

**“WE WANT A PLACE TO PLAY ON A RAINY DAY”: LISTENING AND IMPACT OF CHILDREN'S VOICES IN THE INSTITUTIONAL SELF-ASSESSMENT OF THE DAY CARE CENTER**

**“QUEREMOS UM LUGAR PARA BRINCAR EM DIA DE CHUVA”: ESCUTA E IMPACTO DAS VOZES DAS CRIANÇAS NA AUTOAVALIAÇÃO INSTITUCIONAL DA CRECHE**

**“QUEREMOS UN LUGAR PARA JUGAR EN UN DÍA DE LLUVIA”: ESCUCHA Y IMPACTO DE LAS VOCES INFANTILES EN LA AUTOEVALUACIÓN INSTITUCIONAL DE LA GUARDERÍA**



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**ABSTRACT:** This article presents the results of a research that aimed to identify the understandings of the teachers and manager regarding the listening and participation of three-year-old children in the institutional self-assessment of the day care center and the impact of these voices on their practices. This is a case study, whose methodological procedures were: analysis of the Political-Pedagogical Project, reflective record of the coordinator and the use of letters. The theoretical framework dialogued with studies the sociology and pedagogy of childhood, as well as the laws that regulate and guide work in Early Childhood Education. Data analysis revealed that the children's participation enabled their recognition as subjects of rights, including the right to speak and to participate. It allowed the teachers and administrators to assume listening as a way of life and the day care center as a social and cultural space where children have the opportunity to live their childhoods democratically.

**KEYWORDS:** Day care center. Listening. Children's participation. Institutional Self-Assessment.

**RESUMO:** Este artigo apresenta os resultados de uma pesquisa que objetivou identificar as compreensões das professoras e gestora frente à escuta e participação das crianças de três anos na autoavaliação institucional da creche, e o impacto dessas vozes em suas práticas. Trata-se de um estudo de caso, cujos procedimentos metodológicos foram: análise do Projeto Político-Pedagógico, registro reflexivo da coordenadora e o uso de cartas. O referencial dialogou com os estudos da sociologia e pedagogia da infância, assim como as legislações que regulamentam e orientam o trabalho na Educação Infantil. A análise dos dados revelou que a participação das crianças possibilitou o seu reconhecimento como sujeitos de direito, dentre eles o direito à palavra e à participação. Permitiu às professoras e gestoras assumirem a escuta como uma postura de vida e a creche como um espaço social e cultural em que as crianças têm a possibilidade de viver, democraticamente, suas infâncias.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Creche. Escuta. Participação das crianças. Autoavaliação Institucional.

**RESUMEN:** Este artículo presenta los resultados de una investigación que tuvo como objetivo identificar los entendimientos de las profesoras y gestoras sobre la escucha y participación de los niños de tres años en la autoevaluación institucional de la guardería y el impacto de estas voces en su practicas Se trata de un estudio de caso, cuyos procedimientos metodológicos fueron: análisis del Proyecto Político-Pedagógico, registro reflexivo de la coordinadora y uso de cartas. El marco teórico dialogó con estudios de la sociología y pedagogía de la infancia, así como las leyes que regulan y orientan el trabajo en Educación Infantil. El análisis de los datos reveló que la participación de los niños permitió su reconocimiento como sujetos de derechos, entre ellos el derecho a hablar y a participar. Permitió que las profesoras y directivos asumieran la escucha como una forma de vida y la guardería como un espacio social y cultural donde los niños tienen la oportunidad de vivir su infancia democráticamente.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Guardería. Escucha. Participación de los niños. Autoevaluación Institucional.

## Introduction

The child was, for a long time, understood as an immature, passive being, simply a reproducer of culture, without rationality, without the right to voice and participation, and must be cared for and disciplined based on the values, beliefs and knowledge determined by the social-historical-cultural context. From the 20th century onwards, as a result of social movements, research and, consequently, with advances in the legal sphere, the child began to be recognized as a subject of rights, therefore, as a social actor, an active participant in and in society, as they build knowledge in interactions and relationships established with the environment and with others; a powerful being that interprets and produces culture through play and its multiple languages.

