

## Contributions of toys and games in early childhood education



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### ABSTRACT

Games and games have a creative, imaginary, innovative and socializing character and therefore gain more and more space in the school routine, especially in Early Childhood Education.

Playfulness is, therefore, a means of promoting the integral development of the child, as he seeks to understand the world that surrounds him and builds his relationship with knowledge in a unique and participatory way. The present research, essentially bibliographic, aims to investigate the contributions of play in the stage of Early Childhood Education, without losing sight of Piaget's ideas. To this end, we consulted books and scientific articles by authors who discuss the subject, such as: Kishimoto (2001), Sneyders (1996), Santos (2006), Brougère (2010), among others. The results point to the importance of pedagogical practices involving play, from the perspective of a coherent action on the part of teachers, to fulfill their function in favor of the integral formation of the student, in view of the rights of learning.

**Keywords:** Playfulness, Pedagogical practices, Jokes, Early Childhood Education.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Quality education must be established with practices that can enable a new way of managing educational institutions. From this perspective, establishing a study addressing the theme of Early Childhood Education and playful activities, games and games as teaching tools represents an action of extreme relevance for professional training, as well as for the development of a practice that seeks theoretical and methodological support for Early Childhood Education teachers with suggestions for actions agreed on ethical values. moral and affective through children's games and games.

Intentionally reflecting on how the effects are solidified from the construction of a holistic suggestion of play, grounding this moment as an element of procedure and aggregation with the world in which we are inserted is more than thinking, that is, it is contributing to the training of a professional whose practices are increasingly important in the learning process in Early Childhood Education.

This research addresses contexts related to playfulness in the scope of Early Childhood Education, with emphasis on play and aims to investigate the contributions of playfulness in the Early Childhood Education stage, without losing sight of Jean Piaget's ideas. Educational practice only



makes sense if it enables the understanding of the differential that in teaching there is no transfer of knowledge, but the creation of possibilities for its production or construction. It is worth understanding, then, that the school has become a place in which there is an urgent need for work focused on social practice and, in addition, an environment that must first of all be attractive and stimulating for students, in order to promote meaningful learning.

In this way, games and games in the school routine, especially in Early Childhood Education, have been gaining more space, since they have a creative, imaginary, innovative and socializing character. Playfulness is, therefore, a means of promoting the integral development of the child, as he seeks to understand the world that surrounds him and builds his relationship with knowledge in a unique and participatory way.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

This article is an excerpt from a master's research in which a study was carried out on the ludic in Early Childhood Education, between reality and what is recommended by the National Common Curricular Base – BNCC. This qualitative study had the data collected through a structured interview, after approval by the Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Mato Grosso, Araguaia Campus - UFMT, located at Avenida Senador Valdon Varjão, N° 6390 - Araguaia University Campus - Unit II, ICBS, Block 25 - Block 48 - Room n° 06, with the Certificate of Presentation of Ethical Appreciation - CAEE No. 69784323.5.0000.5587.

## **3 PLAYFULNESS IN THE CONTEXT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

When thinking about education, it is known that its main objective is to form critical and creative people who are able to interact satisfactorily in society and who can also build knowledge, acting actively in their environment. For this reason, it is essential that children learn from a very early age to discover and overcome challenges (SANTOS, 2016).

From this perspective, it is valid to consider that play is a fundamental resource for the development of preschool children, since through it it is possible to improve affection, motor skills, language, perception, memory and other important functions. Play favors the child's affective balance and contributes to the process of appropriation of social signs. It creates conditions for a significant transformation of children's consciousness, by demanding from children more complex forms of relationship with the world.

Moraes and Araújo (2019) contribute to this discussion, showing that the school, by valuing playfulness, allows a good formation of concepts of the world and society, being able to work with affectivity, socialization, creativity. Through play and games, the child learns to deal with the world around him, forms his personality, deals with various feelings and achieves a healthy and harmonious



development. This increases their independence and visual and auditory sensitivity, getting in touch with the culture and developing motor skills. There are several benefits of using playfulness at school, so it is necessary to pay attention to these aspects so that the student can exercise their imagination, improve their emotional intelligence and favor their integration.

