

A brincadeira de papéis sociais como atividade promotora do desenvolvimento humano nas escolas de Educação Infantil

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Resumo

Este estudo apresenta algumas considerações sobre a importância da brincadeira para o desenvolvimento humano com base na Teoria Histórico-Cultural e tem como objetivo discutir a função da brincadeira de papéis sociais como elemento potencializador do desenvolvimento infantil. As ações desta pesquisa foram efetivadas em uma escola municipal de Educação Infantil, a partir da observação de uma turma de crianças de cinco anos. Para tanto, foi estruturada uma pesquisa qualitativa baseada na observação participante dos espaços/tempos organizados para as crianças. A análise dos dados evidencia que o desenvolvimento infantil por meio das brincadeiras ocorre de maneira efetiva quando os espaços e as intervenções dos educadores se ancoram no desenvolvimento proximal das crianças. Ademais, foi possível perceber como a gestão e o professor da turma favoreceram a autonomia das crianças. O exposto valida a ideia de que as brincadeiras de papéis sociais podem contribuir para o desenvolvimento das crianças na Educação Infantil.

Palavras-chave: Educação. Desenvolvimento infantil. Teoria Histórico-Cultural.

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The social role playing as an activity to promote human development in early children's schools

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Abstract

This study presents some considerations about the importance of playing for human development based on the Historical-Cultural Theory and aims to discuss the function of social role playing as a potentiating element of child development. The actions of this research were carried out in a municipal kindergarten school, as of the observation of a group of five-year-old children. For that, qualitative research was structured based on the participant observation of the spaces/times organized for the children. Data analysis shows that child development through playing effectively occurs when educators' spaces and interventions are anchored in children's proximal development. In addition, it was possible to see how the management and the class teacher favored the autonomy of the children. The presented information validates the idea that social role playing can contribute to the development of children in Early Childhood Education.

Keywords: Education. Child development. Historical-Cultural Theory.

El juego de roles sociales como actividad promotora del desarrollo humano en las escuelas de educación infantil

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Resumen

Este estudio presenta algunas consideraciones sobre la importancia del juego en el desarrollo humano basado en la Teoría Histórico-Cultural y tiene como objetivo discutir la función del juego de roles sociales como elemento potenciador del desarrollo infantil. Las acciones de esta investigación se llevaron a cabo en una escuela municipal de Educación Infantil, a partir de la observación de un grupo de niños de cinco años. Para ello, se estructuró una investigación cualitativa basada en la observación participante de los espacios/tiempos organizados para los niños. El análisis de los datos muestra que el desarrollo infantil a través del juego ocurre de manera efectiva cuando los espacios y las intervenciones de los educadores se basan en el desarrollo próximo de los niños. Además, fue posible percibir cómo la gestión y el profesor del grupo fomentaron la autonomía de los niños. Lo expuesto valida la idea de que los juegos de roles sociales pueden contribuir al desarrollo de los niños en la Educación Infantil.

Palabras clave: Educación. Desarrollo infantil. Teoría Histórico-Cultural.

Introduction

This research addresses issues related to the role of play as a promoter of child development within the context of the Teaching Program, associated with the São Paulo State University (Universidade Estadual Paulista). The activities developed in this program highlight social role-playing games as the primary activity for children during early childhood, and the discussions carried out contribute to broadening the understanding of the role of play in Early Childhood Education (ECE) through the lens of Cultural-Historical Theory (CHT).

Cultural-Historical Theory emphasizes that biological apparatus alone is insufficient for the development of psychic abilities. At birth, we emerge into the social world, and through life in society, we are humanized in a continuous social process of life and education. As children actively engage with the objective world, alongside a more experienced partner, they have the opportunity to develop and appropriate both the material and immaterial culture historically created by humans over the years. From this perspective, the complex process of human development is constituted through interpsychic and intrapsychic relationships, as expressed by Vygotsky (2010, p. 114) in the law of psychic development, which states that,

All higher psychointellectual functions appear twice during the course of a child's development: the first time, in collective activities, in social activities, that is, as interpsychic functions; the second time, in individual activities, as internal properties of the child's thinking, that is, as intrapsychic functions.

The interpsychic functions experienced by children, socially and collectively, arising from their concrete social environment, as well as the process of teaching, education, and human activity, enable differentiated ways for the child's objective reality to become subjective. In each stage of development, the child has a unique way of relating to and perceiving the world. With birth, direct emotional communication with the adult emerges as a driving force for development. The adult, through gaze, touch, and gentle conversation with the child, introduces the child to the cultural world through sensations, allowing the child to explore external aspects of objects by hitting, shaking, pushing, thus contributing to the genesis of the next developing stage, the manipulative object phase. The focus during this period is on using the object in view of its social function (its intended purpose). The use of the object with a social function constitutes the genesis of social role-playing, enabling the child to move away from the sensory field towards the ideational plane (FAVINHA, 2022).

