Cultures of childhood in the work of early childhood education teachers

As culturas da infância no trabalho docente da Educação Infantil

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Abstract

This article shows results of a search on the cultures of childhood wich was developed at an institution of Early Childhood Education. It aimed mainly to investigate how the four axes of children cultures works: interactivity, playfulness, fantasy of real and reiteration. The methodology is qualitative, and it was characterized as action research. As for the results achieved, we highlight, the methodology itself that required the participation of individuals from the partner institution, the university team performance in the context investigated and the pursuit of the transformation of reality. These requirements increased the demands of commitment, mutual respect, team work and tolerance among social

actors in different institutions. The situation's study, discussion and intervention led to clashes between concepts and showed different looks for the child and for educational practice. We also emphasize the influences on pedagogical work, because it was found that the educators have expanded and updated their views, especially with regard to education for childhood and the importance of playful activities as an axis of the cultures of childhood. At diagnosis, we found that they charged too severe behavior that turned into obstacles to the peculiar activities of children. The expansion of the topic's understanding made the teachers to relate the four axes of childhood cultures together and realize the need of their role as mediators and responsible for conditions that ensure the participation of children as protagonists, and the right to an education that respects the childhood specificities.

Keywords: Childhood education. Cultures of childhood. Continuous education.

Resumo

Este artigo retrata resultados de uma pesquisa sobre as culturas da infância que foi desenvolvida em uma instituição de Educação Infantil. Teve como objetivo central investigar como são trabalhados os quatro eixos das culturas infantis: interatividade, ludicidade, fantasia do real e reiteração. A metodologia, de natureza qualitativa, caracterizou-se como pesquisa-ação. Quanto aos resultados alcançados, destacamos a própria metodologia, que exigiu a participação dos sujeitos da instituição parceira, a atuação da equipe universitária no contexto investigado e a busca de transformação da realidade. Tais requisitos ampliaram as exigências de comprometimento, respeito mútuo, trabalho coletivo e tolerância entre os atores sociais de distintas instituições. As situações de estudos, discussão e intervenção geraram embates entre concepções e indicaram olhares diferentes para a criança e para a prática educativa. Ressaltamos, também, as influências no trabalho pedagógico, pois foi constatado que as educadoras ampliaram e atualizaram suas concepções, principalmente no que se refere à educação para a infância e à importância das atividades lúdicas como um eixo das culturas da infância. No diagnóstico, verificamos que cobravam comportamentos muito rígidos, os quais se transformavam em empecilhos para as atividades peculiares das crianças. A ampliação da compreensão sobre o tema fez com que as educadoras relacionassem os quatro eixos das culturas da infância entre si e percebessem a necessidade de sua atuação como mediadoras e responsáveis por condições que

garantam às crianças a participação, como protagonistas, e o direito a uma educação que respeite as especificidades infantis.

Palavras-chave: *Educação infantil. Culturas da infância. Formação continuada.*

Introduction

Studies on children have intensified over the past two decades. Various fields of knowledge have contributed to the debate and sociology in particular has brought contributions advocating in favor of recognition of childhood as a social category resulting from a social and historical construction. Studies on this theme are identified in English principally by Cléopâtre Montadon (2001) and in French by Régine Sirota (2001). The first discussions appeared when childhood sociologists met, for the first time, in 1990 at the World Congress of Sociology. This debate contributed to childhood being placed at the center of reflection of sociological thought.

Montandon (2001) shows that studies seek to understand children as current and not future subjects. The assumption that childhood is a specific social construction, breaks with the traditional approaches of child socialization. For Sirota (2001), both in Sociology in general, and in the Sociology of Education, what prevailed was a Durkheimian conception of childhood which saw children as docile beings. Montandon and Sirota defend the urgency of the Sociology of Childhood which as a priority discusses the child as a subject of rights, and childhood as a social and historical construction.

