

Escuta das crianças na Educação Infantil: a potência das narrativas docentes

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Resumo

Este artigo foi construído a partir da Dissertação de Mestrado "A Escuta Das Crianças Na Educação Infantil: Narrativas De Uma Professora Em Tempos De Pandemia", apresentada ao Programa de Pós-graduação em Políticas Públicas e Gestão Educacional da UFSM. Na pesquisa realizada, buscou-se compreender como é construída a relação professora, criança e conhecimento e suas possibilidades no trabalho pedagógico com crianças pequenas em tempo de pandemia. A pesquisa está alicerçada em uma abordagem qualitativa, criada a partir de uma "Artesania" da própria pesquisadora, contemplada com algumas inspirações da pesquisa etnográfica, contando com percepções e reflexões acerca dos movimentos das crianças e professora na escola. Desta forma, ao analisar os achados por meio das narrativas, foi possível perceber a importância escuta atenta e sensível para com nossas crianças no trabalho pedagógico diário, reverberando o protagonismo compartilhado a partir dos espaços, tempos e interações existentes na docência da Educação Infantil.

Palavras-chave: Educação Infantil. Trabalho pedagógico. Narrativas. Pandemia.

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Listening to children in Early Childhood Education: the power of teaching narratives

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Abstract

This article was constructed from the Master's Dissertation "Listening to Children in Early Childhood Education: Narratives of a Teacher in Times of Pandemic," presented to the Postgraduate Program in Public Policies and Educational Management at UFSM. In the research conducted, we sought to understand how the relationship between teacher, child and knowledge is built and its possibilities in pedagogical work with young children during the pandemic. The research is based on a qualitative approach created from the researcher's own "artisanship," incorporating some inspirations from ethnographic research and including perceptions and reflections on the movements of children and teachers in school. Thus, by analyzing the findings through narratives it was possible to perceive the importance of attentive and sensitive listening to our children in daily pedagogical work, echoing shared protagonism based on existing spaces, times and interactions in Early Childhood Education teaching.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education. Pedagogical work. Narratives. Pandemic.

Escuchar a los niños en Educación Infantil: el poder de las narrativas

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Resumen

Este artículo fue construido a partir de la Tesis de Maestría "La escucha de los niños en la educación infantil: narrativas de una maestra en tiempos de pandemia", presentada al Programa de Posgrado en Políticas Públicas y Gestión Educativa de la UFSM. En la investigación realizada, se buscó comprender cómo se construye la relación entre maestra, niño y conocimiento, así como sus posibilidades en el trabajo pedagógico con niños pequeños en tiempos de pandemia. La investigación está fundamentada en un enfoque cualitativo, creado a partir de una "artesanía" propia del investigador, que incluye algunas inspiraciones etnográficas, con percepciones y reflexiones sobre los movimientos de los niños y la maestra en la escuela. De esta manera, al analizar los hallazgos a través de las narrativas, fue posible percibir la importancia de una escucha atenta y sensible hacia nuestros niños en el trabajo pedagógico diario, promoviendo el protagonismo compartido desde los espacios, tiempos e interacciones presentes en la enseñanza infantil.

Palabras clave: Educación Infantil. Trabajo pedagógico. Narrativas. Pandemia.

Introduction

Currently, our educational landscape is undergoing constant reform, with many theoretical approaches being discussed and debated between teachers and pedagogical management in schools, aiming to enhance and rethink daily practices, reaffirming children's agency and their potential in their own development.

This article is an excerpt from the Master's dissertation "Listening to Children in Early Childhood Education: Narratives of a Teacher in Pandemic Times," developed within the Graduate Program in Public Policies and Educational Management at the Federal University of Santa Maria, RS, produced between 2019 and 2021.

It is important to mention that the research was conducted at Colégio Marista Santa Maria, a private institution in the municipality, where I taught in Early Childhood Education from 2016 until early 2022. I highlight that the text presented here consists of reflections, questions, and dreams that were recorded through immersion and daily practice with young children in a school during pandemic times.

When reflecting on the years 2020 and 2021, it is inevitable to recognize that they were indispensable for this investigation to take place, and they certainly strained many aspects of education and the teaching profession. As we began³, the year 2020, we were met with an unwelcome surprise, one that no one ever wants to face a global pandemic had descended upon humanity, and COVID-19 had reached us..

Isolation and distancing were certainly the words we heard the most during the long months of confinement in our homes, and we felt the consequences of this crisis firsthand. We were faced with a flood of doubts, unsure whether we would find the right answers. After all, life is an adventure full of uncertainties. We experienced the abrupt disruption of the immediate, of daily life, of playing together, of the school with children, and of being with the children. Isolation made us secluded not only in our homes but, at times, within ourselves. (Morin, 2020)

In March 2020, we lived through an unprecedented experience, at least for the generations currently alive. A treacherous and lethal virus imposed, in practically the entire world, the adoption of social isolation policies schools closed, shops closed, streets nearly empty. Those who could, continued working. Old habits had to be postponed, and new ones were developed.

