


LITERATURE AND STORYTELLING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: STRATEGIES TO STIMULATE READING

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ABSTRACT

Storytelling is a fundamental pedagogical resource in Early Childhood Education, stimulating imagination, curiosity and inserting the child in the universe of reading and writing in a playful and pleasurable way. This study analyzes the importance and contributions of children's literature and storytelling in Early Childhood Education classes of a public school in Parnaíba-PI. In the theoretical framework, the research was based on authors such as Abramovich (1995), Cademartori (2010), Góes (2010), Frantz (2011), among others. A qualitative approach was used, based on the studies of André and Lüdke (1986) and Bogdan and Biklen (1994). Through the data collected and the respective analysis, the results show that storytelling significantly favors the insertion of the child in the world of reading and writing. The child expresses his opinions about the story, takes a critical position and recounts what he heard according to his own interpretation. In addition, the study highlights the teachers' effort to create pleasurable experiences with reading, such as the reading corner, an essential space for children's autonomous contact with children's literature, consolidating the taste for reading from an early age.

Keywords: Children's Literature. Early Childhood Education. Storytelling.

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INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education plays a role of great importance in society. As established in the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDBEN) No. 9,394, of 1996, in its Section II, article 29, "Early Childhood Education, the first stage of basic education, aims at the integral development of children up to 5 (five) years of age, in their physical, psychological, intellectual and social aspects, complementing the action of the family and the community". In this context, by highlighting that the main objective of this stage is to ensure the integral development of the child, it becomes essential to stimulate the formation of the reading child so that he or she becomes a critical, reflective and autonomous citizen.

But who is this child? According to article 4 of Resolution No. 5, of December 17, 2009, of the National Council of Education, which establishes the National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education, it emphasizes that:

[...] It is a historical and rights-based subject who, in the interactions, relationships and daily practices he experiences, builds his personal and collective identity, plays, imagines, fantasizes, desires, learns, observes, experiments, narrates, questions and constructs meanings about nature and society, producing culture. (BRASIL, 2009, p. 1).

Thus, it is understood that the child, in daily practice and in interaction with other individuals, builds his identity, with imagination and fantasies being integral parts of this process. In this context, the formation of the reader is fundamental for child development, and Early Childhood Education is configured as a privileged space, where the teacher has the opportunity to awaken interest in reading. Even if the children do not know how to read, as the teacher develops, on a daily basis, the reading of stories and promotes contact with children's books, they become interested in handling them, as well as trying to unravel the written content. It is at this point that children's literature plays an essential role in the process. Abramovich (1995) emphasizes the importance of reading stories to children:

It is being able to smile, laugh, laugh with the situations experienced by the characters, with the idea of the story or with the way of writing of an author and, then, being able to be a little accomplice in this moment of humor, of play, of fun [...]. It is also to arouse the imagination, it is to have curiosity answered [...]. (ABRAMOVICH, 1995, p. 20).

Based on the author's words, it is observed that, when developing reading practices with children, the teacher involves them in a different way in the universe of writing and reading, as the children's imagination leads them to insert themselves in the story, experiencing the experiences of the characters throughout the narrative. In this playful process, the child questions, positions himself and makes new discoveries. Thus, the relevance of storytelling in Early Childhood Education is highlighted, since it is an essential resource for stimulating children's development.

Therefore, the objective of this research was to analyze the importance and contributions of children's literature and storytelling in Early Childhood Education. Specifically, it sought to understand how teachers highlight the relevance of children's literature, how they perceive the relationship between Early Childhood Education and storytelling, in addition to identifying the strategies they use in this process.

In the theoretical framework, the research was based on authors such as Abramovich (1995), Cademartori (2010), Frantz (2011), among others. A qualitative approach was chosen, based on the studies of André and Lüdke (1986) and Bogdan and Biklen (1994).

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND ITS CONTRIBUTIONS

Through emotions, playfulness, imagination and fantasies, the child apprehends and understands reality, attributing a meaning to it. In a globalized world, in which the media exerts a massifying power, it is extremely important that parents and teachers act together to awaken, from Early Childhood Education, the desire for reading in children. In this way, as they mature, they will be able to become adults capable of carrying out a critical and reflective reading of what is presented to them.

