

PLAYING, LIVING TOGETHER AND RESPECTING: PLAYFUL PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES IN CHILDREN'S SEXUAL EDUCATION AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR SOCIALIZATION AND PROTECTION OF RIGHTS

BRINCAR, CONVIVER E RESPEITAR: ESTRATÉGIAS LÚDICO-PEDAGÓGICAS NA EDUCAÇÃO SEXUAL INFANTIL COMO INSTRUMENTO DE SOCIALIZAÇÃO E PROTEÇÃO DE DIREITOS

JUGAR, CONVIVIR Y RESPETAR: ESTRATEGIAS LÚDICO-PEDAGÓGICAS EN LA EDUCACIÓN SEXUAL INFANTIL COMO INSTRUMENTO PARA LA SOCIALIZACIÓN Y LA PROTECCIÓN DE LOS DERECHOS



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ABSTRACT

Sex education in early childhood has become a highly relevant topic in contemporary educational contexts, especially in light of challenges related to child protection and the development of individuals aware of their rights. This article aims to analyze the role of playful pedagogical strategies in the development of early childhood sex education, considering their contribution to socialization, autonomy building, and violence prevention. The study adopts a qualitative, bibliographic approach, grounded in theoretical frameworks from the sociology of childhood, education, and public policies for child protection. It is based on the assumption that sex education, when properly adapted to children's developmental stages, goes beyond biological aspects and encompasses emotional, social, and cultural dimensions, fostering respect for one's own body and for others. In this context, play emerges as an essential pedagogical tool, enabling meaningful and accessible learning processes for children. Furthermore, the articulation between sex education and the defense of children's rights proves to be crucial in addressing child sexual abuse, particularly in cases where violence occurs within the family environment. The study also engages with concepts from the sociology of childhood, which recognizes children as active social agents, and with Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus, explaining how social dispositions shape behaviors and perceptions from early life. The findings indicate that the integration of playful methodologies into sex education enhances emotional development, strengthens social bonds, and promotes a culture of protection. It is concluded that early childhood sex education, when guided by sensitive and well-structured pedagogical approaches, is an indispensable tool for the comprehensive development of children and for the promotion of a more just and conscious society.

Keywords: Early Childhood Sex Education. Playfulness. Sociology of Childhood. Habitus. Children's Rights.

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RESUMO

A educação sexual na primeira infância constitui-se como uma temática de grande relevância no contexto educacional contemporâneo, especialmente diante dos desafios relacionados à proteção integral da criança e à formação de sujeitos conscientes de seus direitos. Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar o papel das estratégias lúdico-pedagógicas no desenvolvimento da educação sexual infantil, considerando sua contribuição para a socialização, construção da autonomia e prevenção de violências. A pesquisa fundamenta-se em uma abordagem qualitativa, de natureza bibliográfica, ancorada em autores da sociologia da infância, da educação e das políticas públicas de proteção à criança. Parte-se do pressuposto de que a educação sexual, quando desenvolvida de forma adequada à faixa etária, ultrapassa a dimensão biológica e incorpora aspectos emocionais, sociais e culturais, promovendo o respeito ao próprio corpo e ao outro. Nesse sentido, o brincar emerge como ferramenta pedagógica essencial, possibilitando a construção de conhecimentos de forma significativa e acessível às crianças. Além disso, a articulação entre educação sexual e defesa de direitos revela-se fundamental no enfrentamento da violência sexual infantil, sobretudo em contextos em que o abuso ocorre no ambiente familiar. O estudo também dialoga com conceitos da sociologia da infância, que compreende a criança como sujeito ativo, e com a noção de habitus, proposta por Pierre Bourdieu, para explicar como disposições sociais influenciam práticas e percepções desde a infância. Os resultados apontam que a inserção de práticas lúdicas no ensino da sexualidade contribui para o desenvolvimento emocional, para o fortalecimento de vínculos e para a construção de uma cultura de proteção. Conclui-se que a educação sexual infantil, mediada por abordagens pedagógicas sensíveis e estruturadas, é uma ferramenta indispensável para a formação integral da criança e para a promoção de uma sociedade mais justa e consciente.