Santos (2016) makes it clear that playfulness consists of satisfying the child through the real and the concrete, leading him to construct and reconstruct contexts and situations, interact, think, reflect, make decisions and, consequently, develop integrally.

The Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education No. 9,394/96 explains that Early Childhood Education will be offered in daycare centers or equivalent entities for children up to three years of age; preschools, for children aged four to five. In the same direction, the National Curriculum Reference for Early Childhood Education points out the guidelines that should guide this stage of teaching. .

According to these documents, the indication of play as one of the priorities for the development of children in this age group is visible. Article 4 of the National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education states that:

The pedagogical proposals of Early Childhood Education should consider that the child, the center of curriculum planning, is a historical subject with rights who, in the interactions, relationships and daily practices he experiences, constructs 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. 10).

Some items of the new LDB text were already described in the Curricular Guidelines for Early Childhood Education, including the discussion on ways to evaluate the stage. One of them is the one that determines the issuance of documentation that allows attesting to the child's development and learning processes.

Currently, with the change of several paradigms in education, especially in the scope of Early Childhood Education, the practice of playful activities is strengthened every day and provokes stimuli in the child so that teaching and playing are inserted in educational projects, having the intention and awareness that the result of this action is a more significant child learning.

According to Kishimoto (2010), the word playfulness has its origin in the Latin word "ludus", which means "game". If its origin were to be confined, the term ludic would be referring only to play, to play, to spontaneous movement, but it came to be recognized as an essentially psycho-physiological trait, that is, a basic need of the personality of the body and mind in human behavior.

Sneyders (1996, p.36) states that [...] "To educate is to go towards joy." Playful techniques make the child learn with pleasure, joy and playful education is not a pastime or a diversion. In early childhood education, playful activities contribute to children's learning, as they enable interaction, enable the development of imagination, creativity, as well as motor and reasoning skills.



In this way, it is possible to understand that play as a child's language is capable of keeping the child in contact with the imaginary world, that is, the little ones are able to imitate reality in a pleasurable way. In this scenario, it is observed that each game plays an important role in the acquisition of new learning and discoveries, in addition to constituting a unique and privileged moment for new interactions.

The RCNEI - National Curriculum References for Early Childhood Education (1998), point out the importance of keeping the child in contact with the games of other times, especially with regard to the rules and types of toys used. Such an adult procedure enables the recovery of children's culture, in addition to contributing to the integral development of children.

Moments of play should be permanent activities in which children can also be in contact with themes related to the social and natural world. The teacher will be able to teach the children games and games from other times, proposing research with family members and other people in the community and/or in books and magazines. For the child, it is interesting to know the rules of the games of other times, to observe what has changed in relation to the current rules, to know what the toys were made of, etc. (BRASIL, 1998, p. 45).

For Kishimoto (2010, p. 83), there is a difference between the toy and the pedagogical material based on the nature of the objectives of the educational action, presenting his interest in the pedagogical game, when he states that by allowing the manifestation of the child's imagination, through intentionally arranged symbolic objects, the pedagogical function subsidizes the integral development of the child. In this sense, any game used at school, as long as it respects the nature of the playful act, has an educational character and can also be given the general name of educational game.

It is for all these reasons that playfulness is a human need, especially for children and their development, and cannot be seen only as fun, but as learning. The personal development that playfulness provides associated with social and cultural factors contributes to good physical, cognitive, affective, emotional and mental health, facilitating the process of socialization, communication, construction of knowledge, as well as a full and integral development of children, individuals involved in the teaching-learning process.

For the child, games help develop language, thinking, socialization, initiative, and self-esteem. It prepares them to be citizens capable of facing challenges and participating in the construction of a better world. Therefore, it is suitable to be used as a tool for school learning in all areas of knowledge.

