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## PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES IN THE INITIAL LITERACY PROCESS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the pedagogical practices developed in the initial literacy process in Early Childhood Education, highlighting their importance for children's cognitive, social and cultural development. Understanding literacy as a meaningful and contextualized process is fundamental to promoting effective learning that respects the specificities of childhood and values students' linguistic and cultural diversity. This study aims to analyze the pedagogical practices developed in Early Childhood Education in the initial literacy process, highlighting their contributions to the child's integral development and the construction of written language in a meaningful and playful way. Through qualitative and bibliographical research, the study emphasizes the role of the teacher as mediator, who must plan and implement pedagogical strategies that encourage curiosity, experimentation and interaction with written and oral language. The results point to the need for pedagogical practices that value prior knowledge, respect children's stage of development and encourage their active participation in the construction of knowledge.

**Keywords:** Early literacy; Early childhood education; Pedagogical practices

## INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is the first stage of basic education and its primary function is to promote the all-round development of children from 0 to 5 years of age, in physical, emotional, social and cognitive terms. Within this context, the initial literacy process emerges as one of the most debated dimensions, especially in terms of how pedagogical practices are organized to promote children's appropriation of written language.

The National Common Core Curriculum (BNCC) establishes that Early Childhood Education should guarantee meaningful experiences that promote orality, listening, rea-

ding and writing, respecting the rhythm and specificities of each child. Thus, this article aims to discuss pedagogical practices in the initial literacy process in Early Childhood Education, highlighting their theoretical and methodological foundations, as well as the challenges faced by teachers at this stage.

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Literacy is one of the fundamental pillars of basic education, and its foundation begins to be built in Early Childhood Education. Understanding how pedagogical practices influence this process is essential to ensuring meaningful learning, respecting children's development and promoting access to written culture in a contextualized way.

The BNCC (2017) emphasizes the importance of experiences with oral and written language from the earliest years, without anticipating formal teaching, but with pedagogical intent. However, many institutions still face difficulties in aligning theory and practice, often adopting mechanical and decontextualized methods.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND INITIAL LITERACY

Early literacy is one of the most significant stages in the educational process and is fundamental to children's cognitive, social and cultural development. This is when they begin to understand the logic of the alphabetic system and start their journey into the world of reading and writing. Pedagogical practices aimed at this stage must be carefully planned, taking into account the specificities of childhood, the multiple languages and socio-cultural contexts of the students.

Children don't start learning to read and write when they arrive at school. They already have a lot of knowledge that they have built up in their interaction with the written world around them. Therefore, teaching to read and write cannot just be a transmission of rules and codes, but a process that recognizes the child as an active subject in the construction of knowledge. (FERREIRO; TEBEROSKY, 1999, p. 17)

The quote by Ferreiro and Teberosky (1999) is set in the context of the psychogenesis of written language, a theory that has revolutionized the way in which the literacy process is understood. Studying the development of writing in children, the authors demonstrated that learning to read and write does not begin at school, but much earlier, from the child's experiences with the literate world in their daily lives, at home, on the street, with signs, packaging, books, cell phones, etc.

There has been a paradigm shift: the child is no longer seen as a passive recipient of knowledge, but as an active subject who formulates hypotheses about writing based on their experiences. Recognizing this, pedagogical practice needs to move away from purely mechanical methods, based solely on the transmission of codes, to adopt approaches that value interaction, reflection and respect for each child's level of conceptual development.

Ferreiro and Teberosky (1999) therefore criticize traditional methods that disregard prior knowledge and advocate literacy that involves meaning, participation and the active construction of knowledge. This view is in line with the assumptions of constructivism, where the teacher's role is that of mediator and teaching should promote challenging situations that encourage the child to think about written language and its social functions.

Literacy goes beyond simply teaching the linguistic code; it involves the formation of critical subjects, capable of interpreting and transforming the world around them. In this

sense, it is essential that the teacher adopts methodologies that dialog with the student's reality, promoting interaction, play, orality and active listening. As Paulo Freire (1996) argues, the literacy process must be linked to the concrete experience of the student, respecting their learning time and stimulating their autonomy and creativity.

Teaching to read and write is, first and foremost, a political act that requires the educator to be sensitive to the student's reality and competent to promote meaningful learning. Literacy must be understood as a process of liberation, in which the student recognizes himself as a historical subject and begins to read the world even before reading the word. (FREIRE, 1996, p. 25)

Paulo Freire (1996) comments on an important reflection on the political and liberating nature of literacy, which goes beyond the technical limits of teaching reading and writing. For Freire, teaching reading and writing is not a neutral act, but a gesture that is deeply committed to the social and cultural reality of the student. In this sense, literacy means giving the student a voice, enabling them to understand the world in which they live and to act on it in a critical and transformative way.

By stating that students "read the world before they even read the word", Freire emphasizes that life experience, social context, popular and everyday knowledge are fundamental to the learning process. Literacy, therefore, must start from the student's concrete reality, valuing their previous knowledge and culture, in a dialogical, critical and meaningful teaching proposal.