And in the face of this isolation, I often found myself feeling very fragile. A year that had everything to go right was turned upside down. I can say it was a year of great challenges. My Level

³ I use the word "initiate" in the plural because, in many parts of the text, I refer not only to myself but also to my Master's advisor, as well as to the group of teachers at the school where I worked.

I class at Colégio Marista Santa Maria, which on February 17, 2020, consisted of 16 children, had only 3 children remaining by May of the same year.

What did I do wrong? Were the live sessions⁴ not engaging enough? Was something missing in the adaptation process? Could I have planned differently? So many anxieties and questions accompanied me through the long months of isolation, as we remained in remote work from March to October. Unanswered questions, after all, my children were gone, and I couldn't even see them through the computer screens.

In the midst of this experience, I knew there were many topics to be researched regarding Brazilian Early Childhood Education. Therefore, this research became extremely relevant to my continuing education process, which at that time was shaped by the organization of my Master's research. It is also important for Early Childhood Education as a whole, as well as for my colleagues who are striving to improve pedagogical work in Early Childhood Education during the pandemic.

But what has this health crisis brought upon us as humans? A reflection on our own lives and the lives of others. In this sense, Morin (2020, p. 53) suggests that “[...] hope lies in the struggle to awaken minds and search for a new path, which the experience of this global megacrisis will have stimulated.” Therefore, now is the time to consider that this crisis leads us to question our way of life, our needs often concealed by the alienations of everyday life.

Here, I find myself reflecting on teacher training as well, since we could say that during the pandemic we experienced opportunities for self-formation. This is characterized by the processes lived by each teacher who wants to learn more, who seeks out new knowledge, who is not content with what they already know and always wants more.

I cite Nóvoa (1992), who discusses that the process of teacher education is the key moment of socialization and professional development, going far beyond techniques and knowledge. Teaching is built through the process of experimentation, that is, through the experiences lived by each individual, focusing on what is truly meaningful for each teacher.

With this perspective in mind, it is not enough to accumulate courses, training, or techniques. Beyond that, there must be a reflection on our practices and daily work with children, as this process is deeply felt in our identity, representing both personal and professional self-formation. To address this process of reflection and self-transformation, this research explored the question:

⁴ Lives: se refere aos eventos que gravados ao vivo, foram transmitidos remotamente, de maneira virtual a todas as crianças e famílias, semanalmente.

"How is the relationship between teacher, child, and knowledge constructed, and what are the possibilities in pedagogical work with young children during pandemic times?"

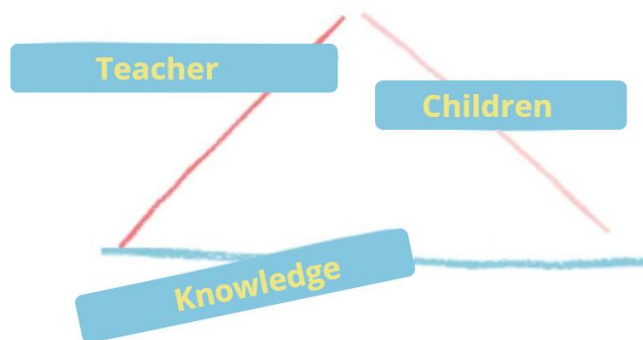
This problem was conceived based on my entire professional journey. When faced with the COVID-19 pandemic in my personal, professional, and academic life, it would have been unusual for this topic not to be linked to my research.

Thus, when constructing the research, the objective was to understand how the relationship between teacher, child, and knowledge is constructed, and the possibilities for pedagogical work with young children during the pandemic.

After all, experiencing the spaces of home, school, and university without being physically present with others brought up many questions in my journey but also provided new perspectives on these spaces, as well as attempts to find ways of being and belonging within them.

The Road Beneath Our Feet: A Sensitive Gaze and an Attentive Listening to Children and the Teacher

As the research was outlined, I found myself intertwined in the teacher-child-knowledge triad, as I understood that these elements needed to be articulated and interconnected in the pedagogical work to be developed in Early Childhood Education, as the figure below illustrates.



Source: Constructed by the author

Thus, it was necessary to seek a theoretical framework that could support the discussion and reflection of this perspective in the pedagogical practices that take place in Early Childhood Education. For this, I had to delve into the studies of Paulo Freire (2017; 2019), Rinaldi (2014), Junqueira Filho (2015), Gaulke (2013), among others, weaving connections related to pedagogical work from the perspective of being a teacher in the education of young children.

To continue this writing, I begin with the principle that being a teacher in Early Childhood Education is much more than being in a classroom with numerous children and building knowledge.

Being a teacher goes beyond the walls of the school; it is about having the child as the focus of the work and understanding that Early Childhood Education is a space that enables experiences and discoveries (MAFFINI, 2016).

Following this line of thought, it is necessary to reflect on the role of the teacher not only in "normal" times, or how we lived before, but also on how we experienced teaching during the pandemic and now with its lingering effects. Freire (2019) clarifies that teaching is not about transferring knowledge; it involves being seriously and ethically engaged in the education of young children. It requires being open to the inquiries, curiosities, and questions that children bring, creating opportunities for their own production and construction, and understanding that such knowledge needs to be witnessed and lived out daily.