Direct emotional communication, manipulative object activity, and social role-playing are key

activities in the early years of childhood. As Leontiev (2010, p. 122) explains,

we refer to the main activity as the one with which the most significant changes in the child's psychic development occur and within which psychic processes unfold, preparing the way for the child's transition to a new and higher level of development.

When the child relates to the world composed of material and immaterial objects and people, they can appropriate culture through authentic processes of education and teaching, mediated by an adult who possesses a more developed culture. In this sense, it is not any activity done for the child that characterizes the main activity, but rather that which drives psychic processes towards the formation of a new developmental stage. Thus, in emotional communication, the foundations are laid for the child to manipulate objects in a conventional way, and in the manipulative object stage, the genesis of social role-playing emerges. Child development does not occur in a linear fashion; rather, it constitutes a process of advances and setbacks between periods, debunking the strictly biological way of understanding human development.

In the realm of Early Childhood Education (the early years of childhood), the importance of play for the child's holistic development is clear, encompassing cognitive, moral, ethical, social, and emotional aspects. As "Play is a free action, which arises at any time, initiated and led by the child; it brings pleasure, does not require a final product as a condition; it relaxes, engages, teaches rules, languages, develops skills, and introduces the child to the imaginary world" (KISHIMOTO, 2010, p. 1). In addition, the author affirms that it is through play that the child "learns to make decisions, how to relate to others, express feelings and values, self-knowledge, and knowledge of others. (...) By playing, the child explores the world of objects, that is, the world of people, nature, and culture" (KISHIMOTO, 2010, p. 1).

From this perspective, as the culture of childhood values play, it also enables the child to develop, learn, and express themselves. Furthermore, Marcolino (2017) asserts that not all actions and relationships established with the child's world promote qualitative changes for child development. The author points to play as the main activity for children from three to seven years old (MARCOLINO, 2017).

Given the above, the objective of this investigation is to discuss the role of social role-playing in early childhood schools as an activity that can contribute to enhancing child development.

In the preschool period, the need for the child to want to do what the adult does emerges, and as they cannot fulfill their desires, they play to fulfill unmet needs at the moment. Play allows the child to reconstruct social roles from their concrete social environment. Thus, they can be a driver and drive a car, or a doctor and use a stethoscope. Through play, the child can appropriate socially

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human behaviors, with the possibility of developing, especially, imagination, self-control of conduct, and the psychic function of consciousness.

Social role-playing games are sources of development, allowing the emergence of the ideational plane. Children learn to act based on the appropriations they have seen, heard, felt, and touched since birth. Thus, the more the child establishes powerful relationships with culture (both material and immaterial), the greater the conditions for refining play during the preschool period. The appropriations reconstructed in play are social; in this regard, Elkonin (2009, p. 80) clarifies: "[...] (play) is of social origin and nature. Its birth is related to the very concrete social conditions of the child's life in society and not to the action of any innate, internal, instinctive energy."

Marcolino (2017) and Favinha (2022) highlight social role-playing as a powerful activity for preschool children to appropriate human culture, integrating themselves as participants in the human race, thereby humanizing themselves.

In the next section, we will present the historical trajectory of Early Childhood Education in Brazil and the contributions of Cultural-Historical Theory.

Early Childhood Education, Play, and Cultural-Historical Theory

The history of education in Brazil reveals that the child's right to education has been marked by struggles led by social movements organized by parents, intellectuals, education professionals, and activists. Until 1970, there was little concern from the government regarding the education of children. The existing institutions served only the wealthier social class, focusing on intellectual formation, while the working class was relegated to welfare-based institutions. This structural strategy reinforced and perpetuated the pursuit of maintaining social inequality in the country.

The first institutions dedicated to the care of young children in Brazil date back to the late 19th century, with the main objective of sheltering the children of working mothers. At that time, there was no concern with cognitive aspects, only providing care and protection for the children (KUHLMANN JR., 1998, p. 26 *apud* SILVA, 2016, p. 23).

