

THE IMPORTANCE OF GAMES IN THE LEARNING OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

A IMPORTÂNCIA DOS JOGOS NA APRENDIZAGEM DE CRIANÇAS COM ESPECTRO AUTISTA NA EDUCAÇÃO INFANTIL

LA IMPORTANCIA DE LOS JUEGOS EN EL APRENDIZAJE DE NIÑOS CON TRASTORNO DEL ESPECTRO AUTISTA EN LA EDUCACIÓN INFANTIL



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ABSTRACT

This research seeks to reflect on the importance of playfulness in the learning process of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in early childhood education, since games and playful activities are exceptional instruments of mediation between pleasure and learning, given that playfulness is eminently cultural. The theme of this study is the importance of games in the learning of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in early childhood education. However, the general objective of this work is to understand the importance of playful activities in the learning process of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Early Childhood Education. The methodology adopted is qualitative and quantitative, making inferences through bibliographic research. It was concluded that games in early childhood education are important as facilitators of students' learning and should certainly be part of the daily practice of all schools, as they develop skills not only related to cognition, but also to social, affective, and emotional aspects.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder. Early Childhood Education. Playfulness.

RESUMO

Esta pesquisa busca refletir sobre a importância do lúdico na aprendizagem de crianças com espectro autista na educação infantil, uma vez que os jogos e brincadeiras são excepcionais instrumentos de mediação entre o prazer e a aprendizagem, já que o lúdico é eminentemente cultural. Tem como tema a importância dos Jogos na aprendizagem de crianças com espectro autista na educação infantil. Entretanto, este trabalho tem por objetivo geral compreender a importância das atividades lúdicas no processo de aprendizagem de criança com espectro autista na Educação Infantil. Em relação a metodologia qualitativa e quantitativa, fazendo inferências por meio de pesquisas bibliográficas. Concluiu-se que os jogos na Educação Infantil são importantes como facilitadores da aprendizagem dos alunos da escola e que certamente deve fazer parte do cotidiano da prática educativa de todas as escolas, pois desenvolve habilidades que não estão voltadas somente para o cognitivo, mas também para o social, o afetivo, o emocional.

Palavras-chave: Espectro Autista. Educação Infantil. Ludicidade.

RESUMEN

Esta investigación busca reflexionar sobre la importancia de lo lúdico en el aprendizaje de niños con Trastorno del Espectro Autista en la educación infantil, ya que los juegos y las actividades lúdicas son instrumentos excepcionales de mediación entre el placer y el aprendizaje, dado que lo lúdico es eminentemente cultural. El tema de este estudio es la importancia de los juegos en el aprendizaje de niños con Trastorno del Espectro Autista en la educación infantil. Sin embargo, el objetivo general de este trabajo es comprender la importancia de las actividades lúdicas en el proceso de aprendizaje de niños con Trastorno del Espectro Autista en la Educación Infantil. La metodología adoptada es cualitativa y cuantitativa, realizando inferencias a través de investigaciones bibliográficas. Se concluyó que los juegos en la educación infantil son importantes como facilitadores del aprendizaje de los alumnos y que, sin duda, deben formar parte de la práctica educativa cotidiana de todas las escuelas, ya que desarrollan habilidades que no solo están orientadas al aspecto cognitivo, sino también al social, afectivo y emocional.

Palabras clave: Trastorno del Espectro Autista. Educación Infantil. Ludicidad.

1 INTRODUCTION

The process of school inclusion has been the subject of discussion in the school context of Brazil. The recent publication of the Brazilian Law for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (Law No. 13,146, 2015) reinforces this discussion, emphasizing the principles of establishing an inclusive society. However, Special Education at school becomes a space of conducive reception, molded to the student. Inclusive Education differs from Special Education, as it is not characterized as a modality, but rather a methodological procedure within basic education.

Special Education is of great importance, especially in its inclusive perspective, because it is through it that the rights of individuals are ensured by law, and this inclusive process occurs in the regular school system. (Kassar, 2011).

