

**TEACHING VOICES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF AFFECTIVITY IN  
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

**VOZES DOCENTES NA PERSPECTIVA DA AFETIVIDADE NA EDUCAÇÃO  
INFANTIL**

**VOCES DE ENSEÑANZA DESDE LA PERSPECTIVA DE LA AFECTIVIDAD EN LA  
EDUCACIÓN INFANTIL**

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**ABSTRACT:** The development of children in early childhood education involves several aspects inherent to the school context. Mainly, the question of affectivity is considered as a central element in the learning process. Thus, the following research sought to give teachers a voice about the importance of affectivity in the child's development, more specifically, in early childhood education in the municipality of Bertioga. To this end, the research was structured based on a bibliographic survey according to the theoretical assumptions of Wallon and Piaget, which portray the importance of interactions in human development, also highlighting the relation between affectivity and children's learning. For a conclusion based on experiences in the school context, the field research was carried out with 7 teachers from different schools, through a semi-structured interview with teachers from public and private schools in the municipality of Bertioga. The data collected by the interview with teachers allow a more in-depth reflection on school practices and the importance of affectivity from the perspective of teachers.

**KEYWORDS:** Affectivity. Child education. Teacher.

**RESUMO:** *O desenvolvimento da criança na educação infantil perpassa por diversos aspectos inerentes ao contexto escolar. Considera-se, principalmente, a questão da afetividade como elemento central no processo de aprendizagem. Dessa forma, a seguinte pesquisa buscou dar voz aos docentes acerca da importância da afetividade no desenvolvimento da criança, mais especificamente, na educação infantil do município de Bertioga - SP. Para tanto, a pesquisa foi estruturada a partir de levantamento bibliográfico de acordo com os pressupostos teóricos de Wallon e Piaget, que retratam sobre a importância das interações no desenvolvimento humano, salientando também a respeito da relação entre a afetividade e a aprendizagem das*

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crianças. Para uma conclusão fundada em experiências do contexto escolar, a pesquisa de campo foi realizada com 7 professores de diferentes escolas, por meio de uma entrevista semiestruturada com professores de escolas públicas e privadas do município de Bertioga - SP. Os dados levantados pela entrevista com docentes permitem uma reflexão mais aprofundada sobre as práticas escolares e a importância da afetividade sob a perspectiva dos docentes.

**PALAVRA-CHAVE:** Afetividade. Educação infantil. Professor.

**RESUMEN:** El desarrollo de los niños en la educación de la primera infancia implica varios aspectos inherentes al contexto escolar. Principalmente, la cuestión de la afectividad se considera un elemento central en el proceso de aprendizaje. Por lo tanto, la siguiente investigación buscó dar a los maestros una voz sobre la importancia de la afectividad en el desarrollo infantil, más específicamente, en la educación de la primera infancia en la ciudad de Bertioga - SP. Con este fin, la investigación se estructuró con base en una encuesta bibliográfica de acuerdo con los supuestos teóricos de Wallon y Piaget, que retratan la importancia de las interacciones en el desarrollo humano, destacando también la relación entre la afectividad y el aprendizaje de los niños. Para una conclusión basada en experiencias en el contexto escolar, la investigación de campo se llevó a cabo con 7 maestros de diferentes escuelas, a través de una entrevista semiestruturada con maestros de escuelas públicas y privadas en la ciudad de Bertioga - SP. Los datos recopilados por la entrevista con los docentes permiten una reflexión más profunda sobre las prácticas escolares y la importancia de la afectividad desde la perspectiva de los docentes.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Afectividad. Educación Infantil. Profesor.

## Introduction

Arguably, from the 19th to the 21st century, we have followed significant advances in the field of attention to Early Childhood Education, which conceive the child as a subject of rights.

One of the advances in the conquest of rights related to early childhood, focuses on Article 6 of the Brazilian Federal Constitution, education as a fundamental right of a social nature, and that the duty of the State with education will be carried out by guaranteeing attendance at daycare centers and pre-school to children from 0 to 6 years old (BRASIL, 1988, art. 208).

Another important step towards strengthening the new concept of childhood in guaranteeing rights is consolidated with the creation of the ECA (Portuguese initials for Statute of the Child and Adolescent) in 1990.