With the promulgation of the Federal Constitution (BRAZIL, 1988), the right to education is guaranteed to children, enabling the beginning of the reorganization of the Brazilian educational system by making federal, state, and municipal governments responsible for providing Early Childhood Education. Furthermore, with the publication of the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA) (BRAZIL, 1990), the child's right to education is reaffirmed. Article 54, section IV, mandates

the provision of daycare and preschool services for children aged 0 to 5 years (LIMA et al., 2021). In 1996, the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB), Law 9.394/1996 (BRAZIL, 1996), was published, recognizing Early Childhood Education as the first stage of Basic Education.

Subsequently, in 1998, ten years after the official recognition of the right to education for children aged zero to six, the Federal Government published the first guiding document for pedagogical proposals and principles for Early Childhood Education (ECE), the National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education (RCNEI) (BRAZIL, 1998), which suggested content based on five key areas of focus to be addressed in the organization of curricula: Movement, Visual Arts, Oral and Written Language, Nature and Society, and Mathematics. According to the document, the

development of identity and autonomy is closely related to the processes of socialization. In social interactions, the expansion of emotional bonds that children can establish with other children and with adults occurs, contributing to the recognition of others and the awareness of differences between people. This can take place in early childhood education institutions, which, by excellence, serve as spaces for socialization, as they provide opportunities for contact and interaction with adults and children from various sociocultural backgrounds, different religions, ethnicities, customs, habits, and value (BRASIL, 1998, p. 11).

According to this framework, the child

is a social being who is born with emotional, affective, and cognitive abilities. The child has a desire to be close to others and is capable of interacting and learning with them in a way that allows them to understand and influence their environment. As children expand their social relationships, interactions, and forms of communication, they become increasingly confident in expressing themselves (BRASIL, 1998, p. 21).

Despite being the first national document specifically published for Early Childhood Education (ECE) and aligning its theoretical concept with the cultural-historical perspective by advocating for "quality educational practices that can promote and expand the necessary conditions for the exercise of citizenship among Brazilian children" (BRAZIL, 1998, p. 13), the document did not address the differences in each childhood reality and the educational policies of each Brazilian region (SILVA, 2016). This issue supports one of the principles of the theory defended here, highlighting the importance of respecting and appropriating the culture and the historical and social conditions of each region in the country so that parts of human culture are not lost or forgotten by people.

With the promulgation of the National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education (DCNEI) (BRAZIL, 2009), issues concerning the education and care of young children were broadened based on the understanding that children are historical subjects who have the right to

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humanizing experiences. Among these experiences, Lima et al. (2021, p. 140) highlight “harmonious social relations with adults and among children in play situations, fantasy and imagination games, storytelling, and story construction, among others.”

The National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) (BRAZIL, 2018) for Early Childhood Education recognizes play as one of the six rights of children’s learning and development. This means that children's rights must be guaranteed in each of the five fields of experience proposed by the document: "The self, the other, and us"; "Listening, speaking, thinking, and imagining"; "Traces, sounds, colors, and shapes"; "Body, gestures, and movements"; and "Spaces, times, quantities, relationships, and transformations."

In addition to interaction, play also emerges as a key structuring axis of Early Childhood Education proposals. With this understanding, the organization of pedagogical practices focused on play can contribute to the learning process of children, in their relationships with adults, peers, and other children, as well as in moments of discovery and exploration, which expand the child’s repertoire.

According to Cultural-Historical Theory, humans, being social beings, develop their abilities through interaction with a more experienced partner, such as parents, teachers, or other children. Therefore, when lacking assistance, the child becomes capable of practicing what they have learned while simultaneously developing their individuality, thus characterizing themselves as an individual (LIMA; RIBEIRO; VALIENGO, 2012). Furthermore, according to this theory, the historical time and place in which the child lives create conditions for human capacities to be developed, as the environment and the social relationships that surround the child directly influence their cultural development.

Early Childhood Education, as the first stage of basic education, aims to enhance and promote conditions for the development of physical, motor, social, cognitive, and emotional aspects, as well as to explore the discoveries and experiments of children. Therefore, the question arises: how should pedagogical work be organized so that children develop holistically?

The works of art created over time document play, depicted by different artists throughout history. Documentation, with a mnemonic character, enables the observation, interpretation, and reflection of play, which is present in the daily lives of children (Figures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6) (RINALDI, 2020).

Figure 1 Painting "Children's Games" 1525. Pieter Bruegel.



Source: <https://virusdaarte.net/pieter-bruegel-o-velho-jogos-infantis/>. Accessed on January 5, 2023.

Figure 2 - Quadro "Children Playing on The Beach" 1884. Mary Cassatt.



Source: <https://www.arteeblog.com/2014/10/15-pinturas-de-criancas-brincando.html>. Accessed on January 5, 2023.