In Brazil, the Federal Constitution of 1988 legitimized the child as a subject of rights (BRASIL, 1988), being reaffirmed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1990 which, in its article 12, decides that “[...] States must ensure the child the right to express their opinions on matters related to them” (BRASIL, 1990, our translation). This right is reiterated in the Legal Framework for Early Childhood, which establishes guidelines and principles in favor of the formulation of public policies for Early Childhood, from 0 (zero) to 6 (six) years, guaranteeing children their rights as participatory citizens (BRAZIL, 2016).

Although there are advances from a legal point of view, we still encounter in many early childhood education institutions the silencing of the voices of girls and boys, which denotes an understanding of the child as a being of pure adaptation and not intervention in the world, therefore, not able to participate in collective decisions that concern them.

In view of this scenario, recognizing the child as a subject of rights, but who in the educational context still does not have the guarantee of participation in decision-making processes, the research presented here is inserted (VICENTE, 2021). This is a case study carried out in a daycare center in the city of São Paulo, which has been developing work involving the participation of very young children in the institutional self-evaluation process.

The research aimed to identify and understand the role of listening to children's voices in the process of children's participation in the institutional self-evaluation of the daycare center. For this, the following methodological procedures were used: the description of the daycare center's institutional self-evaluation experience based on the coordinator's records, the analysis of the Political-Pedagogical Project and the use of Letters as a way of establishing a dialogue with the teachers and manager, weaving, thus, the plot of this experience with its learning, reflections and interpretations of the investigated context, in an interlocution with authors from

the sociology of childhood and childhood pedagogy, as well as with the legal documents that regulate and guide work in education childish.

In this article, we share the path and results of this investigation, presenting, initially, the strategies that enabled children's participation in the institutional self-evaluation of the daycare center. Next, we discuss the methodological path, with emphasis on the use of letters, and, finally, the analysis of the narratives woven throughout the research, in order to identify and understand the role of listening that children's voices assumed in the context of daycare and how they transformed educational practice.

### **Building a participatory context in daycare**

Listening, participating and legitimizing children's voices are challenges that enter the universe of daycare centers, as they imply, above all, a change in the adult's conception and attitude towards children, as well as breaking the gap between speech and practice. In this sense, there is an urgent need to affirm children's potential to argue, suggest, criticize, give opinions, analyze, interpret and bring about changes in the contexts in which they live.

Thus, Oliveira-Formosinho (2007) defends the child as a subject with agency, who challenges, summons, interrogates, investigates and challenges the world based on the relationships they establish, building knowledge, cultures and actively intervening in the social context in which they are involved. inserted, influencing and being influenced by it. However, as Nascimento (2011) asserts, adults, when interpreting these forms of child participation, end up limiting or even disregarding children's voices, or even betting on children's potential only as a future influence for the transformation of the world.

Recognizing the right of boys and girls to participate in the institution's decisions and the adult-child relationship established through listening and dialogue, a daycare center in the city of São Paulo, since 2015, has invested in building voice listening strategies children in order to enable and implement the participation of 3-year-old children in the institutional self-assessment process, thus adapting the methodology proposed in the São Paulo Early Childhood Education Quality Indicators - IQEIP instrument (SÃO PAULO, 2016a).

This proposal came about after the daycare principal heard the children's request for a place to play on rainy days. This request was a driving force for the transformation of the team's perspective on the potential of childhood, as these boys and girls were demonstrating how capable they are of evaluating the weaknesses that existed in the school space and claiming

their rights, as stated by Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2019, p. 71), children “[...] have their own voice and must be heard in order to be considered seriously, involving them in dialogue and democratic decision-making”.

