



THE READING OF THE WORLD IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: GEOGRAPHIC CONTRIBUTIONS

A LEITURA DO MUNDO NA EDUCAÇÃO INFANTIL:
CONTRIBUIÇÕES GEOGRÁFICAS

LA LECTURA DEL MUNDO EN LA EDUCACIÓN INFANTIL: APORTES
GEOGRÁFICOS

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Abstract: The text discusses the possibility of babies and young children reading the world as thought up by Paulo Freire. A reflection that considers that spaces interfere in the ways of living childhood. In an articulation between Pedagogy and Geography, we used Freire (1989), Lopes (2018, 2021) and Callai (2005), as well as other authors who discuss children's manifestations, their interactions with the world and their ways of producing their living spaces, taking into account the experiences of practice in Early Childhood Education institutions. Based on this dialog, we consider Geography's contributions to the Early Childhood Education stage to be significant, both for everyday life in institutions and for curricula, improving the reading of the world of babies and young children, considering these subjects as historical and social, who produce and reproduce their cultures.

Keywords: Early childhood education; geography of childhood; childhoods.



Resumo: O texto aborda a possibilidade de bebês e crianças pequenas realizarem a leitura do mundo pensada por Paulo Freire. Uma reflexão que considera que os espaços interferem nos modos de viver a infância. Em uma articulação entre Pedagogia e Geografia, utilizamos Freire (1989), Lopes (2018, 2021) e Callai (2005), além de outros autores que discorrem sobre as manifestações infantis, sobre suas interações com o mundo e suas maneiras de produzir seus espaços de vivência, levando em conta, as experiências próprias da prática em instituições de Educação Infantil. A partir desse diálogo, consideramos significativas as contribuições da Geografia para a etapa da Educação Infantil, tanto para o cotidiano nas instituições quanto para os currículos, aprimorando a leitura do mundo de bebês e crianças pequenas, considerando esses sujeitos como históricos e sociais, que produzem e reproduzem suas culturas.

Palavras-chave: Educação infantil; Geografia da infância; infâncias.

Resumen: El texto aborda la posibilidad de que los bebés y niños pequeños realicen la lectura del mundo según lo pensado por Paulo Freire. Es una reflexión que considera que los espacios interfieren en las formas de vivir la infancia. En una articulación entre Pedagogía y Geografía, utilizamos a Freire (1989), Lopes (2018, 2021) y Callai (2005), además de otros autores que hablan sobre las manifestaciones infantiles, sus interacciones con el mundo y sus formas de producir sus espacios de vida, teniendo en cuenta las experiencias propias de la práctica en instituciones de Educación Infantil. A partir de este diálogo, consideramos significativas las contribuciones de la Geografía para la etapa de Educación Infantil, tanto para el día a día en las instituciones como para los currículos, mejorando la lectura del mundo de bebés y niños pequeños, considerando a estos sujetos como históricos y sociales, que producen y reproducen sus culturas.

Palabras clave: Educación infantil; Geografía de la infancia; infancias.

Initial considerations

This article focuses on reading the world in early childhood education, including how geography can help babies and toddlers¹ read the world. We believe that children move through spaces and appropriate them according to the conditions they are offered. We are interested in observing and analyzing how this happens in the daily lives of a group of children, developing a reflection that allows us to know the reality and the possibilities for the exercise of children's experiences².

We know that in Brazil, early childhood education was the result of welfare—the need for a place to take care of children while their parents worked. Based on legislation and advances in our understanding of the concept of the child, the characteristics of this understanding have changed. The Federal Constitution (1998) gave this group the status of a constitutional right, followed by other documents that guide the way we see, understand, and care for children. These include the Statute on Children and Adolescents (1990), the National Education Guidelines and Basic Law (1996), and the National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education (NCGCE), in its first version (1999). In this way, according to the updated NCGCE(2009), early childhood education institutions are the first space for collective education outside the family nucleus and are part of a project for a democratic society that considers children as subjects of rights, who

[...] in the interactions, relationships, and daily practices they experience, they construct their personal and collective identity, play, imagine, fantasize, desire, learn, observe, experiment, narrate, question, and construct meanings about nature and society, producing culture (Brasil, 2010, p.12).

