activities that can be carried out by everyone according to their difficulties and needs.

In this way, it is possible to say that playful practices are indispensable for the teaching of young children, it provides children with a state of satisfaction, well-being, a greater facility to learn what is desired, in short, through teaching practices through playfulness it is possible to achieve a faster and more satisfactory result in relation to the development of children, both psychic, social, cognitive, cultural and motor, among others.

The well-being and development of the child should be the main objective of teaching practices, so it is essential that these practices are well developed respecting the individuality of each one, thus leading the student to a significant and satisfactory level of development for all.

Pedagogical practice requires attention and planning, especially when we talk about teaching practices involving playfulness so that this playfulness as a methodological tool can be inserted in classes in a conscious and responsible way, contributing to children's learning. This is how Nascimento states

The teacher who works with Early Childhood Education needs to develop his work focused on play, be aware of the children's age group, so that each activity worked on enables the teacher to achieve the proposed objectives, in addition to coherent and necessary materials. (LIMA, LIMA AND NASCIMENTO 2015, p,11).

For the author, the relationship between teacher and student can be facilitated by the playful activity, deepening better learning conditions. Because playfulness, in addition to contributing to the child's development, also helps with the creation of bonds between students and teachers.

It is evident that playful activities must be incorporated into pedagogical practices. Through play, the child reinvents himself, giving wings to his imagination, sharpening the curiosity between what he already knows and what is new. The teacher, as a mediator, needs to be attentive to all situations, thus favoring meaningful learning, taking care that the act of playing is not just a pastime. In this sense, it is important and necessary to build strategies that contemplate the integral development of children.

According to Leal (2011):



It is possible to say that playfulness is a pedagogical tool that teachers can use in the classroom as methodological techniques in learning, since through playfulness students will be able to learn in a more pleasurable, concrete and consequently more meaningful way, culminating in a quality education. (LEAL, 2011, p.08).

Playful practices provide better development for children. Therefore, from teaching practices using playfulness, it is possible to develop interaction, socialization, improve the acquisition of knowledge, thus generating a more effective and dynamic development for the teaching and learning of children.

WHAT TEACHERS THINK ABOUT THE USE OF PLAY IN THEIR TEACHING PRACTICE

Next, we will present what teachers think about playfulness in their teaching practice, here we will focus on more significant responses revealed by the analyzed data provided by teachers.

Relationship between playfulness and children's learning	
Subject	Answers
Professor A	Playfulness is a powerful instrument for the teaching-learning process, because in childhood the way the child interprets, knows and operates naturally is playful.
Professor B	It is a pleasurable relationship that contributes to the development of children in the personal, cultural, social aspects, which facilitates the process of building the child's knowledge, with regard to creativity, orality, interaction, logical reasoning, socialization, as well as cognitive, motor, psychomotor development, in addition to stimulating fantasies, imagination, thinking and clarity of ideas.
Professor C	Playfulness facilitates the child's learning and development.

Source: Field research

All teachers who responded to the questionnaire have the same opinion about the importance of playfulness for children's learning. The teachers' opinion was unanimous in affirming the importance of playfulness directly linked to the child's learning, so that it facilitates the process of knowledge construction, awakening the pleasure of learning, interaction and socialization.

Following this thought, we can cite Cardoso (2010, p. 30) who states, "games and games should not serve as simple entertainment, but as activities that develop their learning."

To this end, it is necessary that these games and games are according to the age group or needs of each group of students, with clear objectives and not just playing for the sake of playing. In this way, the teacher can add the pleasure of the students playing or playing to develop their classroom activities in a more pleasurable way, and without their class becoming tiring and boring.

The relationship between playfulness and the emotional development of its students

Subject	Answers
Professor A	There are several benefits, they improve the relationship with each other, concentration, joy during activities and greater interest in learning.
Professor B	Playful activities are essential for the development of children's learning, through these activities it is preserved that children are more motivated to learn. They contribute a lot to the improvement of learning and consequently to their emotional development. Emotions are part of children's daily lives, when playing, children get emotional. The key is that this has a positive impact on the child's learning process.
Professor C	Playfulness promotes in early childhood education a practice of knowledge of the world, thought and meaning, so it is a fundamental tool for the emotional development of children.
Professor C	Playfulness facilitates the child's learning and development.

Source: Field research

Regarding the benefits of playful practices for the emotional development of students, the research points out that playfulness is directly related to the child's development in all aspects, psychic, emotional and sociocultural.

And in this regard, Cardoso (2010) indicates that:

Through play, I believe that it is possible [...] to develop in the child motor coordination, cooperation among their peers, expressive and understanding language, socialization and especially cultural values. (CARDOSO, 2010. n.p.).

Thus, it is possible to affirm the importance of playful practices in early childhood education, relating them to the emotional, psychic and sociocultural development of children. Thus, playful practices cannot be left out of the school planning of early childhood education teachers.

It is from well-developed practices with defined objectives, in different environments, that it is possible to stimulate students, which will lead to better development and self-knowledge, enabling a total development of the child so that he becomes autonomous from childhood.