This thought characterizes the way of thinking about and practicing teaching that is desired in Early Childhood Education and is understood to be ideal for children. It reflects the teaching of a teacher who builds their pedagogical work based on listening, guided by ethics, and attentive to the other—in this case, the children. A teaching practice where this other is seen as someone eager for challenges and opportunities for development and growth.

However, it is important to highlight that such listening goes far beyond the ability to hear. Listening, in this sense, involves the subject's constant willingness to be open to the other's speech, the other's gestures, the other's differences, and the understanding that listening does not produce ready-made answers but instead constructs new questions.

For Rinaldi (2014, p. 43), a "pedagogy of listening" listening to thought exemplifies for us the ethics of an encounter built on receptivity and hospitality to the Other, an openness to the Other's differences, to the arrival of the Other.

Thinking about this I-other relationship (teacher-student, student-student, teacher-teacher, teacher-administrator, teacher-family) involves considering a Wallonian concept, as for Wallon, human beings cannot live without the other. From this perspective of interactions, the teacher goes through a process of "re-construction" and "re-creation" based on the connections they establish with their environment (Proença, 2018).

In this interactional perspective, relationships begin to produce transformations in the individuals involved. That is, as the teacher embraces this approach, they undergo a re-signification of their role, allowing children to also build new meanings and new learning, moving away from traditional pedagogy, where only the teacher holds the knowledge.

With this understanding, thinking about teaching work is no easy task. It requires a daily reflective process, commitment, responsibility, curiosity, affection, coherence, and above all, love for what you do.

A teacher cannot work without a sense of meaning, without being a protagonist. They cannot simply be someone—even if intelligent—who implements projects and programs decided and created by others for "other" children and for undefined contexts. The highest value and the deepest meaning lie in the pursuit of sense and purpose, which are shared by adults and children (teachers and students), always with a full awareness of the different identities and distinct roles (RINALDI, 2014, p. 106).

In this way, the teacher needs to be seen and respected as a protagonist as well, since it is she who organizes and establishes the interconnections, the network of relationships and knowledge, to transform them into meaningful experiences of interaction and communication with the children. In this regard, it is important to highlight that the principles of Child Protagonism were developed by Italian and Portuguese authors who began their studies on young children, using the term *progettazione* (which has no direct translation into Portuguese).

For Rinaldi (2014), this concept should remain in its original form, as it addresses the working method found in the Reggio Emilia schools in Italy. For her, this concept represents a different way of working, starting from initial hypotheses and classroom activities, with the possibility of modifications throughout the process, since it does not occur in a linear fashion but rather responds to the curiosities and needs of its protagonists in this case, the children, Rinaldi (2002, p. 76-77):

One of the fundamental points of Reggio Emilia's philosophy is the image of the child as someone who experiences the world and feels a part of it from the moment of birth; a child who is full of curiosity and a desire to live; a child who has a strong will and a great ability to communicate from the very beginning of life; a child who is capable of creating maps for their symbolic, emotional, cognitive, social, and personal orientation. Because of all this, a young child can respond with a competent system of skills, learning strategies, and ways of organizing their relationships.

In this sense, it becomes evident that alongside this protagonist child, a mediator teacher is necessary, someone who understands the child's role and knows that their own role will be of utmost

importance in supporting the child in their learning and development process. If the teacher enters the relationship without the willingness to engage with children as their interlocutors, as protagonists, it becomes very difficult for children to demonstrate their potential. Therefore, it is essential for both teachers and children to begin their relationship with the openness to get to know each other and to accept one another as legitimate others in their shared experiences.

In this way, the importance of both the teacher and the children in the daily practice of Early Childhood Education becomes evident. Both need to be in sync, open to the daily tasks, as children will learn with more meaning and understanding if they are truly seen and heard. Likewise, the teacher needs this understanding for their planning to have purpose and significance.

By "listening" to children through careful observation of their interactions and play, teachers can engage with them and help them recognize aspects of the situation and the participants involved. It is also the educator's role to encourage them to make new discoveries and build new knowledge based on what they already know (OLIVEIRA, 2020, p.12)

In light of this, it is known that Early Childhood Education has been developing and creating its own identity over the years. For many years, children were not seen or understood as subjects of rights, just as teachers experienced periods of devaluation, since no formal training was required to work with children in daycare centers—simply liking being with them was enough.

Now, in the 21st century, we face a global pandemic, and the fear of seeing many of the hard-earned achievements slip away is very real. One example of these achievements is the child's right to interact and play within the school context.

To underestimate the child, to see them as weak, passive, and not a protagonist in their own development, is to revert to the past and regress in our conceptions and struggles.

According to Monção (2017, p. 163), it is important:

Considering the fundamental rights of children as guiding principles for public policies and daily practices is based on the understanding of the child as a subject of rights, capable of participating in their own development process from an early age, and of childhood as a social and historical construct. This perspective recognizes early childhood education institutions as contexts that promote the socialization of

young children in collective spaces, in partnership with their families.