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Figure 3 - Quadro “Meninos Brincando”1955. Candido Portinari.



Source: <https://www.arteeblog.com/2014/10/15-pinturas-de-criancas-brincando.html>. Accessed on January 5, 2023.

Figure 4 - “Children Playing” 1960. Heitor dos Prazeres.



Source: <https://www.arteeblog.com/2014/10/15-pinturas-de-criancas-brincando.html>. Accessed on January 5, 2023.

Figure 5 – “Children Playing” 2000. Edilson Araújo.



Source: <https://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/obra11972/criancas-brincando>. Accessed on January 5, 2023.

Figure 6 - Painting "Children in the Square" (date not found). Ivan Cruz.



Source: <https://acrilex.com.br/portfolio-item/ivan-cruz/>. Accessed on January 5, 2023.

Brougère (2009 apud SILVA, 2016) argues that play is not innate; it is a social learning: one learns to play. Thus, from the images, it is possible to notice, in different situations, the presence of a partner in play, referring to the socializing aspect of play. Furthermore, the child also plays when alone, expressing their own thoughts, feelings, and personal desires.

In Early Childhood Education schools, teaching work requires the organization of pedagogical situations that can enhance contexts and conditions for children to appropriate human culture. This

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organization of "situations, times, places, materials [is essential] so that the child, in moments of collaborative action with an adult or another child, can activate the use of human qualities, such as different types of thinking and language" (LIMA; RIBEIRO; VALIENGO, 2012, p. 71).

With this perspective, pedagogical work involves providing experiences and moments filled with diverse play activities, as it is through these activities that the child understands the world around them. When discussing this topic, the mention of toys is almost automatic, as they can be any object used during play and are not necessarily handled by the child based on their original meaning.

Play is an activity that fosters psychological and cultural development, as evidenced in childhood. Therefore, the toy is an example of a mediating instrument that has a function and meaning as an object when socially constructed, and another meaning when a child chooses to use it. Its functionality and meaning are unique, as they stem not only from the object's function but also from how the child will attribute meaning to it, and this is the analysis that Vygotsky (2007) proposes [...] (GONÇALVES, 2014, p. 7).

When playing, the child explores the world of objects through the senses of touch, sight, smell, taste, and hearing (KISHIMOTO, 2010). These actions allow the child to discover different ways of using the same material, which, for adults, typically has a more restricted use. This process is fundamental for the development of the child's creativity, stimulating their curiosity, and even contributing to motor coordination. Thus, any object with which the child comes into contact holds an infinite range of possibilities in the world of the child's imagination.

According to Leontiev (2010), one of the thinkers of Cultural-Historical Theory, social role-play is characterized as an activity in which the reason for engaging in it is the process itself. Therefore, this activity, typical of the preschool period, has different outcomes and does not aim to satisfy vital needs, such as hunger, reaffirming that play has its end in itself.

The author also distinguishes between the playful activities of some animals and children's toys, stating that "the child's play is not instinctive, but precisely human, an objective activity, which, by forming the basis of the child's perception of the world and human objects, determines the content of their play" (LEONTIEV, 2010, p. 120). With this understanding, it becomes clear that history and culture permeate the social relationships in which children are immersed and can affect the development of children's play and interactions with objects, such as in the case of toys.

Moreover, the author explains that play changes from one developmental period to another, that is, from early childhood to preschool. In early childhood, the focus is on objects, discovery, and social use. Objects guide play, as when a child chooses to pick up a spoon, this can lead to play such as

offering food to dolls or pretending to cook. In the preschool period, the child's needs shift to social relationships. Consciousness emerges in the form of action, expanding knowledge of the objective world. "This world includes not only the objects that constitute the immediate environmental world of the child, the objects with which the child can operate, and does operate, but also the objects with which adults operate, but the child is not yet capable of operating, as they are still beyond their physical capacity" (LEONTIEV, 2010, p. 120).

It is through play and through the action on objects that the child appropriates the meanings of the human world, as well as becoming aware of how adults manipulate them. In this sense, the potential of play in Early Childhood Education is expanded, especially those that consider that children, through exploring the environment and manipulating objects, can make discoveries about the concrete world. This process not only stimulates children's actions on reality, contributing to the formation of active and expressive subjects, but also meets the needs children have related to belonging in social interactions. "A child who masters the world around them is the child who strives to act in this world" (LEONTIEV, 2010, p. 120).