As a result of the advances, the Law of Guidelines and Bases (LDB, 1996), Law no. 9394/96, created to define and regularize the Brazilian education system based on the Federal

Constitution, indicates in its art. 29, Early Childhood Education as “the first stage of Basic Education, aiming at the integral development of the child up to six years of age, in its physical, psychological, intellectual and social aspects, complementing the action of the family and the community”<sup>4</sup>.

It is known that child development in early childhood education involves several aspects inherent to the school context. Mainly, the issue of affectivity is considered as a central element in the child learning process.

Thus, the research will be based on the theoretical assumptions of Piaget (1973) and Wallon (1995), which portray about child development, emphasizing the influence of emotions present in children in this age group and how important they are for their development, without consider any component of development as the main, nor disregard them.

Thus, this article aims to discuss and highlight the perspectives on affectivity, giving voices to teachers.

For that, a qualitative field research was carried out, in the format of semi-structured interviews with teachers from public and private schools. In total, 7 teachers were interviewed whose analysis of the interviews allowed a reflection on the teachers' view on the importance of affectivity in their practices in Early Childhood Education.

### **Concepts on human development and affectivity**

To address the theme of affectivity in the child's development, it is necessary to portray the genesis of development, also highlighting the presence of affectivity and its possible influences on development and learning.

Throughout history, several theorists have emphasized the importance that affectivity has in the development of the person, but few have gone deeper like Wallon and Piaget. The respective theorists contribute to the work, as they emphasize the importance that affectivity has in human development from birth to adulthood.

Theorist Henri Wallon (1995) dedicated himself to understanding the child's conception process, realizing that by studying their development he could better understand the process and the factors that involve the person's psyche, that is, psychogenesis. He concentrated his

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<sup>4</sup> “primeira etapa da Educação Básica, tendo como finalidade o desenvolvimento integral da criança até seis anos de idade, em seus aspectos físicos, psicológicos, intelectual e social, complementando a ação da família e da comunidade”

studies on the early stages of the child, going deeper into the field of consciousness, emphasizing factors of biological and social origin, says Wallon (1995, p. 49-50):

Thus, in the child, factors of biological and social origin are opposed and mutually implicated [...]. The objective thus pursued is nothing more than the realization of what the individual's genotype, or germ, potentially had. The plan according to which each being develops depends, therefore, on the dispositions that it has since the moment of its first formation. The realization of this plan is necessarily successive, but it may not be total and, in short, circumstances change it more or less. Thus, it was distinguished from the genotype, the phenotype, which consists of the aspects in which the individual has manifested himself throughout life. The history of a being is dominated by its genotype and constituted by its phenotype.<sup>5</sup>

Wallon (1995) highlights the influence that the social context has on the child's development, and states that the realization of each stage of its development will depend on the context in which it is inserted. In the dichotomy between genotype and phenotype, he highlights that the result in human development is unstable, as they depend on the subjective social circumstances experienced individually.

Thus, child development is punctuated by conflicts of exogenous and endogenous origin (WALLON, 1995), that is, the first is the result of the individual's action with the outside environment, and the second is the effects generated by nervous maturation, the indoor environment. All these processes come into conflict in search of balance and control, however they are subject to activities of instability in their relations, understanding these conflicts as dynamogenic, that is, as stimulants for child development. Perceiving the conflicts in the child's development, highlights the importance of observing the moments of crises.

The study by Wallon (1995) presents a dialectical psychology, that is, it warns that there is a relation of reciprocal determination between organic and social factors, affirms that man is physiologically and socially determined. Due to this conception, an integrated study on the development of the psyche is proposed, thus understanding that the human being is *organically social*, that is, he should not disregard any component of development as the main one, nor disregard them, thus grounding the notion of four domains functional, the psychogenesis of the complete person: “among which will be distributed the study of the stages that the child goes