In 2017, another document was added to those already in place to guide the first stage of basic education, the Common National Curriculum Base (CNCB³), which lists six learning rights for babies and young children: living together, playing, exploring, getting to know, participating and expressing. On the basis of these rights, institutions, authorities and teachers are instructed to think about the daily routine of early childhood education and the experiences they have with children. In addition to the aforementioned rights, this stage of basic education has interaction and play as its structuring axes, which should guide the daily work of teachers, as well as reflections on local curricula, ways of recording and evaluating the work of/with babies

¹ We use the terms babies and young children to refer to subjects from zero to 6 years old.

² The proposal for this text arose from the discussions in the Master's program in Geography at the Federal University of the Southern Frontier, and around the construction of the dissertation.

³ The CNCB - a 2017 document - is the first update of the base that includes the Early Childhood Education stage and considers it as the first stage of basic education.

and young children.

It is therefore necessary to recognize that ideas about children and childhood have changed over the years, and that the children we meet in early childhood centers today belong to a broad culture. At the same time, they are producers and reproducers of this culture, going through childhood with their different ways of experiencing what constitutes childhood, in the plural. In this way, how children understand and read their world and how they theorize about it also depends on their socio-cultural experiences.

Reading the world is therefore closely related to understanding the rules of the place where one lives, the ways of acting and relating, and how these rules, actions, and relationships can be transformed. To this end, it is important to allow babies and young children to test their worlds of experience, to create theories, to express their points of view on events, and to negotiate permanence and change with their peers and with adults, not only through orality, but also by allowing the adults with whom they live to "listen" to their bodies and their ways of interacting.

These findings, based on legislation and experience of working with children, are supported by theorists dedicated to this line of research, which allows us to broaden our understanding of the subject and even (re)think the practices that are current in educational institutions.

We know that Paulo Freire was concerned throughout his career with the literacy of young people and adults, and his writings are still relevant and adaptable in different contexts, including early childhood education, precisely because his productions allow us to see the power of subjects. However, the reference is to situated subjects, which is why it is important to consider their surroundings, valuing local knowledge in addition to the knowledge systematized by humanity. The practices of subjects are not separate from the place where they are produced and reproduced, and they also produce and reproduce it. In this sense, there is a two-way street: subject and place are products and producers of the relationship itself. In this way, the everyday life of babies and toddlers in an early childhood center gains strength because it is in everyday actions that mishaps, changes, attempts, theorizations, failures, reformulations, etc. occur, and it is from these experiences that the reading of the world of these individuals takes place.

Paulo Freire's "The Importance of the Act of Reading"⁴ is the book that deals with reading the world. This work is divided into three complementary texts. The first part is called "The Importance of the Act of Reading" and comes from a paper presented at the opening of the

⁴ It is the result of two lectures given by the author himself in Campinas and João Pessoa and a publication in the Harvard Educational Review.

Brazilian Reading Congress, held in Campinas in November 1981. In it, Freire discusses the importance of the dynamic between reading the word and reading the world, emphasizing that the act of reading goes beyond decoding words, beyond mere memorization, and that in this act there is the power to understand the world and transform it through critical reading. The second part, entitled "Adult Literacy and Popular Libraries" is the result of a speech given by Paulo Freire at the XI Brazilian Congress of Librarianship and Documentation, held in João Pessoa in January 1992. In this speech, Freire discusses the importance of community libraries as a tool for the literacy of young people and adults. He emphasizes that reading should not be mechanized, but rather a practice that involves reading reality, that involves the participation of students throughout the process, and that their local experiences should be respected. In the last part, "The people say their word or literacy in São Tomé and the Prince,"⁵ Freire emphasizes that the practice of literacy should not be considered a mere technical process of teaching reading and writing skills, but rather a political and knowledge act. He argues that literacy teachers should critically engage their students in analyzing the reality in which they live, allowing them to become active subjects in the transformation of their society.