Also according to Kishimoto (2010), it was in the mid-1930s that educational games began to be inserted in children's institutions, the meaning of play was considered as a manifestation of children's interests and needs and not just as a distraction. The child's education was made possible through the toys and games he played.

On the other hand, it is necessary to consider what Negrini proposes (apud Costa, 2006 p.104): [...] "The conception that play is reserved for children is nothing more than the loss of human



naturalness, imposed by man on man himself, since history tells us - the adult used to devote many hours to leisure."

If we consider that the preschool child learns intuitively, acquires spontaneous notions, in interactive processes, involving the whole human being with their cognitions, affectivity, body and social interactions, the toy plays a relevant role in developing it. (Kishimoto, 2010, p. 36).

With regard to professional training, in order for the pedagogue to be able to act as an educator, it is necessary, according to Dewey (1961 apud Kishimoto, 2010, p. 94-95), that he knows how to conduct the teaching-learning process in a democratic way, organizing the participation of individuals in social awareness, since all education comes from the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race. This process begins almost unconsciously at birth and continually forms the powers of the individual, developing their consciousness, forming their habits, training their ideas, and awakening their feelings and emotions.

In Early Childhood Education, the process of playful activities takes place with more emphasis on children aged 0 to 5 years. Where they interact with each other, playing a social role in which they can develop imagination, creativity and also motor and reasoning skills.

Thus, playfulness has been a current theme that demands a theoretical discussion in order to enable the understanding of its functionality. The ludic is a pedagogical and social resource, a tool that the educator can use in his pedagogical practice. Playfulness will provide the student with a great discovery of stimulating inner aspects for the development of their learning.

Early Childhood Education represents the beginning of the child's formal contact with the world of letters. Although at this stage literacy is not the focus, the child knows, through play, the first letters, learns to spell his own name. There are countless pedagogical proposals that have been raised over the years, seeking to find privileged resources that can help the child in the teaching-learning process and, especially, in literacy.

It is important to highlight that in 2006, with the enactment of Law No. 11,274, the age of entry of children in Elementary School was reduced to six years. According to the proposals of PNAIC (2017), "The Literacy Cycle should be marked by an intentional and progressive pedagogical action that prepares a solid structure for new lifelong learning." In this sense, playful play has been pointed out as a privileged and fundamental resource for the child's development.

Froebel, one of the first educators to take into account the importance of early childhood as a decisive phase in adult education, defended the idea that play would be the first resource on the path to learning. For him, games would be much more than fun, it would also be an alternative for the child to represent the concrete world around him in the expectation of understanding it. According to Oliveira,

Play is the privileged resource for the development of young children because it triggers and



develops psychological processes – particularly memory and the ability to express elements with different languages, to represent the world through images, to take the point of view of an interlocutor and adjust their own arguments through the confrontation of roles that are established in it. to have pleasure and to share situations full of emotions and affectivity" (OLIVEIRA, 2019, p.235).

The cognitive development of a child, according to Piaget, is not only due to the accumulation of information received, but results from a process that is elaborated from the child's interactive activities. In this way, "Educational games, in their essence, lead to learning based on leisure and fun, and the size of the child's motivation is interconnected with the form and approach given by the educational focus presented" (SOUZA, 2012, p. 27).

In the process of child development, playfulness with educational purposes can transform content that does not bring meaning or interest to the student into an important teaching tool. Therefore, using this resource, the teacher can stimulate the child to interact with the written language and from it promote in their knowledge construction process a significant learning that provides the development of their motor, mental and social skills.

From this perspective, the literacy process is an important stage in children's lives, and should contain subsidies that enable the student to permeate conditions to obtain elements that support a solid structure that serves as a basis for the improvement and development of new learning throughout the trajectory of their existence.

Based specifically on consideration of school learning and teaching, the theory of meaningful learning proposed by David Ausubel <sup>1</sup>is based on the valorization of students' prior knowledge. When this specific knowledge existing in the individual's cognitive structure interacts in a substantive way with the new information, attesting to its relevance, it contributes in this sense to the reinforcement or construction of new meanings.