Every day the methodologies that facilitate the child's learning are being discussed. It has long been believed that children learned only by receiving information from the teacher. The child listened, copied, memorized and should learn in this way. But as time went by, other ideas about how to teach the child developed. These ideas were the products of the work of several educators and also of psychologists who sought to study means that facilitated the child's understanding and consequently better learning.

It is considered that the function of Early Childhood Education is to promote the global development of the child; To do so, it is necessary to consider the knowledge he already has, allowing the child to experience his world, exploring, respecting and reconstructing. Each individual learns in their own personal and unique way. Even so, there are several types of methodology that can be applied to facilitate the child's learning. It is important to find out the type of learning style of the child, so that you can teach him more efficiently and obtain better results.

This article seeks to reflect on the importance of games for the integral development of children with Autism Spectrum in Early Childhood Education, since games and play are excellent instruments of mediation between pleasure and learning, especially mathematics.

According to Principle VII of UNICEF's Universal Declaration of the Rights of the Child, play is a right of all children in the world. It is an enriching task for the child, as it makes him agile, satisfied, creative, and gives him the opportunity to communicate with the environment.

In this sense, the guiding problem of this research is based on the need to seek answers to the question: **What is the importance of playful activities in the learning process of children with autism spectrum in Early Childhood Education?** Thus, the following hypotheses were raised: Playfulness is important for the learning of students with

autism spectrum in Early Childhood Education. The types of playfulness that are worked on facilitate children's learning.

The justification for the research is that when using games, children with autism spectrum disorder seek to reflect on how play can complement learning, providing an excellent development of their potentialities and skills. In view of its degree of importance for the development and formation of the child, through this work that has as its theme: "the importance of play in the learning of children with autism spectrum in early childhood education."

The objective of this study was to understand the importance of playful activities in the learning process of children with autism spectrum in Early Childhood Education. And, in this way, characterize children with Autism Spectrum in Early Childhood Education; Know the playful activities as a pedagogical strategy; Explain the relevance of playfulness in the process of school inclusion of a child with Autism Spectrum, through reflection on its use in classrooms. To know the role of the Teacher in the Early Childhood Education of children with Autism Spectrum in Early Childhood Education.

For the methodology of the work, a qualitative descriptive approach was used, focusing on bibliographic research. The theoretical basis for this work was given through the following authors: Cunha (2011), Kishimoto (2014 and 2016), among others, who contemplate the theme proposed in this project, as well as the laws of the Federal National Constitution (1988), Statute of the Child and Adolescent - ECA (2013), LDB Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education - LDB (2016) and the National Curriculum Parameters (2018).

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 BRIEF HISTORY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Currently, schools that work with early childhood education have adopted a new scenario, with the main focus on children, the center of education. We can, therefore, observe numerous changes that have occurred over the years, whether in the way of understanding the child, their evolution or the educational process in which they are inserted.

In Brazil, early childhood education has been discussed about the importance of play in classroom practice. In addition, play is one of the crucial tools for the child's teaching and learning development process. With great studies by theorists and scholars in recent decades, it has been developing and gaining a new expression (Rego, 2014; Kishimoto, 2016; Piaget, 2016).

With the creation of the Federal Constitution in 1988, with the legal definitions of the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education, Law No. 9,394/96, there was an advance

in relation to early childhood education, acquiring a new instrumentalization in the country's education. The Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education, Law No. 9,394/96 in its Article 29, expresses that early childhood education has as its purpose the integral development of children up to 5 years old, in their physical, psychological, intellectual and social aspects.

In this sense, according to article 205 of the Federal Constitution of 1988, Education must be promoted and encouraged with the collaboration of society, aiming at the full development of the person, his preparation for the exercise of citizenship and his qualification for work.

In 1990, the ECA (Statute of the Child and Adolescent) was created, whose main objective is to guarantee the merit of the rights and duties of children and adolescents. According to Ferreira (2015, p. 184), this Law is more than a simple legal instrument, because it inserted children and adolescents into the world of human rights; it established a system for the elaboration and inspection of public policies aimed at children, trying to prevent abuse, embezzlement of funds and violations of children's rights; It also served as a basis for the construction of a new way of looking at the child: a child with the right to be a child, with the right to affection, the right to play, the right to want, the right not to want, the right to know, the right to dream. This means that they are actors of their own development.