Authors such as Pinto (1997) and Sarmento (2004; 2006) also advocate for the vision of children as producers of culture, as opposed to viewing them merely as reproducers of a content transmission process. Conceiving a child not in relation to what they lack in relation to

an adult, but being guided by what is proper to childhood as a social category with its own characteristics, rights and needs. This concept of childhood opposes the representations which, according to Ariès (1981) have long prevailed. The child, in the Middle Ages, had no prominent place, privileges or benefits, being viewed as interchangeable with a utilitarian function in society.

Although Ariès made a significant contribution to the history of the child, several authors disagree with some of the ideas contained in his work, criticizing it, for example for using iconography as a source and also for claiming that a sense of childhood did not exist in the Middle Ages. Kuhlmann Júnior (1998) opposes the theory that a sense of childhood only emerged in the Modern Age, exploring it in periods prior to this. The different perspectives on this stage of life are important, in that they incite us to seek information and knowledge on children and childhood, which went unnoticed for a long time. For Pinto (1996, p. 36):

> The conclusions of Aries on the history of childhood had a big impact in academic and educational circles and were undoubtedly a source of inspiration for numerous works in different latitudes, but likewise provoked various objections which do not invalidate, however, this deserving historian for having provided us with the awareness that what seemed a natural and universal phenomenon was in fact the result of a gradual building of modern and contemporary societies.

Childhood cannot be seen only as a universal given, nor as a natural category, but essentially as a historical, cultural and social construction. Accordingly, we must ask: what happens in Elementary school today? What vision do educators have concerning the child? Are they conceived as historical subjects, who appropriate and produce culture? Does the work in schools focus on the student in their specificity and value the childhood cultures? Is it possible to think about and adopt the conception of childhood in school?

A path for childhood

Starting from the assumption that different spaces and realities produce different childhoods, it appears that there are endless possibilities when it comes to being a child. The cultures of childhood, therefore, seek to examine the multiple situations in which infants live and how the first stage of life is built in these contexts. This heterogeneity initiates an invitation for an interpretive investigation of the singularities and differences that structure these ways of being a child. As well as being a childcare facility for small children, an Elementary school becomes a building space and conviviality of individuals which, when properly respected and integrated, may represent a guiding point of qualification for the pedagogical work which, consequently, exerts major influences on the complete development process of the students.

If our definition is guided by what children lack in relation to adults, we are not talking about real children, but rather of a project in progress, in which the image of the child is absent. Understanding the cultures of childhood is therefore essential because it enables new directions for educational activities, becoming an important tool for improving education, when presented together with the knowledge which historically accompanies childhood. For Sarmento (2003, p. 4):

> The cultures of childhood are as old as childhood itself, resulting from the societal process of the construction of childhood, coeval with modernity. The generational difference is thus historically constructed, with effects on the evolution of social status and social representations of children. In saying this, we refuse an ontogenetic conception of childhood cultures and distance ourselves from a perspective that "naturalizes" modes of perception, representation and meaning in the world for children, generated from specific developmental characteristics and performed in a social vacuum. Instead, the cultures of childhood, being socially produced, are formed historically and are changed by the historical process of rebuilding the social conditions in which children live and which govern the interaction possibilities of children with each other and with other members of society. The cultures of

childhood carry the marks of time, expressing society in its contradictions, strata and complexity.

According to Sarmento (2004), the cultures of childhood constitute the society in which the children are based, thus describing the characteristics of their environment, although, in a particular way. This enables the various children's manifestations to be seen in the description of their realities which, understood in the educational space, aids comprehension of the characteristics of each individual child. In analyzing the issue, Sarmento (2004) highlights four structural axes of the cultures of childhood: interactivity, playfulness, fantasy of real and reiteration. Each of them offers important points for understanding childhood from a new perspective.

The first axis, *interactivity*, according to Sarmento (2004, p. 23), shows that children live in a unique world, where they are in contact with many different realities which allow the formation of personal and social identity. School, the church, their family, their peers and social activities, among other institutions, assist this process, as well as the attainment of learning. Thus, peer culture fosters the sharing of the same spaces and relationships between equals.

