

## Research reports

# Supervised internship as a space to learn how to teach in Early Childhood Education

## O estágio supervisionado como espaço de aprendizagem da docência na Educação Infantil

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### Abstract

Grounded in the epistemology of professional practice and the sociology of the subject, we investigate how students enrolled in a Teacher Education program (leading to Pedagogy Licensure) at a Brazilian public university learn to teach in Early Childhood Education. We addressed the question: How does the Supervised Internship in Early Childhood Education support students' learning and their identification with the early childhood teaching? The analysis focused on five out of forty Reflective Portfolios produced during the classes and selected for the depth of their narratives and the richness of reflection on teaching practice. Narratives were examined in relation to students' life histories and formative experiences beyond the university. Results indicate that personal life contexts significantly shape values, knowledge, and practices that constitute the professional identity of future teachers. Furthermore, Reflective Portfolios proved to be an effective pedagogical tool, enabling students to select and critically analyze key aspects of their professional development and teaching practice.

**Keywords:** early childhood education; teaching practice; reflective portfolios; formative experiences; pandemic.

### Resumo

Com base na epistemologia da prática profissional e na sociologia do sujeito, analisamos a aprendizagem da docência na Educação Infantil por estudantes de Pedagogia em uma universidade pública cearense. Buscamos respostas à pergunta: Como o Estágio Supervisionado em Educação Infantil tem favorecido aos estudantes a aprendizagem e identificação com a docência nesta fase da educação? De 40 Portfólios Reflexivos construídos durante o Estágio, cinco foram analisados considerando a extensão de seus relatos e a incidência de reflexão sobre o magistério na Educação Infantil. Dialogamos com as narrativas dos Portfólios, vinculando a análise às histórias de vida dos autores e suas experiências externas à universidade. A análise evidenciou que: os contextos de vida pessoal influenciam os valores, saberes e fazeres que constituirão o perfil profissional dos educandos; o uso dos Portfólios constituiu uma profícua ferramenta de aprendizagem ao oportunizar aos estudantes selecionar e discutir aspectos relevantes para sua atuação profissional.

**Palavras-chave:** educação infantil; prática docente; portfólios reflexivos; experiências formativas; pandemia.

### INTRODUCTION

As professors in a Teacher Education program (leading to Pedagogy Licensure), we feel constantly compelled to reflect about our role as trainers of new teachers. In this trajectory, by assuming a critical and reflexive posture, we constantly seek answers to questions that directly impact the training that we aim to provide to new teachers. One of these questions is related to the way teaching has been presented to students, considering that our goal is to train qualified professionals to work in Basic Education. Therefore, we consider it is relevant to emphasize that,

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regardless of the choices and (de)motivations of students that enter the University's classrooms, we understand teaching as a professional activity specialized in human development.

From this place of speech — that of professors in the Pedagogy Licensure — we chose to direct our look to the learning of teaching in Early Childhood Education, which requires an attentive look at the specificities of educational care to children ages 0-5. In this context, we look for answers to the following question, which guides this study: how has Supervised Internship in Early Childhood Education made it easier for students to learn and identify themselves with teaching at this stage in education? We ask ourselves, therefore, if training licentiates are willing to understand the requirements of this practice and to assume it as a professional activity. In other words, our concern is only the transmission of the specificities of Early Childhood Education as a field of work, but also the promotion of a profession identification to Pedagogy students with this first stage of basic education.

This concern is justified since it is undeniable that there is a meaningful relationship between what licentiates learn in their early training and what they will effectively do in the day-to-day activities of Early Childhood Education institutions, constructing expectations about this learning from their own experience with children. Such expectations arise from tensions between the logics of practice and the normative logics of educational plans and techniques to which they will be subject. For this reason, we deem it is fundamental for the enhancement of teacher training to understand what mobilizes future Early Childhood Education teachers for this activity and under which conditions they project their professional practice. After all, we assume that the several material difficulties these students will face — added to the discouragement caused by low salaries, precarious working conditions, and insufficient pedagogical support in nursery schools and preschools — are realities they already know, especially due to Early Childhood Education-specific courses previously completed during their teaching internship.