This approach requires sensitivity and pedagogical competence on the part of the educator, who must be able to recognize social inequalities and promote practices that encourage inclusion, active participation and the construction of a critical conscience. Thus, the act of literacy becomes a political act in the sense of transformation, aimed at forming subjects capable of reading, interpreting and intervening in the world.

This Freirean perspective inspires many contemporary pedagogical practices, especially those that seek to overcome technicality and authoritarianism in the literacy process, promoting an education that respects the dignity and protagonism of the student.

In the context of Early Childhood Education and the early years of Primary School, practices such as storytelling, conversation circles, educational games, interdisciplinary projects, shared reading and text production are highlighted. As well as motivating students, these strategies encourage the development of reading, writing and speaking skills in an integrated way. According to Soares (2004), literacy should be seen as a process that involves learning the writing system and, at the same time, entering the literate world, broadening the social practices of language.

Literacy, understood in its complexity, requires educators to work not only to teach the alphabetic code, but also to teach literacy, i.e. the child's inclusion in the social practices of reading and writing. Teaching reading and writing is not just teaching letters and syllables, it is teaching how to use written language in real and meaningful contexts (SOARES, 2004, p. 16).

It is also important to consider the principles of the Common National Curriculum Base (BNCC), which proposes a curriculum based on valuing social practices and developing competencies and skills. The BNCC emphasizes that the work with initial literacy should ensure that students master reading, writing and the functional use of language, respecting the linguistic and cultural diversity that exists in Brazil. In this scenario, the role of the teacher is essential as a mediator of learning and promoter of meaningful experiences.

The literacy process requires continuous and reflective training for teachers. Efficient teaching practice is the result of planning based on theories of language, the psychogene-

sis of writing and knowledge of child development. Authors such as Emília Ferreiro and Ana Teberosky (1999) have made a significant contribution by demonstrating that children build hypotheses about writing and therefore require teaching interventions that are consistent with their stage of development.

Therefore, teaching practice in early literacy cannot be restricted to repetitive or mechanical methods. It needs to be meaningful, enjoyable and contextualized, considering the student as an active subject in the construction of knowledge. Valuing playfulness, listening and respect for individuality are fundamental elements in ensuring effective and humanizing learning. It is up to the school, with the support of the family and community, to create a literacy environment rich in interactions, where learning to read and write is a natural, exciting and transformative process.

## **THE TEACHER'S ROLE IN INITIAL LITERACY**

Initial literacy is a fundamental stage in the educational process, as it marks the beginning of children's journey in discovering reading and writing, essential skills for personal, social and academic development. In this context, the role of the teacher takes on central importance, not just as a transmitter of knowledge, but as a mediator and facilitator of learning, capable of building rich and meaningful environments for children to appropriate the alphabetic system and the multiple languages that surround the written world.

According to Freire (1996), initial literacy teachers need to understand that literacy is not just about teaching how to decode letters and words, but about stimulating students' cognitive, affective and social development. This requires sensitivity to recognize the particularities of each child, their rhythms, interests and cultural contexts, as well as the competence to articulate diversified strategies that

favour the literacy process. Listening attentively and keeping an eye on children's attempts at writing and reading are essential so that the teacher can plan interventions that respect the stage of each learner.

Therefore, the teacher must be a reflective and critical agent, who constantly revisits their pedagogical practices, seeking to update and adapt their approaches to new research and educational guidelines. The use of active methodologies, such as the exploration of varied texts, games, reading circles, collective and individual textual production, allows students to engage with the written language in a playful and meaningful way. In this way, the teacher contributes to the formation of autonomous readers and writers, capable of interpreting, producing and criticizing different types of text.

The relationship between teacher and student in initial literacy is therefore dialogical and interactive. The teacher not only transmits knowledge, but creates situations that promote the construction of this knowledge, valuing children's previous experiences and stimulating critical thinking. This process requires patience, dedication and an ethical commitment to education, recognizing that literacy is a social right and an instrument of citizenship.

The literacy teacher must assume the posture of a mediator, a provocateur of learning, who creates challenging and meaningful situations, respecting the pace and path of the student, so that they can build their knowledge of the written language in an autonomous and critical way." (SOARES, 1995, p. 70)

Another fundamental aspect of the teacher's role is to build a welcoming and motivating environment where children feel safe to experiment, make mistakes and learn. Valuing the students' cultural and linguistic diversity, including content that dialogues with the students' daily lives and encouraging active participation are strategies that strengthen the bond between teacher and student and expand the possibilities for learning.

Finally, the initial literacy teacher also plays the role of liaison with the family and community, recognizing that learning to read and write is strengthened when there is a network of support and appreciation for the educational process beyond the classroom. Frequent communication with guardians, involvement in collective projects and dialogue with other education professionals all contribute to building a more comprehensive and contextualized learning process (SOARES, 1992).

In this respect, the teacher's role in initial literacy transcends simple instruction; it is an ethical and pedagogical commitment that involves sensitivity, creativity, knowledge and constant reflection. Only with a prepared and engaged teacher will it be possible to ensure that children have meaningful literacy, which enables them to read and write the world, broadening their personal and social horizons.