Moreira (2011) describes this prior knowledge:

In simple terms, subsumer is the name given to a specific knowledge existing in the individual's knowledge structure, which gives meaning to a new knowledge that is presented to him or discovered by him. Both by reception and by discovery, the attribution of meanings to new knowledge depends on the existence of specifically relevant prior knowledge and interaction with it (MOREIRA, 2011, p. 14).

In the event that there is no interaction between the new information and existing knowledge, or that this information produces less incorporation and assigns little meaning, the result will be purely rote or repetitive learning. In this sense, "In colloquial language, rote learning is known as 'memorize', so used by students and encouraged at school." (MOREIRA, 2011, p.32)

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<sup>1</sup> David Paul Ausubel (1918-2008) American researcher, with training in Psychiatrist Medicine and Psychology, author of the Theory of Meaningful Learning. Taking into account the school context, David Ausubel developed his theory taking into account the subject's history as well as his or her predisposition to learn and relate to potentially significant material. <<https://novaescola.org.br/conteudo/262/david-ausubel-e-a-aprendizagem-significativa>> accessed in Aug. 2023.



In this way, Moreira, based on Ausubel, presents two essential conditions for meaningful learning to actually occur: the student's predisposition to learn and potentially significant school material or content. As far as predisposition is concerned,

It's not exactly about motivation, or liking the material. For some reason, the learner must be predisposed to interactively relate (differentiating and integrating) the new knowledge to his previous cognitive structure, modifying, enriching, elaborating and giving meanings to this knowledge. (MOREIRA, 2011, p. 34)

As for the potentially significant material, it is important to emphasize that there is no significant material (class, books, playful games...) because the student will be the one who will attribute meaning to the material and this will depend on the logical meaning of the material and the learner's predisposition. Therefore, the logical meaning will result from the non-arbitrary relation of the contents presented with the anchor ideas existing in the learner's cognitive structure, that is, from the relation of the learner's anchor ideas to the new information.

#### **4 JOKES WITH EMPHASIS ON JEAN PIAGET'S IDEAS**

Games and interactions should permeate all pedagogical actions aimed at children. For Piaget (1971), "when the child plays, he assimilates the world in his own way, without commitment to reality". Piaget defines this type of play as symbolic play, which is the representation of one object by another with different meanings. This game is composed of an expression of gestures accompanied by speech. It is possible to highlight "make-believe" as one of the examples of symbolic play.

According to Kishimoto (2010):

In role-playing or make-believe games, the child is free to choose roles to play and set their rules. Its functioning is the process that has an end in itself. The child plays and enjoys playing. In these games, the child takes initiatives, organizes actions, in short, plans and replaces the meaning of the objects in order to reproduce the relationships and phenomena observed by him (KISHIMOTO, 2010, p.111).

Therefore, before the power of symbolizing, it is difficult for a child to act with roles, with make-believe, because it is in play that the child will make use of objects in a subjective way, regardless of their objective social functions. Brougère (2010) adds that:

Play is a means of minimizing the consequences of one's own actions and, therefore, learning in a situation that carries fewer risks. However, it is an open, uncertain world. You don't know, in advance, what you're going to find: the game has a random dimension. In it we find chance or indeterminacy, resulting from the complexity of the causes that are at work. It's a space that can't be totally dominated from the outside. Every internal coercion resurfaces the game... all external coercion risks destroying it (BROUGÈRE, 2010, p. 43).

Therefore, it can be said that, through the child's games and voluntary expressions, it is possible to observe their inclinations, their anxieties, their desires and their conceptions about the culture in



which they live, including about its social actors. This is the moment when values are learned, the child internalizes and socializes meaningful concepts. Therefore, playfulness is configured as an activity with its own purposes, to the extent that it arises voluntarily and is conducted unexpectedly, happening for the simple pleasure of playing.