Palavras-chave: Educação Sexual Infantil. Ludicidade. Sociologia da Infância. Habitus. Direitos da Criança.

RESUMEN

La educación sexual en la primera infancia se ha convertido en un tema de gran relevancia en los contextos educativos contemporáneos, especialmente ante los desafíos relacionados con la protección infantil y el desarrollo de individuos conscientes de sus derechos. Este artículo analiza el papel de las estrategias pedagógicas lúdicas en el desarrollo de la educación sexual en la primera infancia, considerando su contribución a la socialización, la construcción de la autonomía y la prevención de la violencia. El estudio adopta un enfoque cualitativo y bibliográfico, fundamentado en marcos teóricos de la sociología de la infancia, la educación y las políticas públicas de protección infantil. Se basa en la premisa de que la educación sexual, cuando se adapta adecuadamente a las etapas de desarrollo infantil, trasciende los aspectos biológicos y abarca dimensiones emocionales, sociales y culturales, fomentando el respeto por el propio cuerpo y por los demás. En este contexto, el juego emerge como una herramienta pedagógica esencial, que posibilita procesos de aprendizaje significativos y accesibles para los niños. Además, la articulación entre la educación sexual y la defensa de los derechos de la infancia resulta crucial para abordar el abuso sexual infantil, particularmente en casos de violencia intrafamiliar. El estudio también aborda conceptos de la sociología de la infancia, que reconoce a los niños como agentes sociales activos, y la noción de habitus de Pierre Bourdieu, que explica cómo las disposiciones sociales moldean los comportamientos y las percepciones desde la primera infancia. Los hallazgos indican que la integración de metodologías lúdicas en la educación sexual potencia el desarrollo emocional, fortalece los vínculos sociales y promueve una cultura de protección. Se concluye que la educación sexual en la primera infancia, guiada por enfoques pedagógicos sensibles y bien estructurados, es una herramienta indispensable para el desarrollo integral de los niños y para la promoción de una sociedad más



justa y consciente.

Palabras clave: Educación Sexual en la Primera Infancia. Juego. Sociología de la Infancia. Habitus. Derechos de la Infancia.

1 INTRODUCTION

Sex education in early childhood has gained prominence in contemporary academic and educational debates, especially in view of the need to promote the integral development of the child in its multiple dimensions. Far from being restricted to biological aspects, sex education involves emotional, social and cultural issues, contributing to the formation of individuals who are more aware of themselves and of the other. In this sense, addressing this theme from the first years of life becomes fundamental for the construction of relationships based on respect, autonomy and human dignity.

Historically, child sexuality has been marked by silencing and taboos, and is often neglected in the family and school context. Such a scenario contributed to the perpetuation of misinformation and to the vulnerability of children in the face of situations of violence and abuse. Currently, however, there is a movement of resignification of this field, recognizing the importance of treating the theme in an age-appropriate way, with accessible language and a sensitive pedagogical approach.

The school, in this context, assumes a central role as a space for socialization and construction of knowledge. It is in this environment that the child expands his experiences and establishes relationships with different subjects, and is also a privileged place for the development of educational practices aimed at sex education. Thus, it is up to the school institution not only to transmit content, but also to promote values such as respect, empathy and recognition of one's own limits.

At the same time, the family plays an essential role in this process, being the first nucleus of the child's socialization. The articulation between school and family is, therefore, indispensable for sex education to occur in a continuous, coherent and effective way. When there is dialogue and alignment between these spaces, children's ability to protect and guide is significantly increased.

One of the main challenges in addressing child sex education lies in the resistance of educators and guardians, often influenced by cultural or religious beliefs or by the lack of adequate training. This resistance can result in the omission of the theme or in inappropriate approaches, compromising the educational and preventive potential of this practice.