For Veronese and Custódio (2011, p. 37):

The rights of children and adolescents emerge from a system guided by the principle of the best interests of the child, provided for in article 3, 1, of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, which determines that 'All actions relating to children, carried out by public or private social welfare institutions, courts, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, must consider, primarily, the best interests of the child'. It is a principle arising from the recognition of the child's peculiar condition as a person in the process of development.

Despite the changes that have occurred in education in the twenty-first century, many institutions still operate with the same educational system focused on traditionalism, failing to exercise an educational action focused on playfulness. Teaching requires a lot of skill and knowledge, respecting the students' knowledge and not transmitting the implicit content without discussing the theme, knowing that these activities work on the free and spontaneous movements of the student (Freire, 2016).

The National Curriculum Parameter for Early Childhood Education (Brasil, 2018, p. 13), specifies the various aspects to be contemplated, including playing.

The quality of the experiences offered that can contribute to the exercise of citizenship, respecting the affective, emotional, social and cognitive specificities of children from zero to six years old, must be based on the following principles:

Respect for the dignity and rights of children, considered in their individual, social, economic, cultural, ethnic, religious differences, etc.;

The right of children to play, as a particular form of expression, thought, interaction and communication of children;

Children's access to available socio-cultural goods, expanding the development of skills related to expression, communication, interaction, thought, ethics and science.

The socialization of children through their participation and insertion in the most diversified social practices, without discrimination of any kind;

Attendance to essential care associated with survival and the development of their identity.

Also, according to Brasil (2018, p. 23),

Educating means, therefore, providing situations of care, play and learning oriented in an integrated way and that can contribute to the development of children's capacities for interpersonal relationships, to be and to be with others in a basic attitude of acceptance, respect and trust, and access by children to broader knowledge of social and cultural reality. In this process, education can help the development of the capacities of appropriation and knowledge of the bodily, affective, emotional, aesthetic and ethical potentialities, in the perspective of contributing to the formation of happy and healthy children.

2.1.1 Children with Autism Spectrum in Early Childhood Education

In recent years, autism has been discussed, especially in Early Childhood Education. Because the child with autism spectrum has a certain limitation, presenting difficulties in socialization, communication and language. For this, it is necessary to create strategies for the development of skills for better school performance.

In this sense, Cunha (2011, p. 20) explains that:

Autism comprises the observation of a set of behaviors grouped into a main triad: impairments in communication, difficulties in social interaction and restricted-repetitive activities (...) Kanner observed children with an inability in interpersonal relationships that differentiated it from other pathologies, as well as delays in speech acquisition and motor difficulties.

In this sense, the school has a very important role when it comes to educating a child with autism spectrum, as it is necessary to provide their socialization effectively, for this

reason, the school has the responsibility to enhance their growth to achieve their purpose.

As Brito (2003, p. 85) explains:

It is from the daycare center that the intellectual and affective development of the autistic child must be conducted, through an interaction between the environments he is part of, making him aware of the reality existing in society and providing knowledge of humanity and the relationships that surround it. It is clear that placing the autistic person in an institution can bring many internal conflicts and even emotional problems for parents. Many of them usually have the feeling that they are leaving their children aside, as if there were a feeling of guilt, because there is already a feeling in our world linked to the rejection of the disabled child.

It is understood that through play, play, games, and the rules of the games, the child with Autism Spectrum in Early Childhood Education begins to acquire knowledge of his rights and the rights of his classmates, so necessary for socialization.

Thus, Feijó (2012, p. 185) says that:

Through play and its history, the ways and customs of civilizations are recovered. The possibilities that play offers the child are enormous: it is capable of revealing the contradictions between the adult and the child's perspective when interpreting the toy; make contact with challenges, seek to satiate curiosity everything, know; to represent social practices, to release richness from children's imagination; facing and overcoming barriers and conditioning, offering creation, imagination and fantasy, affective and cognitive development.