To support this understanding, Oliveira-Formosinho and Formosinho (2017, p. 117) complement this perspective, weaving together insights that lead to the assertion that traditional pedagogy is no longer relevant in our current times; change is necessary, as:

"The deconstruction of conventional pedagogy is an essential first step towards the reconstruction of a different pedagogy, which, inspired by Paulo Freire (1994, 2009), seeks a testimonial everyday life. To bring this everyday life to light, we affirm praxis as the discovery of the child and the reconceptualization of their image."

Therefore, considering this new understanding of childhood, children, and the teacher, it is important to reflect on how this shared protagonism is being signaled through the actions of teachers with children, also considering the knowledge that is articulated in the process, in the pedagogical work that takes place in the daily life of the school.

We understand that designing pedagogical work based on the organization of various spaces in the classroom represents the teacher moving beyond what the children already know, to encourage them to learn and develop through their own experiences.

Regarding these spaces thought out and planned by the teacher, Oliveira (2012, p. 83) states that:

The organization of the space serves as a reference for the child to anticipate what can and cannot be done in a given area and to decide how they want to use it to fulfill their emerging desires. The space also provides opportunities for the child's artistic development, as it exposes them to different textures, colors, shapes, sounds, smells, and tastes elements significant in constructing varied meanings related to their sensory and aesthetic experiences.

Thus, space is understood as an essential element that must be thoughtfully designed to facilitate children's learning. It needs to be planned in advance according to the teacher's intentions, which are developed based on observations and listening to the children. Therefore, this space will never be neutral; it will always contain elements that promote discovery and the children's experiences.

In this sense, the teacher's perspective and understanding of this space will make a significant difference in daily practice with the children. It requires the teacher to be an eternal researcher, someone who can live with uncertainty, accepting that they bear the responsibility for making choices

and creating conditions for experimentation, discussion, reflection, and evaluation of processes rather than just results.

Fortunati (2014, p. 31) emphasizes:

The presence of the educator is much more structuring precisely in providing the space for the relationship between the children and for the experiences they share. It is an educator who knows how to sit and observe what happens, who intervenes verbally but tries not to stifle the voices of others, who moves through the spaces trying to engage in the situations, and sometimes even changes their position and suggests possible developments in the play.

It is this teacher that is discussed here, the one who designs spaces, observes, reflects, evaluates, and positions herself as a mediator of processes with the children. Often, or even most of the time, this teacher is not recognized as a protagonist in this process; she is there, observing, accompanying, and deciding the right moment to interact and stimulate the experiences that unfold.

This teacher is so pivotal in the experiences occurring among the children in the classroom, as she does not intrude on the children's discoveries but rather is a "participant in the game," available and attentive to fostering dialogue with the children present. (FORTUNATI 2014, p.71)

Thus, it is evident that the shared protagonism between children and teacher, linked to knowledge, forms a triangle in which all sides must work together, without one side overshadowing or having supremacy over the others. In this context of protagonism, Meirieu (1998) also has an established idea regarding the protagonist teacher:

The teacher's role is to spark the desire to learn; their task is to "create the enigma" or, more precisely, to make knowledge an enigma, to comment on it or present it. It is enough to reveal its interest and richness, but to remain silent in time to evoke the desire to uncover it (MEIRIEU, 1998, p. 92).

In this context, it is important to view pedagogical work as a possibility for shared protagonism, serving as the foundational element of this action. Similarly, Madalena Freire, in her book "A Paixão de Conhecer o Mundo" (2007), discusses how the relationship between teacher and child intertwines with knowledge:

[...] What I have observed and felt in the children (and in myself) as a reflection of our work is a great enthusiasm, with challenges being faced with joy and pleasure. This reassures us that the pursuit of knowledge for children is not preparation for something else, but rather life here and now (FREIRE, 2007, p. 50)

Following this line of reasoning, considering the pursuit of knowledge as an inherent aspect of being human, Freire (2019), in his work *Pedagogy of Autonomy*, attributes in the third chapter that teaching is a human specificity, therefore, “I move as an educator, first because I am human” (FREIRE 2019, p.92). Thus, it is understood that before being a teacher, there is a human, a subject who thinks, relates, and interacts with others. Consequently, it is inconceivable to view teaching practice without students children without recognizing that in the teacher-child relationship, knowledge is constructed collectively and is an integral part of this work.

In other words, the triad of teacher-knowledge-child in Early Childhood Education functions differently from other levels and stages of Basic Education, as it is a unique time in life. “Childhood is understood as an event that prevents the repetition of the same world; we are born each time we realize that the world can be born again and be different, and this faculty called creation is childhood” (KOHAN, 2008, p. 47).

The beauty of teaching practice is built when the teacher understands the importance of their qualification, recognizing their own unfinished nature. After all, it is in the incompleteness of being that the educational process occurs; the awareness of incompleteness is what generates educability (FREIRE, 2019).

