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Conceptions of childhood, play and interaction in Brazilian state curricula

Concepções de infância, de brincar e de interação em currículos estaduais brasileiros

Concepciones de infancia, juego e interacción en los currículos estatales brasileños

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Abstract

This paper is part of a macro-project funded by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq). The study aimed to analyse the process of materialising the National Common Curriculum Base (BNCC) in Early Childhood Education curricula in five Brazilian states - Bahia, Goiás, Pará, Paraná, and São Paulo - with an emphasis on conceptions of childhood, play, and interaction. The research is based on the theoretical frameworks of historical-critical pedagogy and historical-cultural psychology, whose epistemological and ontological basis is the method of historical-dialectical materialism. For the methodological procedures, a documentary analysis of the Early Childhood Education curricula of the aforementioned states was adopted, as well as testimonies from managers who took part in a didactic-training intervention carried out as part of the macro-project. The analysis showed that although the curricula are specific, they are in line with the BNCC. In the process of drawing up the curricula, the involvement of both public and private actors was evident, with emphasis on institutions representing the market, such as the curricula in Bahia, Goiás, and Paraná. Although all the states affirm, in their discourse, the importance of play and interaction as the structuring axes of Early Childhood Education, there are conflicts between the attempt to adapt national guidelines to local realities, the risk of standardisation, and the emptying of the curriculum.

Keywords: BNCC. Curriculum. Childhood. Play. Interaction.

Resumo

Este artigo é um recorte de macroprojeto financiado pelo Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq). O estudo objetivou analisar o processo de materialização da Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC) em cinco currículos da Educação Infantil de estados brasileiros - Bahia, Goiás, Pará, Paraná e São Paulo - com ênfase nas concepções de infância, brincar e interação. A investigação fundamenta-se nos referenciais teóricos da pedagogia histórico-crítica e da psicologia histórico-cultural, cuja base epistemológica e ontológica é o método do materialismo histórico-dialético. Quanto aos procedimentos metodológicos, adotou-se a análise documental dos currículos da Educação Infantil dos estados supracitados, e de depoimentos de gestores(as) que participaram de uma intervenção didático-formativa realizada no âmbito do macroprojeto. A análise revela que embora possuam especificidades, os currículos encontram-se em consonância com a BNCC. No processo de elaboração, ficou demarcado o envolvimento de atores públicos e privados, com destaque para as instituições representantes do mercado, a exemplo dos currículos da Bahia, de Goiás e do Paraná. Embora todos anunciem, no âmbito discursivo, a importância das brincadeiras e das interações como eixos estruturantes da Educação Infantil, identificam-se tensões entre a tentativa de adaptação das diretrizes nacionais às realidades locais, risco de padronização e esvaziamento curricular.

Palavras-chave: BNCC. Currículo. Infância. Brincadeira. Interação.

Resumen

Este artículo forma parte de un macroproyecto financiado por el Consejo Nacional de Desarrollo Científico y Tecnológico (CNPq). El estudio tuvo como objetivo analizar el proceso de materialización de la Base Curricular Nacional Común (BNCC) en cinco currículos de Educación Infantil en estados brasileños - Bahía, Goiás, Pará, Paraná y São Paulo - con énfasis en las concepciones de infancia, juego e interacción. La investigación se basa en los marcos teóricos de la pedagogía histórico-crítica y la psicología histórico-cultural, cuya base epistemológica y ontológica es el método del materialismo histórico-dialéctico. En cuanto a los procedimientos metodológicos, se adoptó un análisis documental de los currículos de Educación Infantil de los estados mencionados, así como testimonios de gestores que participaron en una intervención didáctica-formativa realizada como parte del macroproyecto. El análisis señaló que, si bien los currículos son específicos, están en línea con la BNCC. En el proceso de elaboración de los currículos, fue evidente la participación de actores públicos y privados, con énfasis en instituciones representativas del mercado, como los currículos de Bahía, Goiás y Paraná. Si bien todos ellos anuncian, en su discurso, la importancia del juego y la interacción como ejes estructurantes de la Educación Infantil, existen tensiones entre el intento de adaptar las directrices nacionales a las realidades locales, el riesgo de estandarización y el vaciamiento curricular.

Palabras clave: BNCC. Currículo. Infancia. Juego. Interacción.

1. Introduction

The National Common Curricular Base for Early Childhood Education (BNCC-EI), both in its structure and in its guiding concepts, reflects the foundations for children's education. In other words, the structure of the BNCC-EI (2018) presents: a brief description of this segment in the context of Brazilian educational policy, the rights to learning and development, the fields of experience, the specific objectives, and the transition from Early Childhood Education to Elementary School.

This structure is organised around six learning rights: "[...] to live together, play, participate, explore, express oneself, and know oneself" (Brasil, 2018, p. 40, author's emphasis), which are linked to the five Fields of Experience. These, in turn, "[...] constitute a curricular arrangement that embraces the concrete situations and experiences of children's everyday lives and their knowledge, intertwining them with the understanding that is part of their cultural heritage" (Brazil, 2018, p. 40), by favouring both the elaboration of curricular objectives and the development of scientific knowledge, considering the students' previous experiences (Brasil, 2018).