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<sup>5</sup> Deste modo, na criança, opõem-se e implicam-se mutuamente fatores de origem biológica e social [...]. O objetivo assim perseguido não é mais do que a realização daquilo que o genótipo, ou germen do indivíduo, tinha em potência. O plano segundo o qual cada ser se desenvolve depende, portanto, de disposições que ele tem desde o momento de sua primeira formação. A realização desse plano é necessariamente sucessiva, mas pode não ser total e, enfim, as circunstâncias modificam-na mais ou menos. Assim, distinguiu-se do genótipo, o fenótipo, que consiste nos aspectos em que o indivíduo se manifestou ao longo da vida. A história de um ser é dominada pelo seu genótipo e constituída pelo seu fenótipo.

through, therefore, those of affectivity, of the motor act, of knowledge and of the person”<sup>6</sup> (WALLON, 1995, p. 117). These domains are called ‘functional fields’, which are affectivity/emotion, movement, intelligence and the person. The fields would act in an integrated manner, their relations are not always harmonious, they often come into conflict, but they are inseparable from each other.

The *impulsive-emotional* stage is the stage that is located in the first year of life, where emotions permeate, being the privileged factor of its interaction with the context that surrounds the child, which is nourished by the look, by physical contact, is expressed in gestures, mimicry and postures, their affective manifestations certainly reflect their ability to act in their environment. “Response to their state of malpractice, the predominance of affectivity guides the baby's first reactions to people, to whom they mediate their relationship with the physical world”<sup>7</sup> (GALVÃO, 1995, p. 27). The child's first manifestations are affective and it is through them that the child constitutes his environment

In the *sensorimotor and projective* stage (up to 3 years), the child's attention turns to the physical world, their notions of movement allow more autonomy in the exploration of their environment and in the manipulation of objects. It is at this stage that the development of symbolic function and language occurs. The expression “projective” is due to the fact that during the development process, thought needs the help of gestures to express itself, “the mental act“ projects itself ”into motor acts” (GALVÃO, 1995, p. 42) . Unlike the other stage, the predominance that occurs is the cognitive factors in their relation with the environment, with practical and symbolic intelligence. All movement is an action that permeates all development, separated into two categories, instrumental movements and expressive movements. Instrumental movement is all physical action to achieve a specific goal, for example, chewing, running or picking up objects.

The expressive movement has a more communicative function, as an example would be smiling, gesturing, crying, among others, (GALVÃO, 1995). As seen earlier, from the emotion precedes the cognitive conduct providing their relations.

The dominance of the affective character in their relationships corresponds to the stages that lend themselves in the construction of the self, in this process the affectivity becomes more and more rationalized, that is, the feelings begin to be elaborated mentally. For the author,

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<sup>6</sup> “entre os quais vai se distribuir o estudo das etapas que a criança percorre serão, portanto, os da afetividade, do ato motor, do conhecimento e da pessoa”

<sup>7</sup> “Resposta ao seu estado de imperícia, a predominância da afetividade orienta as primeiras reações do bebê às pessoas, às quais intermediam sua relação com o mundo físico”

emotion organizes psychic life and leads to cognitive construction, that is, the intelligence that expresses itself and is constituted through language and is born from emotions.

Therefore, according to Wallon, emotions can initially create cognitive operations that will allow the construction of knowledge, and can also structure the 'person' early in life, without the participation of cognition. In this respect, Piaget's theory is opposed to Wallon's, he believes that there is a relation between affectivity and cognition, but their relations are not causal and alternating. Piaget states (1962):

It is indisputable that affection plays an essential role in the functioning of intelligence. Without affection, there would be no interests, no needs, no motivation; as a result, questions or problems could not be formulated and there would be no intelligence. Affection is a necessary condition for the constitution of intelligence. However, in my opinion, it is not a sufficient condition (PIAGET, 1994, p. 129).<sup>8</sup>

For Piaget (1994), in the brain maturation process, schemes are produced, which are divided into assimilation, accommodation and equilibrium. The author defines schema as the basic unit of intelligent behavior, and through mental schemas we organize past experiences and understand future ones.

In the process of assimilation, we experience new things with our current capacity for understanding (schemes). That is, we incorporate new information into existing schemes. For example, having the cat *scheme*, a child can call all animals four-legged cat. (MYERS, 2006; GROSS, 2005). However, this process is the ability to interpret the world, not only look at the world, but assimilate some information, make it some elements of the world. It is worth mentioning the importance that affection has in this process for brain maturation, as Piaget believes that the energetic of the conduct is related to affection, the motivation that sustains each act.