Children's literature represents a path that leads children to the universe of reading in a playful and engaging way, because, through its magical character, it captures the attention of young readers. However, many times, the school has not been able to offer this charming and playful aspect of children's literature. Reading is not presented to the child as a beautiful and pleasurable activity, resulting in a poor formation of readers. Consequently, adults will be formed who do not experience the pleasure of reading or recognize it as an indispensable social practice. Thus, it is up to teachers to promote playful activities and develop diversified methodologies in their classes that awaken in students the pleasure of reading.

In the mid-1980s, the period in which the first edition of "What is children's literature" was published, the literary genre aimed at children began to be the subject of discussions and to gain value in the academic community. During this period, the Ministry of Education distributed literary books to children in the country's schools and libraries. This pioneering initiative, called the Reading Rooms Program, was developed by the Student Assistance Foundation. (CADEMARTORI, 2010).

Coelho (1986) argues that literature is an art form and a creative act that, through the word, creates an autonomous, realistic or fantastic universe, where beings, objects, facts, time and space, although they resemble what is recognized in the concrete world, are transformed into language and assume a different dimension: they belong to the universe of fiction.

Children's literature plays a fundamental role in various aspects of education, especially in the formation of students who enjoy reading, as it encourages them to read through the attraction and beauty that are present in literary texts. Cunha (1974, p. 45) states that "children's literature influences and wants to influence all aspects of the student's education. Thus, in the three vital areas of man (activity, intelligence and affectivity) in which education must promote changes in behavior, children's literature has means of acting".

According to Frantz (2011), the history of Brazilian children's literature begins with Monteiro Lobato, who was the first author to write stories of literary quality aimed at Brazilian children. Previously, literature aimed at children was mainly composed of classic works of European literature, translated or adapted into Portuguese. In 1921, Monteiro Lobato published the work that inaugurated Brazilian children's literature, entitled *The Girl with the Snub Little Nose*.

According to Carvalho (1989), literature is one of the noblest achievements of humanity, representing the conquest of man himself. It provides the knowledge, transmission and communication of the adventure of being. Only this reality can offer literature its true dimension and allow man the certainty of being. Zilberman (1994, p. 22) argues that:

Literature synthesizes, through the resources of fiction, a reality, which has wide points of contact with what the reader lives daily. Thus, no matter how exacerbated the writer's fantasy or how distant and different the circumstances of space and time within which a work is conceived, the symptom of its survival is the fact that it

continues to communicate with the current recipient, because it still speaks of its world, with its difficulties and solutions, thus helping him to get to know him better.

It is essential that each child develops a taste and pleasure for reading, since this is an essential dimension in the life of any human being. Reading exercises the mind and sharpens the intelligence. According to Moric (1974), literature is an art form, but it also represents a means of educating the young reader, developing their aesthetic perception of the world, refining their qualities, revealing their intelligence, their worldview, their ideas and their taste. In the words of Góes (2010, p. 47):

The development of reading among children will result in a progressive enrichment in the field of moral values, language culture and in the rational field. The habit of reading will help in the formation of opinion and a critical spirit, especially the reading of books that form the critical spirit, while the repetition of stereotypes impoverishes.

Literary texts are fundamental for children, as they stimulate their fantasies, emotions and intellect, presenting themselves with an attractive aesthetic and involving playfulness. In the educational scenario, literary texts acquire a unique and singular function: they combine information with the pleasure of play, involving reason and emotions in an integrative activity, conquering the reader as a whole and not only in his cognitive sphere.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STORYTELLING

Even before entering the school environment, the child already has some knowledge about the world of writing, whether through advertisements he sees on television, signs on the streets, magazines, newspapers, or books used by the family, among other means. Thus, it is extremely relevant that the child is encouraged to read from an early age. Thus, we emphasize the importance of reading practices carried out at home, because when the child grows up in an environment where he sees, on a daily basis, people who enjoy reading, he tends to develop greater interest in the act of reading.