The Fields of Experience are named as follows: "The self, the other, and the us"; "Body, gestures and movements"; "Traces, sounds, colours, and shapes"; "Listening, speech, thought, and imagination"; and "Spaces, times, quantities, relationships and transformations". In each of these areas, specific learning and development objectives are established for three age groups: infants (0 to 1 year and 6 months), very young children (1 year and 7 months to 3 years and 11 months), and young children (4 to 5 years and 11 months). The document concludes with a discussion of the transition to elementary school, which, according to the government's discourse, promotes comprehensiveness and continuity between the stages of Basic Education.

In light of this organisation, which dialogues with Brazilian curricular policy, the central question of the current investigation emerges: How do the Early Childhood Education curricula of the states of Bahia, Goiás, Pará, Paraná, and São Paulo assume the concepts of childhood, play, and interaction?

To answer this question, the historical-dialectical materialism (HDM) method was used. According to Martins (2019), the HDM method has its own epistemological and ontological foundations, which means it cannot be classified as a qualitative approach. Moreover, the researcher aims to analyse the fetishised empiricism present in capitalist society, moving beyond phenomenal appearances to the essence. To this end, the multiple determinations posed by the interaction between form and content must be highlighted, in such a way that the objects studied are permeated by the dialecticity between the singular-particular-universal.

Regarding the methodological procedures, a documentary analysis of the Early Childhood Education curricula of the states listed above was adopted, in addition to the testimonies of 120 managers who participated in a didactic-training intervention carried out within the scope of the macro project, with a view to revealing aspects related to the historicity, implications, and developments of the BNCC in the Basic Education curricula.

Regarding documentary research, the considerations of Evangelista & Shiroma (2019, p. 89) are valid, since "to produce knowledge about documents is to produce awareness." Thus, when analysing the curricular bases for training aimed at children, it becomes imperative to examine different nuances that will impact the organisation of educational work at this formative stage. Based on these assumptions, as emphasised, we proceeded to critically examine the early childhood education curricula of the Brazilian states of Bahia, Goiás, Pará, Paraná, and São Paulo, focusing on the concepts of children, play, and interaction. Thus, one state from each Brazilian region was considered.

Regarding the didactic-training intervention, carried out within the scope of the Macro project financed by Universal Notice No. 18/2021, of the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), Franco et al. (2019) emphasise that this presents itself as an effective possibility for expanding the appropriation of knowledge by the participants, in addition to contributing to professional development.

Therefore, throughout the second half of 2023, ten modules were offered, with a total workload of 50 hours, conducted through the *Google Meet* platform. Each module was offered synchronously, at three distinct moments, with

the intention of favouring the participation of managers from different regions of the country, and considering the specificities and dynamics of the institutions where they worked.

These evaluative dialogues during the didactic-training intervention allowed us to observe the transition from syncretism (chaotic vision of the whole) to synthesis (understanding the totality of the determinations of reality), by enabling participants to analyse and question aspects identified in their social practice (Franco et al., 2019).

Using historical-critical pedagogy (PedHC) and historical-cultural psychology (PsiHC) as theoretical references, both based on the HDM method, the collected data were analysed based on the creation of analytical units in conjunction with the basic categories of HDM, such as totality, contradiction, and mediation (Paulo Netto, 2011).

With this methodological approach, it is reinforced that the article had as its central objective: to analyse the process of materialisation of the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) in Early Childhood Education curricula of five Brazilian states- Bahia, Goiás, Pará, Paraná, and São Paulo- with an emphasis on the concepts of childhood, play, and interaction.

2. The BNCC-EI and its relationship with the Brazilian states

The underlying discourse behind the BNCC states that it is not a curriculum, but merely a guideline for developing state and municipal curricula. Therefore, it was up to each state to develop its own curriculum. According to Paula & Silva (2021), in compliance with the instructions of the Ministry of Education (MEC), the states dedicated the years 2018 and 2019 to the elaboration of, or, for those that already had curricula, to the review and due updates of the Early Childhood Education (EI) and Elementary Education (EF) documents, to align them with the BNCC. In the states that were the focus of this investigation, the curricula were published in the following years: Bahia in 2020; Goiás in 2018; Pará in 2019; Paraná in 2018; and São Paulo in 2019.

It is important to highlight that in 2018, the process of constructing these curricula was supported by government initiatives, such as the BNCC Implementation Support Program (ProBNCC), created to assist states by working with state and municipal secretariats to construct and/or re-elaborate their curricula, in addition to actions developed by the Todos pela Base Movement. These bodies acted as important monitoring and inspection tools, with the aim of ensuring the adequate application of the guidelines established in the National Base.

Furthermore, during this process, the contributions of the National Council of Education Secretaries (Consel) and the National Union of Municipal Education Directors (Undime) also gained prominence. It should be noted that the period of work on state curricula in 2018 was marked by the political situation of discussions, clashes, and elections for federal and state executive and legislative positions, which often had consequences for the creation of these documents (Paula & Silva, 2021).

