

PLAYING IN KIDS EDUCATION AND ITS RELATIONSHIPS WITH TEACHERS' FORMATION AND VISION: A SCOPING REVIEW

O BRINCAR NA EDUCAÇÃO INFANTIL E SUAS RELAÇÕES COM A FORMAÇÃO E VISÃO DOS PROFESSORES: UMA REVISÃO DE ESCOPO

EL JUEGO EN LA EDUCACIÓN INFANTIL Y SUS RELACIONES CON LA FORMACIÓN Y LA VISIÓN DE LOS PROFESORES: UNA REVISIÓN DE ALCANCE

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ABSTRACT: Playing is one of the main approaches in the teaching process in early childhood, being advocated by several authors with authority on the subject, such as Vygotsky, Piaget, Kishimoto, Montessori, and described by the Common National Curricular Base as one of the rights to learning and development of the child. This study aimed to identify the vision of play as a practice used by early childhood educators from different countries. The methodology used was the Scoping Review, with a search in five databases, totaling 19 selected articles. The contributions of the articles were relevant in demonstrating that play as a practice in early childhood education is not completely widespread, and is not yet valued for its benefits in the child's learning process and in teacher formation, and the application of pedagogical practices still does not look at play as an essential focus for preschool curricular.

KEYWORDS: Play and playthings. Nursery school. Teacher formation. Disabled children.

RESUMO: *O brincar é uma das principais abordagens no processo de ensino na primeira infância, sendo defendido por diversos autores com autoridade no tema, como Vygotsky, Piaget, Kishimoto, Montessori, e descrito pela Base Nacional Comum Curricular como um dos direitos de aprendizagem e desenvolvimento da criança. Esse estudo teve como objetivo identificar a visão do brincar como prática utilizada por educadores do ensino infantil de diversos países. A metodologia abordada foi a Revisão de Escopo, com busca em cinco bases de dados, totalizando 19 artigos selecionados. As contribuições dos artigos foram relevantes para demonstrar que o brincar, como prática na educação infantil, não está completamente difundida, ainda não tem a valoração correspondente aos seus benefícios no processo de aprendizagem da criança e na formação dos professores, e a aplicação de práticas pedagógicas ainda não têm o olhar para o brincar como foco essencial para os currículos pré-escolares.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Jogos e brinquedos. Educação infantil. Capacitação de professores. Criança com deficiência.*

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RESUMEN: *El juego es uno de los principales abordajes en el proceso de enseñanza en la primera infancia, siendo defendido por diversos autores con autoridad en el tema, como Vygotsky, Piaget, Kishimoto, Montessori, y descrito por la Base Curricular Nacional Común como uno de los derechos para el aprendizaje y desarrollo del niño. Este estudio pretendía identificar la visión del juego como práctica utilizada por educadores en educación infantil de diferentes países. La metodología utilizada fue la Scoping Review, con búsqueda en cinco bases de datos, totalizando 19 artículos seleccionados. Las aportaciones de los artículos fueron relevantes para demostrar que el juego como práctica en la educación infantil no está del todo extendido, aún no se valora por sus beneficios para el aprendizaje infantil y la formación del profesorado, y la aplicación de prácticas pedagógicas aún no tiene el juego como eje esencial para los currículos preescolares.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Juego e Implementos de juego. Educación infantil. Capacitación del profesorado. Niños con discapacidad.*

Introduction

Playing is recognized worldwide for its benefits and contributions to the physical, mental and intellectual development of children of all ages. Play is considered one of the main occupations of the child, providing great possibilities for learning (CHRISTIANSEN; TOWNSEND, 2010).

Related to development and learning, as well as exploration and pedagogical resource, playing provides internal and external motivation, and also establishes the need for a suitable place for learning: the school environment, as a sign of freedom and a means of education. The child, therefore, can only develop through experiences in the environment: this experiencing we call work. And the child's behaviors can only be internalized, with the experiences lived in the environment (MONTESSORI, 2021, p. 88).

Educational environments should be conceived as spaces for dialogues, for the construction of knowledges and meanings. The teacher-child relationship should be of mediation for the encouragement and guidance of the undiscovered looks. Playful activities in these spaces of knowledge assume the function of a tool to facilitate and maximize learning, making this process pleasant, motivating and active (REZENDE JUNIOR, 2016).