The author talks about the need to use games and play in early childhood education, showing in her research the importance of using this mechanism in the classroom.

2.2.2 The role of the teacher in Early Childhood Education

With playfulness, the school space can be transformed into a pleasant and dynamic environment, so that the teacher can reach the main objective of his professional performance, which is to achieve the success of students in the classroom. No educational process is efficient without the participation of a good teacher. It is largely up to him to enable the school to become an educational space, for sharing, reflection and construction of knowledge. For any change to occur in the educational area, it must first go through the training and appreciation of teachers, so an early childhood education teacher must be aware of his great responsibility towards these little ones, and above all he must enjoy what he does.

According to Rego (2014, p. 8) the role of the educator is "to be a facilitator of games, and it is necessary to mix moments where he guides and directs the process, with other moments where children are responsible for their own games". Also according to this author,

whenever possible, the educator should participate in the games and take the opportunity to question the children about them, in addition, organize and structure the space in order to stimulate the child's need to play, aiming to facilitate the games.

In this sense, it is important to remember that the teacher also learns, and this learning is constant, so he must identify different ways of thinking about his profession, he must face it as part of a constant movement of search. As Freire (2016, p. 24) says, "the awareness of the world and the awareness of oneself as an unfinished being necessarily inscribe the being aware of its incompleteness in a permanent movement of search".

It is important that the educator has a good relationship with his students so that he can provide safety and protection to the child in the school environment. For this to occur, it is necessary that the teacher has adequate training, so that they can actually guide the children, being a mediator of knowledge, assisting in their activities and encouraging them to do them alone, so that there is interaction and can facilitate the child's development.

According to Piaget (2016), the child's development happens through play. She needs to play to grow, she needs the game as a way of balancing with the world. Thus, in order to be successful in the school environment, it is necessary to have a good organization in the workplace, seeking multiple teaching, aiming at a combination of reciprocal exchange of experiences, that is, between teacher and student, with commitment and responsibility to share experiences in the classroom.

According to Fortuna (2010), in a classroom where playfulness is present, knowledge is assimilated through a mutual exchange of information between teacher and student, collecting the importance that the student's participation has in the learning process, thus generating a harmonious environment that motivates new knowledge.

However, playing is a resource that can efficiently assist in teaching practices, making classes more creative and contributing to more productive learning. In this sense, the teacher must plan his classes so that they are more meaningful to the student. It must create several conditions that provide a more collective and individual work. For Coll (2017), the analysis of any learning process needs to take into account all factors and the possible interactions that can be established between them.

[...] In the cultural and biological context, the activities are free, joyful and involve a meaning. It is of great social value, offering educational possibilities, as it favors bodily development, stimulates psychic life and intelligence, contributes to adaptation to the group preparing to live in society, participating and questioning the assumptions of social relationships (Kishimoto, 2014, p. 13).

According to Arroyo (2010), only through playful teaching can education undergo positive transformations, encouraging and innovating the methodological relationship between teacher and student, thus enhancing the assimilation of knowledge in a meaningful and interactive way.

For Coll (2017), the analysis of any learning process needs to take into account all factors and the possible interactions that can be established between them. Therefore, the teacher must organize his activities so that they are meaningful to the student. It must create conditions for group or individual work, facilitating its development. Because, in playfulness, the child will have the opportunity to experience rules, norms, transform, recreate, learn according to their needs, develop their reasoning.

Therefore, games are essential for the Autistic Spectrum child to develop their skills, and for them to learn to socialize and participate with other children in a joint action, with the participation of the teacher who will mediate between playing and learning.

2.2.3 The Practice of Play in the Learning of Children with Autism Spectrum

We live in a globalized world, where a certain barrier has fallen for some, while others are raised for others. In this contemporary society, with its fast capitalist consumption behavior, the "different" has not always been tolerated, the difference, discards cultures, customs and values, all this for an unequal competition, where only the strongest has been considered in the "race" for success. This way of life of the citizen, young, old, black, and especially fragments the lives of people with special educational needs, making them beings with serious difficulties in relating.