It is at school that this stimulus should be intensified, as many children do not have the opportunity to live with constant reading and writing practices, which are essential for them to become critical, reflective and autonomous readers and writers. Resolution No. 5, of December 17, 2009, in its article 9, explains that the pedagogical practices that make up

the curricular proposal of Early Childhood Education must have interactions and play as guiding axes. Specifically, in items II and III, it is emphasized that experiences must be guaranteed that:

II - Favor the immersion of children in different languages and their progressive mastery of various genres and forms of expression: gestural, verbal, plastic, dramatic and musical; III - Enable children to experience narratives, appreciation and interaction with oral and written language, and contact with different oral and written textual supports and genres. (BRASIL, 2009, p. 4).

In this sense, to stimulate children's contact with oral and written language, the relevance of storytelling is highlighted. This practice reveals itself as an important resource, which can and should be widely explored, especially in Early Childhood Education, since it promotes immersion in different languages and provides other essential experiences. Parallel to the construction of various fundamental knowledge for child development, the child is inserted into the world of reading and writing in a playful and pleasurable way.

It is in this context that children's literature comes into action, with its playful importance. The teacher, when working with storytelling, stimulates the child's imagination, leading him to travel through the world of fantasy. According to Frantz (2011, p. 20), "we cannot forget that the child in this age group lives the phase of playful thinking and magical thinking. Playing, fantasizing and questioning are ways that this child uses to know and explore his reality, building his knowledge." Children's stories influence the learning process of children, contributing significantly to their development and the construction of their personality. Faced with the situations presented in the stories, the child is confronted with moral and ethical dilemmas, and needs to take a stand in front of them.

Thus, it is essential to implement reading practices in the classroom that promote children's development. The teacher should select children's books that contribute effectively to this goal, as this will help with initial learning related to reading and writing. As Cademartori (2010, p. 63) emphasizes:

[...] Books and reading, presented to children in their early years, can offer them a seductive reason for the effort undertaken in the literacy process. The role of literature in the early years is fundamental for establishing an active relationship between speaker and language, which does not occur without the involvement of affection and emotions.

In addition, from the beginning of schooling, children need to actively participate in reading and writing acts. Consequently, as the child listens to the reading of stories, he progressively develops his linguistic repertoire and appropriates the characteristics of oral and written language.

Therefore, Early Childhood Education, as a fundamental stage of development, should involve students in practices that lead them to understand writing and reading, facilitating the process of literacy and literacy.

METHODOLOGY

Storytelling is an important resource to be used in Early Childhood Education. In view of this, this study seeks to analyze the relevance and contributions of children's literature and storytelling in this stage of basic education, based on the observation of two classes, kindergarten IV and V, in a public school in the city of Parnaíba-PI. Qualitative research was chosen, characterized as an attempt to understand in detail the meanings and situational characteristics presented by the subjects involved (RICHARDSON, 2009).

In this sense, Bogdan and Biklen (1999) point out that this type of research works with the natural environment and involves obtaining descriptive data from the researcher's direct contact with the situation studied. The qualitative research of the descriptive type was chosen, which seeks to explain and describe the investigated object faithfully. According to Oliveira (2010), this type of research offers a detailed description of the way the phenomenon is presented, characterized by a deep analysis of the observed reality.

The following instruments were used for data collection: semi-structured interviews, observation and questionnaire. The semi-structured interview was chosen because it allows a more meaningful dialogue with the interviewee, enabling the spontaneous exposure of knowledge and opinions on the topic in question. According to André and Lüdke (1986), the interview creates a relationship of interaction between the researcher and the interviewee, allowing an atmosphere of reciprocal influence. Although it follows a basic outline, the semi-structured interview allows for the adaptation of questions as needed.

With regard to the questionnaire, Oliveira (2010, p. 83) explains that it is "[...] a technique for obtaining information about feelings, beliefs, expectations, situations experienced and about any and all data that the researcher wishes to record to meet the objectives of his study". The questionnaires applied to the teachers were elaborated with open questions, aiming to obtain more subjective information.