Thus, the organization of the early childhood school can prioritize the child

the provision of rich and diverse experiences, based on the child's own experiences and access to a rich culture. Therefore, it requires that the school provide opportunities for group interactions, composed of children of different genders and ages; position the child as a citizen with rights and as a human being, who, like any other, has fears, desires, curiosities, creativity, and the will to grow, learn, and relate to the world and the people around them (LIMA; RIBEIRO; VALIENGO, 2012, p. 71).

From this perspective, the need for care and attention to the full development of specifically human capacities becomes evident, with the aim of reflecting on the holistic development of children. According to Kishimoto (2010), play is the main activity in a child's daily life. Therefore, it is important to emphasize that during Early Childhood Education, play is considered a necessity and a right of children, which must be respected and valued, as it is through play that the child learns to express themselves. Furthermore, it is important to highlight that play does not arise spontaneously, and the child is not born playing. Rather, they learn to play when interacting with other children, or even with adults, and this process contributes to their holistic development.

In addition to learning to play by observing and interacting with others or objects, the child also incorporates the rules of play. However, this does not mean that a learned play always occurs in the same way and everywhere, especially when this phenomenon is observed on a global scale. Although

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certain games around the world may be very similar, it is noticeable that the unique characteristics of different communities tend to prevail. This happens because when a child learns to play, in addition to reproducing, they can create new games and new rules based on their experiences and social relationships. Therefore, the school environment can promote conditions for traditional games of a particular people to be passed from one generation to the next, ensuring "the circulation and preservation of playful culture" (KISHIMOTO, 2010, p. 2).

In Early Childhood Education, children can, therefore, experience human relationships in an environment where they can manipulate objects, toys, and interact with other children through play, which is conducive to the development of communication between people from early childhood, in addition to contributing to the preservation of human culture.

According to Kishimoto (2011): "It is possible to understand that play helps the child in the learning process, providing imaginary situations in which cognitive development will occur and facilitating the child's interaction with different people, who will contribute to an increase in knowledge" (KISHIMOTO, 2011, p. 151).

Based on the above, we infer the essential role of social role play as an opportunity for the child to experience diverse ways of acting in the world without assuming adult responsibilities concretely. Furthermore, the child can learn and discover new values, customs, and feelings through socialization, while simultaneously developing their identity and autonomy. These initial ideas are expanded upon in the following discussion about the paths taken in the research.

Methodological Path of the Research

To achieve the proposed objective, some actions were established within the scope of the Teaching Program at São Paulo State University (Unesp) – Marília Campus, SP.

To this end, actions were carried out at a Municipal Early Childhood Education School (EMEI), highlighting the partnership between the university and basic education. The program aims to promote the connection between theory and practice in the educational context, as well as to involve the scholarship student in the school environment.

Thus, the actions carried out at the EMEI were organized to include: a) Involvement of the scholarship student in a class of Infantil II (children aged 5 to 6 years); b) Reading the school's Political Pedagogical Project; c) Reading the teacher's work project for the class; and d) Monitoring and observing the class in various spaces of the school, with a focus on the Freinet room, with the

aim of promoting the full development of the children through experiences and experiments via their work. The Freinet room is a space in the partner school named after the French educator, as the institution implements the principles of Freinet pedagogy (1977) in its educational practice. The teachers working at this school participate in collective and formative studies to appropriate Freinetian concepts, which aim to ensure humanizing education that guarantees the child's right and fosters the conditions for them to feel the need to learn more about the world and the culture produced by human.

The data were produced through the observation of the class in question, including a planning phase and preparation of the observer. According to Lüdke and André (2018, p. 30), "observation means determining in advance 'what' and 'how' to observe." Thus, the observation of the spaces and time related to play at the EMEI was defined as the object of study for the investigative proposal in discussion.

From this perspective, the data derived from the defined observation were described and analyzed based on the Content Analysis approach (BARDIN, 2011), considering the organization of two thematic analysis axes, namely: A) Free play in the different spaces of the school and B) Social role play.

It is important to emphasize that ethical principles were followed, starting with the parents' signing of a consent form for the use of images of their children for scientific dissemination purposes. Additionally, the data related to the school, the teacher, and the children were preserved.

Results - Actions Developed

The observation of the teaching practice of the class teacher was proposed with the aim of revealing the organization of teaching, focusing on play with children. Thus, the following topics present the two analysis axes that were structured for this exposition.

A) Free Play in the Different Spaces of the School

Currently, some research has discussed the role of free time in Early Childhood Education. According to Pereira (2018), a misconception is to think of free time as a moment when children can do whatever they want, without the teacher's intentional planning of these activities. Understanding that the teacher is the more experienced partner and responsible for educational actions, this free time should be guided and planned by the teacher. According to Pereira (2018) and Kishimoto (2010), in collaboration with school management, the teacher plans and organizes stimulating spaces and

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materials that create motivations for the children to develop.