In the school environment, these situations are affirmed, as there has been a significant increase in the number of children with some type of disability in the country's regular school system in recent years, and this growth is not accidental, but the result of the mobilization of Brazilian society, which after the Brazilian Constitution of 1988 guarantees access to regular elementary education to all children and adolescents. without exception, and makes it clear that children with special educational needs should receive complementary specialized care, preferably within the school.

But the problem is that the PNEE child is sometimes excluded within the school and one of, if not the best instrument for the true inclusion of these children is to treat them as equals, and one way for this to happen, according to several theorists, is through the use of toys and games, games and recreation. In this case, the playful:

(...) it is play that is universal and that is health itself: play facilitates growth and, therefore, health; play leads to group relationships; finally, psychoanalysis was

developed as a highly specialized form of play, at the service of communication with oneself and with only others (Winnicott, 2015. p. 63).

Playing not only reinforces inclusion, but is also a powerful tool in the hands of the teacher as an additional subsidy for children with some type of special need. Let's take as an example a child with visual impairment, DV (blindness), studying in a regular class, the teacher when dealing with a content, for example, geometric figures needed an extra resource, because in an expository class he had left the DV student "out" of the subject, at that time the toy will be valuable, because he will be able to use toys with geometric shapes, and so through touch the blind child will have the same opportunity to learn.

The toy, in addition to being the main child activity, is also the privileged way in which their mind, their superior psychological capacities, such as attention, memory, imagination and (...) creativity, develop" (Zanluchi, 2015, p. 2).

It is also possible to mention the Multifunctional Resource rooms, which are spaces, organized in schools of the education network, which offer Special Education services and resources to students with disabilities, global developmental disorders and high abilities/giftedness. The resources of these rooms are mostly toys of various types and used according to the needs of each student.

The various playful activities carried out in the classroom by teachers serve as excellent didactic resources for the teaching and learning process of children with Autism Spectrum. They can also transform the school environment by making it more attractive.

In the conception of the theorist mentioned in the quote above, first, the teacher must always plan looking for tools that facilitate knowledge, worrying about the training of their students, especially children with the Autistic Spectrum, always aiming to improve and enrich their work as a teacher.

The use of the game in the classroom requires attention in the sense of exploring what will be done, and it is important to direct to whom, where and to which reality it should be directed. The act of playing provides the construction of knowledge in a natural and pleasant way, helping in socialization and the development of autonomy.

Intentional intervention based on the observation of children's play, offering them adequate material, as well as a structured space to play, allows the enrichment of children's imaginative, creative and organizational skills. It is up to the teacher to organize situations so that the games occur in a diversified way to provide the children with the possibility of choosing the themes, roles, objects and companions with whom to play or the games of rules and construction, and thus elaborate in a personal and

independent way their emotions, feelings, knowledge and social rules. (Brazil, 2018, p. 29).

Both the use of materials and the school space are useful for the learning of children with autism spectrum, and the teacher as an advisor is fundamental for their development, proposing various resources that stimulate and are of great effectiveness for their learning.

The teacher is a competent being and must create a diversified place of games and play for the integration of children with Autism Spectrum in the classroom. By looking for forms of learning according to the specificities of the student, making him an active being in this development process.

The game is a facilitating tool used in the learning process, which motivates the student through playfulness to analyze and create strategies to solve challenges, also providing the educator with the role of mediator and stimulator in the assimilation of new knowledge (Antunes, 2012).

The presence of play in the classroom is fundamental for the integrality of the autistic child, making him more active and participative, adding joy and transforming the school space, making it increasingly pleasurable and dynamic. According to Antunes (2012) apud Macedo (2014), for the assimilation of knowledge to occur, it is necessary that teaching is dynamized by the educator, and this must be continuously renewed through methodologies that relate the student's daily life to the knowledge passed on in the classroom.