The observation technique was also used in data collection, and was considered by André and Lüdke (1986) to be the main instrument of investigation. Observation allows the researcher to resort to personal knowledge and experiences to assist in the understanding and interpretation of the phenomenon studied. Thus, through observation, it is possible to verify and analyze the object of investigation in practice.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research was carried out in a municipal school in the city of Parnaíba, Piauí, which offers Early Childhood Education. The analysis was conducted in two classes, kindergarten IV and V, at the Ciranda school. The two teachers who work in these classes were assigned as Lily and Sunflower. Lírio has a degree in Pedagogy from the Federal University of Piauí and has nine years of experience in Early Childhood Education. Girassol, also with a degree in Pedagogy from the State University of Piauí, has been working for five years.

At the beginning of the research at the Ciranda school, the performance of teachers Lírio and Girassol was observed, who, with the objective of encouraging the taste for children's stories, organized a presentation of the play "The Three Little Pigs". Together with other teachers, they prepared the scenario, built the characters' houses and characterized themselves as the characters in the story. The children, gathered in the courtyard, followed the staging carefully and had fun with the entrance of the "villain", the big bad wolf.

The teachers reported that these moments are fundamental to encourage the taste for children's books and awaken the desire to learn to read. Both highlighted the importance of storytelling in Early Childhood Education, stating that this stage is ideal for developing activities that provide good results. Lírio commented:

Early Childhood Education is the most important phase in a child's life, as it is there that he is graduating. So, at this stage, it is time for the teacher to explore all the potential of this child. And when we talk about the importance of storytelling, it's a moment we can't ignore. It is impossible for a teacher to develop a work in Early Childhood Education without using this resource. I use children's storybooks a lot, I take a lot of books to do storytelling. So, there is always that moment of storytelling, it is the moment they like the most. When I say: 'I'm going to tell you a story', the children cheer. It is wonderful to see their joy. I always try to tell the story in a different way. I've already taken a story with very large illustrations. I made sure to print the images; Then I would tell and show the figures. They liked it very much.

Another strategy to do this storytelling is to take puppets. My classroom is very large, so I put a rug, and every time, at the time of the story, the children sit there. They simply love. (PROFESSOR LILY).

The analysis of teacher Lírio's speech shows how storytelling is an essential pedagogical resource in Early Childhood Education, directly impacting the cognitive, emotional and social development of children. By using storytelling in a creative and engaging way, Lírio not only arouses the interest and enchantment of students, but also promotes the development of fundamental skills, such as imagination, problem-solving, and the ability to make decisions based on the situations experienced in the narratives.

By highlighting the positive reaction of children to the announcement of a new story, Lírio's account shows how storytelling acts as a moment of pleasure and expectation in the school routine, creating an atmosphere conducive to playful learning. Children are thrilled to know that they will participate in this activity, which reveals the importance of creating environments and learning experiences that are fun and engaging, especially at this stage of training. The use of visual elements, such as large illustrations and puppets, reinforces the interactive character of storytelling, further stimulating children's engagement and enhancing learning.

Another point highlighted by the teacher is the physical interaction with the space: by organizing a special carpet for the moment of storytelling, she creates an environment that symbolizes the importance of that moment, establishing a kind of playful ritual that children value and look forward to. This type of pedagogical strategy goes beyond the simple reading of a story, transforming the moment into a sensory and social experience, where children can get together, share the space and experience the stories together. This socialization also contributes to the development of socio-emotional skills, such as cooperation, empathy, and communication.

Lírio's speech also highlights the role of storytelling as a bridge between the school and the family environment. When exposed to this practice at school, children tend to reproduce what they experience, whether telling stories to their family and friends or asking adults to read to them. Even without knowing how to read yet, the simple act of retelling the story based on the images they have seen or the elements they have heard demonstrates the significant impact that this resource has on the development of emerging literacy. This reproduction of what is experienced at home school promotes the affective bond with books

and reinforces the importance of encouraging reading in the family environment, creating continuity in the educational process.