With the officialisation of the BNCC in 2017 for Early Childhood Education and Elementary Education, and in 2018 for High School, both public and private educational institutions began to structure their pedagogical projects aligned with the fundamental learning defined by the document, which was consolidated as a central parameter for curriculum development throughout the country. As established in the official text, "[. . .] while the competencies and guidelines are uniform, the curricular proposals present variations. Furthermore, the curriculum must be oriented towards the development of skills, with the contents acting as means to this end" (Brazil, 2018, p. 11), a foundation that is supported by the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (Law No. 9,394/96), by ensuring both essential knowledge and basic curricular references.

All the curricula analysed were developed collectively. The Bahia curriculum (2020) included the participation of several individuals, such as state secretaries of education, heads, coordinators, counsellors of the Bahia State Council of Education, and representatives of Undime. In addition, private entities such as Salvador University (Unifacs), ISEO College, Unijuí University/RS, and the Lemann Foundation also participated. Technical partners include the Lemann Foundation itself, the Faz Sentido Project (composed of the Inspirare Institute, Tellus Institute, and Unibanco Institute),

and the Getulio Vargas Foundation (FGV). The Early Childhood Education stage was coordinated by a representative from Undime (Bahia, 2020).

In the Goiás curriculum (2018), working groups were created, organised by disciplines and curricular components, such as: Portuguese Language, Geography, Art, Theatre, Music, Dance, Visual Arts, History, Natural Sciences, Physical Education, English Language, Mathematics, and Early Childhood Education. Among the participants, the presence of representatives from private educational institutions, such as Colégio Objetivo, Colégio Athos, Colégio Shalon, Universidade Salgado de Oliveira (Universo), Colégio Marista, Union of Private Schools (Sepe), Social Service of Industry (Sesi), National Service of Industrial Training (Senai), and Social Service of Commerce (Sesc) is noteworthy (Goiás, 2018).

The Pará curriculum (2019) lists the names of several individuals involved: coordinators of educational stages, state and municipal secretaries of education, and members of Undime and Consed. The group responsible for coordinating the development was named the "PROBNCC Pará Commission"; however, there is no mention of the participation of private entities.

The Paraná curriculum (2018), like the others, was developed with the collaboration of state and municipal education secretaries, coordinators, heads of basic education, and representatives from Undime and Consed. Also noteworthy are partnerships with private higher education institutions, such as the Northern University of Paraná (Unopar), the Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná (PUC-PR), and a representative from PROBNCC.

In the São Paulo curriculum (2019), some individuals are mentioned, such as coordinators and managers of the state and municipal education departments. However, the document does not specify whether working groups were formed, nor does it present the names of the participants (São Paulo, 2019).

The approval of the BNCC, which guided the construction of these curricula, was accompanied by critical positions from researchers concerned about the direction these documents were taking, especially regarding the risk of curricular standardisation (Aguiar & Dourado, 2018; Caetano, 2020). Despite its rhetoric in defense of quality education, critics say the BNCC hides a rigidity in school content, which is consequently reflected in state curricula (Bedin & Antônio, 2023).

Furthermore, it should not be overlooked that the BNCC, according to Caetano (2023), by influencing the development of state curricula, reveals the interests of conglomerates linked to private business groups. "Many of these groups sought to direct educational policies through state agencies, as well as influence the content of the proposal in undemocratic ways" (Caetano, 2023, p. 21). The author adds that, in this context, Brazilian private foundations and institutes, such as those indicated in the states' curricula, represented by the Movimento pela Base, expressed their position in defense of market interests, even going so far as to pressure the MEC itself to implement this proposal.

2.1 Materialisation of BNCC-EI in state curricula

In this context of monitored implementation, in the states researched (BA, GO, PA, PR, SP), it can be observed that the curricular documents establish a complex dialogue with the national guidelines; while some faithfully maintain the structure of the BNCC, others introduce regional elements, especially in the Fields of Experience that involve culture and identity. As Arroyo (2013) highlights, this conflict between the national and the local reflects deeper disputes about what knowledge is considered legitimate in the school space.

To highlight this relationship in the curricula, we used the concepts of childhood, play, and interaction, as established in the approval of Resolution No. 5, of December 2009, which sets the National Curricular Guidelines for Early Childhood Education, when stating that the child is:

[...] a historical and rights-bearing subject who, in the interactions, relationships, and daily practices experienced, builds his personal and collective identity, plays, imagines, fantasises, desires, learns, observes, experiments, narrates, questions, and constructs meanings about nature and society, producing culture (Brasil, 2009, p. 1).

In addition, as a pedagogical proposal to serve children in Early Childhood Education, it should:

[...] guarantee children access to processes of appropriation, renewal, and articulation of knowledge and learning of different languages, as well as the right to protection, health, freedom, trust, respect, dignity, play, coexistence, and interaction with other children (Brasil, 2013, p. 82).

It is observed that the DCNEI is a guiding document for Brazilian educational policies and curricular and pedagogical proposals developed to support pedagogical practices in Early Childhood Education. Its guiding principles are play and interactions, with the aim of “[...] enabling their condition as active subjects and expanding their possibilities of action in play and interactions with other children, moments in which they exercise their ability to intervene in reality and participate in curricular activities with their peers” (Brasil, 2013, p. 90).