With the proposition that "reading the world precedes reading the word," Freire (1989, p. 9) makes a significant contribution to the field of education by reflecting on our readings of the immediate world, which constitute our interactions with the places where we live, as well as our representations of everyday situations.

In this sense, Callai (2005) contributes by thinking about this interaction with places of experience from a child's perspective, stating that

[...] space is not neutral, and the notion of space that children develop is not a natural and random process. The notion of space is socially constructed and the child gradually expands and complexifies the space they experience concretely (Callai, 2005, p. 223).

This idea helps us understand that there is no neutrality in interacting with space, either on the part of the children or the spatial constitution itself, both of which (inter) affect each other. At the same time that spaces can be inviting or uninviting to the actions of groups of children, they can also modify them in their own way, according to the complexity of their perspectives, marking their presence. To complement this idea, we turn next to Freire, who is concerned with reading the world and those significant childhood experiences that shape the lives of individuals and produce their singularities.

Right at the beginning of the book we are looking at here, in the first text, "The

⁵ Published in a special issue of the Harvard Educational Review in February 1981.

Importance of the Act of Reading," Freire describes his interaction with the backyard of his house in Recife, "surrounded by trees, some of them as if they were people, such was the intimacy between us - in their shade I played, and in their more docile branches at my height I experimented with smaller risks that prepared me for bigger risks and adventures" (Freire, 1989, p. 9). In this recollection of his childhood, the author states that this was his first world, where his development first took place: talking, walking, babbling, crawling, etc. It was the world of perceptions, and it was there that he first learned to read. Freire then describes how, from an early age, he was immersed in an environment where reading was not limited to books but manifested itself in colors, shapes, and interactions with the world around him. This immediate world then presents itself as a "text" to be contextualized, observed, reflected upon, and understood. A "text" that, according to Freire, can be read in the relationship between him and the space is also mediated by other people, such as his parents and siblings. For the author:

The "texts," "words," and "letters" of that context were embodied in the singing of the birds - the tanager, the bird called "*olha-pro-caminho-quem-vem*", the Great Kiskadee, the thrush;; in the dance of the treetops blown by strong winds that announced storms, thunder, and lightning; and in the rainwater playing geography: inventing lakes, islands, rivers, and streams (Freire, 1989, p. 10).

From birth, we learn from people, animals, and spaces how to behave, the order in which things happen, and how to elicit certain responses. For all ages, but especially for babies and young children, the body is the support for getting to know the world through the senses (Silva, 2012), so the body is the support for reading the world. Our senses are then guides to learning that begins at an early age, tools for reading the world, allowing us to experience and interpret sensory experiences that enhance reflection on and with our surroundings.

Silva (2012, p. 222)⁶, considering the potential of the bodily experiences of babies and young children, states that: "the body and movement are of a social, cultural, biological, and historical nature, since it is through this dialectical symbiosis that the development of young children is constructed, which therefore takes place in the space-time and socio-historical dimension". He goes on to quote Wallon and adds that the motor act plays a fundamental role in affectivity and also in cognition. Since the body mediates our interactions with the space and society that it also constitutes, the way we act, feel, and interpret is directly linked to our bodily experience, and for all of us this means building ourselves collectively and individually.

In this regard, and also looking for anchors in geography, we bring into the conversation Milton Santos, in his text "The Power of place", part four of the book "The nature of space"

⁶ Physical educator and post-doctorate from UMINHO.

(Santos, 2020). In this section, the author states that the body takes the form of a sensitive materiality in the face of the interaction between the individual and the world. Thus, we realize that each subject is in itself singular and collective, producing a place that is in communion but distinct from all others in the world. In this way, our bodies serve as a link between individuals and the experiences they will have in any place they live.