The theories of great classic thinkers such as Vygotsky, Piaget, and Montessori establish the relationship between human development, education, and health with play, and its importance in life, behavior, development, and formation of the child as an autonomous and independent being. The authors endorse all the national documents related to the first stage of Basic Education, daycare and preschool, both on issues related to play itself, and the relationships established through it.

Early childhood education, for a long period, was related to welfare and basic care to the child, however, the legislation of Brazil brought the requirement and with more expanded objectives in favor of education, among them are: the Federal Constitution of 1988 (BRAZIL, 1988), the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA - Federal Law No. 8.096/90) (BRAZIL, 1990), Law of Directives and Bases of National Education (BRAZIL, 1996), the National Education Plan (PNE in the Portuguese acronym) and Common National Curriculum Base - BNCC (BRAZIL, 2017). Integrate basic care to the "full development of the child up to five (5) years, in its psychological, intellectual and social aspects, complementing the action of the family and the community" (BRAZIL, 1996, art. 29, our translation).

With this, a more specialized look began to be directed to the care of children, the search for methodologies that could impact the development in a comprehensive way in promoting the development of physical, socioemotional and cognitive skills, and through play as many authors and researches substantiate: the child can interact, know, create, imagine, explore, have fun, develop autonomy and learn. What permeates this environment may be free or directed play, but the activities practiced need to be planned and directed by a trained teacher to meet the greater objective of educating and caring for the child (REIS, 2021).

In order for the pedagogical practice to be conducted with all the requirements demanded by the Law of Directives and Bases and the new BNCC of early childhood education, teacher training and periodic updates are essential for the understanding and application of play in the daily lives of children to be integrated into the learning process and systemic development.

These thoughts are also related to the role played by the educator in the teaching and learning process, in which he proposes and organizes the children, experiences of exploration and knowledge of self and the other, of spaces, of nature, of personal care, of play, of art and culture (BRAZIL, 2017).

For Barbosa, Miranda and Marques (2021), playing should be highlighted and thought of as an ally, providing an environment that can be welcoming and challenging, contributing to the development of the child, in addition to interaction and play, as an axis of early childhood education, as highlighted in the BNCC (Common National Curriculum Base).

Research shows that children with developmental delays or disabilities may need more intense support and supervision due to delays in their play skills and behaviors, requiring more targeted instruction and intervention from teachers. Which in turn requires greater knowledge of educators to engage in play in the school term (KEUNG; FUNG, 2021).

The texts and documents described contextualize and prove the need and importance of play for the integral development of children and in the learning process, in which the teacher has the role of mediation in conducting the significant experiences of this process.

This study aimed to identify the vision of playing as a playful practice used by early childhood educators from different countries.

Methodology

The methodology used in this work was the Scoping Review, described by Arksey and O'Malley in 2005. According to the authors, scoping reviews can aim to quickly map the key concepts that underpin a research area and the main sources and types of evidence available, and can be conducted as stand-alone projects in their own right, especially where an area is complex or has not been comprehensively reviewed previously.

This type of review has the following characteristics: it takes a broader approach to research topics, with comprehensive coverage of the available literature, but does not assess or qualify the selected studies, and the depth of the available literature depends on the researcher's purpose and objectives (ARKSEY; O'MALLEY, 2005). In their studies, the authors describe four main situations in which the scoping review can be used:

1. To examine the extent, scope and nature of the research activity: to map and detect, even if only superficially, the amount of material available on the topic;
2. To determine the value of conducting a full systematic review: to see if a more in-depth review on the topic is feasible;
3. To summarize and disseminate the research results: it facilitates the dissemination of research results directed to a theme, favoring other professionals and researchers;
4. To identify research gaps in the existing literature: it is important to stress that identifying gaps in the literature does not necessarily detect research gaps, since the scoping review does not analyze the quality of the article.

Arksey and O'Malley (2005) report that the researcher may or may not place limits on the identification of relevant studies, because the process is not linear but interactive, requiring engagement at all stages to ensure the comprehensiveness of the approach to the researched literature. Highlighting all the characteristics of the scoping review, the authors describe the stages for conducting the study:

Stage 1 - identify the research question: this stage is the starting point for identifying the

research question and guiding how the strategies will be constructed, also considering aspects, such as the study population, interventions or outcomes. The authors' recommendation for this stage is to maintain a broad approach to generate breadth of coverage.