The school environment needs to be a place of constant exchange and stimulation for the child, a place where written language circulates in all its diversity, allowing the student to gradually appropriate the social uses of writing, which is only possible with the presence of a teacher who is sensitive to the needs and possibilities of each student." (KRAMER, 1994, p. 112)

The author emphasizes the importance of the school environment as a dynamic and enriching space, where written language is not just presented in isolation, but circulates in its cultural and social diversity. This allows children to appropriate writing not just as a code, but as a social practice, recognizing its different uses and meanings in everyday life.

It also highlights the fundamental role of the teacher, who must act sensitively, observing the particularities of each student in order to promote meaningful and progressive learning. This view reinforces the idea that literacy is a living and contextualized process, which requires the teacher to pay attention to individual needs and to value the multiple forms of interaction with written language.



## RESULTS

Analysis of the theoretical framework reveals the complexity and richness of the initial literacy process, which goes beyond simply teaching the linguistic code to encompass cognitive, social and cultural dimensions that are fundamental to the child's integral development. Ferreiro and Teberosky's (1999) studies show that literacy does not only begin at school, but is based on the child's previous experiences with the literate world. This understanding points to the need for teaching practices that value prior knowledge, respect children's stage of development and encourage their active participation in the construction of knowledge.

The psychogenetic approach to writing advocated by the authors breaks with traditional methods based on simple memorization and repetition, proposing literacy that recognizes the child as a subject capable of formulating hypotheses about written language. This implies that the teacher's role must be that of a mediator, promoting reflection and dialogic interaction, essential elements for meaningful and contextualized learning.

In the same vein, Paulo Freire (1996) highlights the political nature of literacy, stressing that teaching to read and write is an act of liberation and social transformation. For Freire, literacy is a practice that must start from the student's concrete reality, valuing their knowledge, culture and life experience. This reinforces the need for methodologies that stimulate the autonomy, critical thinking and protagonism of the student. The literacy process must therefore be sensitive to the social inequalities and cultural diversities present in the school environment, promoting inclusion and active participation.

The results also indicate that pedagogical practices such as storytelling, conversation circles, educational games and interdisciplinary projects, when linked to reading and

writing, favor the integrated development of linguistic and communicative skills. These strategies are effective in motivating students and broadening their inclusion in social language practices, as highlighted by Soares (2004), who understands literacy as a process that involves mastering the writing system and participating in the literate world.

As such, the National Common Core Curriculum (BNCC) reinforces this view by highlighting the importance of a curriculum that values social practices, respects linguistic and cultural diversity, and promotes essential skills and abilities for the functional use of language. In this sense, the role of the teacher stands out as fundamental in mediating the process, requiring continuing training and pedagogical reflection that are aligned with theoretical advances in child development and the learning of written language.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In order to be effective, initial literacy needs to be understood as a dynamic, enjoyable and meaningful process that respects the time and individuality of each child. Playfulness, active listening and the involvement of the family and community are indispensable elements for building a literacy environment that encourages students to play a leading role and favors their critical and conscious insertion into the literate world.

According to the theoretical framework presented, initial literacy is a decisive stage in the educational process, not only because of the acquisition of technical reading and writing skills, but also because of the child's integral development in its cognitive, affective and social dimensions. The results indicate that the role of the teacher in this context goes beyond the simple transmission of codes, becoming an active and reflective mediator of learning.

As Freire (1996) points out, teachers play a fundamental political and ethical role in literacy, because it is through their sensitive and critical gaze that children can recognize themselves as historical subjects, able to read the world even before they read words. This reinforces the need for pedagogical practices that consider the cultural diversity and social contexts of the students, promoting an emancipatory literacy that goes beyond mechanical decoding.

In this sense, the research highlights that active methodologies, such as the use of varied texts, educational games, reading circles and textual productions, are effective tools for building meaningful and playful learning, as suggested by Soares (1995). These practices encourage student autonomy, while at the same time strengthening the dialogical relationship between teacher and student, which is essential for the shared construction of knowledge.

The school environment, as highlighted by Kramer (1994), emerges as a privileged space for the circulation of written language in its social and cultural diversity. It was observed that creating a welcoming environment, where children feel safe to experiment and make mistakes, is an indispensable condition for progress in the literacy process. Valuing students' previous experiences and including content that relates to their daily lives have proved to be effective strategies for increasing engagement

and interest in reading and writing.

Another important point identified was the teacher's role as a liaison with the family and community, corroborating the view that learning is not restricted to the classroom, but is strengthened by support networks and a contextualized approach (SOARES, 1995). Constant communication between school and family and involvement in collective projects broaden the possibilities for learning, promoting a more holistic literacy.

It was possible to observe that quality initial literacy is intrinsically linked to the teacher's reflective and critical attitude, their ability to build rich and motivating environments, and the adoption of diversified methodologies that respect the students' rhythms and contexts. It can therefore be said that Early Childhood Education is a stage of fundamental strategic importance for the integral development of children, since it is during this period that the foundations are laid for lasting learning and for the full formation of the human being. Therefore, investing in this stage contributes significantly to building a fairer and more equitable society. Only in this way can literacy fulfill its social role of forming autonomous, critical individuals capable of reading and writing the world, as advocated by the theoretical framework analyzed.

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