Daycare needs to be recognized not only as a place to be frequented, but as a space built by everyone who attends it, including children, which implies the effectiveness of their participation, giving life to their experiences and not just conceiving them as users of a service (BONDIOLI; SAVIO, 2013). Thus, when planning children's listening strategies and adapting the Quality Indicators methodology, the pedagogical coordinator and teachers decided to address dimension 6 of the IQEIP (SÃO PAULO, 2016a), which deals with educational environments: times, spaces and materials, something that was in line with what the children were pointing out as the need for qualification.

As a strategy for listening to children's voices in view of the evaluation of daycare spaces, the teachers from Minigroup II (3 years old) suggested a conversation circle, using photographs of the institution's spaces as a trigger: reference room, solarium, park, outdoor area, cafeteria and TV room. The proposal was for children to choose the space they liked most and justify their choice. It was also discussed that the dialogue should be mediated by the class teacher, because, as Corsaro (2009) explains, in an investigation with very young children, who recognize them as social actors, it is necessary to understand the context of boys and girls in a relationship of belonging to that social group.

In a second step, it was planned to adapt the methodology for the colors of the quality indicators, opting only for the colors green and red. It was decided that the colors would be represented by the happy (green) and sad (red) face, so the children would qualify the spaces they liked and didn't like with the faces and justify their choices, identifying whether this space needed adjustment.

The team decided that the recording of this process would be done through audio recording, thus all the children's statements would be recorded in full, without judgments or interpretations, allowing the adult to listen, establishing a dialogue, eye to eye, demonstrating interest in the children's narratives and discoveries, open to the readings that boys and girls make of the world, since “[...] it is necessary to give children adequate conditions, without rushing, without control, without worries” (TONUCCI, 2005, p. 18, our translation) so that they can reflect and say what they think.

The children's reports revealed a critical view of daycare spaces, pointing out difficulties that adults saw, but which had no dimension to how much they were seen as barriers by them.

They also highlighted the possibility of a more dialogical education, with children as interlocutors in the understanding and construction of “[...] realities that claim to be kinder and fairer to all beings that inhabit the planet” (SILVA, 2021, p. 5, our translation).

At the end of the institutional self-evaluation process, the principal replanned the expenditure of municipal and federal funds, in order to implement the children's proposals, sharing them with the School Council and other family members. Of these proposals, some were made viable that year. Thus, after completing the actions, he gathered all the children in the cafeteria and presented, through photos, the changes that had occurred in the institution, demonstrating the importance and legitimizing children's voices, recognizing that “[...] listening to children offers important subsidies because, by accepting their perspective, it is possible to transform daycare centers and preschools into places that care for and educate them with greater respect for their desires and needs” (CRUZ, 2008, p. 91, our translation).

### **The methodological option**

To identify and understand the role of listening to children's voices in the process of participation of very young children in the institutional self-evaluation of the daycare center, the methodological option was a case study, as it is research that “[...] investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its context” (YIN, 2015, p. 32, our translation).

Given the unique nature of the work carried out by the daycare center, the following methodological procedures were used: the analysis of the unit's Political-Pedagogical Project, the coordinator's reflective records and the audiovisual records of the narratives constructed by the children of Minigroup II in the self-assessment, considering that the gaze of children:

[...] allows us to uncover another social reality, which is the one that emerges from children's interpretations of their respective life worlds. The look of children allows us to reveal social phenomena that the look of adults leaves in the shadows or completely obscures (PINTO; SARMENTO, 1997, p. 27, our translation).

To rescue the narratives woven during the process by the adults involved, another data collection procedure was used: letters, as a braiding of narrative threads, since the letter genre allows for written authorial, subjective, which historicizes a journey narrating from its own experience. This choice was made as a way to establish a dialogue, share narratives, rescue memories, provoke “[...] reflection and systematization of experiences in process” (CAMINI, 2012, p. 41, our translation).

Given its dialogical, interactive, subjective, authorial, meaningful and open character, this textual genre made it possible to intertwine the different narrative threads woven by the subjects who participated in the institutional self-evaluation process with the children, two of whom are teachers, who we will treat here as Teacher 1 and Teacher 2, and the Principal.