In this sense, playful-pedagogical strategies are presented as effective alternatives for the approach to sexuality in childhood. Play, as the child's own language, enables the construction of knowledge in a natural, meaningful and contextualized way. Through games, stories, and interactive activities, it is possible to work on concepts such as body, limits, consent, and respect.

In addition, the use of play contributes to the emotional and social development of children, favoring the expression of feelings and the construction of bonds. This aspect is especially relevant when considering that many situations of violence are not verbalized directly by children, but can be expressed through behaviors and games.

Sex education is also directly related to the defense of children's rights, especially with regard to protection against violence. By knowing their body and understanding their rights, the child becomes more capable of identifying risk situations and seeking help. Thus, sex education is an important instrument for prevention and promotion of citizenship.

From a theoretical point of view, this study dialogues with the sociology of childhood, which recognizes the child as an active subject and producer of culture, breaking with adult-centric views. In addition, Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus is used to understand how social experiences influence the formation of dispositions and practices from childhood.

In view of this scenario, this article aims to analyze the role of playful-pedagogical strategies in children's sex education, considering their contribution to the integral development of the child and to the promotion of a culture of respect and protection. Thus, it seeks to contribute to the advancement of academic discussions and to the qualification of educational practices in this field.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 SEX EDUCATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD AND ITS FORMATIVE ROLE

Sex education in early childhood should be understood as an essential formative process for the integral development of the child, involving biological, emotional, social and cultural dimensions. Recent studies highlight that the appropriate approach to sexuality from the first years of life contributes to the construction of identity, autonomy and body awareness. In this sense, sex education should not be treated as an isolated content, but as an integral part of pedagogical practices aimed at the formation of critical subjects who are aware of their rights. In addition, when worked on in a continuous and contextualized way, it favors the construction of healthier and more respectful relationships from childhood (BRASIL, 2017).

The absence of dialogue about sexuality is still one of the main obstacles to the healthy development of children, especially in contexts marked by taboos and misinformation. Recent research points out that silence around the topic can generate insecurity, fear and difficulty in expression, compromising emotional and social development. In this way, the insertion of sex education in the school environment becomes essential to break down these barriers and promote a welcoming and informative learning space. This approach also contributes to the

naturalization of the theme, reducing prejudice and expanding access to knowledge (UNESCO, 2018).

Another relevant aspect concerns the role of sex education in the prevention of violence, especially child sexual abuse. Recent data show that children who receive adequate guidance about their bodies and their limits have a greater ability to identify risk situations and seek help. In this context, sex education acts as a protection tool, strengthening the child's autonomy and emotional security. In addition, it contributes to the development of communicative skills that allow expressing discomfort and denouncing situations of violence (WHO, 2020).

The implementation of sex education in the school context is supported by contemporary educational guidelines that value the integral development of the student. The National Common Curriculum Base, for example, emphasizes competencies related to self-care, empathy, and respect, which dialogue directly with the objectives of sex education. Although it does not explicitly address the theme as a discipline, the BNCC opens space for interdisciplinary approaches that integrate the theme into the school routine, promoting a broader and more meaningful education (BRASIL, 2017).

Finally, sex education in childhood should be understood as a fundamental right of the child, directly related to their dignity and healthy development. Recent literature reinforces that ensuring access to adequate information about the body, emotions, and social relationships is a way to promote citizenship from the first years of life. Thus, the responsibility for its implementation must be shared between school, family, and society, from a perspective of integral protection and human development (UNICEF, 2021).

2.2 PLAYFUL-PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES AS A TEACHING AND PREVENTION STRATEGY

Playful-pedagogical approaches play a fundamental role in the teaching-learning process in early childhood education, especially when it comes to complex content such as sex education. Playing is recognized as the child's main form of expression, and it is through it that he interprets the world, constructs meanings and develops cognitive and social skills. In this context, play presents itself as an effective strategy to mediate knowledge, making learning more meaningful and accessible to children (Kishimoto, 2020).