The involvement of children in storytelling also favors the expansion of their linguistic and cultural repertoire, since they come into contact with new words, expressions and concepts through narratives. This contributes to building a solid foundation for literacy and literacy, as well as stimulating intellectual curiosity. Children's literature, in this context, not only introduces children to the universe of reading, but also acts as a vehicle for the transmission of values, culture and ethics, essential aspects for the integral formation of the individual.

The diversity of strategies used by Lírio highlights the importance of varying the methods of presenting the stories to maintain the interest of the children and stimulate different forms of learning. By including visual and tactile aids, the teacher caters to the diverse forms of learning and the specific needs of children, providing a rich and inclusive experience. This multidimensional approach reinforces the idea that the teacher in Early Childhood Education must be creative and flexible, adapting methodologies to meet the interests and development of children more broadly.

Thus, storytelling presents itself as a versatile and powerful pedagogical tool, which goes beyond the mere narration of texts and becomes an instrument for the integral development of the child. Through it, children not only learn to like books, but also develop essential skills for life in society, such as critical reflection, the ability to solve problems, and the construction of a broader and more complex worldview.

Girassol also emphasized the importance of storytelling in his pedagogical work, stating:

I love working with Early Childhood Education, but I also know that it is a lot of responsibility for the teacher, because it is the moment when we must stimulate the integral development of this child. So, if he does not have a well-developed Early Childhood Education, he will have problems in the first year and so on. Our responsibility is great. When people ask me about which activities I give more emphasis to, I immediately mention storytelling, because this moment is something that cannot be missed in my classes. I always like to read a story during the class or at the end. What I can't do is stop doing the telling, because the children are euphoric for this moment. As a strategy for storytelling, I always like to wear my storyteller's hat. When I say I'm going to put on the hat, the children already know that I'm going to tell a story. I also use the magic box, from which I take the

characters from the stories and, as if by magic, they appear. Using storytelling is very important to encourage children to read, after all, our goal should be to enable these children to learn to read. (PROFESSOR GIRASSOL).

Girassol's speech reinforces the role of storytelling as a stimulus to reading, highlighting the importance of teachers promoting children's daily contact with children's literature.

The reading corner, where the books are available, was mentioned by both teachers as an essential space in the Early Childhood Education classrooms. Teacher Lírio highlighted the importance of this environment as a place of freedom and choice for children, where they can interact with books autonomously and spontaneously, even if they do not yet know how to read. This practice is fundamental for the construction of future readers, since early contact with books, in a playful and pleasant environment, stimulates interest in reading and creates a positive relationship with literature. By emphasizing the importance of starting the stimulation in early childhood, Lírio warns of the challenge of encouraging the habit of reading in more advanced stages if this practice is not worked on from an early age:

The reading corner cannot be missing in an Early Childhood Education room. I gather several books, and the children, every day, have a moment to enjoy this environment that is theirs, that was made for them. We must work with the construction of the child reader. When we do storytelling, we work with children's literature, and this literature is very important. In the reading corner, there are several books, and the children go there to choose the books they want to read. Even if they don't know how to read, this is the right time to encourage them. Because, if we don't stimulate it now, then it becomes much more difficult. (PROFESSOR LILY).

Creating a pleasant and accessible environment, where children can explore books autonomously, is essential to encourage a taste for reading. Girassol also highlighted the importance of this space in his living room:

The reading corner is the place where the child becomes a person who enjoys reading. We see different realities here at school. Many parents do not encourage this at home, but there are also those who help a lot. So, we have to reinforce this taste for reading here at school. In my classroom, the reading corner occupies a

prominent place. I made the space very pleasant, which makes the children want to be there every day. When the child grows up with the habit of reading, he becomes a different, critical person, who knows how to interpret and will not have difficulties in society, because this was well worked on in Early Childhood Education. It is exciting for me, as a teacher, to see my students using the books. They pretend they can read; When they pick up the books, they show the pictures and tell the story with such joy, as if they were really reading. But, in fact, they are reading, through the images, and they say what is happening in history. That's why I love working with children's literature and storytelling, which are fundamental resources.
(PROFESSOR GIRASSOL).