Based on these aspects, this text aims to reflect on the learning process in Early Childhood Education teaching by Pedagogy students from the analysis of their narratives about the experiences they had during the curricular supervised internship. Specifically, we analyzed the knowledge they constructed — or were then constructing — about the professional practice in Early Childhood Education; we discussed the situations, experiences and training strategies that favored the constitution of this repertoire; and we identified possible values and meanings that will guide their future pedagogical practice in this field.

The discussion will be conducted considering the ideas that conceive teaching as a profession which, just like the others, is learned (Mizukami, 2006). Added to this conception is the understanding that Early Childhood Education teaching has specificities that distinguish it from other education stages and levels, since “[...] childhood is a period of affective, intellectual, socio-relational and intercultural achievement that has great impact in a person's process of humanization” (Oliveira-Formosinho; Formosinho, 2001, p. 87). Therefore, the reflection around this teaching knowledge — understood both as learning contents and constructions of meaning for pedagogical practice — has caused us to come up with two theoretical approaches that dialog with this topic and encapsulate the ideas about learning to teach as a profession. The first one is Epistemology of Teaching Practice (Tardif, 2002), which directly approaches the issue, and the second is the Theory of the Relationship with Knowledge (Charlot, 2000), whose contribution is made through the analysis of the notion of knowledge in its relationship with teaching, more specifically materialized with the work of Lomonaco (1998).

We will start this reflection with the discussion about the Supervised Internship curricular component. Then, we will describe the stages of the construction process of the data analyzed herein and, at last, we will present the knowledge, experiences and meanings identified as structuring the future pedagogical action in Early Childhood Education, based in the narratives prepared by the licentiates through reflective portfolios.

## **SUPERVISED INTERNSHIP AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF PEDAGOGICAL KNOWLEDGE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

The construction of pedagogical knowledge is indissociably anchored in the relationship between theory and practice, and Supervised Internship is not only the “practicing time”

but, according to Lima (2001, p. 6), constitutes “[...] the time to start thinking of the teacher’s condition as an eternal learner”. In the case of the Internship in Early Childhood Education — an essential activity to the preparation for teaching practice in this stage of education —, it is fundamental to understand it as an opportunity for students to “[...] learn to observe children, identify their most elementary communicative modalities, establish a specific communicative relationship with them, [thus constituting] the based for pedagogical preparation” (Mantovani; Perani, 1999, p. 93). Moreover, this mandatory curricular component of Pedagogy programs -- Early Childhood Education Internship — according to the laws currently in effect, plays a central role in the constitution of learning aimed at Child Pedagogy (Oliveira-Formosinho, 2002). It is worth noting, however, that this learning of knowledge and this making of Early Childhood Education, potentially promoted by the Internship, is also structured from knowledge already acquired by students, which evidences the importance of previous knowledge in the construction of new knowledge. In view of this, we can state that Internship in Early Childhood Education is a key element in the learning process of teaching in the first stage of basic education. In this perspective, according to Santos (2009), four categories are fundamental for us to understand the role of internship in the teacher’s initial training: internship as a space to construct learning; as an organizing element in the curriculum of teacher training program; as a link between different levels of teaching; and as a component that integrates theory and practice.

## **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION INTERNSHIP AT THE UNIVERSITY: TEACHING GOAL AND METHODOLOGY**

The 160 hours that comprise the Internship in Early Childhood Education at the university to which the authors of the portfolios analyzed are linked were organized in “Face-to-Face Meetings at College” and in “Face-to-Face Meetings at the Early Childhood Education Institution”. The meetings held at the College were primarily intended to plan each stage of the internship in the educational institutions. At these moments, guidance, reflections and discussions were promoted about the situations experience in the field, connecting them to the knowledge developed in other courses of the Pedagogy program, with special attention to those related to the Early Childhood Education area.

In the context of the experience reported, the Meetings in the Early Childhood Education Institution started with the observation of the institution and of the educational practice of the teacher in the classroom where the internship was conducted. In the observations, the interactions between children, between children and adults, and between adults themselves stood out. Then, the interns carried out interviews with the professionals working at nursery schools and/or preschools, as well as with the children’s family members or guardians, with the goal of enriching the stage of “Description of the Educational Institution”. Subsequently, there as an effective co-participation in the institutions, with the help of the teacher in the organization of activities developed with the children, participation in pedagogical and planning meetings, with both the families and the teachers, as well as the collective preparation of materials for activities with the children, teachers and/or family members. At the end of this process, the Pedagogical Intervention Project was present to the teacher in charge of the classroom, which was developed with the children group under that teacher’s responsibility.