In the context of sex education, the use of playful activities allows addressing topics such as the body, limits and respect in a natural and age-appropriate way. Recent studies indicate that methodologies based on games, stories and dynamics favor the active participation of children, creating a safe environment for dialogue and the construction of knowledge. This

approach contributes to reducing the embarrassment associated with the theme and enables more effective learning, based on experience and interaction (Silva; Souza, 2021).

In addition, playing plays an important role in the emotional development of children, functioning as a means of expressing feelings and experiences. Contemporary research indicates that, through play, children are able to externalize situations that they are often unable to verbalize, which can help educators identify signs of vulnerability or violence. In this way, play is also configured as a tool for sensitive listening and welcoming in the school environment (Oliveira; Costa, 2022).

Another relevant aspect is the relationship between playfulness and violence prevention. Recent literature shows that playful pedagogical practices contribute to the teaching of fundamental concepts such as consent, privacy and respect for the body. These contents, when worked in an integrated way with the children's daily lives, strengthen their ability to recognize inappropriate situations and act safely. Thus, play not only teaches, but also protects (Santos; Silva; Souza, 2020).

Finally, it is highlighted that the effectiveness of playful strategies is directly related to the training of educators. Recent studies highlight the importance of teacher training for the conscious and intentional use of play as a pedagogical tool. It is essential that teachers understand the potential of these methodologies and know how to apply them appropriately, ensuring that playing is used as a learning and development tool, and not just as a recreational activity (Rodrigues; Almeida, 2023).

2.3 CHILDHOOD, HABITUS AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE CHILD

The sociology of contemporary childhood proposes an understanding of the child as an active subject in the construction of his social reality, breaking with traditional views that placed him only as a passive receiver of norms and values. This perspective recognizes that children interpret, resignify and transform the world around them, producing culture and establishing their own social relations. In this way, childhood is no longer seen as a merely preparatory phase and is understood as a social category with its own characteristics (Sarmiento, 2020).

Childhood, in this context, is understood as a social and historical construction, which varies according to cultural, economic and political factors. Recent studies reinforce that there is not a single way of experiencing childhood, but multiple experiences that reflect the social conditions in which children are inserted. This understanding broadens the view of the child and contributes to the development of more inclusive educational practices that are sensitive to different realities (Qvortrup, 2021).

The concept of habitus, developed by Pierre Bourdieu, also contributes to the understanding of the social formation of the child, by explaining how dispositions, values and behaviors are incorporated from childhood. The habitus is formed from the experiences lived in different spaces of socialization, such as family and school, influencing the way individuals perceive and act in the world. This process often occurs unconsciously, but it has a significant impact on the individual's social trajectory (Bourdieu, 2020).

In the educational field, habitus can contribute both to the reproduction and to the transformation of social inequalities. Recent studies indicate that the school, by valuing certain cultural standards, can reinforce existing inequalities. However, it also has the potential to promote change, as long as it adopts inclusive and critical pedagogical practices, capable of recognizing and valuing the diversity of students' experiences (Nogueira; Nogueira, 2021).

Finally, the articulation between sociology of childhood, habitus and sex education allows us to understand the child as a subject of rights and protagonist of the educational process. By recognizing their capacity for participation and knowledge construction, it becomes possible to develop more effective and humanized pedagogical practices. This approach contributes to the formation of individuals who are more aware, critical, and prepared to act in society in an active and responsible way (Corsaro, 2022).