Another central concept is that of accommodation, which represents mental structures, that is, the organization that the person has to know the world is able to change to account for the uniqueness of the object, and it is this change that is called accommodation (LA TAILLE, 2006).

However, in this process one can think about the way to relate this object of knowledge, reflective abstraction is just that, the information that I get about my actions on the object. Taille

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<sup>8</sup> É indiscutível que o afeto tem um papel essencial no funcionamento da inteligência. Sem o afeto não haveria nem interesses, nem necessidades, nem motivação; em consequência, as interrogações ou problemas não poderiam se formulados e não haveria inteligência. O afeto é uma condição necessária para a constituição da inteligência. No entanto, em minha opinião, não é uma condição suficiente (PIAGET, 1994, p. 129).

states, “For Piaget, the child's development is based on thinking about the world and thinking about their action on the world”<sup>9</sup>.

According to Piaget (1973), cognitive development is a process of many changes in its structures, at all times the maturation process takes place, that is, the individual builds and reconstructs their structures, the development process is not linear, but it is a development that takes place by leaps, ruptures, making it more and more apt for balance. He named these constructions as *stages*, which represent a logic of intelligence that must be overcome by a higher stage and are closely related to the development of the child's affection and socialization, Piaget defines the stages in 4 periods, namely: the sensorimotor period (0 to 2 years), the Preoperative period (2 to 7 years), the period of concrete operations (7 to 11 or 12 years) and the period of formal operations (11 or 12 years onwards).

The sensorimotor period understands the world through sensations and actions. The presence of affectivity in this process is very relevant, says Souza (2011, p. 37),

to the evolution of the sensorimotor period, which he called perceptual affects, a stage in which affectivity, as well as intelligence, is linked to physiological needs and ‘news’ brought about by the exercise of perception. They are basically feelings of pleasure and displeasure, success and failure, resulting from actions in the world.<sup>10</sup>

Since children need to have opportunities for experiences at school that contribute to their development, it is also noticeable that affectivity is related to cognition, Piaget states in his writings:

Affective life, like intellectual life, is a continuous adaptation and the two adaptations are not only parallel, but interdependent, since feelings express the interests and values of actions, of which intelligence constitutes the structure (PIAGET, 1990, p. 265).<sup>11</sup>

From the perspectives of the authors presented, we think of the contribution of these studies to the understanding of affectivity in development and learning in early childhood. That is, the interdependent cognitive development of the relations of affection that will be built in the classroom. Thus, it is essential that the teacher is aware of the importance of affectivity for

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<sup>9</sup> “Para Piaget o desenvolvimento da criança se dá a partir do pensar sobre o mundo e o pensar sobre sua ação sobre o mundo”

<sup>10</sup> à evolução do período sensório-motor, o que denominou afetos perceptivos, etapa na qual a afetividade, assim como a inteligência, está ligada às necessidades fisiológicas e às ‘novidades’ trazidas pelo exercício da percepção. São basicamente sentimentos de agrado e desagrado, êxito e fracasso, decorrentes das ações no mundo.

<sup>11</sup> A vida afetiva, como a vida intelectual, é uma adaptação contínua e as duas adaptações são, não somente paralelas, mas interdependentes, pois os sentimentos exprimem os interesses e os valores das ações, das quais a inteligência constitui a estrutura (PIAGET, 1990, p. 265).

the child development process in early childhood education. Thus, it is essential to investigate the teachers' view of affectivity.

### **Teaching voices about affectivity**

Understanding the school context according to the teachers of early childhood education provides us with a greater contact with reality, and consequently it will facilitate the understanding on the theme, thus expanding the possibilities of better exercising pedagogical practices. Based on this assumption, a case study was developed on the importance of affectivity in the school environment.

The research data were constructed from an interview previously structured in a questionnaire, with four essay questions, the teachers of early childhood education were invited to participate after presentation of the research, which was done personally in schools. The interviewees were chosen after the research was presented in HTPC - Hour of pedagogical work - collective of the school units and developed based on the interest of the teacher to participate. Thus, the interview was conducted in 7 different schools, 4 public and 3 private schools in the municipality of Bertioga - SP, with a teacher from each school, in 2019. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed for observation and analysis responses.