Planning activities with the children had, as a starting point, attentively listening to the group and the participative observation of the pedagogical routine implemented by the classroom teacher. This organization of the internship, commonly conducted face-to-face, was interrupted in March, 2020 because of the pandemic caused by the novel Coronavirus. In Fortaleza and throughout the State of Ceará, face-to-face school activities at all levels, stages and modalities of education were suspended, as the main strategy adopted by the government to contain the advance of the disease. Faced with this scenario, the Ceará State Education Council, through Resolution No. 481, dated 19 March, 2020 (Ceará, 2020), ordered public and private institutions to adopt, from then on, the remote class regime, without any expected date to resume face-to-face activities.

In the case of the Internship in Early Childhood Education, in a remote format, classes started to be taught through both synchronous and asynchronous meetings. The intern’s contact with

the institutions' teachers was made through tools such as *WhatsApp* and *Google Meet*, whereas interactions with the children and their families or guardians were intermediated by teachers of the educational units. Both in the face-to-face and in the remote format, students were instructed to reflect on theoretical bases that supported the Internship, relating them to the experiences that took place, either directly or indirectly, with the children, the teachers and the families.

The methodology adopted in the classes involved seminars, whose topics were defined jointly by the teacher in charge of the class and the students, as well as conversation rounds about relevant topics for the field of Early Childhood Education, such as: a) pedagogical practice with infants in nursery schools; b) inclusive pedagogical practices in the daily routine of Early Childhood Education; c) educational practices related to education for ethnic-racial relations, among others. Interviews were also conducted remotely with school managers, teachers, children and their guardians, with the aim of understanding their perceptions about the pandemic and the remote actions carried out by the Early Childhood Education institutions in this context.

The college professor responsible for supervising the Internship in Early Childhood Education, together with the teachers of the institutions which hosted the interns, accompanied the activities carried out, according to the respective academic calendars. This curricular component was resumed in August 2020. In the 2020.1 academic term, the internship was conducted in a mixed format, by combining face-to-face activities, carried out before the pandemic, with remote activities, called by the College "free emergency educational activities". In the 2020.2 academic term, the internship was conducted exclusively in the remote format.

As one of the evaluation strategies, we required students to produce Reflective Portfolios. As argued by Villas Boas (2001), this instrument allows that teaching autonomy is constructed throughout the training process. Considering that we learn how to be teachers from the educators that taught us — and from the way we were taught and evaluated by them —, the Portfolio also constitutes a source of learning in teaching practice. However, it is not about any teaching practice: is an intentional, contextualized and complex pedagogical making that allows for, among other opportunities, the construction of written records by students; the reflection on their production; the exercise of creativity; self-evaluation; the strengthening of the partnership between teacher and students, and among students' themselves; and the development of autonomy (Villas Boas, 2001).

## THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ANALYZED DATA

The experience of the Early Childhood Education Internship referred to herein took place throughout two academic terms in 2020, in a remote format, and in the first term of 2022, in a face-to-face format. This training session was part of the Pedagogy program of a public university in the state of Ceará, being the third mandatory component in the training area aimed at teaching practice in the first stage of basic education. Its main goals consisted in involving, in a gradual manner, students in educational practice situations which could promote their personal and professional development, as well as to mobilize a set of competences — such as observation, intervention, and reflective analysis — necessary to pedagogical work with children aged 0-5, in nursery schools and preschools (Cruz; Costa, 2014).

The data analyzed here were also constructed as part of the field work of broader research, which resulted in a Master's thesis. However, due to the short time available to finish the said work, such data were not included in the final version. The project of this investigation was duly submitted to and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the university to which it was linked, according to Official Opinion No. 3.956.132

According to the ethical procedures established for research with human beings, all participants in this study signed a Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF) upon the beginning of the construction of the data that supported the preparation of this text. In the said document, the goals of the research were explained and the guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity of participants were made. According to what had been agreed upon, all names used here are fictional, assigned based on the first letter of the students' original names, to preserve their identities. All portfolios were read that were prepared by 40 interns, distributed into two

classes comprised of 20 students each, respectively attended in the first and second academic terms of 2020, both in the morning.