Playfulness, as the second axis, is an essential aspect of child culture, and the interactive nature of playing is one of its first components. The author emphasizes that "the toy and playing are also key factors in recreating the world and in the production of children's fantasies" (SARMENTO, 2004, p. 26).

When we speak of playfulness, we are referring to both structured and unstructured games, because we understand that both are activities of the same nature, differing only in their degree of complexity: whereas unstructured games are dominated by the imagination and the requirement for social interaction is smaller, in structured games, the rules are the predominant factor, requiring the child to exchange views and complementary actions with the other participants of the game.

Regarding the third axis, *fantasy of real*, Sarmento (2004) demonstrates that it is through imagination that a child assigns meaning to things and builds their vision of the world. It is also through this that they acquire an ability to resist unwanted, painful and unusual situations. However, for the author,

> This expression – "make believe" is something inappropriate to refer to the specific way children transpose the immediate reality and reconstruct it creatively in their imagination, importing fanciful situations and characters into their daily lives, interpreting in an imaginative way the events and situations which occur. In truth, the dichotomy reality-fantasy is too fragile to denote the process of overlapping of the two universes of reference, which in childhood cultures are effectively associated. Moreover, we rightly ask ourselves whether this overlap does not also occur in the adult world, this is "real" isn't it, is after all, the purpose of the segmentation, transposition and recreation made in the act of interpreting events and situations (SARMENTO, 2004, p. 26).

As for the fourth axis, *reiteration,* Sarmento (2004) points out that a child's time is always being provided with new possibilities, capable of being repeated and restarted at any moment. This can occur in both the synchronic plane in which routines and situations are recreated and in the diachronic plane, through the sharing of structured and unstructured games and rituals "from older to younger children, continuing unceasingly, allowing that childhood be reinvented and recreated, starting all over again" (SARMENTO, 2004, p. 29).

Thus, it is considered that the establishment of Elementary school is a place where children should be understood as social stakeholders, because it is there that they relate to people, interact with adults and develop strategies to deal with issues from the social world in which they live. Studies on the *Sociology of Childhood* have made major contributions to a better understanding of children's cultures. They point out that one must understand the child from their own viewpoint, considering

that in every child there is above all a cultural, social and concrete subject, who thinks, feels, has rights and is seeking their place in the world.

Research pathways

This article is the result of research carried out over twelve months in a Municipal Pre-elementary and Elementary School (EMEIF) in the city of Presidente Prudente. The participants in the research were; the teachers and students from the Physical Education and Pedagogy courses at the Faculty of Science and Technology – Unesp, Presidente Prudente Campus; all members of the Centre for Studies and Research in Education, Playfulness and Childhood (CEPELI) and, also the teachers from the partner unit.

The methodology adopted was action research, which represented the possibility of linking theory and practice in order to promote mediation between the researchers and the group of participants, formal knowledge, theoretical and methodological rigor, and empirical knowledge. In relation to the researchers, this methodological choice allowed a trial in a real situation, in which the participants could intervene in a conscious and intentional way, concerned with the changes and advances in the reality studied.

The investigated EMEIF serves students from the local neighborhood, surrounding farms and smallholdings with ages ranging from 4 months to 5 years. In relation to household income, 27% earned 0-1 minimum wage and 32%, 1-2, minimum wages, which demonstrates that the largest share of the registered pupils came from a social category with low purchasing power.

Regarding the planning of the action research, the step by step structure highlighted by Thiollent (1988, p. 48-72) was adopted, which does not establish rigid forms of construction, instead, stating that the research steps be flexible. Thus, the work was developed in stages, with emphasis on the; definition of the topic; exploration, diagnosis;

place of theory (workshops); field of observation; data collection and external dissemination.