The first letter sent by the researcher to the participants, in addition to thanking them for accepting to participate in the research, aimed to rescue the memory of the experience regarding the children's participation in the institutional self-evaluation of the daycare center. Once the response to this first letter was received, a second was sent with the intention of deepening the dialogue, sharing knowledge or impacts that such an experience may have had on her know-how as a teacher or manager, as well as revealing the challenges faced during the process.

After receiving the letters, data analysis was carried out, based on: the theoretical framework, the description of the institutional self-evaluation process and the narratives of the teachers and principal through the letters, highlighting the obstacles and possibilities of children's participation in the decision-making processes, as well as the role that their voices play in the contexts in which they are inserted.

The data analysis was based on Franco's (2003) studies on content analysis, since, starting from the narratives, we sought to understand the contextual conditions of their production. In the investigation in question, the categories were not defined a priori, they emerged from the participants' speeches, being subsequently interpreted in light of the theoretical framework. With this, "It is inferred, therefore, from the different 'speaks', different conceptions of the world, of society, of school, of the individual, etc." (FRANCO, 2003, p. 54, our translation). For the analysis, the following categories were raised: Strategies used for children's participation in institutional self-evaluation; Children's political participation; Learn with children.

### **Strategies used for children's participation in institutional self-evaluation**

Thinking about children's participation in evaluation processes requires planning and involvement of a collective with a commitment to accepting children's voices as the premise of quality education, believing in their expressive capabilities and potential, understanding that boys and girls have the right to participate in decision-making in the contexts in which they are inserted.

From this perspective, it was necessary to think about strategies that would enable participation and listening to children's voices in institutional self-assessment by adapting the

IQEIP (SÃO PAULO, 2016a), considering dimension 6, which deals with educational environments, as it meets children's demands for a place to play on rainy days. As reported by the Principal (Letter 1): “our experience had the purpose of enabling the participation of children from Minigroup II in institutional self-assessment through the Quality Indicators of Early Childhood Education in São Paulo”, so “we sought strategies with the minigroup II teachers to listen to the small children”. Teacher 1 narrates, in letter 2, “that as it was a project for Minigroup II, we had moments of sharing, studies, discussions and planning, seeking actions, partnerships for effective results”.

Faced with the challenge of building strategies to enable children's participation, the teachers describe that they built:

[...] strategies thought out and planned collectively, concerned with a language that was easy for children to understand, such as posters with images of CEI spaces, so that children could evaluate by observing the images using happy faces in green and the sad face in red. Red represented what they didn't like and green represented what they liked (TEACHER 2 – letter 2, our translation).

I remember that, for the purpose of evaluating quality indicators, we asked children to express their preferences and opinions about the spaces and toys available in the educational environment. We prepared posters with images of CEI spaces and toys and, by rotating classes, the children analyzed the material and expressed their opinions and points of view (TEACHER 1 – letter 1, our translation).

Among the methodological instruments, the photographic resource was the trigger for evaluating the spaces, since, through images, it is possible to understand the children's point of view in their collective and individual narratives.

During strategy planning, the educational team defined that the evaluation process would be mediated by the teacher herself through conversation circles. According to Campos (2008), conversation circles constitute a good strategy for collecting children's voices, as it is an action that is part of children's routine, something they are already familiar with, which facilitates the communication process, a since the adult demonstrates the need to listen and know the experiences, stories and cultures of the children themselves; This action is visible in the teachers' narratives:

When we started working on institutional evaluation, I started bringing experiences that occurred at CEI into the conversation and the children told us everything, what they did, what they liked and what they didn't like. From there, I created questions that would encourage the children to participate in the conversation, for example: How? When? And questions that referred to their experiences, proposing some themes, such as: cleaning the room,



birthday parties, games, toys and favorite spaces at CEI, favorite foods served by the unit, activities they liked to do most, general suggestions (TEACHER 1 – letter 2, our translation).