Considering this process of incompleteness, the pursuit of knowledge is always necessary and, moreover, is an integral part of being human. Thus, ongoing professional development becomes one of the pillars to address this process. A training that focuses on the problems encountered in the educational context and, through reflective analysis, contextualizes pedagogical practices.

It is essential to understand that knowledge of isolated information or data is insufficient; it is necessary to organize the information and data within its context so that they make sense. “It is not a matter of abandoning knowledge of parts for knowledge of wholes, nor of analysis for synthesis: it is necessary to combine them (MORIN, 2000, p. 46).

According to Cruz (2011, p.18): “Reflection on teaching practice becomes an essential factor for personal and professional transformation and is based on the thesis that reflective interaction is a facilitating resource for the development of new methodological devices for effective student

learning.”

Thus, it is understood that the teacher needs to become unsettled and seek changes, for it is in this restlessness that she will search for new ways to shape her teaching alongside the children, driven by the desire and concern for the learning of others and of herself.

Therefore, this teacher, who is daily in pursuit of new knowledge, qualifying her practice, and understanding childhood as unique, potent, and pleasurable, is the one who will make a difference in the context of early childhood education. She will be as much a protagonist as the children, understanding this triad of teacher-child-knowledge as essential to her pedagogical work.

Based on these considerations regarding childhood and teacher training, the research began to take shape and follow its course to be completed in its entirety.

Step by Step of the Journey: The Interweaving of the Research Built in Daily Practice

In dedicating these lines to the methodology, I found myself reflecting on how the research unfolded, what materials I focused on, and which references were most pertinent for constructing my interpretations, taking into account my life experiences, which certainly served as the foundation for everything that was researched.

My journey in research involved many advances and retreats, numerous stops, and restarts, and perhaps these movements occur in most research endeavors. With this, I emphasize that the methodological path is closely linked to the method adopted for conducting the research, but it is necessary to make a parenthesis and recall that the word method, in its Greek origin, means "a path that is made by walking while walking" (GHEDIN and FRANCO, 2011, p. 26).

In constructing the research, I saw it intertwined in a craftsmanship that was being built in my journey, something personal and unique. There was no possibility of finding in books the techniques and ways to organize it; I needed to understand and write about the entire journey, what was significant, what had already been covered, and how these experiences constituted me as a human being and teacher. Finally, I reflected on what was important to share with everyone who would have access to these lines described here.

Mills (2009, p.56) states,

[...] Be a good craftsman: avoid any rigid set of procedures [...]. Let each person be their own methodologist; let each person be their own theorist; let theory and method

become the practice of a craft [...]. Be an independent mind in confronting the problems of man and society.

Thus, I emphasize that the research employed a qualitative approach, which focuses on the interpretation of the object and legitimizes the researcher's closeness to the study. Mills (2009) believes that research can present itself as an artistic object, allowing for creativity to flow while not disregarding the rigor of scientific research. Hence, I constructed it using an analogy, as if it were a road where I, as a researcher, traverse a path seeking to enhance my continuing education, with the road representing the research as a whole.

This road was marked by numerous challenges, curves, descents, and ascents, which were articulated with the moments I encountered in the research: organizing the problem, theoretical framework, research findings, and finally, analysis and (in)conclusions.

It is important to highlight that along the road, I encountered a beautiful landscape the school many stones the narratives that fascinated me with their specifics, shapes, smells, and lightness, which were kept in a bag my logbook reflecting the memories collected throughout the journey.

Freire (2003, p.19) helps to think about recalling past times, as the subject reflects on their lived experience.

When today, taking a distance from moments I lived yesterday, I reminisce about them, I must be as faithful as possible in describing the plot to what actually happened. On the other hand, I must also be faithful to the moment when I recognize and describe the previously lived moment. The "eyes" with which I "resee" are no longer the "eyes" with which I "saw." No one speaks of what has passed except from and through the perspective of what is currently happening.

Thus, the narratives provided an opportunity for development, revisiting the past and reflecting according to the moment we were living, to see if what was planned truly made sense for the daily life of Early Childhood Education, and especially for the children.

The data collection began when I contacted the Director of the School, requesting authorization to conduct the research within the institution and with my class. After receiving approval, I started working with the Level 2 group in 2021.

The Level 2 class consisted of 18 children aged 4 and 5 years old, a very active group with boys and girls curious about the new, eager to discover new topics and explore new experiences.

My observations and reflections began very early, in fact, as soon as I stepped into the classroom. These observations were recorded in my journal, and I also included, whenever possible, photographic records depicting scenes from our experiences and activities.

Given this, the research theme highlights the importance of discussing some elements of the narratives produced about experiences lived in Early Childhood Education. In this sense, it was necessary to reflect on ways of working that could consider the children, through attentive and sensitive listening to their needs and movements, in order to foster relationships between the teacher's protagonism, the children's protagonism, and knowledge.

In this direction, it would be inconsistent to think about such a proposal outside the work context or with other Early Childhood Education teachers. It was time for me to challenge myself and use my narratives as a teacher, documenting my own story, without separating the professional and personal dimensions.