Likewise, Ribeiro (2017, p. 9) highlights the importance of play for the development of skills in children:

Playful Education, in a spontaneous and pleasant way, puts the child in a position to be guided in his instinctive impulses. To encourage, guide and develop the child's instinctive manifestations is to help the timely development of his intelligence, to refine his emotions, to strengthen his will, his individuality and his sociability.

For an effective and successful development, it is necessary that the student has built concrete knowledge and, above all, understands the contents clearly and objectively. Playfulness acts as a tool to facilitate knowledge, so it is noticeable that playing helps in the development of autistic children, especially during early childhood education.

It is up to the teacher to use strategies to use playfulness and we can then, through playfulness, encourage the imagination of the child with autism in a practical and admissible way, without harming the instigation of these students.

It is the responsibility of the school and the teachers to provide innovations that can facilitate their learning and development. However, as these are students with ASD, it is

essential that these professionals are qualified so that they can be successful in following the games and games, as each student has their specificities.

Playfulness is an essential resource to help in learning, as it favors the acquisition of knowledge, it is known that all games have rules, which provide the opportunity to explore the contents. For autistic students, the playful activity works as a link between several aspects, as the child enhances his learning, through cultural and social advancement, contributing to a healthy physical and mental life, representing a creative and communicative means through naturalness. However, the obstacles that cross the use of games with autistic students are of great relevance not only in learning, but also in the emotional state of these children who in certain situations sometimes do not have support from the efficient parts.

3 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

To carry out this research work, about the importance of games in the learning of children with autism spectrum in early childhood education, as a fundamental educational principle for the development of children with Autism Spectrum, it was decided to use a bibliographic research, using a descriptive qualitative approach, as this aims at research, analysis and understanding of the theme.

The research was carried out through data collection, selection of scientific articles and qualitative analysis that addressed the topic studied, in the Portuguese language, published in Brazil, between the years 2024 and 2025, through websites such as: the Scielo-Scientific Electronic Library On-Line, Google Scholar and others. Which will serve as a database. The following keywords were used: learning, autistic spectrum, early childhood education and playfulness.

After reading all the material, all the most relevant information was selected, with great criteria. Consequently, it was used in a descriptive way, with an investigation of all monographs, especially articles, always seeking to understand and polish more the knowledge about the theme studied.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It was concluded that Games contribute as a facilitating agent for learning. Playing can be used as an instrument of practical complement, complementing theory, however, pedagogically very enriching, because it unsettles the subject, provoking him to move and interact with his peers and space and his environment, to the extent that a certain game, or learning proposal that the teachers are presenting at that moment, other knowledge comes into action; such as respect for rules, clarity of communication, strengthening of the affective

bond between the group, disinhibition, trust with each other, among other issues of values such as understanding, friendship, cooperation, solidarity and other knowledge that are articulated among themselves, linked by a large network incorporating themselves into each other.

The games and Play is an important strategy for development and learning, because in addition to contributing to the learning of school content, it helps in the cognitive, affective, social and psychomotor development of the autistic or non-autistic student. When playfulness is worked on in education, a door is opened for the autistic child to release his feelings, offering him the opportunity to develop his affection, thus learning to socialize better with the people around him. To assist the autistic child, adapted methods and techniques are necessary for inclusion to happen.

It is hoped that this work can contribute to a greater reflection on the theme in question, it is up to the teacher to work towards a diversified and playful methodology in the search to improve every day and have a good performance in the learning of their students. It is believed that play is an enriching source for children with the Autism Spectrum. For this learning to occur, it is necessary for the autistic child to build his own knowledge by assimilating the contents more effectively. In addition, another resource that also facilitates their learning is games.

Finally, the teacher needs to develop dynamic classes with the student as the guiding focus of his actions. Make a didactic plan aimed at constant motivation and can only happen if playful activities are present in the teacher's day-to-day life. Thus, it is possible to have a new look at the learning of autistic children, with the proper use of games, developing pleasurable playful activities that motivate and activate learning. Efforts are needed to break down barriers, eliminate prejudices and guarantee the right to quality education and recognition of differences.

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