With our bodies, we can smell things that repel us, touch textures that we don't like, hear frequencies that hurt our ears and others that soothe them, taste foods that we will eat all our lives and others that we will never eat again. These experiences mark us positively or negatively and form our identity over time as we read the world from an early childhood and constitute ourselves subjectively. In this sense, the body guides us through these experiences. According to Lopes (2018, p. 64),

Initially, children can only perceive space through their bodies in contact with objects, using their senses. At this early stage, their space is experiential: it is made up of the places where they play, go for walks, and the objects that exist there and that they use. Spatial relationships develop and become more complex as she expands her space of action.

In this way, there are non-linear stages that the subject must go through, in terms of developing spatial awareness using the body. Over time, they build relationships of neighborhood, near/far, order, sequence, notions of inside/outside, and so on.

Lopes (2021, p. 42) calls the child's altruism “the generosity of discovering oneself as a being with language and who puts oneself in dialogue with the world,” noting that language is not only oral, but also in crying, laughing, body movements, facial expressions, ways of eating, licking, handling, and staring, among others. Thus, since infancy, we have had to communicate with the world while others help us to read it, so that even before they master reading the written word, infants, and toddlers interpret the various manifestations, expressions, and structures present in the groups and spaces that surround them. Babies and toddlers communicate with the world in an intense, continuous way that is typical of their generational stage, often challenging our status quo and asking other groups in the social structure to change their actions, spaces, and cultures. The fact that they read their world from the backyard to school institutions provokes us to think about the ways in which the act of reading takes place in early childhood.

Can babies and young children read the world?

Based on the above considerations, we assume that reading the world does not happen in one way; there are different ways of reading the world among the different ways of living. We

will therefore look at the possibilities of reading the world in early childhood.

According to Callai (2005), reading the world means reading life—reading what is constructed daily. In this way, reading the world means reading life itself, interpreting our daily actions. This highlights the importance of observing, understanding and interpreting the dynamics of everyday life, which allows us to understand the context in which we live and the experiences that shape our existence.

In early childhood education, everyday life is emphasized precisely because it is in the details of everyday life that the experiences of young children and babies are given meaning through the teacher's intentionality and attentive listening. In this stage of basic education, routine has a significant weight. There are moments that happen every day to organize the children's stay in the institutions, with the aim of contemplating care and education, two basic actions of teaching in early childhood. According to Professor Altino J. M. Filho (2021), a pedagogue⁷, routine can't be only the unbridled and frenetic repetition of the daily life in the institutions, but everyone involved in the educational process of babies and young children must be surprised by the daily life. A new theory, a new way of playing, a question that can't wait, curiosity about an internal or external event. In this way, children's experiences cannot be subjected to institutional organization. It's not enough to repeat routine actions; it's necessary to reflect on what's done, on the way it's done, and also through attentive listening. For Bruna Ribeiro⁸:

[...] listening and being attentive to children's needs provokes us to listen to the educational context, that is, to look, observe, and investigate the educational environment as a whole, questioning ourselves at the service of which child it is, and placing ourselves as constant and permanent investigators of daily life and the educational context (Ribeiro, 2021, p. 111).

Based on attentive listening - taking into account the different ways of listening, since children have countless ways of communicating - we need to act, and for this we need intentionality in our proposals, leveraging the prior knowledge of the children's groups. It is therefore important to think about teacher intentionality, which according to the CNCB consists of:

[...] the organization and proposition, by the educator, of experiences that allow children to know themselves and others and to know and understand relationships with nature, culture, and scientific production, which are translated into personal care practices (feeding, dressing, and sanitizing), play, experimentation with various materials, approaching literature, and meeting people (Brasil, 2017, p. 39).

⁷ PhD in Education from the Federal Universidade do Rio Grande do Sul. He calls himself a pedagogue teacher.

⁸ PhD in Education from the University of Sao Paulo.