To characterize the teachers, all women, they were named by the letters A to G, and characterized according to their age and time of teaching, as shown in the table below:

**Table 1 - “Time they teach/age”**

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Time of teaching</b>	<b>Age</b>
<b>A</b>	21	45
<b>B</b>	5	30
<b>C</b>	3	23
<b>D</b>	Not informed	36
<b>E</b>	Not informed	25
<b>F</b>	11	48
<b>G</b>	8	38

Source: Devised by the authors

According to the table, the group of respondents is quite heterogeneous. Some teachers are at the beginning of their careers, others have been teaching for 21 years. Teachers *D* and *E* did not disclose the time they teach. According to the table, the age of teachers is 23 to 48 years.

When, in the first question, they were asked if “Affection was important in their school trajectory”, the answer was unanimous, 100%, that is, all teachers claimed that affection was



important or very important in their school trajectories. Thus, it is evident the need to understand how this path was and under what perspective these teachers understand affectivity.

**Table 2** - “*The importance of affectivity in the trajectories*”

Teacher	Answer
A	The teacher must maintain bonds of affection with her students and vice versa.
B	I was a very shy student and so the teachers' patience and affection made all the difference.
C	I found pleasure in learning from the teachers in whom I created a certain bond.
D	It is important to deal with love and care so that children can have these feelings as a reference.
E	It was through affection that today I became a critical, responsible subject, with high self-esteem and values.
F	It is fundamental to the learning process.
G	Through the affective look we can assimilate any and all information.

Source: Devised by the authors

According to the teachers' synthesis, the affective bond is of great value for the good development in the school trajectory, besides facilitating learning, it also contributed to the psychoemotional growth. What corroborates with what Mendonça and Tavares (2008, p. 01) says, that “based on affectivity, the child develops autonomy and interrelation with the environment and with the people that surround him, building global knowledge, highly progressive”<sup>12</sup>.

**Table 3** - “*What is affection for you?*”

Teacher	Answer
A	It is respect and caring for others and imposing limits when necessary.
B	It is a bond that we create, based on affection, respect and trust.
C	It is caring about the other.
D	Affection is a demonstration of feelings and emotions from one person to another.
E	It is the ability we have to demonstrate our affection and respect for others.
F	Affectivity is paying attention to what affects a being.
G	It is patience, it is zeal and, above all, empathy with children and all the processes of their development.

Source: Devised by the authors

<sup>12</sup> “com base na afetividade a criança desenvolve a autonomia e a inter-relação com o ambiente e com as pessoas que a envolve construindo um conhecimento global, altamente progressivo”

It can be seen that some teachers believe that affectivity is related to caring, respect, and showing feelings, and others also agree that it is the ability to impose limits, to care about the child, that is, affectivity is not exclusively related to definition of feelings, but in the attitude of care and zeal towards the child, thus emphasizing Teacher F's position "Affectivity is giving attention to what affects a being".

**Table 4** - "For you as an educator, what is the importance of affectivity in the school context?"

Teacher	Answer
<b>A</b>	To strengthen ties and thus enable confidence and the guarantee of an effective learning process.
<b>B</b>	The learner creates a bond of trust and interest with the educator.
<b>C</b>	The way the educator transmits knowledge can change everything.
<b>D</b>	The affective bond interferes in learning, it is through interactions that learning is built.
<b>E</b>	Affection is a bond that connects the teacher and the student.
<b>F</b>	To facilitate schooling and the learning process.
<b>G</b>	The affective look is careful and can alert about different forms of teaching, allowing reflections on their own practices.

Source: Devised by the authors

According to theoretical assumptions, Piaget (1973) claims that without affection there would be no interests and, as a result, problems could not be formulated, there would be no intelligence. Teacher D says, "The affective bond interferes with learning, it is through interactions that learning is built"<sup>13</sup>. Both teachers commented on an effective relationship that is established between the student and the teacher through affection. It is noticeable the participation of affectivity in the school environment, even so according to teacher G "The affective look is careful and can alert about different forms of teaching, it allows reflections on our own practices"<sup>14</sup>. In other words, the presence of affection in addition to being a facilitator for learning can also be an effective instrument for the teacher's methodology.