At the time of the evaluation, we visited the spaces with the group of children and then in the conversation circle held either in the common room or in the video room, the teacher asked questions using images of the spaces as a trigger: which environments they liked the most, which space they liked to use most, which spaces were their preference, which spaces they didn't like, what needed to change or improve in that space, what is missing in this space (Teacher 2 – letter 2, our translation).

According to the City Curriculum: Early Childhood Education (SÃO PAULO, 2019), school is a space to ask good questions, not those that seek right or wrong answers, but those that provoke children to reflect on situations that concern them, that make sense to them and that provoke reflections on the spaces and situations experienced in the day-to-day life of institutions. Therefore, through the teachers' open and available stance to listen and with questions that involved their context, the children felt safer to reveal their desires, interests and concerns.

### **Children's political participation**

Ensuring children's participation in decision-making processes implies: assuming the daycare center as a public, social and democratic space, which plays a role within society, as stated by Dewey (1979); guarantee the “[...] consolidation of emancipatory daily practices through which children can imagine, create, invent and transgress” (SILVA, 2015, p. 116, our translation) and, mainly, change the attitude of adults, conceiving the child as a citizen, who builds his autonomy through democratic experiences, who expresses and investigates the world through multiple languages and who interprets the world differently from adults.

The daycare's path of transformation began with the phrase “we want a place to play on a rainy day”, said by children aged 3 years old, in the form of a demand for their rights, which made it possible to change their outlook, practices, spaces and contexts of the daycare center, as revealed by the narratives of the principal and teacher 1:

Inspired by these clear and simple children's voices, our Early Childhood Education Unit began to explore the new, gaining a new face, the face that the children wanted so much (PRINCIPAL – letter 1, our translation).

Gradually, the spaces took on new shapes. Currently, it has a sand pit, an area with a football field, a vegetable garden, a large park with different toys (TEACHER 1 – letter 2, our translation).

The need for a covered space was something already noticed by some members of the educational team, but never assumed as a demand. It was not even a priority in the spending

plan for federal and municipal daycare funds. As Tonucci (2020, p. 249, our translation) states, "[...] children are able to point out problems that adults tend not to see or underestimate, such as the lack of space and time to play, the absurdity of excessive protection, the impossibility of autonomous mobility, etc."

In view of what Tonucci (2020) asserts in relation to children's view of the context in which they are inserted, such problems are revealed in the statements of these children during the evaluation of the spaces:

During the assessment of the external area Gabriel <sup>3</sup>points out that, "*it needs cement, there are stones, then the motorcycle stops.*" [...] Regarding the video room, Laura says: "*it's not good, because there's no space*", another child supports her statement, exclaiming: "*I think it's bad.*" When asked by the teacher what could be done to improve that space, João takes a stand and says "*you have to remove these chairs so we can watch, and just put carpet for us to sit on*". [...] Pedro Park argues "*There are no toys for me to play with. There's no scale, because Paulo doesn't let me play, so there has to be another one*" (Reflective record of the coordinator, 2015, our translation).

Ensuring children's participation in daycare does not mean setting a time and date to listen to them, because, as Freire (1996) argues, listening is a commitment, an attitude, a way of living and positioning oneself in everyday life, understanding that children manifest themselves all the time.

By assuming the daycare center as a meeting place, for collective decisions in which all social actors are co-responsible, giving due importance to institutional self-evaluation as a space for dialogue and openness to transformations and qualification of practices, the management and teaching team allowed children express and announce their concerns, perceptions and suggestions, feeling strengthened and recognized through a humanized and horizontal dialogical relationship between them and the teachers. As the principal states in her second letter, "within this perspective, we understand that it is imperative not only to listen to the child's voice, but also to legitimize their participation, authorship and leading role in the construction of quality early childhood education".