As already mentioned, caring and educating appear as fundamental and inseparable elements at this stage, since they must be incorporated into the work of teachers during daily experiences, considering attentive listening to children's manifestations and the teacher's exploratory gaze, aiming at teaching intentionality. According to Lopes (2018, p. 56), "caring and educating, words so dear to early childhood education, are signs and commitments of our species to itself and an essential condition for the development of children". For this reason, we are aware of the importance of teachers considering the readings of the children's world and expanding their experiences, offering new readings that complement those of other contexts, such as the family, and taking into account the basic needs of children at each age. The permeation of different ways of life and the recognition of the uniqueness of the contexts in which our lives take place bring with them the power to perceive collectivities.

According to Callai (2005), reading the world of life helps us to understand life in society, and the fundamental task of the first years of school, for the author, would be to learn to think about space and, based on this, citing Castellar, she stresses the need to create conditions for children to read their lived space⁹. Here, too, we find the importance of the teacher's intentionality, seeing it as an amplifier of the knowledge that comes from the life contexts of babies and young children. Paying attention to the paths taken by the subjects involved in the educational process, recording their theories and manifestations about the world whenever possible, taking into account the two structuring axes and participatory rights, are indications that will be addressed below.

The CNCB¹⁰ document, in the stage of early childhood education, works around two structuring axes, interactions and play. Within these axes, as mentioned above, six learning and developmental rights must be guaranteed: playing, socializing, exploring, getting to know, expressing, and participating. With these rights in mind, the document is divided into five areas of experience called Self, Other and We; Body, Gestures and Movements; Listening, Speaking, Thinking and Imagination; Signs, Sounds, Colors and Shapes; and Spaces, Times, Quantities, Relationships and Transformations. From this, the writings address important aspects for reading the world when carried out by babies and young children, such as: realizing that their actions have reactions; getting to know other ways of life, knowing their own limits; respecting the rules of living together; respecting physical differences; improving forms of movement

⁹ It is important to note that the first years of children's schooling take place in Brazil at the age of 4, i.e. in Early Childhood Education. Callai's text predates the extension of the compulsory age (2014), as is being considered in this text, but it still makes major contributions and mentions this stage of basic education.

¹⁰ The Common National Curriculum Base is a normative document that lists a set of essential learning outcomes for each age group, in a common way throughout the country and should be used as a basis for thinking about/rethinking local curricula, which will take into account the singularities of each place in Brazil.

(crawling, dragging, jumping, running, jumping...), getting to know the properties and characteristics of objects, among others.

Having Early Childhood Education in a normative document for Basic Education is of the utmost importance. However, it is significant that we stick to the fact that in early childhood, the ideal would be for objectives not to take center stage, but rather the experiences of young children and babies. Precisely because the assessment of achieving, not achieving, and partially achieving is not at all significant at this stage, but rather the learning, reflections, and theories thought up during the process. In other words, for Early Childhood Education, experiences go beyond results. This stage, in turn, has particularities that distinguish it from others, both in the organization of spaces, investigative contexts, proposals, and everyday experiences, whether previously thought out or not. Therefore, in Early Childhood Education, everything is interconnected: caring and educating, daily practices and directed proposals, playing, and learning.

Taking into account this perspective of integrality, we agree with Callai (2005) when he points out the need to see the world in a non-fragmented way, paying attention to the fact that space is not a backdrop to life and should not be used, for example, to count disconnected data but needs to be integrated, including the subject who thinks about it. This corroborates Milton Santos' (1988, p.8) assertion that space

[...] it must be considered as an inseparable whole in which, on the one hand, a certain arrangement of geographical objects, natural objects and social objects participate and, on the other hand, the life that animates them or that which gives them life.

