Conceptions of childhood from the perspective of early childhood education teachers: an approach to the state of knowledge

ARTIGO

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Abstract
The study analyzes seven surveys on conceptions of childhood in Early Childhood Education. As a theoretical foundation, we present Ferreira (2002) and Romanowski and Ens (2006) based on the possibility for the researcher to appropriate discussions about the theme. The research methodology was based on the mapping of productions from the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD). This delimitation is justified by the large contribution of productions on the theme of childhood. As for the concepts studied, the inclusion parameters were: a) relevant studies on childhood concepts; b) productions made between 2008 and 2020, due to the approval, in that period, of the Law of Guidelines and Bases (LDB) and the National Common and Curricular Base (BNCC). The results point to subjects understood as a) dependent and passive; b) protagonists and assets; c) producers of culture and creativity; d) in need of schooling or literacy.

Keywords: State of knowledge. Childhood conception. Child education.

Concepções de infância sob o olhar docente da educação infantil: uma aproximação ao estado do conhecimento

Resumo

1 Introduction

Early Childhood Education is considered the first space for development, learning, and systematized socialization in Basic Education (BRASIL, 2009). It is up to this segment to fully develop the child in its physical, psychological, intellectual and social aspects, so that the individual can enter the following stages of education with skills that favor significant learning.

Conceptions about childhood are dynamic and are built according to the social, historical and cultural contexts, and are also established from different and multiple variables that include: ethnicity; social classes; economic conditions, in which teachers and managers, that is, education professionals who work with this level, are inserted and can add and reflect in their daily practices and actions (DCNEI, 2009). Considering such elements and their relationship with the image of the child built in time and history, we should ask: what are the conceptions of childhood present in the practices of Early Childhood Education teachers, in the framework of the implementation of educational policies, which guide the practices through the DCNEI and BNCC documents? The conceptions have been transforming throughout the teachers' professional career "[...] during many hours, days, months and years with them, that is, a time/space dialectically constituted by the historical-social configurations that circumscribe the relational modes and by the actions of the subjects that compose it" (KRAMER, 2011, p. 20), corroborating multiple visions of childhoods and ways of being a child in this phase of life.

In this sense, it has been valued to study the conceptions of childhood that embrace the teachers who work, particularly in Early Childhood Education in Basic Education, since they are introduced in the relationships that establish consciously or unconsciously the teachers with their students, marking somehow the attitudes and concepts that constitute their own students about themselves in the daily doings of the class (GARCIA ROZO; VILLEGAS, 2020).

Given the previous panorama and the relevance of this discussion, this work delves into issues related to the constitution of the Early Childhood Education teacher, in order to
understand the conceptions of childhood present in the pedagogical practice in the contexts where they work. Thus, we characterize the relevance of this study especially regarding the methodology of the State of Knowledge, which aims to map, over a period of 12 years, in the official sites of theses and dissertations in Brazil, scientific productions related to conceptions of childhood present in the practices of Early Childhood Education teachers - conceptions that generate reflections about the theme childhood and that can contribute to an ongoing research related to the processes of becoming an Early Childhood Education teacher.

Thus, we base and characterize the study on the assumptions of Ferreira (2002) and Romanowski and Ens (2006), when they state that the research of the State of the Knowledge type enables the researcher to seize discussions about the subject of investigation and realize gaps that may instigate future research "[...] trying to answer which aspects and dimensions have been highlighted and privileged in different times and places" (FERREIRA, 2002, p. 258). The researcher needs to appropriate the object of research, to exhaust previous investigations, in order to understand it in its various dimensions to support his or her inquiries (FAZENDA, 1994).

Having said this, the study is organized in two parts. The first relates to the methodology related to the search, organization, selection of material and data collection on the BDTD website, since the delimitation by this collection is justified due to the large contribution of academic productions, containing research on various topics discussed by researchers; among them, there are even discussions of researchers who theorize about children’s childhood, in order to instigate our interest in discussions on this subject. In the second part, we emphasize the findings, through pertinent discussions and dialogues, discussing various aspects, such as the conceptions of childhood assumed by education teachers and the reasons that condition their visions and their positions.