During the observed moments, some children chose to play in the open area of the school, others on the lawn, running alongside the teacher, and others in the so-called kiosk or "house," which has several learning spaces.

One of these spaces is the kitchen, which contains various everyday items, such as a table, pots, cabinets, kitchen utensils in general, as well as plastic toys and toys made from recycled materials, such as cardboard. In addition to the kitchen space, there is the bedroom area, with a bed, dolls, stuffed animals, and pillows, where children lie down, explore, and play. In this space, while observing the children's actions, the researcher conversed with them, but always with the care of not interrupting their play.

Outside the kiosk, some children were handling wet soil, creating beautiful sculptures for an exhibition. After some time, following the teacher's guidance, the children organized the space and prepared for snack time, thus concluding the moment of free play in the outdoor area of the school.

Throughout the research, the value of human relationships in outdoor play at the school was noticeable. It is important to highlight that it was from these relationships between the children, in a moment observed by the class teacher, that the theme for the project to be developed during the 2022 school year emerged. While playing freely in the park, the children began to question the presence of ants on the ground. From the teacher's questions, hypotheses emerged about the existence of insects in the area. Thus, noticing the children's interest in insects, the teacher started a science project on this topic so that the children could express their prior knowledge about the subject and expand it.

Throughout the project, the children took the initiative to collect the insects they found on the lawn, placing them in a container to better observe the animals. Magnifying glasses were also offered so they could investigate the details (Photos 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5). Naturally, the children divided into groups and chose the areas where they thought they could find the animals. Frequently, questions and hypotheses about the animals arose, such as "What insect is this?", "I think it's looking for its family," "I think this one is a baby because it's small," "You can look up what insect this is on the internet," "These are eggs," "It's a spider," among others. Based on these questions, the teacher also asked the children questions such as, "Why do you think it's in this hole?" and "Is a spider an insect? Why?" with the purpose of helping them express their knowledge on the topic. Additionally, the children

also took the opportunity to play with the magnifying glasses, handling the new object and learning its effects on observing insects and other animals or objects.

Photo 1 - Lawn area. Children observing an ant nest.



Source: Project Data (2022).

Photo 2 - Lawn area. Children observing insects with the help of magnifying glasses.



Source: Project Data (2022).

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Photo 3 - Park area. Children observing an insect in the sand.



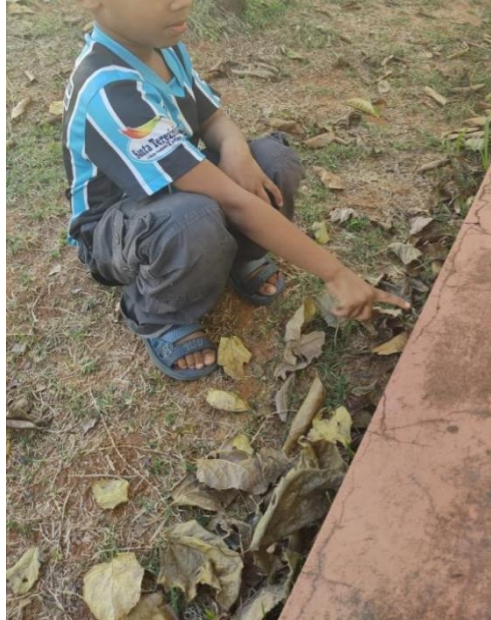
Source: Project Data (2022).

Photo 4 - Lawn area. Children playing with the sun rays that pass through the magnifying glass.



Source: Project Data (2022).

Photo 5 - Lawn area. Child observing ants.



Source: Project Data (2022).

Next, an educational situation was organized in which the children received modeling clay and walked freely around the school to search for elements of nature such as stones, branches, and leaves. The children were encouraged to build the insects they had observed during the course of the project (Photos 6, 7, and 8). The teacher's intervention, questioning the children about the external characteristics of the insects, made the investigative action powerful for reflections and conclusions about different species of animal life in the world.

Photo 6 - Classroom area: Children creating insects with modeling clay and natural elements.



Source: Project Data (2022).

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Photo 7 - Classroom area. Butterfly with its eggs made by one of the children.



Source: Project Data (2022).

Photo 8 - Classroom area. Insect made by one of the children.



Source: Project Data 2022).

With the use of visual documentation, it becomes possible to infer the value of free play in the school space by providing children with situations to explore and investigate, which may lead to the emergence of questions about the environment in which they live. The importance of the teacher's work is also highlighted, as they recognize when to intervene in free play, creating conditions and situations for a better appropriation of human culture, in this case represented by science.