Based on the four structural axes of childhood culture referred to by Sarmento (2004) — interactivity, playfulness, fantasy of real and reiteration — the main objective was to analyze which concepts of the child and childhood cultures were underlying the work in two classes of an Elementary school: a Pre-II-A (kindergarten) class, with teacher Sonia[1], containing 28 children, and a Pre-II-B (kindergarten) class, with teacher Beatriz, containing 26 children, all aged between 4 and 5 years.

The simplest step was to define the theme, given that, with the agreement of the two teachers, we were asked by the management of the institution to conduct research on the cultures of childhood at the EMEIF. This was believed to be a promising start, since the methodology of action research requires that the school participants need to want to participate in the research in order for the objectives to be achieved.

In the second phase, the exploratory procedure, the proposal was presented to all participants with a description of the steps which needed to be carried out, seeking strategies for collective work, as suggested by the adopted methodology. The group defined that every Wednesday, between 8 a.m and 11 a.m, the two groups of students along with the teacher from each of the rooms, would assume activities related to the theme, using unstructured, structured and cooperative games as supports for the educational practice. The use of recreational activity in a real context incited questions, difficulties and progress which were later discussed. Also at this stage it was established that the two teachers would participate in the *Cultural Body: knowledge and practices* research group, as well as one WTPC per month, together with the staff from the university, to study and reflect on the subject.

Following this, the third phase began which constituted the diagnosis. The teachers had the opportunity to relate the main problems they faced on a day to day basis. Also at this time, they answered

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[1] The names of the teachers and children are fictitious.

semi-structured interviews and questionnaires aimed at collecting data about their concepts of the child, childhood and education which guided their educational practices.

In the fourth phase, we incorporated the place of theory. According to the methodological framework of action research, we conducted two types of workshops. The first, which involved only the members of the university team, was to study, plan and evaluate the actions of the research. This workshop, entitled the *Study and Intervention Group*, was held on Tuesdays from 2 p.m to 5 p.m, when the members met to study various texts and authors, evaluate and systematize the data collected from the previous week, and, always a week in advance, prepare lessons which were sent by *e-mail* to the EMEIF so that the teachers would have the lesson plans in hand. Fortnightly on Thursdays at the same time, they also participated in the *Cultural Body: knowledge and practices* research group at which the effective action was presented.

The second workshop was held at the school once a month during the meetings of the Working Time Pedagogical Collective (WTPC), involving the two EMEIF teachers, together with both teachers and students from UNESP, and also, in times of ongoing training, provided for in the EMEIF school calendar. These workshops aimed to promote discussion and reflection on the theme of childhood cultures. Overcoming problems, adjustments, criticisms, proposals, analyzes, records, exchanges of information and experience as well as knowledge about the way games, playing, the body, understanding the stages of development, social interactions and the mediation process could be worked on were also subjects of the meetings.

Regarding observation and data collection, which comprised the fifth phase, we sought to document all actions through filming, photos and field diaries, ensuring that the records would serve as support for analysis, discussion, evaluation and scientific production. While one intern worked with the children on play activities, another documented the necessary records. The interesting and rich observations facilitated discussions with the teachers about the theoretical framework adopted.

In the sixth and final phase, we incorporated external disclosure. After performing the research and demonstrating the progress, both in relation to the children, and the educators, it was possible to systematize the production of knowledge and enrich the educational practices, not only in the university and the participating EMEIF, but with other teachers who had already expressed an interest in taking part in a new stage of the study, having perceived the impact of the work on the ongoing training and improving the quality of education offered to the children. The knowledge gained was also disseminated through publications and various appearances at scientific events, which contributed to the construction of pedagogical works directed to the complete development of the child.

Results and discussion

At the beginning of the intervention, the role of the teachers was reserved and they summarized their actions as intervening to maintain discipline on the part of children. They found it difficult to listen to the children because they thought that, due to their age, they were immature, naive and incapable. To quote teacher Beatriz at the beginning of the study: "*How can we listen to what the children want? They do not yet have an opinion about what is important in their lives; it is up to us, the adults who know what is best for them*".