At the end of the institutional self-evaluation, a dialogical process that strengthened the democratic management of the institution, ensuring the listening and participation of the Minigroup II classes and other actors in the daycare center (teachers, managers and support team), the management shared the changes with the children that were possible to do that year,

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<sup>3</sup>Although the quote was removed from the coordinator's pedagogical documentation, the children's names are fictitious, in order to preserve their identities. Therefore, we emphasize that all ethical procedures were guaranteed throughout the research.

demonstrating to them that their voices and desires have value, that they were listened to seriously and legitimized.

Regarding the park, the children discussed the need to increase the number of swings, thus reducing waiting time and conflicts between them, as this was a toy much requested by children. Another issue was the cutting of the bush, expressed in the letter from Teacher 1:

I remember that when I asked about the learning spaces, two questions stood out to me: the request from two children to tidy up the park, as there were many holes and they could get hurt (Rafael and Ana) and the emphasis they gave to the discomfort they felt around notice the overgrown weeds making it difficult to play in this space. Rafael was inquisitive and always asked when they were going to cut the bush (TEACHER 1 – letter 1, our translation).

Regarding the coverage of a space so that children could play on rainy days, the principal called an engineer to check the possibility, however, that year, with the funds received, it would not be possible, a fact shared with the children “valuing each child protagonism and a childhood considered in its entirety” (TEACHER 2 – letter 1, our translation).

The request was sent in June 2015 to the Regional Board in the action plan for the Quality Indicators of Early Childhood Education in São Paulo (SÃO PAULO, 2016a), in addition to the memorandum requesting a renovation for the daycare center, which was completed at the end of 2020, five years after the request.

Even though it was temporarily impossible to build a space for the children to play on a rainy day, the principal bought the toys they requested and renovated the solarium, building a new park. Among the children's requests, we found Laura's: “*I want a toy that goes in one side and comes out the other, very big*” and Ana's “*you can't play house with just a playhouse, right?*” (Coordinator's reflective record, 2015). In the words of the Principal (letter 1, our translation):

In this way, the children's voice was represented, we included the purchases requested and the modifications they requested. A new park was built, we carried out renovations to the park and the outdoor area, we also built another park, we reorganized a space for games on rainy days, we reorganized the way meals are served, giving them the option of serving themselves at the table.

Given this context, it is possible to verify that the daycare center valued the children's voices during the self-evaluation process, communicating to them the reason for their participation, respecting their desire to speak out or not during the previously planned conversation circles, or during the routine; The welcoming and attentive attitude of the teachers towards the children's statements and the response to their demands legitimized their voices.

## Learning with children

Children, by sharing their cultures, their theories, discoveries and reflections, enable the adult to see what was often invisible to their eyes, as the manager states when referring to the children's demands: “ a phrase that aroused our curiosity and changed our teaching practice [...] and that was how we began this adventure with our children in 2015, seeking to see what we had not yet seen” (Principal - letter 1, our translation).

According to Silva and Fasano (2020), keeping our childhood alive allows us to rescue the boy's gaze of discovery, curiosity, investigation, enchantment, without absolute truths, but open to the world and listening to others (a), as can be seen in the teacher and principal's narrative:

[...] we looked forward to hearing what the children wanted to tell us, and we were surprised by the amount of “things” they had to say. [...] we were enchanted and showed how children's political participation is possible to build this new narrative (PRINCIPAL – letter 1, our translation).

Finally, this activity provoked in me a greater interest in observing the class, seeking knowledge, researching, putting myself in the shoes of these social and thinking subjects; and above all listening to them, as the children pointed out what they would like to experience and this made my planning easier. Children always give clues, elements that reveal their expectations, making their learning more enjoyable and the teacher's practice more meaningful” (TEACHER 1 – letter 2, our translation).

Teacher and manager report, in addition to listening, the importance of observation, as a continuous look of welcome, discovery, attention and interest in discovering the world through the relationships, interactions, looks and voices of children, since the act of observing “[...] depends on our training, our culture, our intentions and the image of children that we construct, [...] we observe, in particular, because we want to generate changes” (RIERA, 2019, p. 80, our translation).