It is important to distinguish make-believe play from pedagogical games, which, in turn, must have determined the objectives to be obtained. In this case, the game can have two functions: playful, because it provides fun, pleasure and/or displeasure and consists of voluntary attitudes; and the educational function, because it adds knowledge. Considering, therefore, Piaget's cognitivist approach, which analyzes the game in relation to the child's mental life, as something that is influenced by the process of assimilation, he states that, in other words, the game:

(...) it is a particularly powerful form of activity to stimulate the social life and constructive activity of the child (...) it is true that in most of my publications I have dealt with various aspects of cognitive development, particularly with cognitive development, particularly with the development of operativity, but I believe that in my early works I have already emphasized the importance of interindividual exchanges (PIAGET apud KAMII, 1991, p.10).

In this sense, the function of the game would be to create situations or activities for the child to fantasize, because fantasy is the element for the assimilation of events and objects to the child's "I" and "mental structures". In child development, Piaget (1971) distinguishes that children's games are assigned according to three major structures: exercise, symbol and rule.

Thus, several studies carried out in the 1980s already showed that the first five years of life are essential for human development and the formation of intelligence and human personality. However, until 1988, in Brazil, children under 7 years of age did not have the right to education. The current constitution, for the first time, recognized Early Childhood Education as a right of the child, an option of the family and a duty of the State. Since then, Early Childhood Education in Brazil has ceased to be linked only to the social assistance policy, but has become part of the national education policy.

On December 26, 1996, Law No. 9,394/96, the Law of Guidelines and Bases for Education (LDB), was enacted. The Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education LDBEN No. 9,394, makes evident the importance of Early Childhood Education, a period in which this modality began to be considered as the first stage of Basic Education with the aim of the integral development of the child from zero to five years of age, in its psychological and physical aspects.

Through playful activities, games and games, the teacher can work on the social side, with established rules and limits and thus helping in the formation of personality, making the student respect each one's space, allowing interaction and socialization.

According to Rego (1997):

Play represents the possibility of solving the impasse caused, on the one hand, by the child's need for action and, on the other hand, by his impossibility of performing the operations





required by these actions. "The child wants to drive the car himself, he wants to row the boat by himself, but he cannot do so, and he cannot do so mainly because he has not yet mastered and cannot master the operations required by the real objective conditions of the given action." Thus, through toys, the child projects himself in the activities of adults, seeking to be coherent with the roles assumed (REGO, 1997, p. 82).

Both games and games are important for the child and for the adult, the problem is that the adult often does not want to enter this child universe, leaving aside and even forgetting how the games and games were experienced in childhood. It is necessary to lose the fear of being judged, of making mistakes, understanding that if we enter the world of games, children will thank us for our attitude, therefore, letting games be part of our lives, will bring us satisfaction.

The sense of playing and playing is lost because they understand that it is a child's thing and often this reflects on the child's learning. The simple fact that the child wants to play and somehow handle the objects escapes the eyes of the adult who think that children's behavior through games and games are mischief, scolding them.

Contemporary education seeks to introduce games as a pedagogical resource, as they provide the child's interaction with the proposed content. Often the look at the methodologies developed in Early Childhood Education characterizes traditional teaching and, therefore, the education that makes a difference for children is far from existing.

According to Almeida (2003, p. 30): "It is very common to hear that games are useless and have no meaning within schools, except in physical education. Such an opinion is closely linked to the assumptions of traditional pedagogy, which excluded playfulness from any serious or formal educational activity." Games and games in Early Childhood Education enable children to express themselves through the daily exercise of directed activities that promote the development of their motor, cognitive and social skills.

Playing is one of the fundamental activities for the development of identity and autonomy. The fact that the child, from a very early age, can communicate through gestures, sounds and later play a certain role in the game makes him develop his imagination. In play, children can develop some important skills, such as attention, imitation, memory, imagination. Some socialization capacities also mature, through interaction and the use and experimentation of rules and social roles (BRASIL, 1998, p.22).