<sup>13</sup> "O vínculo afetivo interfere na aprendizagem, é através das interações que se constrói a aprendizagem"

<sup>14</sup> "O olhar afetivo é cuidadoso e pode alertar sobre diferentes formas de ensinagem, permite reflexões sobre as próprias práticas"

**Table 5** - “Do you believe that there is a relation between affectivity and the child's cognitive development? Justify your answer.”

Teacher	Answer
<b>B</b>	The trust established allows the child to focus her concentration and interest on the content transmitted by the educator.
<b>C</b>	With the bond you learn more.
<b>D</b>	The child learns better and faster when she feels loved, safe and cared for.
<b>E</b>	Affection is not only manifested with gestures of physical affection, but also a preparation for cognitive development, enabling the individual to become a critical, autonomous and responsible subject.
<b>F</b>	Affection is an instrument that facilitates the child's cognitive development.
<b>G</b>	The child who feels loved feels the urge to learn.

Source: Devised by the authors

According to the answers, all teachers believe that there is a relation between affectivity and cognitive development, it is clear how the presence of affectivity is important for cognition to happen, that is, the child learns better and faster when feels loved and safe, thus realizing that “*affectivity is an instrument that facilitates the child's cognitive development*”<sup>15</sup>, as stated by teacher *F*. The bond can significantly help the child's development, the results that involve emotion generate more impact and better develop the cognitive aspects. However, the teacher needs to instigate the student in an affective way so that he can satisfactorily internalize.

Notwithstanding Professor *E* says, “*Affection is not only manifested with gestures of physical affection, but also a preparation for cognitive development, enabling the individual to become a critical, autonomous and responsible subject*”<sup>16</sup>. Since affection and cognition go hand in hand, Wallon (2007, p. 198) states:

It is against nature to treat the child fragmentarily. At each age, it constitutes an inseparable and original set. In the succession of their ages, the child is a unique and even being in the course of metamorphoses. Made of contrasts and conflicts, your unity will therefore be even more susceptible to development and novelty.<sup>17</sup>

According to Wallon (2007), there is no difference between body, cognition and affection, they are inseparable, and over time, they interfere in the individual's life subjectively,

<sup>15</sup> “a afetividade é um instrumento facilitador do desenvolvimento cognitivo da criança”

<sup>16</sup> “A afetividade não se manifesta apenas com gestos de carinho físico, mas também uma preparação para o desenvolvimento cognitivo, capacitando o indivíduo para que se torne um sujeito crítico, autônomo e responsável”

<sup>17</sup> É contra a natureza tratar a criança fragmentariamente. Em cada idade, ela constitui um conjunto indissociável e original. Na sucessão de suas idades, ela é um único e mesmo ser em curso de metamorfoses. Feita de contrastes e de conflitos, a sua unidade será por isso ainda mais susceptível de desenvolvimento e de novidade.

each one with its singularity. Affective practice in the school environment is essential in order to improve their relationships and the child's cognitive and motor development.

### **Final considerations**

The research analyzed the perception of teachers about the importance of affectivity in early childhood education. The analysis of the interviews showed that the teachers, regardless of the age and time they teach, work in public or private schools, understand that affectivity is fundamental in their daily work, that is, in early childhood education.

It is also observed that the same teachers pointed out affectivity as fundamental in their school trajectories. However, when asked about how they would define affectivity, teachers point out feeling “respect”, “empathy”, “care”, “trust” and even the idea of “limiting the child”, presenting several possibilities of affective practices in the classroom of class.

Thus, the child needs to feel safe at school, there is an increasing need for the teacher to take into account all the students' manifestations, to understand them more precisely, to seek new methods in order to welcome and transmit affection. This perception can facilitate the educator's practice. “An educator's awareness is necessary, that it is not enough to just educate for affectivity, it is necessary to educate in affectivity”<sup>18</sup> (BATISTA, 2012, p. 45).

Although all teachers see a positive impact of affectivity on the child's development, further research is needed to elucidate how pedagogical practices are empathetic and affective in the daily life of early childhood education.

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<sup>18</sup> “É necessária uma consciência do educador, de que não basta apenas educar para afetividade, é preciso educar na afetividade”

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