According to Josso (2004, p.48):

[...] speaking about one's own formative experiences is, in a way, to tell oneself one's own story, including one's personal and sociocultural qualities, the value attributed to what is "lived" in the temporal continuity of our psychophysical being. However, it is also a way of indicating that, within this temporal continuum, some experiences have a particular intensity that imposes itself on our consciousness, and from which we extract useful information for our interactions with ourselves and/or with our human and natural environment.

Thus, by addressing my narratives, I reflect on my practices as a teacher and on the sensitive experiences I lived with the children, traversing my old memories with the sensitivity and affection they involve.

In this sense, I emphasize that the narratives presented throughout the research do not pertain only to experiences with a single class, as some of the records discussed refer to experiences with a Level 1 class (children aged 3) from the year 2020. Throughout 2021, the records pertain to a Level 2 class (children aged 4 and 5) from the same school, but involve experiences that allowed for new narratives and experiences.

The journey of this methodological road also presented some challenges. It was time to

reminisce about all the stones that had been gathered along the way to interpret what had been produced during the journey. For this final interpretation, the method proposed by Bardin (1988), Content Analysis, was crucial for analyzing the lived experiences. This method involves pre-analysis, material exploration, results treatment, and interpretation.

The pre-analysis consisted of developing actions, selecting materials and documents for analysis, formulating hypotheses about the problem and objectives, and creating indicators to support the final interpretation (BARDIN, 1988).

In the material exploration phase, I underwent coding, where the narratives of the researcher-teacher that composed the study were revisited, organized into categories that supported the final interpretation, according to the adopted theoretical framework.

Thus, in the final phase of results treatment and interpretation, the results were presented and discussed in conjunction with the theoretical framework to support the researched theme according to the proposed objectives. The content analysis involved examining each "stone" of the path taken during the research presented here.

From this, I selected some of the most important "stones" — the narratives — which helped me categorize the data found. The categories were created as it was possible to revisit all the narratives recorded throughout the research and then interpreted in light of explanatory theories.

The aim delineated in this "road" was to understand how the relationship between teacher, child, and knowledge is constructed and its possibilities in pedagogical work during the pandemic. Specifically, it examined the ways in which pedagogical practices could take into account the children through attentive and sensitive listening, understanding both child and teacher protagonism.

It is important to highlight that the partnership with the children facilitated a crucial space for dialogue to understand how the relationship between teacher, child, and knowledge is built and its possibilities in pedagogical work during the pandemic. Sensitivity in thinking and building together with the children was essential in this process of teacher-researcher.

Much More Than Seeing and Hearing: Reflections on the Findings

It must be inferred that the research reported here posed a significant challenge, as focusing on the voices of the children and the narratives I had constructed was a complex task, yet one with a distinct simplicity. This became possible only by being daily immersed with the group of children, through the dialogues established with the group, and the intense and effective relationships that were built over the months.

According to Oliveira-Formosinho and Formosinho (2013, p.28)

Listening is a process of hearing the child about their contribution to the co-construction of knowledge, that is, their collaboration in the co-definition of their learning journey. Beyond the discussion on the formats of documenting listening, it is important to access a holistic and integrated understanding of listening. Listening, like observation, should be a continuous process in the educational routine, a process of seeking knowledge about the children (learners), their interests, motivations, relationships, knowledge, intentions, desires, and ways of life, conducted within the context of the educational community, which seeks an ethic of reciprocity. Thus, listening and observation should be a safe harbor for contextualizing educational actions.

Therefore, the perspective that permeated this research was guided by the conceptions of the world, life, childhood, and Early Childhood Education that were constructed throughout my trajectory as a teacher. These conceptions, over the course of the process, determined the situations to be perceived and interpreted, as it is impossible to remain indifferent to the events. The various situations, over the days, crossed me as a person and a teacher, thus constituting important elements of the research.

As I engaged with my narratives, I found myself intertwined in many moments of joy, fun, sadness, confusion, and feelings that still lack words to express.

With this crossing, the analysis categories were proposed based on the narratives that reflect the entire research journey. Thus emerges the poetics of childhood, which portrays the beauty of being who we are, of perceiving the world with vibrant eyes; and the dialogical relationship between teacher and children becomes effective, as diving into the narratives made it evident that there was a meeting with the children, surpassing an adult-centered perspective, increasingly investing in the sharing of spaces, learning, and life.

Children renew humanity, and call us to renew ourselves: with their animism, empathy, their thinking in images, their questions, their stories, their relationship with nature and poetry. Interaction with children also educates us, also humanizes us. [...] A poetic pedagogy for children can contribute fruitfully to considering the child as an absolute priority, an attitude with the potential to change lives and transform the world (ANTÔNIO; TAVARES 2016, p.31).

Based on the quote from Antônio and Tavares (2016), the sensitivity that children possess becomes clear, and observing children makes it evident that it is necessary to set aside some preconceived concepts in order to embrace others that arise from the children themselves through their play, narratives, and other manifestations.

The poetics of childhood and the dialogic relationship between teacher and children

To illuminate the categories of the research, I cite Korczak (1983, p. 304):

A child does not think better or worse than an adult; they think differently. Our way of thinking is made up of somewhat faded images and dusty feelings. The child thinks with their feelings, not with their intellect. This complicates our communication with them, and there is probably no art more difficult than talking to children.