Their interventions arise and expand from issues of children's interest during the educational process, such as when considering the provision of magnifying glasses and situations that allowed the children, as active subjects in the construction of knowledge and with a curious perspective, to explore the school environment in which they relate and play. On this matter, Rinaldi (2020, p. 129) concurs: "[...] in addition to witnessing the processes and learning trajectories of children, they also make them possible by making them visible. [...]". By witnessing the observable actions of children in the school environment, the concept of active subjects in the process (teacher and children) becomes evident.

Thus, the visible observation and listening by the teacher, documenting aspects experienced by the children, allows them to reflect on their pedagogical practice, as well as recognize progress in the children's educational processes.

B) Social role play

In moments of play, the teacher's attentive observation in the school context is essential because, through play, the child assumes social roles in situations that contribute to essential learning, enabling systemic development. In play, there is the playful use of objects, where the child substitutes one object for another, even changing its name, and furthermore, authentic relationships occur between the children as they discuss and plan who will assume each role in the game (ELKONIN, 2009). Social role play becomes the main activity during the preschool period. Children reconstruct appropriate human actions from earlier periods. The focus is on human relationships, what humans do, how they do it, and in what way they do it. By reconstructing a social role, the child triggers lived aspects, originating from their social environment, a creative and unique process for each human being (FAVINHA, 2022). Elkonin (2009)⁴ clarifies the content of social role play.

[...] which in preschool games primarily influences the realm of human activities and relationships between people, and whose fundamental content is man – the activity of man and the relationships between adults – because the game is a way to guide the missions and motivations of human activity [...] (ELKONIN, 2009, p. 8).

Based on the considerations made by Elkonin (2009) regarding the importance of social role-playing games, it is worth highlighting that, at the EMEI in question, these games are enhanced, stimulated, and carried out in the daily school life. As an example, aspects observed during the

⁴ Elkonin (2009) uses the term "protagonist play" when referring to social role-playing games.

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moments experienced by the children at the school, in the so-called Freinet room, can be emphasized. This room, as previously mentioned, is a specific space in the partner school dedicated to the study of objects and toys to be used by the children in social role play, also known as pretend play or protagonist play (ELKONIN, 2009).

The room is structured with different defined spaces. The bedroom is where the children's costumes, hats, clothing, shoes, and adult world accessories are kept, such as a full-size bed, a wardrobe with dolls, diapers, stuffed animals, a vanity with a hair straightener, hairdryers, combs, and hair cream, as well as a first aid kit. This space also contains a computer desk with a tube television and a keyboard.

In another part of the room, there is a kitchen, which contains appliances such as refrigerators, stoves, sinks, microwaves, a fruit bowl, a sandwich maker, as well as various pots, jars, cups, bottles, cutlery, and plastic food. Another area of the room contains toy cars, tools, and some building games. There are also shelves with educational games and tables with chairs.

Kusunoki, Lima, and Moraes (2023) highlight that the Freinet technique “Work Corners,” like the room described above, is designed with a pedagogical intention that anticipates the availability and access to different materials, so that children can experience potent educational situations and establish relationships with other people, events, and objects in the world.

During the observation moments, it was possible to notice the teacher's interaction with the children, as in the example of the pizzeria play. Most of the children were excited about the idea, and those who didn't want to participate played in other spaces, such as the car and bedroom areas. Wearing costumes, hats, and, in the case of most girls, oversized clogs, the children chose to re-enact the roles they identified with the most. One child wanted to be the mother, the teacher played the child, and two others played the father and aunt. There were also the attendants and pizza makers, who went to the table where the customers were sitting to take orders and then returned to the kitchen to prepare the pizzas and drinks, such as juices. Once ready, the pizzas and drinks were delivered to the customers, who gave feedback. The pizzeria owner, who had spent a long time with her friends arranging her hair at the vanity, was also present and frequently passed by the table to check on the service. After everyone was satisfied, the pizza was paid for by the father and mother, who held the money made by the children themselves using printer paper and markers, placed on the table next to them.

It was possible to highlight the joy and engagement of the children during the development of the proposal. As snack time approached, the teacher asked them to tidy up the room so that another

SOUZA; FAVINHA; MORAES

class could find the space organized, just as they had found it. Thus, everyone collaborated in the organization and then went to snack time. Photos 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 show this moment of interaction between the children and the teacher in promoting social role play.

Photo 9 - Kitchen area. Teacher and children playing pizzeria.



Source: Project Data (2022).