Stage 2 - identify relevant studies: as already explained, the aim of this type of study is to be as comprehensive as possible in identifying primary studies (published and unpublished) and reviews, which are adequate to answer the central research question. To do this, you can define a strategy that involves searching for research evidence through different sources: electronic databases, reference lists, hand-searching important journals, existing networks, relevant organizations, and conferences. In addition, determine language and time frame for selection of materials.

Stage 3 - selecting the studies: this relates to the importance of defining terminology at the start of a scoping study. Inclusion and exclusion criteria are also used, as in the systematic review. If the relevance of the study is not clear after reading the abstract, the article should be read in its entirety to decide whether or not to include it, and a time limit may be placed on the inclusion of new studies. The next stage to inclusion by abstracts, all articles should be read in their entirety to decide whether the study will be part of the research or not, and describes a technique for synthesizing the findings.

Stage 4 - plotting the data: this stage is the mapping of key information from the research reports related to the main questions and themes, and is compiled into a data chart form, and should contain general information about the study and specific information regarding, for example, the study population, the type of intervention, outcome measures used, and the study design. The information can be organized as follows: author(s), year of publication, study location, type of intervention, duration of intervention, study populations, study objectives, methodology, outcome measures, and important results.

Stage 5 - compiling, summarizing and reporting the results: the last stage, the scoping study aims to present an overview of all the material reviewed and, consequently, questions of how best to present the mapping. Although a scoping study needs some analytical framework, to present the existing literature, there is no attempt to present a view of the value of the evidence in relation to specific issues. This is because the scoping study does not seek to assess the quality of evidence and consequently cannot determine whether specific studies provide robust data or generalizable results.

The authors conclude about the Scoping Review's strengths, such as: providing rigorous and transparent evaluation of the method for mapping areas of research in a relatively short time frame compared to a full systematic review, for example, reviewers can illustrate the field

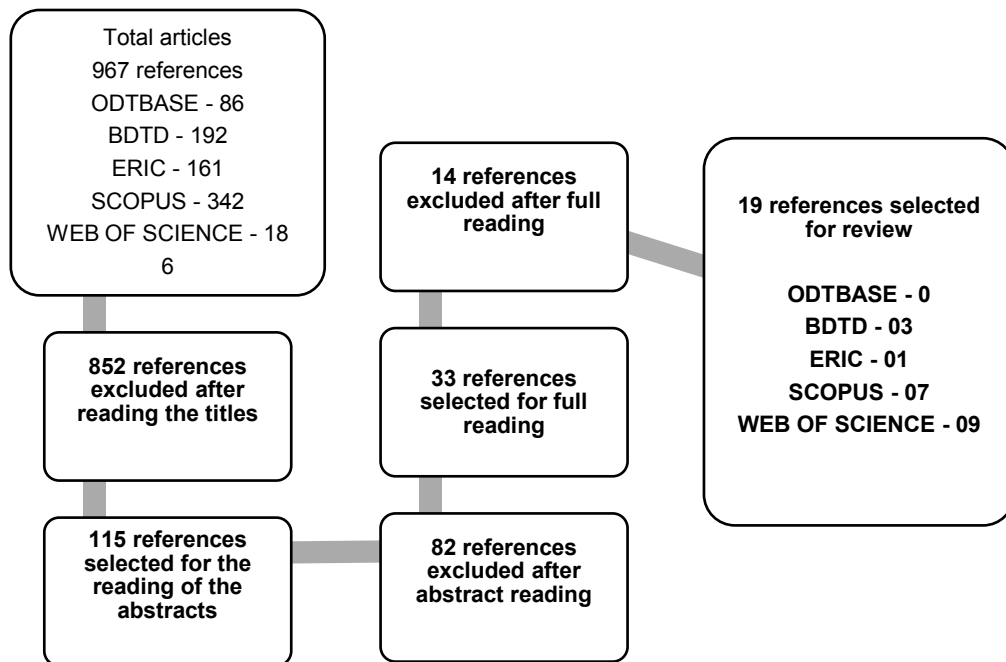
of interest in terms of the volume, nature, and characteristics of primary research. This analysis allows gaps in the evidence base to be identified and the results to be presented in an accessible, summary format, allowing easy access to policy makers, practitioners, and consumers. While they also list the limitations of this type of study, they do not assess the quality of evidence in primary research, nor do they report in any formal sense. The amount of data generated can be considerable, leading to difficult decisions about the importance between breadth (to select all the materials found) and depth (providing a detailed analysis and evaluation of fewer studies).