2 Methodology

To meet the objective of this research, we searched the database of the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD), performing, for this, a first reading on
the URL of that library, in order to know the platform whose goal is to integrate into a single portal the information systems of academic works existing in the country, in addition to providing users with a national catalog of theses and dissertations (with the full text).

After a first review, we opted for a search with filters, considering the time frame between 2008 and 2020, since, throughout this period, we have the equivalence of two legal documents: the National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education (DCNEIs), in 2009, and the Common National and Curricular Base (BNCC), in 2017, which guide the curriculum of Early Childhood Education in Brazil.

The discussions derived from this literature review on the aforementioned theme allow us to: a) visualize the evolution of the subject by identifying, in this debate of ideas from the teacher's point of view, the expansion of new trends about the conceptions of childhood; b) know the theoretical contributions that support the discussion; and c) understand the methodological processes adopted by the researchers. Thus, we aim to obtain subsidies and theoretical support that can ground the research in progress, thus fulfilling the relevance of building the state of knowledge for future research (FERREIRA, 2002; ROMANOWSKI; ENS, 2006).

Considering the terms "childhood", "teacher" and "early childhood education", correlated to the ongoing research with unfoldings about the processes of becoming a teacher at this level of education, taking into account their childhoods, we chose these descriptors and organized the writing arguments into: a) Conception of childhood AND; b) Early childhood education; c) Conception of child AND; d) Teacher. The analysis of the period from 2008 to 2020 and the months of June and July 2021, resulted in the selection of 42 productions, being 32 dissertations and 10 theses.

Thus, after carrying out the floating reading in abstracts and results and appropriating the theme through the readings, we realized that, of the 42 selected works, 35 were distant from the concepts and objectives of the current research; therefore, we used these oppositions as exclusion parameter, since: a) worked on routines in Infant Education; b) discussed about games and play in childhood; c) took place in contexts of elementary school or private educational network, as well as practices of Physical
Education in childhood, being, therefore, unfeasible to the present study disparity with the subject in question. As inclusion criteria, we had: a) studies with theoretical and methodological links intrinsic to the discussion with evidence that correspond to the objective of this study; b) investigations that comprise the temporal space between 2008 and 2020.

Then, based on the premise that there should be homogeneity and relevance of the themes with the interest of researchers (FERREIRA, 2002; ROMANOWSKI; ENS, 2006), and being essential to perform a thorough reading of the selected works, we listed seven materials similar to the perspective of this research, organized and described in the table below:

**Chart 1 - Conceptions of Childhood.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ano</th>
<th>Título do trabalho</th>
<th>Autoras</th>
<th>UF</th>
<th>Instituição</th>
<th>Tipo de produção</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Ações de infância e de Educação Infantil que permeiam a prática docente.</td>
<td>Pinheiro, Maria Margarida</td>
<td>RN</td>
<td>UFRN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>A construção no espaço: dos documentos as concepções e práticas educativas na educação infantil</td>
<td>Ruiz, Sheila Regina Brisson</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>USP</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>A Construção empírica do conceito de infância: o significado de Infância para os professores da Educação Infantil de São Carlos- SP</td>
<td>Calderan, Andréa</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td>UFSC</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>A concepção de infância nas orientações curriculares para a Educação Infantil: um estudo sobre o documento da Prefeitura de São Paulo no período de 2005-2012</td>
<td>Mota, Georgina Lopes da</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>PUC</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>A cultura popular re-significando a vivência educativa na educação infantil.</td>
<td>Bidinotto, Tatiana da Silva</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>UFP</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Coordenador Pedagógico da Educação Infantil e as Necessidades Formativas na Escola: Enfrentamentos e Possibilidades.</td>
<td>Matos, Priscila Conceição Gambale Vieira</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>PUC</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Processos de produção de subjetividade sobre infância e práticas pedagógicas de professoras da Educação Infantil.</td>
<td>Natasha Pereira Barbosa</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>USP</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Chart elaborated by the author of the research. (2021)