Photo 10 - Bedroom area. Child playing on the improvised computer.



Source: Project Data (2022).

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Photo 11 - Bedroom area. Children wearing adult shoes.



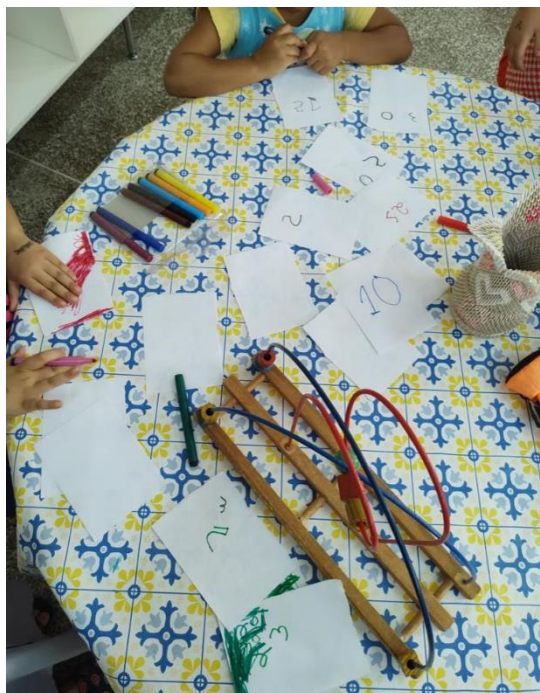
Source: Project Data (2022).

Photo 12 - Kitchen area. Child playing tea party.



Source: Project Data (2022).

Photo 13 - Kitchen area. Children making money notes with paper and markers.



Source: Project Data (2022).

Photo 14 - Bedroom area. Children playing at the vanity.



Source: Project Data (2022).

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Through the visual documentation, the value of social role play for the human development of children becomes evident, and it is understood that actions of this nature are necessary and need to be stimulated in Early Childhood Education schools.

By providing space, time, materials, and establishing authentic relationships with the children, the teacher enables both direct and indirect interventions (FAVINHA, 2022), with documentation serving as a proposal for the teacher's direct intervention. By documenting the lived action, the teacher is engaged in sophisticated levels of observation and interpretation. In the words of Rinaldi (2020, p. 131): "[...] It is impossible, in reality, to document without observing and, obviously, without interpreting." Direct intervention allows the teacher to refine and describe the acts and attitudes experienced by the children as they reconstruct social roles.

Additionally, Kusunoki, Lima, and Moraes (2023) assert the need for educators to understand the specifics of Cultural-Historical Theory (CHT) so they can create humanizing experiences for children. They highlight the potential of the Freinet pedagogical technique "Work Corners" – presented here in the Freinet room of the partner school – as a way for the teacher to organize pedagogical actions involving mediating elements responsible for developing the child's intelligence and personality at increasingly sophisticated levels.

In these situations, the teacher welcomes, observes, enhances, and expands contexts for social role play, even when proposing such actions, as seen in the example above. In these moments, the child externalizes how they are culturally appropriating the environment in which they live, and if necessary, the teacher can intervene to enrich the play. Furthermore, in the images, it is possible to see that various objects from human culture were available and accessible to the children. These aspects enhance the appropriation of meanings by the children during the play, as they represent social roles they have encountered within the family and other social contexts.

Final considerations

Based on the data from the research conducted and the theoretical frameworks studied, it is affirmed that social role play in Early Childhood Education is a valuable activity for promoting the development of preschool-aged children. Moreover, it is evident that the teacher's theoretical knowledge can support planning and educational organization to promote free play or social role play, considering the teacher's role in creating situations and conditions for children to exercise their right to play while simultaneously appropriating human culture.

From the experiences in the context of Early Childhood Education, it is possible to emphasize

the value of free play and social role play for child development, as activities that contribute to the child's appropriation of the richness of their surroundings. From the research, free play became a driving force for the emergence of a theme related to the field of science. Through it, the children played freely around the school space, accompanied by the teacher, initiating an investigative process. In social role play, by acting out roles and interacting with objects, they were able to express their understandings of the culture to which they belong.

Given this, it is important to highlight the teacher's role as an intellectual subject, equipped with the concepts of Cultural-Historical Theory, becoming a professional who consciously and intentionally guides their pedagogical work, with the goal of promoting human culture among the children.

The construction of this educational process requires organizing and enhancing the children's activities, valuing the knowledge they have already appropriated, and encouraging them to be active and participatory. By refining new historical and cultural knowledge, the teacher enables the children to expand their understanding of the world, starting from the early years of life.

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