The Review Scope of this research used 5 databases for the search of articles: Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Web of Science, Scopus, OTDBASE and Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD). The keywords selected for the search for articles and theses were in English, and articles were accepted in three languages: Portuguese, Spanish and English. The keywords were: "Play AND Playthings", Playfulness, Ludicity, "Nursery School", "Child Rearing", Preeschool, "Early School", "Teacher Training", "Disabled Children", "Children with Disability". The descriptors used for searching and retrieving subjects in the databases were validated by the platforms: Descriptors in Health Sciences (DeCS) and Brazilian Thesaurus of Education. In addition to the selected words, synonyms were used with the introduction of Booleans "OR" to amplify the scope: Play; Playfulness; Pupil with disabilities. Booleans were also used to compose the search strategies between the keywords "AND" and the keywords and their synonyms "OR".

Inclusion criteria were as follows: publications between the years 2017 and 2021, and peer-reviewed. Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods approaches were considered for the study.

The database search strategies used were validated by peers who belonged to the research group to which the authors belonged. After the initial searches, the articles and theses found were refined by analyzing the titles, abstracts, and, finally, the full content. After the searches in the databases, selected by strategies and descriptors, two other researchers from the study group performed the same procedures and validated, and the same results were found in each base. A total of 967 articles were found. Then, the articles were refined by title, remaining 852 studies. After reading the abstracts, 33 studies remained to be read in full, resulting in 19 articles to compose the scope review study.

Figure 1 – Stages of the exclusion process of the articles selected from the databases



Note: Flowchart of the selection process using the preferred reporting items model for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA).

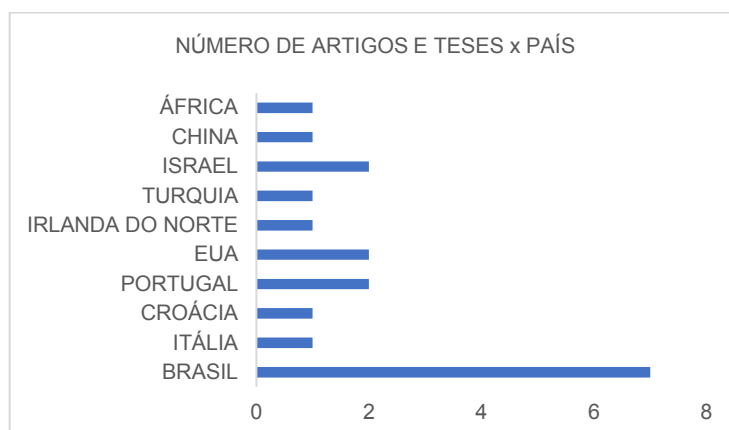
Source: Prepared by the authors

Results

After reading the 19 selected articles, it was possible to analyze several aspects and identify the elements that underlie the research, the play in early childhood education from the teachers' point of view, and the importance of this practice in the integral formation of the child.

The articles presented the reality of 10 countries, with educational and political differences due to cultural specificities and socioeconomic levels, but mostly with the same context in the challenges of implementing playful practices and inclusion in early childhood education.

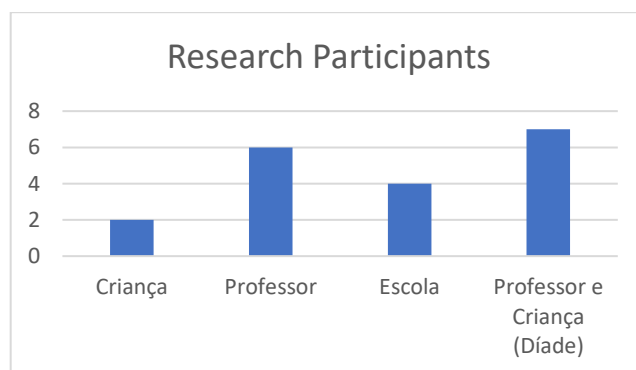
Figure 2 – Distribution of articles per country³



Source: Prepared by the authors

The analysis of the articles regarding the population studied becomes important to demonstrate the target of interest of the researchers of the studies presented, in which there is no great discrepancy between the amount of child, school, teacher, and teacher/child, although some of the studies emphasize the scarcity of children as the main participants in data collection.