In view of the learning and discoveries established in the dialogue, in a horizontal relationship in the construction of an emancipatory education, it was possible to notice that the children, when evaluating the spaces, demanded improvements for the collective, aiming for the well-being of everyone. For Tonucci (2020, p. 247, our translation), “[...] the child, expressing his needs, represents well the needs of all citizens, from the weakest, those with disabilities”, as can be seen in the speech of João, who warns about the existing ditches in the park, “*we have to put glass on the ground to make it better for the babies and us not to fall* ”. (Coordinator's reflective record, 2015, our translation).

Listening to the voices of these children allowed the teachers and manager to discover their sensitive and concerned views on the daycare collective:

In the letter I point out the two requests from the children that left an impression on me. Rafael and Ana's request. These requests impacted me not only because of their content, but because of the expression they had on their faces. We can often think that the child doesn't care, doesn't feel, doesn't understand and, in turn, has no voice. Is not true! At the time, the expression on the children's faces showed frustration at the delay in the measures (TEACHER 1 – letter 2, our translation).

Ultimately, 2015 was a year in which, as early childhood educators, we were given the opportunity to relearn how to look and listen, an experience that allowed us to become enchanted with the “unknown” and which, in a simple and lively way, drove us and continues to drive us today (PRINCIPAL – letter 1, our translation).

Upon experiencing the experience of children's participation in self-evaluation, the daycare center began to transform into a new context of early childhood education, not only with changes in space, but with transformations in practices and conceptions, as “[...] it left the looking at the child and speaking for them, and started to include their voice as a participatory subject” (ALMEIDA; PAIVA, 2016, p. 95, our translation), constituting an environment that respects children's voices, guaranteeing their rights with dialogical and democratic practices, in which everyone has the right to speak and to participate in decision-making situations, as listening is seen as an essential attitude of the early childhood educator.

### **Final remarks**

Investigating the experience of children's participation in institutional self-evaluation, which started from listening to their demands for a space to play on rainy days, constituted a narrative woven by different threads intertwined by memories, looks, voices, perceptions, reflections and words.

Revisiting this investigative context strengthened the process of knowledge construction and transformation experienced by the subjects of this research, as it gave visibility to children's voices within a political and participatory context, with their theories, ideas, concerns, demands, powers, concepts, enchantments, imaginations and stories, and also enabled the daycare center to assume its social role as a space for democratic and dialogic relationships in which citizens constitute themselves in the practice of citizenship.

The daycare team, in this experience of children's participation in institutional self-evaluation, took on listening to children's voices as an action to transform anti-dialogical

practices and conceptions, approaching what was foreseen in the Political-Pedagogical Project, by considering children as subjects rights, including the right to participate in decisions that concern them, as well as:

[...] guarantee children their right to childhood, through pleasant, meaningful, stimulating situations, enabling them to expand their experiences and develop in all human dimensions: affective, motor, cognitive, social, imaginative, playful, aesthetic, ethical, creative, expressive and linguistic (SÃO PAULO, 2016b, p. 26, our translation).

The daycare center was established as a democratic institution, a social and cultural space in which children have the possibility of living their childhoods.

The teachers and the principal understood that listening to children is not a mechanized action to be guaranteed in routine, but a life stance, understanding that boys and girls position themselves, investigate, question, theorize and become enchanted by the contexts they experience, and they, teachers and managers need to be attentive to them, with a sensitive look and listen to their gestures, looks and voices. All this, considering that children express themselves in the world through multiple languages, appropriating the culture of the context and building new cultures based on their interpretations.

The strategy of conversation circles as planned welcoming spaces and discussions with a defined focus, marked by dialogicity and respect for all voices, enabled children to learn from the collective, strengthen bonds and recognize the power of their voices in relation to their positions, conflicts and concerns, sharing decisions together with other actors in the educational unit, since participation is a right of all citizens with their cultures and singularities.

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