It can be seen that encouraging the use of toys and games that favor greater interaction between children allows them to communicate with other people and express their anxieties and joys. The family and the school are institutions that must develop knowledge that helps in the future of children, enabling the construction of meaningful learning. In order for these activities to be expressive, they must be present in the school curriculum, games, games and playful activities that children enjoy and participate in an interactive way. According to the Federal Constitution of 1988, it is the duty of the family, society and the State to ensure to the child and adolescent, with absolute priority, the right to



life, health, food, education, leisure, professionalization, culture, dignity, respect, freedom and community family life.

Toys and games in recent times have aroused the interest of psychologists and educators, due to their importance for the development of the child, and the construction of knowledge. The active participation of the child and the games have served as an argument to strengthen the conception according to which one learns through play.

In the set of human activities, some games mentioned as "playing" from a complex process of designation and interpretation are not the purpose of this paper to show that this process of designation changes in time according to different cultures. When dealing with playful activities and with the objects present in play and games, the child can deal with the definition of words through the concrete object itself, and the child, through this action of playing, although he does not have grammatical language, is able to internalize the functional definition of objects, and then begins to relate the words to something concrete.

When using the game for educational purposes, the educator should promote activities that are interesting and that motivate the child to participate in the activities developed. In this way, he should value creativity, show interest in the proposed activities and encourage children to practice the game or play, intervening, if necessary, in the child's actions so that he can relate, acquire concepts, learn the different languages, in which he communicates and expresses himself through feelings and ideas. Therefore, it is the teacher's role to consider, as a starting point for their educational action, the knowledge that children have, acquired in family and social life.

The role of the teacher is of paramount importance, as he is the one who will work on these moments, transforming them into learning situations, that is: The school needs to perceive the child as a being in development and in constant movement, endowed with a body. The educational act is not only mental, on the contrary, it is directly linked to the body, in its totality. (CORDIOLLI, 2011.p.182).

Dealing directly with the object of study, including thoughts and feelings in physical activities, enables significant learning, developing attitudes and values, transforming them into people capable of transforming, preserving the environment in which they live and interacting with others.

Thus, it is possible to consider that playfulness, games, toys and games are resources used by children to relate to the physical and social environment in which they are inserted, arousing their curiosity and expanding their knowledge and skills, in the physical, social, cultural, affective, emotional and cognitive aspects, and thus, we have the theoretical foundations to deduce the importance that the educator should give to the experience of teaching in Early Childhood Education, since the construction of knowledge happens through interpersonal relationships and reciprocal exchanges of experiences that are established throughout the student's integral education and consequently the teacher learns while teaching.



## 5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Within the scope of the final considerations of this research, it must be stated that the living space in Early Childhood Education is rich in diversity of experiences and enriching situations with regard to study and research to understand the teaching and learning process. In this sense, it is important to understand that it is increasingly necessary to investigate the teaching-learning process from different perspectives, especially when it involves playfulness. Early Childhood Education has gained space in the field of research, considering that it has become a target of concern for many when it comes to learning.

In view of this, it became evident that in addition to learning, it is necessary to observe the methodologies and the relationship between teacher and student, as these factors are preponderant to develop learning. It is known that there are several theories and contextualizations about how to work with playfulness, and it is then up to the teacher to carry out studies to improve their pedagogical practice.

It is not a matter of choosing a right or wrong methodology, but of understanding that learning takes place through a process that must be experienced in a satisfactory way by the student so that it can become meaningful. With the study of playfulness, it was notorious that when thinking about playfulness there is a range of strategies to be explored by educators, such as singing, playing, playing, dancing, moving, among other activities that stimulate students' interest and develop multiple skills.

In addition, games as a teaching tool can effectively contribute to child development, considering that through these tools it is possible to stimulate learning, as play and play are part of the experiences of children's culture. By playing, the child learns to respect rules, to pay attention during the game, to socialize and interact with peers.

Finally, one cannot neglect the importance of play in education, as children learn through play. In this context, the importance of play in Early Childhood Education is indisputable, considering that the child interacts and is actively involved in the learning process, being able to explore and develop multiple skills and knowledge.



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