Figure 3 – Distribution of articles per study population⁴



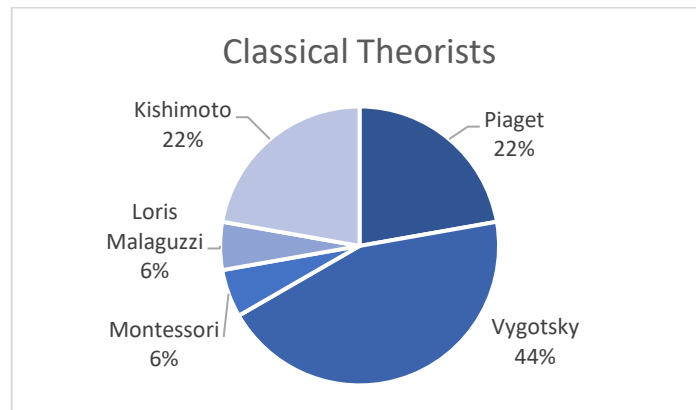
Source: Prepared by the authors

The third important item to highlight are the classical theorists used by the authors in the articles and theses as a bibliographic reference, for a view of the most common authors in this theme.

³ NÚMERO DE ARTIGOS E TESES X PAÍS = NUMBER OF ARTICLES AND THESIS x COUNTRY; Turquia = Turkey; Irlanda do Norte = Northern Ireland; EUA = USA; Croácia = Croatia; Itália = Italy; Brasil = Brazil

⁴ Criança = Child; Professor = Teacher; Escola = School; Professor e Criança (Díade) = Teacher and Child (Duet)

Figure 4 – Distribution of articles by classical authors



Source: Prepared by the authors

In this context, it was possible to identify, in a targeted manner, the main data of interest for this study. In a qualitative, descriptive and categorical way, 5 categories were selected for mapping the articles and theses, as follows: 1. play from the teacher's point of view, 2. understanding of the relationship between play and inclusion, 3. academic training (continued or free) of the teacher directed to playful actions, 4. didactic-pedagogical relationship with the playful context, 5. classic authors most used as a reference on the importance of play and the countries that are studying playfulness in early childhood education and the population studied.

With the analysis of the articles and theses, the following results were found:

Figure 5 – Correlation of classic and current authors and the themes addressed

Article Number	Author and Title	Categories				Classical Authors	Country	Research Population
		Playing	Inclusion	Teacher Training	Ludic practice			
A01	MARTINS, C. A.; CRUZ, S. H. V. The children's and the teacher's participation in the constitution of playing in school.	X		X	X	Piaget, Vygotsky	Brazil	Dyad
A02	GASTALDI, F. G. M.; LONGOBARDI, C.; PASTA, T.; PRINO, L. E. Pre-K children's play- different forms of imitation and exploration behaviours.	X			X	Piaget, Vygotsky	Italy	Child
A03	VISKOVIĆ, I.; SUNKO, E.; MENDEŠ, B. Children's Play—The Educator's Opinion.	X	X	X	X		Croatia	Teacher
A04	COELHO, V.; CADIMA, J.; PINTO, I. A. Child Engagement in Inclusive Preschools- Contributions of Classroom Quality and Activity Setting.	X	X		X		Portugal	Dyad
A05	COELHO, V.; PINTO, A. L. The Relationship between Children's Developmental Functioning and Participation in Social Activities in Portuguese Inclusive Preschool Settings.	X	X				Portugal	Dyad
A06	HONG, S. B.; SHAFFER, L.; HAN, J. Reggio Emilia Inspired Learning Groups- Relationships, Communication, Cognition, and Play.	X	X		X	Loris Malaguzzi	USA	Dyad
A07	SPROULE, L.; WALSH, G.; MCGUINNESS, C. Signalling playfulness disguising work as play in the early years classroom.	X			X		Northern Ireland	School
A08	CANASLAN-AKYAR, B.; SEVIMLI-CELİK, S. Playfulness of early childhood teachers and their views in supporting playfulness.	X	X		X		Turkey	Teacher
A09	PINCHOVER, S. The Relation between Teachers' and Children's Playfulness- A Pilot Study.	X		X	X	Vygotsky	Israel	Dyad
A10	KEUNG, C. P. C.; FUNG, C. K. H. Pursuing quality learning experiences for young children through learning in play- how do children perceive it?	X			X	Piaget Vygotsky	China	School
A11	PINCHOVER, S.; SHULMAN, C. Behavioural problems and playfulness of young children with ASD- the moderating role of a teacher's emotional availability.	X	X		X		Israel	Dyad
A12	FREITAS, M. B. O brincar e a ludicidade como saberes da profissionalidade docente na formação de professoras da educação infantil.	X		X		Vygotsky Kishimoto	Brazil	Teacher
A13	PASSMORE, A. H.; HUGHES, M. T. Exploration of Play Behaviors in an Inclusive Preschool Setting.	X	X		X	Piaget	USA	Child
A14	REIS, M. L. da S. Ludicidade na educação infantil – aprendizagem e desenvolvimento no centro de educação infantil em Codó.	X			X	Kishimoto	Brazil	Teacher
A15	SOARES, L. C.; CÔCO, V. Enunciações docentes sobre a brincadeira na educação infantil- compreensões e interações.	X		X		Vygotsky Kishimoto	Brazil	School
A16	KEKESI, D. K. DONKOR, S. K.; ABURAMPAH, W.; TORKONY, M. Early Childhood Education Teachers' Perceptions on the Use of Play as a Teaching Technique in Afadjato South District of the Volta Region, Ghana.	X			X		Africa	School
A17	PEREIRA, F. A. Ludicidade na constituição da profissionalidade de docentes de uma creche universitária- desafios e possibilidades.	X		X	X	Kishimoto	Brasil	Teacher
A18	REZENDE, M. da C. M. D. Interações e brincadeiras vivenciadas por crianças de 1 e 2 anos na educação infantil.	X			X	Vygotsky Montessori	Brasil	Dyad
A19	MAK, D. Didática no cotidiano da educação infantil.	X			X	Vygotsky	Brzil	Teacher