Based on this inference, we present a narrative that includes a dialogue between the researcher-teacher and a young boy, shortly after the return to in-person schooling in 2021. This narrative explicitly reveals this different way of thinking, of thinking with feelings, which is often not understood by adults for a simple reason: the importance given to what children say.

May 10, 2021

(Me) Did you say it's the smell of the school?

(H., 4 years old) Yes,

(Me) And is the smell of the school good or bad?

(H., 4 years old) Oh, it's very nice.

(Me) It's nice?

(H., 4 years old) Can I play here?

(Me) But tell me more about this smell. Is it from our school, or from the other one too?

(H., 4 years old) Remember the one before?

(Me) Did it have a smell too?

(H., 4 years old) No, I don't think it had a smell.

(Me) And having a smell is good? Is our smell nice?

(H., 4 years old) It's very nice!

(Me) So you like coming here?

(H., 4 years old) Yes, I do!

(Me) What else do you like here?

(H., 4 years old) I like you, I do!

(Me) I like you a lot too!!! (Emotional laughter)

(Me) Do you like playing with me?

(H., 4 years old) Yes, I like you! (Shyness)

At this moment, it is possible to perceive the sensitivity of a child who wanted to express his joy of being at school through the sense of smell. This was something that had greatly affected him, coming from another school where he often mentioned that there were not as many toys and spaces

to explore. This act of sensing the smell may have been his way of affirming that he was comfortable and safe in this new space, despite all the precautions we took.

I realized that the poetic aspect was evident in the children's actions, as Antônio and Tavares (2016) elucidated in their work, stating that each child is made of the world's material, of their life, and of their historical and social context, but is also made of dreams, driven by desires and meanings they discover or attribute to life.

Thus, as I read through the narratives, I found myself immersed in the children's laughter and the lightness that school could bring to their routines. Routine, in this sense, should not be rigid but rather created and recreated with the richness of the children's desires. To illustrate this, I present a narrative that captures a moment during snack time, filled with imagination and fun.

October 22, 2021 – It's impossible to say that I don't feel love and happiness for what I do. Today, I found myself laughing with the children numerous times. Who said that teachers have to be serious? Perhaps I still don't fully understand what it means to be a teacher of young children. Some were absent today due to colds, but the thirteen who were present were very eager to play and have fun, which was wonderful. I also needed to enjoy this afternoon, as outside of school, some challenges await me with a new phase of cancer treatment. The thought of having to leave them again is not easy; they are my anchor, making me feel strong and reminding me that life is worth living. We began to head towards snack time, but before that, we played a bit in the Dino yard, which is very spacious. The day was beautiful, with radiant sunshine illuminating us. We played "Ovo Choco," raced, and jumped on the hopscotch drawn on the ground. Then, we moved to the cafeteria. The children were a bit tired due to the heat. I sat at a table with my assistant, while the children sat at tables around us. I was enjoying my coffee calmly, observing everyone as they chatted in pairs, some quieter than others. Suddenly, I heard P. burst into laughter with A. I looked over and asked what happened, wanting to know the reason for their laughter. P. then shared a riddle: "Is 'churrasco' spelled with one or two 'R's'?" I replied, "Two P." Then he responded, "No, no, profe, 'churrasco' is with meat" (lots of laughter). It was impossible not to burst into laughter, and so, we spent the entire snack time sharing riddles. Everyone joined in the fun, and I noticed others from the back of the room also participating. Some were eating intently, but at the time of the answers, they couldn't help but interact. For instance, when P. asked, "What's the biggest shirt?" C. responded, "Mine! My mom bought a larger size; she said so." At that moment, I also burst into laughter. This afternoon, I realized once again that the lightness we allow in our routines makes the moments more enjoyable and less rigid. Even during snack time, we managed to play, eat, and chat, demonstrating that children are eager for discoveries, curiosity, and fun.

In this narrative, it is possible to see that the cafeteria often became the place for play and games, where we could look at each child's face and see them fully, as it was in this space that we could remove our masks and truly see each other. Some girls wore lipstick, some boys had scrapes on their

mouths, and others had missing teeth. These were characteristics that we could only notice during this special snack time.

Sarmento (2004, p.11) infers that:

Peer culture allows children to appropriate, reinvent, and reproduce the world around them, through a relationship of coexistence that enables them to exorcise fears, construct fantasies, and represent everyday scenes. These activities thus function as therapies for dealing with negative experiences, while also establishing boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, [...] which are strongly implicated in social identification processes.

In this sense, it becomes evident the importance of viewing the child and their multiple languages as unique ways to interact with the world—a being that lives in the present, does not think about tomorrow, and whose life unfolds today. The child, in their purest beauty, experiences each gesture and action as something grand, surrounded by emotion and tenderness, expressing their feelings in a myriad of ways.