Professor Girassol's speech reveals a deep understanding of the role of children's literature in the formation of critical and reflective readers, capable of facing the challenges of society in a more conscious way. The reading corner, which she highlights as a prominent space in her classroom, is not just a physical place, but an environment for the construction of rich and meaningful experiences for children. There, they connect with books in a pleasant and natural way, which reinforces the development of the reading habit from the first years of life.

This welcoming and attractive environment plays an important role in early childhood education, especially for those children who are not encouraged to read at home. The teacher observes that many parents do not promote reading, which makes the school an even more vital space for contact with literature. Girassol's speech also points to the need for the school not only to introduce reading, but also to reinforce the taste for reading continuously, being a regular and engaging practice in the school routine. This perception emphasizes the school as a central space in the formation of readers and in the development of essential skills for life.

In addition, the report about children "pretending" that they read by manipulating books and telling stories from images reveals an important stage in the literacy process. Even if they do not yet know how to decode words, these children are developing emerging literacy skills, such as understanding the plot, constructing meaning from images, and connecting emotionally with stories. This behavior shows that reading goes beyond the decoding of symbols; It is a cultural practice that involves imagination, interpretation and social interaction.

By creating a playful and stimulating space, Sunflower is fostering an environment that validates children's natural curiosity and their willingness to explore the world of stories.

The reading corner, therefore, becomes a powerful pedagogical tool, capable of awakening the desire for reading, in addition to contributing significantly to the development of linguistic and cognitive skills.

Children's literature, in this context, acts as a mediator between the world of fantasy and reality, allowing the child to develop their critical and interpretive capacity. Through storytelling and access to books, children learn to construct narratives, interpret what they see and hear, and expand their vocabulary and understanding of the world. What Girassol describes as the joy of children when interacting with books reflects the aesthetic pleasure that literature can provide, and it is this pleasure that often serves as a basis for the formation of assiduous readers and, consequently, more critical and conscious citizens.

Thus, the teacher's responsibility in this process goes beyond the simple introduction of books and stories; It is up to him to create environments and practices that stimulate children's engagement with reading in a meaningful way. The role of the teacher is therefore essential to ensure that children's literature is more than an educational resource, but an integral part of the child's integral development, promoting both academic learning and emotional and social development.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze the importance and contributions of storytelling in Early Childhood Education, seeking to understand how teachers emphasize the relevance of children's literature and the strategies they use. From the data collected and the analysis carried out, it was found that storytelling is an essential resource to awaken interest in reading and contribute significantly to the literacy process. This process, which begins in the first years of schooling, favors the insertion of the child in the world of reading and writing in a playful and pleasurable way.

The statements of teachers Lírio and Girassol indicate that both value and emphasize storytelling, recognizing its fundamental role in the formation of child readers. The strategies used by them, such as the reading corner and creative storytelling, stand out as practices that involve and motivate children, contributing to the formation of critical, reflective and autonomous citizens.

In addition, storytelling enables the construction of affective bonds between children and educators, creating a welcoming environment that favors emotional expression and socialization. This aspect is essential, as children's literature not only enriches vocabulary

and comprehension skills, but also develops empathy, a fundamental skill for living in society.

Narratives told in a dynamic and interactive way promote imagination and creativity, allowing children to explore different perspectives and expand their cultural repertoire. By engaging with stories, they also learn about values, diversity, and respect for differences, aspects that are fundamental in the formation of a more just and egalitarian society.

Another point to be highlighted is the importance of continuous training of educators, which should include training in storytelling methodologies. Investing in teacher training is essential for them to feel safe and creative when introducing children's literature into their pedagogical practices. Thus, it will be possible to ensure that storytelling becomes a regular and enriching component in everyday school life, positively impacting the children's learning experience.

In short, storytelling in Early Childhood Education is not just a recreational activity, but a rich pedagogical practice that plays a fundamental role in the integral development of the child. The strategies used by the teachers, combined with the valorization of children's literature, promote not only the encouragement of literacy and literacy, but also the formation of critical, creative individuals who are sensitive to social issues.

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