Source: Prepared by the authors

Discussion

A comprehensive Scope Review was conducted, and after refinement directed to the authors' study interest, 19 articles remained for further verification. The studies showed consistency in the presentation of the concepts and importance of play in early childhood education. They presented the view of teachers, children, and the whole school in relation to the theme, which brought several reflections on teacher training, the implementation of playful pedagogical practices, the inclusion of children with disabilities through play, and the construction of a playful space that can contribute to the overall development in early childhood education.

Based on the descriptive analyses summarized in table 5, there is unanimity on the importance of play for learning in early childhood education. There is also a large number of articles about factors that interfere in the pedagogical practice of play. In a smaller number of articles there were themes about the inclusion of children with disabilities and about teacher training.

For the category *playing*, the 19 articles brought as a research theme the importance for the learning process of the child. The texts in a broad way brought discussions such as: the free play versus directed play, the teachers' challenges in transmitting the pedagogical content in a playful way, the lack of academic and continuing education for understanding and implementing play in the classroom and in the inclusion of children with disabilities, the role and involvement of the teacher in the quality of teacher-child interactions and the activity environment, the beliefs of incompatibility between play and academic learning. A playful school environment has been related to increased child involvement in play and improved learning and development; all the texts are based on authors, studies, and the results of their research to support this statement.

In the inclusion category, 07 articles were found (A03, A04, A05, A06, A08, A11 and A13), which brought the reality of the inclusion process through play, the challenge of teachers in adapting and creating an inclusive play space, since it was found by several studies (cited by article A05) that children with disabilities have a history of being more excluded and spend more time involved in less complex activities, which do not allow exploration and quality relationship between peers and teachers in individual and group activities for their development. Also addressed was the need to provide children with a learning environment that is stimulating and inviting, with quality materials, and with the teacher as a group facilitator.

Teacher training was the category least found in the texts, with only 6 articles (A01,

A03, A09, A12, A15, and A17) addressing this topic. The authors who spoke about the subject pointed out the recognition of the teacher's role in creating a favorable and stimulating environment that motivates and affects the child's development and pedagogical conduct. Thus, they reinforce the importance of formal and continued education to educators about playing, and the study A03 emphasized that the importance, incentive, and proposal of playing are directly related to the higher level of education and the resistance to the use of ICT (information and communication technologies) by children with disabilities. Article A08, on the other hand, in opposition to the other five articles in this same category, presented the finding that the playfulness scores for teachers who did not attend play courses and graduated from high school were higher than the scores of teachers who attended play courses and graduated from university. Thus, the finding of this article highlights that the differences in playful pedagogical practices are related to the degree of internalization and the importance that play has for the teacher. Another important factor was in relation to the need for specific training for teachers of children from 0 to 6 years old, due to their peculiarities and differentiated needs, especially in relation to play. Many of the articles reported the lack of guidance for playful practices in training courses, which hinders the practice of teaching in early childhood education.