From these studies, we can consider the key aspects and contributions of previous...
research as basic points, since, of the 7 studies, 6 were conducted in the South and Southeast regions in Federal Universities, more specifically in PUC, USP, UFP and UFSC. This information strengthens the discussion, since the surveys analyzed are conducted by large universities in the country between 2015 and 2020, in parallel to the implementation of the BNCC. With that, according to the sample examined, we can say that this subject had greater emphasis in scientific productions located in the aforementioned regions. Although UFRN is also a federal institution, we did not notice this debate in its scope, since only one of the studies came from Rio Grande do Norte, in 2008, according to BDTD.

2.1 Problematics and objectives of the research analyzed

Considering the problems and the objectives raised in the selected material, the existence of similarity between the questions and the intentions presented by the researchers, all female, are evidenced in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problemáticas</th>
<th>Objetivos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Considerando as concepções de infância e de Educação Infantil declaradas pelas professoras norteiam a prática docente na infância? (PINHEIRO, 2008)</td>
<td>“Analisar prática docente na educação infantil, considerando as concepções de infância e de educação infantil declaradas pelas professoras” (PINHEIRO, 2008, p. 22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quais as concepções e relações a respeito de espaço e infância que se revelam nas falas das professoras e das coordenadoras? As concepções e práticas reveladas mostram-se coerentes com as apontadas pelos teóricos da educação e pelos documentos oficiais produzidos pelo MEC? (RUIZ, 2015)</td>
<td>“Compreender os fatores que favorecem ou comprometem a construção de práticas de qualidade no que diz respeito a utilização dos espaços” (RUIZ, 2015, p. 15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quais as dificuldades das discentes em compreender o cuidar e o educar como atividades indissociáveis no currículo? (MOTA, 2017).</td>
<td>“Investigar as concepções de infâncias implícitas no currículo da educação infantil [...] Refletir sobre as noções de educação e infância na construção do PPP (MOTA, 2017, p. 18).”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quais são as contribuições da Cultura Popular para a prática pedagógica na Educação Infantil como</td>
<td>“Descobrir que caminhos são sugeridos pelos professores/pesquisados/pesquisadores para aproximar e fazer dialogar com a Cultura Popular com os saberes escolares e suas implicações na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>forma de romper com uma educação tradicional?</strong> (BIDINOTTO, 2019)</td>
<td>**formação dos sujeitos, na perspectiva de uma prática pedagógica emancipatória” “[...] para aproximar e fazer dialogar com a Cultura Popular com os saberes escolares e suas implicações na formação dos sujeitos, na perspectiva de uma prática pedagógica emancipatória” (BIDINOTTO, 2019, p. 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>O que as coordenadoras do meu contexto município de Ferraz de Vasconcelos, consideram ser suas necessidades formativas relacionadas com o seu trabalho como formadores?</strong> (MATOS, 2020)</td>
<td>“Analisar as necessidades formativas das coordenadoras da Educação Infantil” (MATOS, 2020, p.18); assim como “Descobrir qual é a concepção de infância das coordenadoras que atuam nesse município” (MATOS, 2020, p.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qual o perfil dos profissionais que atuam diretamente com as crianças?</strong> (BARBOSA, 2020).</td>
<td>“Compreender a concepção de criança e de infância pela qual os professores da Educação Infantil se orientam em suas atividades educativas cotidianas” (BARBOSA, 2020, p. 31).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by the author of the study

It is also noteworthy that, regarding the objectives of the research conducted after the approval of the BNCC, Matos (2020) and Barbosa (2020) point out similarities that not only teachers need training, but also coordinators and managers, i.e., all subjects involved in the educational process need constant training. On the other hand, Bidinotto (2019) seeks a dialogue with the culture of the communities' contexts, based on the experiences in the educational spaces of Early Childhood Education, a proposal that differs from the other researchers.