As the work progressed and discussions gradually deepened, the teachers' performance began to change. They began to feel more confident about the subject and started to mediate in the activities, becoming partners in the developing actions. There was also a noticeable change in the way they conceived childhood, compared to the concept presented at the beginning of the work, when they argued that "*childhood, as a period of immaturity, naivety, incapability, purity and preparation for adult life, is part of being a child*".

With the development of the studies and reflections, the teachers began to change their way of thinking and acting in relation to the children and observing in them aspects which, until that moment, had passed unnoticed. Now, in possession of a theoretical framework, various elements began to make sense. Objects; toys; moral values; interpersonal relationships, both adult/child and child/child gained new meaning in the context. These changes are discussed below, the results of the work performed with the four axes of the cultures of childhood, developed over the twelve months of the research project.

In relation to the first axis, *interactivity*, we observed the difficulties that the teachers had with working in groups, particularly with activities that would enable a child to interact with their peers. In teacher Beatriz's room, the desks were arranged one behind the other, in rows, making it difficult to participate collectively. We also observed that the children talked with their friends, lent each other materials and sometimes exchanged toys "secretly" between each other. On several occasions, we recorded the following comments from the teacher: "*everyone stay in your place, when you have finished, sit quietly so that your friends can finish their work*"; "*I have already told you not to lend things, they will get lost and then your mother will be angry with you*"; "*Matheus, do not disturb Gustavo, he needs to do the work himself*". In teacher Sonia's room, although the desks were in a circle, the situation was no different.

During the development of this research, various texts which discussed the importance of peer culture were worked on. In parallel with the workshops, the teachers invested in actions which allowed exchanges and interactions, breaking with the idea that children should discover the answers on their own. This investment in collective work favored other behaviors in the educational context in relation to values, attitudes and habits, which were seen in the performance of the children and referred to by the teachers, for example, a substantial improvement in supportive behavior in the collaboration between the children.

As for *playfulness*, the second axis, we observed a lack of activities to encourage the children to experience play, since they hardly

ever played and, when they did, they reproduced only standardized and impoverished aspects. This type of play concerned the teachers and the school as the children did not know how to organize themselves. They were reluctant to form lines or circles and listen to the explanations of the activities which, consequently, almost always turned the play into confusion. Their motor difficulties were another important observation point during this stage; the children had problems in relation to fundamental basic movements such as walking, running, skipping and jumping, among others. It was found that 70% of the children fell over at least once during classes, and the teachers, distressed and concerned about complaints from parents when the students hurt themselves in such "accidents", therefore limited running and other movements during play. This framework was soon overcome, because as time passed with better management and activities more appropriate to the possibilities for realization by the children who, in this context, had greater conditions and freedom to be more creative, and organize and lead their play. Forming lines and circles, discussing the rules for playing and organizing themselves were no longer problems for them, and the number of falls ceased to exist to the extent that it had before.

Another positive point was the expansion of the play culture. A 100% improvement was recorded in the two rooms, which proved that playing is not a natural activity for a child, but the result of social learning. The teachers played the role of mediators between the students and the play culture, this intervention was essential to broaden and diversify their knowledge. It was no surprise to observe the autonomy of the children during the games because they actively participated in the classes and it was common to see them playing at other times and spaces in the school, a fact that had hitherto been rare. The parents also provided input and reported that their children had begun to play more at home, watching less television and teaching siblings and friends the games they had learned in school.

Another aspect to be highlighted concerns rules. At the beginning of the fieldwork, this was the point that generated the most

difficulties in developing the work with the teachers because they wanted to establish rigid and immutable rules with the children. After discussions and studies on the role of rules in activities with children, the teachers realized that rules needed to exist and were important, however, they needed to be flexible and relevant to the context, understanding in fact what the children actually needed, which gave them a certain calmness and encouraged exchanges of points of view and the gradual construction of rules for the children. These were not the only aspects covered, but deserve special attention. In this research, we found, according to the data collected, that playfulness promoted many benefits and advances, for through it the child develops integrally, appropriates himself in the real world, relates and integrates socially.