Within this legal context, we sought to identify how these axes are expressed in state curricula, in order to understand how they support educational work. Therefore, the analytical framework focused on the concepts of childhood, play, and interaction. For educational purposes, Table 1 was created to systematise these concepts.

Table 1 - Conceptions of childhood, play, and interaction

Brazilian State	Conceptions	Citation of conceptions
Bahia	Childhood	"The child's becoming is captured in its ineliminable virtuality without a staged logic of child development being the final word for pedagogical initiatives to be configured. The positivity of the child-being in incessant self-organisation, in incessant creation (poiesis) comes first, without disregarding, of course, the child's human nature, but the latter does not emerge without the former; it is an impossibility in the emergence of the child-being's own humanity. Becoming means incessant creation, the inescapable poietic emergence of every child" (Bahia, 2020, p. 111).
	Play and Interaction	"[...] linked to play and games and their formative potential. An Early Childhood Education curriculum should always be a playful curriculum for a playful being." (Bahia, 2020, p. 125). "From our perspective, play is a fundamental characteristic of human beings, on which children depend heavily for their development. Therefore, to grow, as well as to position themselves in the world, they must play. A concern arises when the tendency in our schools is to adopt play as a preparatory rather than recreational aspect. This reality makes the problematised use of play in schools urgent. Bringing playfulness back into children's daily educational lives, in an experiential and reflective way, and protecting it from a certain instrumentalist practice, is one of the important aspects we seek to draw attention to" (Bahia, 2020, p. 126).
Goiás	Childhood	"Therefore, there is no such thing as childhood in the singular, but rather in the plural, because children's experiences are very distinct and depend on the group to which they belong and their circumstances, as mentioned. Thus, to grasp this concept in its complexity, teachers cannot ignore that different societal projects coexist in the same historical period, generating social inequalities and processes of exclusion, including in educational institutions. One of the functions of this space is to equalise children's opportunities for access and participation in the appropriation and production of different knowledge" (Goiás, 2018, p. 69).

Brazilian State	Conceptions	Citation of conceptions
	Play and Interaction	<p>"In the DCNEI (BRAZIL, 2009), as mentioned, the curriculum, assuming the child as the centre of curricular planning, is conceived as a set of practices that must articulate children's knowledge and experiences with the knowledge produced throughout humanity, categorised, as mentioned, into scientific, technological, environmental, artistic, and cultural, with its structuring axes being games and interactions" (Goiás, 2018, p. 71).</p> <p>"Therefore, recognising the importance of play for the child's learning and development process and, consequently, because it is one of the structuring axes of the curriculum, reaffirms the need for educational institutions to set aside several moments daily for children to play with their peers, with different age groups, and with adults" [. . .]. "Finally, the definition of interactions and games, as structuring axes of the curriculum, demands from educational institutions and teachers the urgent recognition of the child as the centre of curricular planning, a co-participant in the planning and development of pedagogical action" (Goiás, 2018, p. 89).</p>
Pará	Childhood	<p>"Currently, many studies are carried out that think of childhood as a heterogeneous category, that see children as social and historically situated subjects in a given context, and constituted by the interactions and experiences lived in their realities, which implies that their development takes place among other human beings, in a given time and space" (Pará, 2019, p. 30).</p>
	Play and Interaction	<p>"By assuming the conception of children as beings with capabilities and potential, we understand that they can, even before they can speak or walk, develop and re-elaborate complex knowledge that is concretely observable in the actions they perform and the languages they articulate, thus defining the commitment to an emancipatory conception of men and women who interact in the world and with the world" (Pará, 2019, p. 45-46)</p> <p>"[. . .] The child is a subject and it is as a subject that he or she arrives at school, and not merely as a "student"; in this condition of human being and person, the child must be considered in his or her specificities and languages, multiple characteristics that must be known by all professionals who interact with him or her. It is necessary that the concept of the child-historical-cultural subject makes sense in school practice, in the lives of teachers, managers, and pedagogical coordinators and gains a field of significant action in the identity of each person who is a participant in the school community" (Pará, 2019, p. 46).</p> <p>"[. . .] playing, within the scope of this document, is assumed as an act that reveals the existence of the child as a person, of their identity, and is therefore linked to their own reason for being in the world. After all, playing is something very serious because it involves a range of complex and refined knowledge, elaborated and re-elaborated, by human beings occupying a historical time called childhood [. . .]. Another fundamental movement we are being driven toward is to dismantle the notion of play as limited to early childhood education or school, or as a restricted field of children's activity. It is necessary to broaden our perspective on childhood and children to better understand that play is not tied to schooling, and it is imperative to deschool it. Playing belongs to human life on Earth, more particularly to the time of being a child, and is linked to ways of being and earthly cultural productions" (Pará, 2019, p. 45).</p> <p>"Considering the conception of a child as a historical-cultural subject, playing is shown as a legitimate expression where multiple languages revealed in thought and movement intersect, exercising autonomy, argumentation, creation, and rights, among many other premises that constitute being a child, articulated in expression and language and as an action that promotes learning. In this sense, playing, as a child's experience, must pass through the sensory sieve of the relationships established and built between adults, between adults and children, and between children and children" (Pará, 2019, p. 46).</p>