Teaching intervention in the case of students who refuse to participate in playful activities

Subject	Answers
Professor A	It is necessary to investigate the reasons that lead the student to cross his arms in front of a certain activity, maintain dialogue, promoting interest in the importance of the activity for his learning, always looking for the best way to help.
Professor B	Talk to the child, find out why he does not want to participate; respect the child's decision at that moment; promote actions with classmates to integrate him in the activity; and if he is still reluctant in the other activities, try to talk to the child's parents, to ask for help from the parents, explain the importance of playful activities in early childhood education.
Professor C	Investigate the reasons why you don't want to participate

Source: Field research



The research points to the interventions that should be carried out in order to investigate the reasons for non-participation in classroom activities. Where at first a dialogue with the student is suggested, seeking to understand their reasons for rejecting the activities and, if necessary, talking to the family.

However, it is important to emphasize that the student will hardly deprive himself of playful activities, playfulness is part of the child's daily life and when proposed by the teacher in the school environment, it becomes even more important and conducive to his development.

In this sense, Carvalho (2021) states that:

Playing has always been present in children's lives, even if in different forms and expressions. This and all the linked elements, such as play, toy and game, are directly related to the child and the individual as a whole. (CARVALHO, 2021, p. 16).

In this way, it is unlikely that the student will fail to participate in playful activities, because play is part of being a child, at the time of play the child develops even more in all senses, emotional, social, cultural, among others.

Therefore, playful practice is indispensable when it comes to young children, because from it the student will expose his fears and desires, with playful practices in the classroom the student will express himself better without fear of making mistakes, because with playfulness it is like this, the student develops his activity many times without even realizing how pleasurable it is. And this is one of the reasons why Students do not stop doing this type of activity.

Frequency with which they carry out playful activities in the classroom

Subject	Answers
Professor A	3 times a week
Professor B	Every day.
Professor C	3 times

Source: Field research

According to the research, playfulness is present in the daily school routine and this shows that the pedagogical practices of the teachers are being consistent with the needs of the students.

Playfulness brings moments that will never be forgotten, with satisfactory results. Playful activities during the school period make students better develop their skills.

According to Lima, Nascimento (2020)

For many psychologists, pedagogues and psychopedagogues, the work carried out with play in the classroom allows the development of relevant aspects in each

student that are important for personal and intellectual life, such as, for example, allowing the development of sociability, multiple intelligences and creativity. (LIMA, NASCIMENTO, 2020. p, 7).

Therefore, playfulness becomes of fundamental importance in the school routine, as it transmits satisfactory experiences for the interaction and development of students. It enables moments of interaction and satisfaction in which students feel full, fulfilled, with the desire to return to school the next day, that is, early childhood education and playfulness need to be together so that a positive result can be obtained in relation to the development of students' teaching and learning.

Materials available for carrying out playful activities

Subject	Answers
Professor A	Yes. games available at school and material made by teachers.
Professor B	There are some materials, but most of the time the teacher needs to make or buy these materials.
Professor C	Sim, we make

Source: Field research

According to the research, there are several materials in the school, but teachers sometimes also produce complementary materials, which meet the needs of teachers and students. Making materials together with the students is very important because it will stimulate the creativity of the students.

For Silva (2017. p, 10) the construction of toys allows the child to experience the experience of producing, feeling useful, capable of imagining and recreating through play, alone or with colleagues.

For the students, these are unforgettable moments in their school life, considering that they will be their first experiences of making toys in the classroom, being a satisfactory experience, which everyone feels at the time of making these materials.

In this sense, nothing better than the teacher bringing these materials to be made together with the students, this will even serve as an incentive for the students to carry out the activities.

Difficulties encountered to develop the activities

Subject	Answers
Professor A	No, they are activities designed according to the needs of the students.
Professor B	Not presenting. What is often difficult is the material that is not available and the inadequate space in the room, which are too small to develop such activities.
Professor C	No

Source: Field research



The research points out that teachers do not find it difficult to carry out playful activities, as they draw the attention of students who automatically want to participate.

In this sense, Dantas, Costa, Silva, Caraúbas (2019) states that:

Playing is an important construction tool, it is through this act that the child reproduces his daily life. Playing promotes the child's learning process, in addition to contributing to the construction of reflection on autonomy and creativity by establishing a close relationship with learning. (DANTAS, COSTA, SILVA, CARAÚBAS, 2019, p.4).

Therefore, it is possible to reaffirm the importance of working with playful activities in early childhood education, they enable students to build their own identity with learning through games that draw their attention, that give them a sense of well-being, and pleasure to learn.

By using playful practices, the teacher will possibly not find difficulties in developing them, because when playful activities are brought to the classroom, the child's learning process becomes more pleasurable and everyone wants to participate. After all, what does the child like most if not playing, and nothing better than learning by playing.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Playfulness provides a more pleasurable learning approach, essential for the educational process of children. When considering the relevance of playfulness in the development of students, we can say that it plays a significant role in the teaching and learning process.

The results revealed the importance of playfulness in the school routine, through the teaching practice of teachers for the educational development of children, favoring both the teaching process and the learning by children, through playful approaches.

Pedagogical practices and playfulness, when incorporated into early childhood education, play a fundamental role in the integral development of children. The teachers researched in this study affirm the importance of pedagogical practices based on playfulness, however, there are still professionals who do not adopt such practices and even disregard them in their teaching action.

It is also important to emphasize that pedagogical practices based on playfulness require a commitment on the part of educators to stay up-to-date on best practices and pedagogical approaches, as well as to reflect on their own practice and adapt it to the needs and interests of children.

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