When analyzing the conceptions of childhood (explicit and hidden) of the participants, based on Calderan (2017), Ruiz (2017), Mota (2017), and Pinheiro (2008), we noticed the need to develop a conception of childhood as an emancipatory practice that values the experiences of infants by relating them to their sociocultural contexts. This conduct was noticed from daily actions when listening, feeling, and seeing children. Next, we point out the main theoretical trends in the set of scientific productions.

2.2 Theoretical trends of the research analyzed

The theoretical foundations of the researches examined highlight the main concepts of childhood from Ariès (1981) to more contemporary theorists, such as Campos (2017), Sarmento (2013), as shown in chart 3.
After analyzing the theories that support and ground the research, we realize that Pinheiro (2008), Ruiz (2015) and Mota (2017) deepened their perspectives on childhood from the conceptions of Ariès (1981), Qvortrup (2011); these make an overview of how the child was considered in his childhood - an invisible being, an adult in miniature, being the first years of life intended for learning the rules and moral values of a society. The researchers bring childhood as a generational category, and the guidelines about Caring and Educating as an effective teaching practice in Early Childhood Education, in coherence with the legal bases (BRASIL, 1988; 1996; 2006), since they recommend how the teaching work should be.

On the other hand, Matos (2020), Calderan (2017), Barbosa (2020), and Bidinotto (2017), besides showing the social history of childhood, put into perspective more contemporary concepts of a childhood that favors child protagonism, an active child, capable of being a product and producing culture. In view of this, it is understood that the conceptions of childhood are procedural and contextual, since there still remain visions and characteristics of traditional models, in some specific situations, which can be justified by lack of structural conditions, times and spaces or absence of formative moments (KRAEMER, 2006). That is, external, conditioning and relevant factors can meet the specificities of children in their childhood (CAMPOS; MADELENA FREIRE, 2017).
However, it is possible to glimpse new trends regarding the conceptions of childhood; based on the research analyzed, we can aim, even if briefly, ruptures to these conventional behaviors, requiring a contemporary look, contextualized and in accordance with the guidelines contained in the legal provisions of Basic Education in Brazil. Thus, we base our assertions, considering the trends theorized by the researchers and, next, we propose the methodological path taken in the researches under analysis.

2.3 Methodological course of the analyzed researches

In our studies, we chose qualitative research due to the following justifications: a) flexibility in conducting the investigation and openness that favors the researcher to align techniques according to the unfolding of the research (PINHEIRO, 2008, p. 32); b) "[...] interpretation consistent with the theme and its questions [...]" (MOTA, 2017, p. 77); c) "[...] understanding and comprehension of the meanings of the actions and behaviors of subjects [...]" (BARBOSA, 2020, p. 40); d) "[...] intention to answer and interpret to particular questions that enable reflections [...]" (MATOS, 2020, p. 48); e) "understanding of the meanings of phenomena amidst social contexts [...]" RUIZ, 2015, p. 55).

To this end, the methods used in the research were field research, case study, and literature review by three researchers (RUIZ, 2015; BARBOSA, 2020; CALDERAN, 2017). The other studies adopted participant observation, with semi-structured interview, questionnaire, and document analysis (PINHEIRO, 2008; BIDINOTTO, 2019; MATOS, 2020; MOTA, 2017).

Drawing on qualitative techniques, criteria, and procedures, the researchers observed and collected information that corresponded to the issues. The authors investigated the data based on: Flick (2004); Minayo (1994); Bardin (2016); André and Lüdke (1996); Cellard (2012); Franco and Ghedin (2011); Brandão and Streck (2006), among other theories, in order to explore the material and perform their interpretations. "The data analysis process is like a funnel: things are open at first (or at the top) and become more closed and specific [...]" (BOGDAN; BIKLEN, 1994, p.50).