Pedagogical practice was the second category with the highest number of articles: there were 16 (A01, A02, A03, A04, A06, A07, A08, A09, A10, A11, A13, A14, A16, A17, A18, A19) studies stating that children's interest and spontaneous and active involvement in play stimulates the development of learning skills, making it a necessary recommended practice. Moreover, playfulness is understood as a characteristic of mediation and interaction between teacher and child, and influences activities throughout the school day, even those with traditional curricular objectives. Of these articles found, many relate the training of teachers with the methodologies and tools used in pedagogical practices, in which many teachers understand that the activity must be traditional in order to obtain intellectual gains, and therefore are incompatible with play, evidencing a "conflict between traditional academic knowledge and the integration of play in early childhood education" (CANASLAN-AKYAR; SEVIMLI-CELIK, 2021, our translation). Thus, play in pedagogical practices and structuring for children with disabilities are still underestimated, regarding the credibility of quality and importance in the use of pedagogical activities, and as pointed out in the texts, the lack of training and updating of teachers.

Through this Scoping Review study, the 19 articles brought together several classical theorists and researchers, however, the cut was made by specific theorists selected by the author to substantiate the importance of the learning process in early childhood education, through the

mediation of teachers in a playful way. To this end, we reflected on play and pedagogical practice from the perspective of Vygotsky, Piaget, and Kishimoto, who were cited by 12 articles (A01, A02, A09, A10, A11, A12, A14, A15, A17, A18, and A19).

"Playing is the school of the child's life and educates him physically and spiritually" (VYGOTSKY, 2014, p. 89, our translation). Vygotsky considers man as a social historical being, and refers to play as a fundamental activity for the contribution of child expressiveness (imagination, feelings, and artistic expression), emphasizing how play develops new skills and favors the child's adaptation to the reality in which he is inserted, considering his needs, culture, and relationships. For the author, the child's development happens in a practical and not passive way, and therefore the relationships and play receive interference from the external environment constantly, and play is a rich medium of experiences to integrate new meanings and knowledge (VYGOTSKY, 2014).

Piaget (2017) corroborates with the concept of active learning by the child, so he associates play with learning and advocates for children to play an active role in the discovery and construction of knowledge. This emphasizes that children can explore, identify, negotiate, take risks, and create meaning during play, with their choices and interests as the driving force for building knowledge, skills, and understanding.

Kishimoto (2002) states that the child plays and is always acting in the world as a broad educational environment to which he belongs, therefore advocates the appreciation of childhood and playful activity in the classroom as enhancers of a more effective pedagogical practice. The author also reflects on professional training in early childhood education, which should include "the most integrated areas of knowledge, such as environment, body and movement, expressive languages, toys and games" (p. 109, our translation).

Final remarks

Early childhood education is part of the child's initial formation, with an impact on all subsequent educational years; therefore, it is understood by the legislation and by scholars in the field as fundamental and adequately qualified.

Playing is the main occupation during childhood, a means by which the child gets to know the world and gets used to it. Social, emotional, and playful relationships happen in the educational environment, not only among children, but between the child and the teacher, and this promotes the constitution of the child's identity as a unique being.

This scoping review study gathered 19 articles that portrayed the view about play in

early childhood education in 10 countries (from varied levels of socioeconomic, technological and educational development), and showed that in many countries the topics: early childhood education, inclusion of children with disabilities, teacher training and pedagogical practices based on playfulness still need to be widely discussed and implemented in schools, regardless of the country's development and the legislation that guarantees the right to appropriate and quality education to children.

It was found that the practice that uses playing as the basis of early childhood education is not completely widespread and systematically applied in kindergartens and preschools in the countries listed in the articles, theses and dissertations.

When the teacher has this knowledge about the importance of play, then it can be expanded to the families and the whole community, so that it is valued and is no longer seen as a "mess and a waste of time", taking its meaning as an essential activity for an environment of well-being and integral development of the child.

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