Despite its relevance, the third axis, the fantasy of real, was not targeted by the two teachers for investment in educational activities, as was evidenced in the first interview with them. Teacher Sonia only worked with this axis when she told the children stories, and Beatrice claimed to sometimes work with fantasy and imagination, however, could not specify exactly how she did this. At the beginning of the activities, we observed that in the context of the proposed tasks the children had difficulties in entering the world of fantasy and imagination. One situation illustrates this reality particularly well: Leo, a student at Unesp, dressed up as Santa Claus to develop an activity, and Peter, a student in Beatrice's room, turned to him and said: "*What are you doing? Are you crazy? Why are you dressed as a woman?*" In order to address these difficulties, the lessons were planned carefully, seeking strategies to better work with this axis.

Over time, the activities gained meaning, with the children entering into the context and the teachers beginning to see the importance of fantasy in the children's everyday life. They realized that educating the imagination was necessary. The work was so important that, because of it, a playroom was set up at the school, to be used by everyone and the children called it "the corner of happiness". This space promoted the investigation as the students began encouraging the teachers to make greater use of the area.

Based on the theory and practical activities with the students, the teachers began to value environments conducive to fantasy in their daily lives, enabling the enrichment of imagination and the encouragement of various manifestations. As a result of the work, the teachers understood that imagination does not arise spontaneously, and for it to flourish, it is necessary for children to consider time, space, materials and narratives which promote it. A major investment was made in this direction, we played monsters, fairies, elves, circuses and house, we created opportunities for the children to be kings, queens, teachers, thieves, priests, bakers, drivers, artists, snakes, bears, elephants, parents, adults but, mainly, to be themselves. Of the many interesting situations that occurred in the playroom, one in particular caught our attention. The children had decided to play "Magic Kingdom of Lippi", and they were all seated in a circle when Jonas asked:

> – *Who is going to be the king?*
> – *Me!* Responded Rafael.
> Felipe disagreed:
> – *Not you! Kings can't be black.*
> Ana immediately said:
> – *My mother said it's not black, it's Negro.*
> Clara suggested:
> – *I think we should choose Davi because he has blue eyes, is very cute and looks like the king from the Cinderella movie.*
> – *You're right, why do the kings in films all have light eyes and skin?*
> – Caio asked.
> Julia added:
> – *In my storybooks the kings and queens are like that too.*
> – *In our classroom books as well, said Caio. In almost all the pictures the people are white.*
> And Amanda finished the conversation:
> – *I watched a movie on afternoon television which had a black king, in Africa, so I think Rafa can be king today, and afterwards we*

can choose someone else who wants to be king, what do you think?
(Teacher Beatriz's classroom)

The children then began a long discussion with the research team, discussing issues related to prejudice, standards of beauty and values. Fantasy, because it is linked to symbol, allows you, through play, to work with various contents and enhance expression of ideas and thoughts. This is fundamental in that games of imagination help small children to move from concrete to abstract actions, with other meanings. The results were very rich and the activities went beyond notebook and blackboard. The two teachers were able to evaluate the benefits of imaginative play to their educational practice and learn to use it as a teaching resource.

Through the activities carried out in this axis, the children developed fantasy by observing the situations they were experiencing, interpreting them and incorporating them into their lives. According to the data collected, the work enabled several advances, among which we highlight the progress in oral language, imagination, creativity, self-esteem and socialization between peers. However, the most relevant result was observed in relation to the two teachers, when they realized the importance of acting as interlocutors in this process.

To finish, we emphasize the fourth axis, *reiteration*. When we started the studies on childhood cultures, on several occasions, we recorded the concerns of teachers about meeting the requirements specified by the system, on schedule. As the work progressed, they began to realize that literacy is not only about teaching reading and writing on the blackboard and in the notebook, but also appreciating various other skills, with emphasis on rhythmic and expressive activities and playing.