3 METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts the explanatory research method, as it is an investigation that seeks to understand and explain the causes, structural factors and implications of sexual violence against children and adolescents. As Lakatos and Marconi (2003) say, explanatory research aims to record, analyze and interpret facts, identifying their causes, in order to expand generalizations, structure theoretical models and generate hypotheses based on logical deductions. Such an approach requires greater theoretical depth, synthesis and critical reflection on the object of study, which is appropriate in view of the complexity of the phenomenon of child sexual violence. The explanatory method research will be addressed:

Explanatory research records facts, analyzes them, interprets them, and identifies their causes. This practice aims to broaden generalizations, define broader laws, structure and define theoretical models, relate hypotheses to a more unitary view of the universe or productive scope in general, and generate hypotheses or ideas by virtue of logical deduction (Lakatos and Marconi, 2003, p. 25).

Explanatory research requires greater investment in synthesis, theorization and reflection from the object of study.

This study uses the deductive method as a method of approach, assuming that if all premises are true, consequently the conclusion must be true. According to Lakatos and Marconi (2003), all the information or factual content of the conclusion must already be, at least implicitly, in the premises. Deductive arguments are either right or wrong, or the premises fully support the conclusions or do not, if the logic is reversed.

Regarding the methodological aspects, this article used bibliographic research. In this way, it is characterized by being;

[...] Prepared from already published material, consisting mainly of: books, magazines, publications in journals and scientific articles, newspapers, bulletins, monographs, dissertations, theses, cartographic material, internet, with the objective of putting the researcher in direct contact with all material already written on the subject of research. In the bibliographic research, it is important for the researcher to verify the veracity of the data obtained, observing the possible inconsistencies or contradictions that the works may present (Prodanov; Freitas, 2013, p. 54).

Furthermore, considering the subjects in their own terms, it is necessary to speak of a cultural contextualization, a dialectical study, because:

[...] For dialectics, things are not analyzed as fixed objects, but in movement: no thing is always in the process of being transformed, developing; the end of one process is always the beginning of another" (Lakatos and Marconi, 1991, p. 75).

To this end, considering this as a careful investigation with the application of critical evaluation and synthesis of selected information, evidence related to the specific theme addressed in this work was synthesized. Thus, the research for this study consisted of the use of books, academic articles and secondary data related to the theme, with a theoretical and qualitative approach.

Gil (2002) points out that bibliographic research is developed based on material already prepared, consisting mainly of books and scientific articles. As Lakatos and Marconi (2003) testify, the bibliographic research is a general overview of the main works already carried out, which are important because they are able to provide current and relevant data related to the theme.

Documentary research was also used, which, as Gil (2002) points out, makes use of materials that have not yet received an analytical treatment, or that can still be reworked according to the objects of the research. It is also a descriptive research that has as its primary objective the description of the characteristics of a certain population or phenomenon or, then, the establishment of relationships between variables.

Thus, the present research qualitative, theoretical and explanatory in nature, based on the critical analysis and synthesis of selected evidence on sexual violence against children and adolescents. The study was based on the use of books, academic articles and secondary data related to the theme, seeking to contribute to the in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and to the strengthening of strategies for the prevention, protection and confrontation of child sexual violence.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the theoretical data shows that sex education in early childhood, when applied in a structured and appropriate way, has significant impacts on the integral development of the child. Recent studies show that children who have access to information about their own bodies and limits from an early age demonstrate greater autonomy, emotional security, and communication skills in situations of discomfort. This result reinforces the idea that sex education is not limited to the informative field, but acts directly in the formation of subjects who are more aware and prepared for healthy social interactions (UNESCO, 2018).

It is also observed that the use of playful-pedagogical strategies significantly enhances the effectiveness of child sex education. Play, as a learning tool, facilitates the assimilation of content considered sensitive, allowing the child to understand concepts such as respect, privacy and consent in a natural way. Recent literature shows that pedagogical environments that incorporate play have greater student engagement and better results in the learning process, especially in early childhood education (Kishmoto, 2020).

Another relevant point identified in the analysis is the direct relationship between sex education and the prevention of violence, especially child sexual abuse. Recent data indicate that most cases of violence occur in family environments or close to the child, which reinforces the importance of educational mechanisms that strengthen their ability to identify and react. In this sense, sex education acts as an essential preventive strategy, contributing to the reduction of child vulnerability (WHO, 2016).