Thus, we identified similarities between the techniques and instruments adopted,
since in the dissertations and theses, semi-structured interviews and document analysis predominate, techniques widely used as strategies and sources of research.

3 Results and Discussion

Considering the review of the results of the researches analyzed (PINHEIRO, 2008; BIDINOTTO, 2011; MATOS, 2020; MOTA, 2017; RUIZ, 2015; BARBOSA, 2020; CALDERAN, 2017), it is evident conceptions of childhood characterized as: 1) protagonist and active; 2) schooling and literacy; 3) producer of culture and creativity; and 4) dependent and passive, as shown in figure 1:

Figure 1 - Conceptions of childhoods encountered

In face of figure 1, according to the results of the aforementioned researches, four (4) conceptions of childhood have been found. Below, we describe each of the conceptions listed.

1. Dependent and passive subject: the childhood lived by the child following the standards, the social rules, and the routines elaborated by the adults who project their beliefs and values in the educational experiences of daily school life. "[...] The adult insists
on taking total control of the time and the propositions of activities for the children [...] so that the teacher teaches and the child learns. The teacher is still trapped in the system" (BIDINOTTO, 2019, p. 80). In this perspective, the dependence of educating the child to basic hygiene and health care are intertwined, "[...] seeking to meet the demands and not to distance themselves from the welfare principles that historically mark early childhood education in Brazil" (PINHEIRO, 2008, p. 111). That is, the welfare practices remain with the focus on care and education, not as a principle of Early Childhood Education, as guided by legislation (BRASIL, 2017), but to meet this dependent, vulnerable child, who must "[...] be prepared for the adult world [...]" (CALDERAN, 2017, p. 127)

2. Subject protagonist and active: this conception of childhood understands children as competent, active and capable of building their knowledge in the social interactions established among peers. And, in these relationships, they exercise their protagonism and develop their autonomy, "[...] create and experience different ways of learning [...]" (RUIZ, 2015, p. 24). For this, "it is up to the adult/teacher to have a sensitive listening to the various forms of expression of the child" (MALAGUZZI, 1999; FRIEDMANN, 2020; FOCHI, 2020). Enabling pedagogical actions that respect the power and uniqueness of the child is the way to a meaningful learning that understands the child as "[...] protagonist in this learning process, to be heard, observed, welcomed in their assumptions" (MOTA, 2017, p. 137). That is, the child builds its learning process through the quality of the experiences favored, added to its experience with peers, including with the most experienced.

3. Subject producer of culture and creativity: in this understanding of childhood, the child is inserted in / is part of the sociocultural context; they build their identity, ways of seeing the world, interacting with the artifacts of everyday life and supporting themselves in activities performed by adults, appropriating the culture, the way of living, speaking, expressing, that is, the experiences exchanged with peers in the community. With this, they not only share knowledge, but also mutually produce it, since "[...] the reproduction of the social context in which the child is inserted is again exposed as a determinant in childhood practices" (CALDERAN, 2017, p. 81). In contrast, Bidinotto (2019) states that even though
there are advances around the conceptions of childhood, pedagogical actions are contradictory, given that "children should be perceived as producers of culture. However, the adult insists on taking total control of the time and propositions of activities for children" (BIDINOTTO, 2019, p. 91).