The university where the students were enrolled offered four classes of the 'Internship in Early Childhood Education' curricular component: two in the morning, preferably intended to students from the full-time Pedagogy program, and two in the evening, primarily intended to students from the evening classes of the Pedagogy program. Each class had 20 seats. Although this internship was scheduled for the sixth term of the curriculum, students from other terms — regardless of the time of the classes they were enrolled in — could also attend it, if they had completed the components required as prerequisites. In these cases, students from other class times could enroll, depending on the availability of seats.

Students from the classes where the 40 works mentioned here came from were instructed to choose 20 meetings they took part in throughout the internship – 10 of which should have been held at the College, and the other 10 at the internship host institution — to freely record/narrate, in their portfolios, their experiences, with an emphasis on learning, feelings, welcomes, and disappointments caused or experienced during both face-to-face and remote classes. We tried to dialog with the reports contained in their productions by connecting our analysis with their life stories and experiences coming also from outside the university environment. After a fluctuating reading of all works, five portfolios were selected for analysis, based on the criteria described below, without the concern of ensuring proportionality as to the authors' number or gender.

Out of the forty (40) portfolios, five (5) were analyzed, chosen by two main criteria: the length of the reports presented, and the higher incidence of reflections that corresponded to the aspects required and listed in previous paragraphs, according to written instructions discussed and delivered to students so that they could base their narratives on. The data extracted from these five portfolios were produced by three students from the full-time program — two female and one male student, with ages ranging from 20 to 30 — and by two students from the evening classes — one female and one male, with ages ranging from 26 to 35.

From their texts, we extracted excerpts which were grouped according to how they related to the knowledge, experiences and meanings that could be pointed out as guiding future pedagogical actions in Early Childhood Education. Although these fragments are directly linked to the writings of specific students, we understand they can represent, sometimes in a closer, sometimes in a more distant manner, these licentiates' learning processes regarding the teaching practice in the first stage of basic education. We present this explanation because we understand that a more detailed comprehension of such processes would require different methodological procedures — more evidently quantitative — that would allow us to grasp their most significant variables.

In the following section, we present some of the reflections raised by the excerpts selected, that would allow us to analyze how students had been constructing and acquiring knowledge, practices and values that could guide them in their future work as teachers in Early Childhood Education centers.

## **KNOWLEDGE, EXPERIENCE AND MEANINGS GUIDING FUTURE PEDAGOGICAL ACTION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

The discussion about knowledge in teaching (or teaching knowledge) — as learning contents or constructions of meaning for the pedagogical practice — has raised on us a specific confluence between two specific theoretical confluences that deal with this topic. The first is Epistemology of Teaching Practice (Tardif, 2002), which deals with the topic in a more direct manner, and the other is the Theory of the Relationship with Knowledge (Charlot, 2000), which discusses the question of knowing in a manner correlated with teaching, as seen in works such as those of Yannakakis (1996) and Lomonaco (1998). This confluence is therefore based on understandings of both theories about the concept of knowledge, even though the Epistemology of Teaching Practice constitutes a theoretical and methodological framework that is different from that of the Relationship with Knowledge.



The first of these understandings that brings both perspectives together relates to the notion of knowledge itself as a relationship and not only as “[...] an autonomous category separated from other social, organizational and human realities in which the [subjects] are immersed” (Tardif, 2002, p. 11). Therefore, to understand the several kinds of knowledge that are being constructed — and under construction — in our students’ experience, we likewise needed to know a little of their life stories, as well as the experiences they are having throughout their formation.