From this perspective, early childhood education, which is not divided into disciplines within the fields of experience, presents itself as a possibility to develop complex, non-fragmented thinking, and integrated planning is also significant, “open to the unusual, to everyday life” (Souza; Loss, 2019), addressing both elements of immediate life and reflections of the global in the local. For Lopes (2018, p. 41), it is important to “look at the child from an interdisciplinary perspective,” and with this, we realize the need to consider the child as an integral subject who is not in a state of becoming but who occupies a structural and social position in society, which is not limited to being a child in the family or a “student” in school institutions. In this sense, the lives of infants and young children are not dual; they are not interrupted when they enter institutions to continue outside them, nor vice versa. For this reason, it would be ideal not to separate children's experiences in their homes, neighborhoods, and cities from their experiences in institutions.

So how can we understand how babies and young children read the world? By observing their interactions and play, we can see the influences of the social representations involved in their practices, which gradually change, creating new anxieties and ways of acting as new knowledge is added. From this perspective, our reading of the world is closely linked to the social representations with which we come into contact within our living groups, our culture, and so on. Moscovici (2007, p. 33) points out that

When we contemplate these individuals and objects, our inherited genetic predisposition, the images, and habits we have already learned, their memories that we have preserved, and our cultural categories all come together to make them as we see them.

In this way, reading other people's facial expressions, ways of playing, interacting, communicating, reading spaces, demanding appropriate behavior, etc. are ways of reading the world based on our preconceptions. These prior mental constructions shape the way we perceive and interpret the world. According to the author, social representations are practically material, precisely because they gain strength with the community, guiding interactions between individuals and shaping their behavior and actions. In other words, even if they remain in the realm of ideas, social representations have a materiality that is incorporated into individuals' experiences.

Doreen Massey (2017, p. 37), a British geographer who studies space, power, and place, states in *The Geographical Mind* that we carry with us “mental images of the world, the country we live in, the street next door,” and that these imaginings “have powerful effects on our attitudes toward the world and on our behavior.” Thus, from an early age, representations or mental images help us to read the contexts with which we come into contact, to constitute them, and to be constituted by them.

Nevertheless, these representations and mental images are often challenged by babies and young children, perhaps because in their lives these ways of understanding the world are not as fossilized as in other generations. Lopes (2018) points out that children's reference systems don't imprison them, precisely because they reveal creation. Here, the importance of children's groups in maintaining our spaces becomes evident, as they “invent, architect or de-architect, accept or reject some spaces, whether in the field of perception or representation” (Lopes, 2018, p. 67). Therefore, to build participatory contexts with babies and young children, it is necessary to listen to their theories, their ways of expressing comfort or discomfort, dissatisfaction, and desires.

Contributions of Geography to Reading the World in Early Childhood Education

In light of this, we are interested in discussing how geography and its themes can enhance infants' and toddlers' reading of the world inside and outside educational institutions, providing an understanding of space as a component of their experiences.

According to Lopes (2018, p. 49), “the child is not in the space, not in the territory, not in the place, not in the landscape; they are the space, they are the territory, they are the place, the landscape, therefore, an experiential unit.” Following this statement, the author cites cultural-historical theory and emphasizes that it is also geographical, precisely because the social markers of the subjects' lives, economic, political, gender, cultural and territorial relations, will interfere in the way children live their childhood, further deepening the statement that there is no one way to live childhood, but we find in the world several childhoods, in the plural (Qvortrup, 2010).

Babies and toddlers experience the world intrinsically, in an defragmented way, an action that Lopes (2018, p. 67) refers to as "geographical fullness", and this group leaves its mark on the contexts with which they interact. For him, the great contribution is to try to understand children in the spaces in which they live, "seeking their logics, listening to them, learning from them, feeling their presence in the world, taking into account their contributions". To listen attentively and to consider them as integral subjects with rights to protection, care, and participation is to guarantee, in some way, the construction of their citizenship and the realization of the rights previously established. Even if in many landscapes children are not present or do not participate, they leave their mark, demanding a different attitude from adults with their ways of playing, being present and changing their context. They even do this by changing our scales, asking us to bend down, demanding that we see the world differently. That is the challenge for adults.