Brazilian State	Conceptions	Citation of conceptions
		<p>"It is interesting to highlight that playing not only exists and has meaning when the child arrives at School or Early Childhood Education, playing and games translate and reveal who children are, how they think or organise their thoughts, what they experience in their daily lives and cultures, as well as revealing their interactions with adults and their peers, therefore, this space is not sufficient to encompass its scope" (Pará, 2019, p. 47).</p>
Paraná	Childhood	<p>"Thus, it is necessary to understand the child as an active subject who continually develops as they establish social relationships in which they acquire knowledge belonging to their cultural heritage. Within this context, the role of education is fundamental, since in this space, there is the intentional teaching of knowledge and understanding that promotes human development" (Paraná, 2018, p. 52).</p>
	Play and Interaction	<p>"Games and interactions happen daily between children and represent their right to childhood, to live and grow in a playful and enjoyable environment that provides them with safety and confidence. However, this does not mean that these moments eliminate the need for intentionality and planning in pedagogical practice, as learning and development objectives become more complex or different in each age group. In this sense, it is important to plan with everyone's unique characteristics and right to learn in mind" (Paraná, 2018, p. 34)</p> <p>"Many games are cultural and artistic manifestations typical of childhood and allow for the expression of freedom and playfulness. Play is a form of interaction and also promotes development. It is important to consider that through play, children explore objects, learn about the different social functions of culture, and develop behavioural control, as they perform the actions of an adult, imitating them in different roles" (Paraná, 2018, p. 41).</p> <p>"Children learn about and express their "world" through interactions and play. They organise their thoughts and communicate, highlighting the importance of paying attention to this expression typical of childhood. While the teacher is a keen observer and gets to know their child by monitoring and analysing their development, they can also direct their actions through new games that provide opportunities for development and learning" (Paraná, 2018, p. 42-43).</p>
São Paulo	Childhood	<p>"In this sense, the relevance of Early Childhood Education as a time to experience childhood is irrefutable, as a way of enhancing the integral formation of children, supporting their development process, since from birth the child attributes meaning to their experience, gradually expanding their curiosity and concerns with the mediation of the guidelines, materials, spaces, and times that organise the different learning situations" (São Paulo, 2019, p. 52).</p>
	Play and Interaction	<p>"[...] contrary to the idea of preparatory, this stage requires prioritising interactions and play as structuring axes for the organisation of time and space, in order to guarantee rich learning experiences, which does not fit with the proposition of stagnant, fragmented activities [...]. An Early Childhood Education institution that prioritises interactions and play has the practice of listening to children, for example, about how toys should be arranged in the park, how the library should be organised, the spaces, and the adequacy and arrangement of furniture" (São Paulo, 2019, p. 53-54).</p> <p>"[...] in the proposed activities and in the management of environments that promote interactions and play [...], teachers must be attentive and aware of the interests that arise throughout the day, during play, and know how to correlate them with the learning objectives, giving pedagogical meaning to their own interventions" (São Paulo, 2019, p. 56-57).</p>

Brazilian State	Conceptions	Citation of conceptions
		<p>“[. . .] Nurseries and preschools need to be organised as spaces for welcome, discovery, interaction and play, with conditions that favour full development, in a quality educational environment, which contributes significantly to the construction of learning for all children” (São Paulo, 2019, p.58-59).</p> <p>“Learning and development have interactions and play as their structuring axes; these axes guarantee the RIGHTS to live together, play, participate, explore, express and know oneself” (São Paulo, 2019, p. 67).</p>

Source: Prepared by the authors based on state curricula (2025).

A close look at the conception of childhood/child in the curricula of the five states reveals that there are similarities, but also differences between them. In the case of the Bahia curriculum (2020), the introduction presents the idea that the adopted conception is not limited to a single framework, but rather results from a set of them, as it understands the child as an existential, social, and cultural variant. The child is seen as an actor, a protagonist of the curriculum; it is based on their experiences, learning practices, and experiences that the possibility of contributing to curriculum development is constructed. The document emphasises that the child is the author of their own learning, thus requiring active and constructionist pedagogical practices.

This perspective refers to the critique of Duarte (2001), particularly of "learning to learn" pedagogies, which conceive the idea that children, by themselves, are capable of producing and acquiring essential learning, simply by learning to be protagonists. However, from the PedHC and PsiHC perspectives, it is understood that, although children must be active in their formative process, this does not eliminate the need for intentional planning and organisation of teaching by teachers. In other words, it is necessary to teach, because it is teaching that enables the appropriation of the most complex social elaborations produced by humankind. Such knowledge will not be acquired solely through "doing for the sake of doing." Therefore, it favours the understanding that the child is an individual who develops his or her higher psychic functions through learning that is organised and mediated for this purpose.

From this perspective, for children to appropriate elements of culture and humanity, it is essential that schools organise teaching, time, and spaces with pedagogical intentionality, enabling psychological development. This implies recognising that children play an active role in their development, but not alone, as they must be guided by the teacher through the mediation of symbolic instruments.