This is justified because teacher training is a process that involves both personal and professional dimensions, leading to the “[...] acquisition of personal and professional knowledge, cunning, skills, attitudes and competences that constitute the content of human formation and teaching” (Lustosa, 2016, p. 143). We can verify such aspects in the excerpt from Gilton’s narratives, as follows:

*I was raised in the culture of fear. Fear of falling, fear of getting hurt, I spent my whole life hearing sentences like: “You can’t do it because you can’t see”, “if it’s already difficult for people who have good eyesight, let alone for you, who don’t.” I wanted to have run more, to have jumped more, to have played more, but they wouldn’t let me. [...]. When I am a teacher, I’ll do everything to make my classes the most pleasant possible, because I want my students to study and learn, and not to take good grades, or to be afraid of failing or getting beaten up by their parents. (Gilton, from the full-time program, emphasis added).*

If the future teachers’ professional profile is based on the contexts of their personal lives (Sarmiento, 2013), the culture of fear, prohibition of freedom and children’s plays, as well as the disbelief in the potential of those who can’t see well to become autonomous were the elements that characterized Gilton’s childhood. However, these same factors also allowed him to construct very different values and knowledge from those to which he had been exposed. Valuing children’s abilities and potentials seems to be, therefore, Gilton’s wish in his future work as a teacher, which constitutes a type of knowledge among others to be put into practice. In an almost analogous situation in terms of deprivation and restriction of freedom, yelling, strict compliance, fear of low school grades and anxiety were the marks that scarred Sergiana’s memory from her school life. Such events accompanied her until adulthood, when she was finally diagnosed with Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

*I had my [ADHD] diagnosis at 23 years old, after coming to psychotherapy with depression... For many, many years, I was frustrated with my own functioning... Since childhood, being sleepy all day long and an insomniac at night, being yelled at for not paying attention to what was asked of me, told to me, and ordered for me to do, low grades, anxiety, depression, an extremely faulty memory and very little attention to things adults deem necessary (Sergiana, from the full-time program, emphasis added).*

Not without a reason, the welcome — the opening activity in every meeting with the students, whether face-to-face, at the College, or remote, in virtual rooms — to make the academic environment more friendly, especially in the room where the internship in Early Childhood Education classes took place – was the most recurring activity/ability in all the narratives. It was pointed out as a necessary and meaningful experience for teaching practice in the first stage of basic education.

This can be explained, according to the second approximation between the two theoretical perspectives we referred to, the psychic, emotional and social aspects that constitute the knowledge in the training for teaching are indissociable. In this regard, the different types of teaching knowledge, in their genesis and constitution, have a social and a relational nature, even though they are dependent on the subjects’ psychic action (Tardif, 2002). Similarly, Oliveira-Formosinho and Formosinho (2018, p. 20), when referring to the training of human development professionals, within which teachers of children aged 0-5 are also put, stated it is a process that “[...] means caring for the relational context where they are trained, understanding this formative context as holding a curriculum of processes that is so impactful in the construction of their professional identity as the content curriculum”.

According to this perspective, Tancredi (2009, p. 15) states that “[...] learning how to teach start well before this formal preparation [at the university, for example] and carries on for the rest of their lives”. When referring to the primary source of how to “become a teacher”, the author also emphasizes that “[...] an important source — maybe one of the first — of learning how to teach are the teachers these teachers had in their professional path in basic education” (Tancredi, 2009, p. 25). It is thus when they enter the first formal education institution that the construction of these types of knowledge and meanings that make up the teaching practice starts, even if the children do not eventually choose this profession in their relation with knowing how to teach (Lomonaco, 1998).

However, the influence of the teachers we had over the profile of the teachers we eventually became is independent from the fact that we consider them — according to the theories that we use nowadays to base the pedagogies we practice — either good or bad teachers. However it is, the testimonies and narratives presented here confirm two important allegations about learning how to teach: the first is related to school as a place where it starts; and the second is related to the social relations taking place there as a source of this learning. The following excerpt from Eduarda’s Reflective Portfolio is therefore representative of these ideas:

I’ve learned from what [internship] Professor R. said that the welcome takes place every time, from the moment the families and children get into the institution to the time they go away. Therefore, we should not consider the *welcome* as a specific, segmented, finite moment. [...] *Welcome* [should be] present at all moments and [should be customized]. (Eduarda, from the full-time program, emphasis added).