The exercise that Freire does, remembering his backyard, is similar in our understanding to what the author Lopes calls "childhood memories," which involve the act of remembering significant childhood milestones. Some points are frequently mentioned by the adult participants, such as places where they played, where they lived, the layout of the space (whether or not it facilitated encounters with other children), everyday details (bathing, time to watch, time to play), and getting together with other children. The stories reveal a different perspective on how children experience, feel, and interpret the world around them than that of adults. For example, in some of the narratives, the distinction between right and left is made on the basis of unique characteristics, such as the fact that the fingers of one hand snap and the

other don't, or when describing that the hands "smell green" after walking through the grass (Lopes, 2018, 2021). These perceptions transcend physical development and are permeated by subjectivities constructed in interactions with space.

In early childhood education, our understanding is that experiences are central to the process, so we need to shift our gaze away from goal attainment and toward the potential of infant and toddler experiences. During a proposal designed by the teacher, the achievement or non-achievement of the goal becomes an obsolete question, precisely because the children and babies have created other formulations, reflections, theories, and ways of acting based on the materials and previous investigative contexts. In this way, it is the group's process of investigating the world that gains power. For Vygotsky (2006), experience is the inseparability of environment and personality; in other words, experience is found at the intersection of situation, environment, historical time, subjectivity, and personality traits, therefore "experience must be understood as the inner relationship of the child as a human being with one or another moment of reality" (Vygotsky, 2006, p. 383, our translation).

It is from these experiences that babies and young children enter a literate world from an early age, bearing in mind that early childhood education does not focus on making children literate. And, therefore, it doesn't need to dwell on this, since the guiding documents, such as the CNCB and the DCNEI, do not emphasize this attribution, valuing other essential and necessary experiences for this stage - and this appears in another stage, that of primary education. But here, in our perception, lies the power of early childhood education. It fulfills Freire's (1989) claim that reading the world precedes reading the word, and that reading the world helps to read the word afterwards. This is because reading the world requires children to be curious, reflective, grounded in prior knowledge, and persistent, which reading the word will also require at another time.

Here we use some photos from our personal collection, taken during my teaching career in early childhood education over the years. These photos help us to constantly reflect on the practices of babies and young children and to record their manifestations. Here we have selected a few to illustrate the fact that, during their experiences, the groups show that they understand the organization of the world and that, even in undirected moments, they use objects, spaces, materials, etc. to represent their experiences and recreate countless others. We selected some records in which, in three different situations, babies demonstrate their ability to read the world by offering food, holding babies, and making food.

Photos 1, 2, and 3 - Children playing in investigative contexts



Source: personal collection of Maria Luiza de Souza.

In these proposals, there was no adult guidance on what to do, but by reading the materiality of the prepared contexts, the children anchored previous experiences and included them in the games. Here, the attentive gaze/listening of the teachers is necessary to enhance these experiences and broaden the world knowledge of babies and young children. Based on this, we consider the incorporation of certain themes and points made by Geography during its development as a field of study to be significant in Early Childhood Education. According to Lopes (2018), some elements are needed to guide the curricula at this stage, and among them, we highlight a significant one when it comes to reading the world through the lens of Geography in Early Childhood Education:

Consider the historicity and geography of children understood as subjects living in a time and space with unique cultural contexts, valuing the diversity of childhoods present in the various spatial scales (local, regional, global...) and temporal scales (past, present, and future) (Lopes, 2018, p.77).

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In early childhood education, geography does not need to appear in isolation; on the contrary, it needs to be integral and at the same time recognize the child as a whole. According to Lopes (2018), this field of knowledge must join other fields of knowledge and move through the spaces of Early Childhood Education, so that its way of looking becomes “a new way of reading the world we live in, a new citizenship” (Lopes, 2018, p. 77). Therefore, we believe that the daily life of institutions must take into account the organization of space and time, experiences, and educational intentions.