The Bahia curriculum (2020) also criticises conceptions of childhood based on child development theories that organise childhood into stages. It is agreed that childhood should not be reduced to a linear set of phases; however, based on the PedHC and PsiHC frameworks, it is necessary to provide children with certain activities to foster their psychological development. The aspect of not explicitly revealing a theoretical contribution demonstrates conceptual fragility and lack of scientific foundation, as Lombardi (2020) points out, when analysing the conception of childhood in the aforementioned curriculum.

Pasqualini & Eidt (2019) and Saviani (2021) add that human productions are not confined to a specific generation or social context, but are transmitted between generations, so that subsequent individuals can appropriate and improve them according to historical needs. It is through learning the culture historically developed by previous generations that human beings develop their higher psychic functions, such as language, memory, and attention.

In turn, the Goiás curriculum (2018) understands the child as protagonist, active, and capable of expressing themselves and producing their own meanings through their actions. It recognises the role of adults as guarantors of children's rights and as mediators who must create conditions for children to be active in various social practices. In doing so, the curriculum rejects the view of children as passive beings, merely adaptable to their social environment. Childhood is interpreted as a social category, a product of historical and "intergenerational" circumstances, since the process of educating a child carries the values, knowledge, and beliefs of two generations: those who have already experienced a given historical period and those living in the present.

The document also mentions the concept of "childhoods," in the plural, recognising that each child's life experiences are diverse and related to the social contexts in which they live. In this sense, it emphasises that there are different societal projects within the same historical context, marked by inequalities and social exclusion (Goiás, 2018). These aspects are pertinent and enrich the concept presented by the curriculum; however, it can be observed that the document does not explain the theoretical perspective that underpins its guidelines, which may open space for the adoption of multiple references, not always compatible with each other. In view of the above, we refer to Pasqualini (2010), who warns that, without a clear theoretical basis, the conception of childhood in school education will corroborate a generic understanding of pedagogy or will place the child as the protagonist to develop their skills, as expressed in this document.

The state of Pará (2019) presents children as historical subjects with rights, who need to be educated based on their existing knowledge and experiences. In this sense, it is the school's responsibility to "harmonise" this previously acquired knowledge. The curriculum document understands that children are inserted into a territory, a culture, and that this belonging contributes to their development as citizens. It also reiterates legislation that recognises Early Childhood Education as an integral stage of Basic Education and as a fundamental moment to ensure children's rights.

In the Pará State curriculum (2019), the concept of childhood is associated with factors such as the reduction in birth and death rates, as well as the expansion of schooling, elements that corroborate a modern conception of childhood. It is argued that being a child is a diverse experience, as these experiences are situated in specific historical and social contexts. This perspective is similar to the concept defended in this research, based on the theoretical frameworks adopted, which indicate that social interactions are essential to the process of humanisation. Therefore, considering childhood involves reflecting on the ways in which collective humanity is produced in each individual, in addition to considering their social, political, and historical reality (Pasqualini & Eidt, 2019). Thus, the curriculum emphasises that children:

[...] must be viewed from their economic, social, and cultural specificities; it is thus possible to speak of poor, rich, eastern, western, urban, agrarian, indigenous, riverside, quilombola childhoods, etc. Each one is made up of characteristics that are similar and different from each other and from their own peers (Pará, 2019, p. 31).

The social environment in which childhood develops directly influences its development; therefore, children's interactions with their peers are fundamental to their development as individuals. According to Pasqualini & Eidt (2019), the school institution is the space for developing humanity in children, considering their origins but also expanding them by providing opportunities for the development of their higher faculties. Although the Pará curriculum text (2019) does not mention authors linked to PedHC or PsiHC, the elements presented demonstrate approximations with these concepts.

It is worth emphasising that capitalist society, marked by structural contradictions and profound social inequalities, often prevents a significant portion of children from experiencing a full and dignified childhood. While the quality of childhood experiences is directly related to access to knowledge and educational opportunities, the exclusion of these elements seriously compromises human development. Understanding this reality is fundamental for the development of educational proposals in Early Childhood Education that are in tune with both the child's developmental stage and the limits imposed by their experiences, in order to expand and qualify their humanisation process (Pasqualini, 2010; Martins & Pasqualini, 2020).

The Paraná curriculum (2018) is the only one that directly uses the expression 'culture accumulated historically by humanity' (Paraná, 2018, p. 52). Furthermore, it understands the child as a historical, social, and active subject, who appropriates human specificities through interactions with others and with elements of culture. Childhood is conceived as a time for learning the knowledge that makes up humanity's cultural heritage, and therefore, the need for organised and intentional education aimed at human development is advocated. The curriculum recognises legislative advances

that conceive of the child as a whole being and emphasises that school time and space must be organised to meet this purpose.

It is also important to emphasise that childhood has specific characteristics that must be considered in pedagogical practices. For each period of child development, there are specific educational interventions, mediated by pedagogical practices based on systematic knowledge and experience (Paraná, 2018). From a theoretical perspective, the Paraná curriculum appears to be the one that most closely reflects principles compatible with PedHC and PsiHC. However, there is no direct mention of the authors of these concepts. This raises some doubts about the conceptual depth of the terms used, which is why the term "apparent" is used here. The discourse expresses a critical perspective on education, but throughout the document, the proposal is outlined by the Fields of Experience and the skills- and competencies-centred approach of the BNCC (Marsiglia et al., 2017).