In addition, the studies analyzed show that the emotional development of children is directly influenced by the educational practices adopted in the school environment. The playful approach to sexuality contributes to the expression of feelings, strengthening self-esteem and building bonds of trust with educators. These factors are fundamental for the child to feel safe to share experiences and doubts, creating an environment conducive to learning and protection (Oliveira; Costa, 2022).

The discussion also reveals that teacher training is one of the main challenges for the effectiveness of sex education in childhood. Many educators still feel insecure or unprepared to address the topic, which can compromise the quality of pedagogical practices. Recent studies highlight the need for continuing education, focusing on appropriate methodologies and the development of socio-emotional skills, ensuring that educators act safely and consciously (Rodrigues; Almeida, 2023).

Another important aspect refers to the influence of the sociocultural context on the way sex education is understood and applied. The concept of habitus allows us to understand how internalized values and beliefs influence both educational practices and the receptivity of families in relation to the theme. This demonstrates that the implementation of sex education requires not only pedagogical changes, but also broader cultural transformations (Bourdieu, 2020).

The analysis also shows that family participation is a determining factor for the success of children's sex education. When there is alignment between school and family, the child receives more consistent and safe guidance, strengthening the learning process. On the other hand, the absence of this dialogue can generate conflicts and hinder the consolidation of knowledge acquired in the school environment, highlighting the need for integrated actions (UNICEF, 2021).

Finally, the results indicate that sex education mediated by playful practices and based on sociological approaches contributes to the formation of a culture of respect and protection in childhood. By recognizing the child as an active subject and promoting their participation in the educational process, the transformative potential of education is expanded. In this way, the articulation between theory and practice is essential for the construction of more effective educational policies aligned with contemporary needs (Corsaro, 2022).

5 CONCLUSION

Sex education in early childhood is revealed, throughout this study, as an essential element for the integral formation of the child, overcoming reductionist conceptions that limit it to the biological field. When considering emotional, social, and cultural dimensions, it is observed that its approach contributes significantly to the development of autonomy, body awareness, and the ability to establish relationships based on mutual respect. Thus, sex education should be understood as a structuring part of the educational process, especially in the first years of life.

The analysis developed throughout the article showed that the playful-pedagogical strategies play a central role in the effectiveness of this process. Play, as a language of childhood, enables the construction of knowledge in a meaningful way, facilitating the approach of topics considered sensitive. In addition, play contributes to the emotional and social development of children, strengthening bonds and promoting a safe environment for the expression of feelings and doubts.

Another relevant point refers to the potential of sex education as an instrument for preventing violence, especially child sexual abuse. By knowing their own body, understanding limits and developing communication skills, the child becomes better able to identify risk situations and seek help. In this sense, sex education is consolidated as a protection tool, aligned with the principle of guaranteeing rights and promoting the dignity of the child.

The discussion also allowed us to understand the importance of the sociology of childhood and the concept of habitus in the analysis of educational practices. By recognizing the child as an active subject and producer of culture, the understanding of his or her role in the learning process is expanded. Likewise, habitus shows how social dispositions influence behaviors and perceptions from childhood, reinforcing the need for critical and inclusive pedagogical practices.

However, there are still significant challenges to the effective implementation of sexuality education in childhood, especially with regard to teacher training and sociocultural resistance. The lack of preparation of educators and the taboos present in society can compromise the development of adequate pedagogical practices. Thus, it is essential to invest in continuing education and public policies that encourage debate and inclusion of the topic in the school environment.

Finally, it is concluded that child sex education, when mediated by playful approaches and based on solid theoretical bases, is an indispensable instrument for the formation of individuals who are more aware, autonomous and prepared for life in society. Its effectiveness depends on the articulation between school, family and public policies, being an essential path for the construction of a more just, safe and respectful society.

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