4. Subject who needs to become educated or literate: this view of childhood remains in the classroom context, through activities that emphasize literacy. There is an "[...] excessive concern of educational institutions with early schooling that is materialized in the emphasis on formal reading and writing [...]" (PINHEIRO, 2008, p. 33). Due to the centrality of the child development and learning process, which is still focused on the figure of the teacher, "[...] there is a clear perception that adults and children, even if sharing the same educational space, are subjects that are apart" (BIDINOTTO, 2019, p. 81). There are also some who believe it is positive to alphabetize the child in childhood, due to the likely success in the next stage, aiming, in this way, "to prepare the child for future stages, disregarding the needs of the same, imposing the interest of the adult" (RUIZ, 2015, p. 18). On the other hand, there are disagreements due to "reflecting on the spaces for play, when the teacher values, above all, the literacy processes" (CALDERAN, 2017, p. 79), since interactions and play are considered, according to the BNCC, a structuring axis for the full development of the child (BRASIL, 2017).

However, after the process of reviewing these conceptions, it is possible to infer that the conceptions found are simultaneously diffuse in all the researches in the show - most markedly those concerning the dependent and passive subject and the subject that needs to be schooled. Despite this, one must consider, from the point of view of the formative paths of the trainers, the lack of infrastructure/time and adequate spaces, mentioned by Campos (2006, 2009), as well as the understanding of official documents, since we did not see conceptions of childhood that promote emphasis on the learning and development rights established by the BNCC - to live together, play, participate, explore, express and know oneself (BRASIL, 2017).

All these aspects are, therefore, conditioning and contributive to the definition of conceptions of childhood, given that the pedagogical practice is permeated with influences
of everyday school life (PINHEIRO, 2008; BIDINOTTO, 2019; RUIZ, 2015; MOTA, 2017; CALDERAN, 2017; MATOS, 2020; BARBOSA, 2020). This situation only reinforces that Early Childhood Education is the first stage of Basic Education and holds the responsibility of developing children integrally in their physical, psychological, cognitive, and social aspects (BRASIL, 2009, 2017).

The previous results ratify the assumptions of the authors:

“[...] in the need to include the knowledge of experience in the teacher education process that motivates to examine their individual and social beliefs to generate proximity between students and children and thus see some possible epistemological changes in educators.” (GARCIA ROZO; VILLEGAS, 2020, p. 49).

4 Final considerations

In view of this approach to the State of the Knowledge that we have made, we see many contributions both in its theoretical and methodological aspects for the training of teachers who are responsible for educating the first levels of early childhood education, specifically with regard to Basic Education. This validates our inquiries in order to deepen our understanding of the strategies that may constitute more favorable tools for looking at the ways of mobilizing the epistemes of the teachers of Early Childhood Education, who aim for this sensitive look that understands childhood as a sociocultural historical subject.

Based on the study, the findings show the conceptions of childhood referred to in the seven studies reviewed: (1) dependent and passive subject; (2) protagonist and active subject; (3) subject that produces culture and creativity; and (4) subject that needs schooling. These visions cross the researches of the sample, that is, there are four conceptions that are intertwined in all the results reviewed.

We note the absence of considerations that can instigate the deepening of the theme, such as the understanding of the child as a social and historical subject (the child as a social category), according to Villegas, Balaguera, Rozo, and González (2021), and the recognition of the child as a subject of law, to whom we must give voice to prevent them from being disregarded in educational plans.

As for the theoretical trends woven into the research publications reviewed, one
can perceive a path that shows the social history of childhood and prospects concepts that favor child protagonism - an active child, capable of being a product and producing culture. Regarding the methodological approaches, all are qualitative and there is parity between the techniques and instruments adopted, since there is a predominance of semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

Finally, we understand that the debate is not exhausted; paths to be investigated are pointed out, due to the identity constitution and interdependence of the main people involved in the educational process (teacher and child), because “recent trends in research on childhood, its history and education emphasize the perspective of approaching the child's point of view” (KUHLMANN, 2000, p. 56). The conceptions are in a process of change, the dependent and incomplete child is losing space for a new scenario, in which the teacher sees the child as an active, historical, social subject, able to live his childhood significantly, to be a product and produce culture, through his experiences and social and historical transformations (CALDERAN, 2017; MATOS, 2020).

References


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