The results in this axis were seen, principally in relation to the teachers, because as the work progressed, time gained other dimensions. In each activity, we sought to understand the children's actions in

relation to their progress at implementing the tasks. The work in this axis was reflected in all the others as the students' activities ceased to receive rigorous control from the adults, but was always guided by the objectives and desired results. Gradually it became clear that the differences in the performances of the proposed tasks did not mean that a child had problems, i.e., was considered slow compared to the others, but that each had their own timing.

As for the children, advances were experienced in both the synchronic and diachronic planes. Regarding the first, we realized that the children were free to repeat and recreate, according to their interests, practices which often followed a ritual, without looking around for an adult, wanting to have determined for them what and how to play. During play, we observed a repetition of facts and routines that followed tirelessly but also some disruptions, especially when a child conflicted with what had been proposed by the group. This was considered positive since they could deal with collectively established agreements and appropriate routines, rules and different modes of expression. In the diachronic plane, it was very interesting to see the emergence of leaders in the group. Beatriz reported that during the week when the children from her class went to the park, or other spaces, with colleagues from Pre-kindergarten they set themselves as protagonists of activities, teaching the younger children games and songs they had learned.

We believe that the four axes specified by Sarmento and worked on during the twelve months at the EMEIF helped us to collectively design, in Elementary education, a practice which was closer to the child. It enabled us, as portrayed by Sirota (2001), *a journey into the world of childhood*, being able to perceive the four interconnected axes, such that when we worked on one, the others became interweaved. We would like to emphasize, before the final considerations, that the child, in Elementary school, must be regarded as a producer of culture and, therefore, be conceived as a protagonist in the process of their own learning and development, intensely living their childhood and being respected and valued.

Final considerations

The developed research sought to overcome spontaneist, naturalistic tendencies and ultimately policies which hinder a new way of looking at childhood. Supported by the ideas of Sociology of Childhood, by highlighting their cultures and four structural axes, we sought, along with two teachers from an Elementary school, to understand childhood in its plurality, helping the children to be seen as full social stakeholders.

At the beginning of the work, there was a predominance of conceptions guided by the concept of the idealized child, i.e., a naturalistic view of childhood. With the interventions, studies and reflections, the teachers began to observe their students in ways that they had not formerly perceived, and various elements began to make sense. Objects, toys, moral values and interactions gained new meanings in context. They developed an understanding of the child as a social and concrete being who occupies a place in history, and their work in Elementary school as an area which guaranteed the means necessary for the development of different skills and effective participation of students in the proposals.

In relation to the four structural axes of childhood cultures, various satisfactory results were observed. The investment in interaction promoted behaviors in relation to values, attitudes and habits, which were observed in the children's behavior itself, in which was also noticed a substantial improvement in solidarity and collaboration between them, as a result of their investment in collective work. Playfulness contributed to learning in many aspects, principally in the development of the creative potential of the children. While exploring the fantasy of real, it was made explicit that children develop their imagination through observing the situations they experience and witness, interpreting and incorporating every experience. In reiteration, the teachers realized that the children needed to be treated as social stakeholders, therefore in the constitution of time and space in the work at the Elementary school there was no longer room for the depreciation of childhood, nor the exclusive unilateral position of an adult.

Finally, we emphasize that this research, apart from the development and initial and continuing training of all involved, promoted the understanding that literacy is not only teaching reading and writing, but also appreciating various other skills; such as dance, music, play, poetry, theater and games, among many other constituents, fundamental for developing the human capacities of small children.

Children have different ways of looking at and living reality. They not only take possession of culture, but build it. Orientating the child from the perspective of what we expect in the process of education is also necessary, however, one must look in a questioning and understanding way in order to interpret their behavior, not only as misbehavior, but as a historical-cultural way to understand, respond to and be in the world. Therefore, understanding the cultures of childhood, with their four structural axes, in addition to having been the aim of this research is an objective in the current historical context.

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