From the beginning, the São Paulo curriculum (2019) states that Early Childhood Education articulates the binomial care and education, as well as the guarantee of learning and development rights provided for in the BNCC. It is argued that childhood should not be reduced to a chronological time or a stage of development, but rather understood as a social and symbolic space, permeated by different cultures. Therefore, the term "childhoods" is used in the plural to reaffirm the diversity of children's experiences. However, according to Pasqualini (2010), discussing the binomials of care and education in a dissociated manner fragments developmental processes and maintains a welfare-based view of early Childhood Education.

Furthermore, the curriculum advocates "the concept of a competent child, highlighting their ability to establish relationships and develop explanatory hypotheses, communicate, create, and maintain interpersonal bonds, build knowledge and cultures, etc." (São Paulo, 2019, p. 51, author's emphasis). In this case, a competent child is one capable of developing skills, formulating hypotheses, and building knowledge and cultures.

However, a reflection based on PedHC and PsiHC is in order here, as school knowledge and everyday knowledge are distinct. Knowledge can be acquired through daily experiences, through relationships with family and social circles. School knowledge, in turn, derives from humanity's greatest achievements, especially in the sciences, and should be selected, systematised, and organised in the school curriculum. Thus, it is understood that the child is in a process of humanisation, appropriating the most elaborate collective cultural productions (Pasqualini & Eidt, 2019). In the analysed excerpt from the São Paulo curriculum (2019), the focus is not on school content, nor is it clarified what type of knowledge the child should constitute, nor is the mediating role of adults mentioned. Given the absence of more detailed explanations, it is not possible to state precisely what type of learning the text refers to.

In light of the above, it is important to emphasise that interactions between children and adults in the cultural environment exert a decisive influence on development from the earliest years of life. These interactions play an essential role in transmitting cultural values, knowledge, and social practices accumulated historically by humanity (Vigotskii et al., 2016).

Even so, the text of the São Paulo curriculum (2019) refers to the integral formation of the child, by allowing him/her to experience multiple childhoods through mediation with pedagogical intentionality, organisation of materials, times, and spaces that structure the learning moments.

The analyses of the five curricula, with regard to the conception of childhood/child, reveal a common search for using socially valued terms, such as active child, protagonist, expressive, capable of acting and learning. Sometimes, terms similar to those of the PedHC and PsiHC are even used, but without proper theoretical depth or direct reference to the authors of these approaches, which weakens the curricular proposals. If the teachers who will have access to these documents are not introduced to the works that support these concepts, how can they develop pedagogical work consistent with them?

The second aspect observed in the curriculum documents refers to the different approaches to play in Early Childhood Education, which reveal both advances and contradictions in relation to the principles of PedHC and PsiHC.

In the Bahia curriculum document (2020), for example, there is a striking conceptual uncertainty, because, although the curriculum advocates overcoming spontaneity, it does not advance an explicit definition of play.

In relation to the Goiás document (2018), play is presented from a more instrumental perspective, directly linked to the formal curriculum and the teaching-learning process. This normative approach transforms play into a curricular tool, distancing itself from the PsiHC conception, which understands play as a symbolic activity fundamental to development (Pasqualini, 2010; Vigotskii, 2016). This instrumentalisation tends to reduce the creative and formative potential of play.

In contrast, the Pará curriculum (2019) presents a unique proposal that values local cultural expressions. The document not only recognises but also institutionalises play as a manifestation of the cultures of rural, aquatic, quilombola, and indigenous children, stating that "through play, they reflect their reality, construct themselves as subjects, and represent their worlds" (Pará, 2019, p. 35). The emancipatory approach that permeates the text is evidenced by its appreciation of "mythopoeia, fantasy, and play" (Pará, 2019, p. 37) as constitutive elements of cultural identity. This perspective overcomes curricular homogenisation by promoting the right to childhood in its diversity. Particularly significant is the appreciation of quilombola games as cognitive, affective, and social expressions (Pará, 2019), approaching PsiHC by understanding play as an activity of cultural significance.

The Paraná State curriculum (2018) stands out for consistently articulating play and interactions as structuring axes of child development. Throughout its text, the Paraná document expresses a close connection with the premises of PedHC and PsiHC, treating play not as a didactic resource, but as an educational principle essential to the human condition and the integral development of children.

In São Paulo (2019), there is an emphasis on play directed at the environment and the organisation of spaces. Although this proposal is relevant, it raises the question: where is the space for free play, essential for the development of Higher Psychological Functions (HPF), as stated by Vygotsky (2016)? Even though the curriculum articulates play and interaction as structuring axes, there is a risk of instrumentalisation when such practices are linked exclusively to the six learning rights, mischaracterising play as an activity specific to learning and child development.