When considering the dialogical relationship as one of the categories that emerged from the analysis of the research findings, it is necessary to reflect on dialogue as a process that stems from our willingness to engage in relationships with others, in this case, demonstrated by the willingness to invest in something beyond just listening as a teacher in conversations with children.

When we as teachers understand how young children develop, we can plan our pedagogical work to maximize their development. This work involves numerous actions and mediations with the children, including how we understand them, how we engage in dialogue, how we tell stories, how we introduce new materials, how we organize time, and how we pose questions to children on various topics.

To affirm this perspective, the following narrative illustrates a storytelling moment, as these moments need to be carefully thought out and planned. And, during the Covid-19 pandemic, we were prompted to explore new possibilities, as each child needed to remain on their cushion with the required distancing, but this did not mean that this moment could not be something very special.

August 17, 2021 – Today, I was truly moved. I told the story of “Ernesto” as a delightful reading experience, and by the end of the story, I noticed how much the children were touched by each other. In the story, Ernesto was a little creature who was constantly criticized—people said he was ugly, foolish, spoke incorrectly, was dumb, and selfish. It was a very short story, but it affected the children deeply. At the end of the story, there is a question: “What would you say to Ernesto?” I asked the children exactly that, and to my surprise, the responses were overwhelming—responses I hadn’t imagined. For example: “I would teach him to speak properly,” “I

would love him,” “I would give him a present,” “I would make food for him,” “I would play with him,” and so many other heartfelt expressions that made my heart so happy. I felt fulfilled. I truly believe that children will make a difference in our world because these small responses show how much they want to help and show affection to others. Sometimes I wonder: Do families also listen to children this way? Have they heard them express such care for one another? So many questions... But I am certain that within the school, we try our best to listen and demonstrate how important it is to show love for others.

I emphasize that storytelling time or the Conversation Circle is much more than just a pedagogical resource; these are spaces for dialogical relationships that promote learning in children, enabling them to think, coexist, make connections about the world, form opinions, create problem-solving strategies, listen to others, and plan experiences that can be shared by the group.

Through conducting the research and, especially in the act of reading and re-reading the produced narratives, it becomes clearer than ever that the freedom of choice allows children to develop a sense of responsibility and maturity. They begin to learn how to make their own decisions and understand that sometimes this can have consequences, which they will experience with a meaning different from that of adults. This approach involves a partnership between the teacher and the children, assuming a responsibility for what is shared.

According to Rinaldi (2014, p. 89): “We need a teacher who is sometimes a director, sometimes the creator of the scene, who is sometimes the curtain and the backdrop, and sometimes the one who prompts the lines. A teacher who is equally sweet and strict [...] a teacher who listens and applauds with enthusiasm.”

In this sense, it is important to understand that the way we relate to others is also reflected in how we organize our work; it demands responsibility and ethics towards the children. The dialogical relationship we develop with the children “[...] will depend on our experiences, our expectations, our interpretations, our history, and our imaginations,” whether conscious or unconscious, as these will shape our formation (Hoyuelos, 2019, p. 177).

Thus, how we live with and listen to the children daily will make all the difference in our everyday pedagogical work. Without listening to them, we will not reach them, as we understand listening as a place of inhabiting the children, given that there is no attentive listening without a sensitive gaze towards the other.

Continuing the Journey Towards Improvement: (In)conclusions of the Journey

The experience of conducting this research during the times we are living in, within the very context of work, and being able to share studies on how the relationship between teacher, child, and knowledge is constructed and its possibilities in pedagogical work with young children during the pandemic, certainly contributes to all teachers who currently still struggle to see themselves as protagonists alongside the children in their classrooms.

In the research conducted, it was challenging to understand how to provide support without offering a hug. It was crucial to always have listening present, to hear and speak, and to create numerous ways to be together with people. We, as teachers, had to relearn some aspects that we believed were ideal within schools. Whether or not these methods are the most appropriate, we do not yet know, but it is what can be done at this moment in the history of humanity.

In this research, we aimed to reflect on some fundamental aspects of pedagogical work with young children, to revisit and emphasize the importance of certain public policies that have helped us reach the present times, and how they have been and continue to be rethought daily.

I can say that it was not an easy task. As I reread the narratives, I find myself moved by everything that was experienced. Certainly, many scars remain: not being able to see the children, not being able to hug loved ones, losing people from the school with whom we had such affinities...

Over the months, we have heard a saying that we are facing the same sea, full of strong waves in a very large storm, but each of us is in a different boat, and it is important to understand this as well. The same applies to schools—private, municipal, and state schools—all were under the same storm but in different boats, navigating distinct paths and trajectories. Some had better infrastructure and more manual and technological resources, while others had less. We want to believe that those involved in education, both within and outside of schools, have managed to weather this storm with minimal pain or loss. After all, this storm has pushed us to rethink pedagogical work with children, while also presenting numerous challenges, anxieties, and fears.

As I conclude this research journey, I find myself intertwined with my own professional development and a desire to know more, to engage more, and to do more than I already do. I hope that all who come into contact with this writing can also feel the enchantment of being a teacher of young children, even in such difficult times, driven by the love for everything experienced within the school.

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