The author also points out the need to achieve a pedagogical dimension that promotes respect for the human condition, not limited to the classroom, but considering the totality of the environments that make up the institution. We also believe that to think of integral education for integral subjects means to think beyond the space of school institutions but to connect their lives with pedagogical practices, precisely so as not to minimize contexts but to connect them, stimulating complex thinking and an understanding of the world in its entirety. For children, according to Lopes (2018, p. 87), “space is not conceived as a metric, as an extension, but as an

intensity,” and in their experiences, they build other spaces in space, creating new functions for old objects, recognizing their differences from other generational groups, and understanding the link between their actions and the resulting reactions.

According to Paganelli (1992, pp. 231-232), a geographer with a Ph.D. in human geography from the University of São Paulo who focuses on children's understanding of geographic space, there are some basic notions of geography that should be addressed in early childhood education: the notion of the social group, space, and time. According to the author, “in the social group, children begin to recognize their identity, their personal individuality, and that of the group”; in turn, thinking about space “means knowing how to see landscapes, knowing how to smell and smell the environment, knowing how to express themselves spatially, drawing, painting, and mapping spaces”; and in terms of time, it is necessary to reflect on “the time of the social space to be unveiled, times in society, times in nature”.

Thus, geography, based on the above considerations, has important contributions for babies and young children in early childhood education to make up their experiences. Experiences that are important for understanding the world in which they live, for considering its rules, its limits, and its potentialities, and for improving their reading of the world.

Conclusions

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In light of the reflections on Freire's reading of the world, the points made about children's groups and the power of their experiences in their places of coexistence, and considering geography as a partner in the processes of reflection and transformation of the world, we can see that the pillar of this stage of basic education is the collective construction of everyday life. To achieve this, we need to consider the voices of the subjects involved in this process, and we need to map and reinforce the children's previous readings of the world. Listening to children and highlighting their knowledge doesn't make the role of the teacher obsolete, because this is exactly their job. In other words, they show respect for babies and young children, ensuring that their developmental and learning rights are guaranteed: to live together, to play, to participate, to get to know each other, to express themselves, and to explore. In this way, it seeks to create opportunities to meet what is expected and proposed for this stage of formal education.

It is therefore essential to change the way we look at babies and young children, respecting their potential to go beyond traditional readings of the world in a shared journey with children. We agree with Lopes (2018) when he states that geography can thus offer an infinity of

conversations, closely linked to everyday life, allowing babies and young children to move between scales and to experience spaces and times that constitute them and are constituted by them, “experiencing themselves, others, geographical spaces, and historical times” (Lopes, 2018, p.86).

Interacting with groups of children while teaching and the contributions of the geography of childhood, as well as the sociology of childhood and pedagogy, among others, have helped us to understand the ability of babies and young children to read the world. This leads us to recognize ways of acting, to recreate them, to question our “truest” knowledge, to (re)architect living spaces, to modify the functions of objects, and to question chronological time. And, among many other things, to question our attitude towards what happens in the world, with its movements and the actions of human life. It is no longer possible to consider children as an empty cup to be filled; we must recognize the amount of knowledge that comes from their contexts and use it as systematized knowledge in educational institutions.

Finally, we would like to emphasize that the times and spaces produced, felt, constructed, and reconstructed by children are different from ours, and that this makes everyday life more powerful. We need to know how to listen respectfully to the manifestations of babies and young children when they tell us which spaces they prefer, what they want to play with, how long they want to play, what food they want to eat, how they want to eat it, etc., precisely with a view to the intensity of the experiences with spaces that have a different time from the chronological one. According to Lopes (2021), it is necessary to have “unfamiliar spaces and times”, and undoubtedly, it is unfamiliar spaces that welcome and enhance children's readings of the world. In these processes, we also consider it important to discuss with these people the limits and conditions of life in the place where they are and to establish the rules of the collective life they live. Geography has much to contribute with its theoretical contributions and the experiences of researchers.

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