It is important to understand that the concepts of play and interaction are present in the five state curricula, each with its own unique characteristics and specificities. However, these are formulations within the legal framework of the documents. In daily educational work, numerous challenges arise, as evidenced by the participants' statements presented below:

So, there are many problems at the pedagogical and school management levels. I'll go back to the structural aspect. If you take any teacher in the classroom today and ask them what their biggest teaching challenge is, they'll obviously talk about slides; they're the hot topic. This is something that hampers everyone, greatly hindering creativity, management, and classroom autonomy (Participant 1, Paraná, Formative Intervention, 2023).

The interface with the BNCC and the principles postulated by the Guidelines and LDB is clear in our curriculum, but in practice this ends up being difficult in the interaction with students due to the overload and bureaucratisation of Early Childhood Education in recent years (Participant 2, Goiás, Formative Intervention, 2023).

The participants' statements highlight the need for more in-depth research and critical debates on the BNCC-EI (2018), by revealing the complex determinations that permeate this educational policy. In this context, Evangelista & Shiroma (2019, p. 84) highlight that documentary analysis, from the perspective of historical-dialectical materialism, has as its essential purpose to unveil "[. . .] the content and meaning of that which" is being "assimilated in a distorted way by social actors, making their perception of reality, distorted and impoverished", within the scope of concrete social relations.

However, although these policies present possibilities for progress, in practice, the institutionalisation and materialisation of the educational work of Early Childhood Education units face numerous obstacles. Certain practices, for example, end up fragmenting play and interactions, especially when they adopt an instrumental and bureaucratic

perspective, with rigid controls over teaching. These principles align with the parameters established by the BNCC, which restrict opportunities for outdoor experiences, contextualised interactions with the classroom reality, and play, whether free or systematic, focused on children's expression.

This limitation is accentuated by the excessive dependence on control, the use of ready-made teaching materials, the search for measurable goals and the intensification of tasks aimed at the early literacy process, which disregards the principles of child development and integral human formation (Martins & Pasqualini, 2020; Ribeiro & Francisco, 2025).

From this perspective, it is necessary to consider strategies in which play and interactions command a central role in the child's development process, in order to encourage the development of meanings and the improvement of FPS through their interaction with the environment. Play equally stimulates motor, affective, and relational development, fostering independence, self-esteem, emotional understanding, and collaborative work. In this regard, the following quote from one of the participants in the didactic-training intervention is presented:

And to do that, we need to understand our role as teachers and resist. Not just resist, but mobilise, because the idea is to make things precarious. The idea is to increasingly limit and accommodate teachers, so that they feel like they have no space, no voice, no place, and are alienated in that scenario [...]. Through collective work, we can resist, we can provide teachers with an awareness of what we have been increasingly exposed to: horrific working and living conditions. And it is not just about fighting for this, but increasingly seeking mobility in the face of this terrifying scenario we have been living in [...]. We have to consider ourselves, we have to talk, we have to show [...] (Participant 3, São Paulo, Training Intervention, 2023).

In this sense, toys and playing are fundamental elements in a child's life, as, in addition to providing moments of fun and pleasure, they contribute significantly to the child's cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development. According to Vygotsky (2016), play is understood as an intrinsically cultural activity through which children interact with each other and with the adults around them, using objects and symbols loaded with cultural meaning. These objects and symbols qualify play. The activity becomes a privileged avenue for learning, capable of mobilising development (Lombardi, 2020; Martins & Pasqualini, 2020).

That said, promoting an intentional and systematic education that values social interaction through play is essential not only to prepare individuals for the future, but also to enable them to understand, belong to, and transform the world around them.

Final Considerations

Based on the aspects highlighted in the Early Childhood Education curricula of the five Brazilian states investigated (Bahia, Goiás, Pará, Paraná, and São Paulo), elements regarding the conceptions of childhood/child, play and interactions can be highlighted, understood in light of the assumptions of PedHC and PsiHC.

An analysis of the Early Childhood Education curricula of the aforementioned states reveals that, although they present some specificities, they are in line with the BNCC (Brazilian National Curricular Framework). Some curricula explicitly highlight the involvement of public and private actors, with a focus on market-representative institutions, such as the curricula of Bahia, Goiás, and Paraná. This process reflects a context of political disputes and the strong influence of initiatives such as the ProBNCC and the Todos pela Base Movement.

Regarding the materialisation of the BNCC-EI in the analysed curricula, it was observed that the conceptions of childhood, play, and interaction vary specifically according to the context and references adopted by each state. Although all curricula recognise, discursively, the importance of play and interactions as structuring axes of Early Childhood Education, there are differences in the degree of theoretical depth and conceptual clarity. Similarities with the foundations of PedHC and PsiHC are noted, especially in the Pará and Paraná curricula, although without direct mention of the authors of these frameworks, which weakens the conceptual coherence of the proposals. The

discussions present themselves as a veneer that masks the real intentions denounced, including by the participants of the didactic-training intervention, especially in view of the limitations and restrictions of educational work.

Furthermore, the synthesis of multiple determinations reveals tensions between the attempt to adapt national guidelines to local realities and the risk of standardisation and emptying the school curriculum. The implementation of the BNCC in state curricula remains marked by contradictions and limitations that require a critical and well-founded approach, especially if there is a desire to break with the established norms in order to ensure more humanising and emancipatory education in Early Childhood Education.

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