We can see in this testimony that, in their professional baggage, teachers carry the experiences and knowledge constructed during their school years. By expanding this idea, Tardif (2002) also states that the teachers’ knowledge is made up of knowledge and a *savoir-faire* that has its origins in the social relations with family, school and university (or with many other institutions) where students earned their diplomas. The subsequent narrative is emblematic of this idea:

Today’s class was about the importance of internship for the training of Childhood Education teachers. We discussed about the welcome and felt welcome to the extent that *our decision of not participating in one of the activities proposed was accepted*. Such a simple thing, but that was so great, maybe because we had never been so listened to [before]. Please, take note: *the welcome is not a moment, but, in fact, a posture*. (Débora, from the evening classes, emphasis added).

This testimony from Débora reminds us of the particularities of a teacher’s activity when aimed at Early Childhood Education. About such particularities, Oliveira-Formosinho and Formosinho (2001) formulate the description of three dimensions of this function, starting with the fact that teachers will have to deal with still very small child who need special and global attention regarding their development stages. In second place, the authors state that teachers do not need to guarantee these children’s full development as a right that belongs only to them and not to their parents, so that they can work in peace. Finally, they refer to the comprehensiveness of the teachers’ role, which constitutes a task of broad responsibilities and of the impossibility of dissociating between caring and educating.

According to Oliveira-Formosinho and Formosinho (2001, p. 89), “[...] the child educator’s professionalism is located in the world of interaction where it develops roles, functions, activities and interfaces”. The authors conclude that it is therefore a teaching practice that involves a broader scope of relations and interactions, and this makes it different from the role played by teachers at other stages and levels of education. Unlike what happens to the latter, those who work in Early Childhood Education need to be in constant interaction with children, assistants, families, psychologists, interns, managers, communities, etc.

By complementing the idea that teaching has a broad interactional field as one of its pillars, the authors highlight the need to think of and develop a professional training based on the assumption that

each person as the center of formative processes, assumed in their similarities with and differences from the other, understood as located within personal and interpersonal

contexts, in educational and civic contexts, grows and develops in connectivity, in relationship (Oliveira-Formosinho; Formosinho, 2018, p. 26).

When it comes to the care-education binomial, Martins Filho (2013) considers it one of the important distinctions of Early Childhood Education when compared to the other stages and modalities. According to him, the minutiae of daily life follow the principles of this binomial, and this is the “[...] guiding dimension of the specificity of this educational segment”. These minutiae are “[...] therefore revealing of the complexity of teaching at this stage of education, even if they are not given the importance they deserve” (Martins Filho, 2013, p. 26). Furthermore, Fochi (2015, p. 48) emphasizes that “[...] the reflection about the composition of teaching [with children aged 0-5] is complex and subtle” (Fochi, 2015, p. 53).

The perception of the subtleness that marks Early Childhood Education-specific teaching presupposes a new way of conceiving children, the target audience of this educational stage, and its relationship with knowledge. It means, therefore, to be sure that “[...] the search of knowledge, for the children, is not preparation for anything, but *life here and now*” (Freire, 1983, p. 50, italics added).

In Vanessa’s narrative, she seems to have grasped a little of these characteristics mentioned by the authors, including the minutiae referred to by Martins Filho (2013), and the subtleties pointed out by Fochi (2015), which will make up her future action as a teacher, if she chooses Early Childhood Education.

About being a Childhood Education teacher, we learned that *we will not teach classes or school content, but develop what we call pedagogical work, organizing the spaces and the time so that child cultures are produced. I'm starting to believe that our great role as Childhood Education teachers will be to fight for free exploration, free child's play, free learning, as you always needed to do.* (Vanessa, from the full-time program, emphasis added).

The feelings described by the students regarding their motivations to learn about Early Childhood Education are relevant, as they indicate that students seem to understand that educating and caring for such small children, in collective institutional environments, is a work marked by subtlety (Fochi, 2015). Apart from these feelings shown by the students, the theorizations they made about teaching Early Childhood Education are equally interesting and start to form their knowledge repertoire. According to these narrators, theorizing about the work with children seems to be something inherent to the profession, which demystifies the idea of innate teaching (Arce, 2001).

The students’ reports on the learning strategies they used in the Internship in Early Childhood Education suggest an understanding of the pedagogical making that “[...] considers the triangular movement of pedagogy: to summon beliefs, values and principles; to analyze practices; and to use knowledge and theories” (Oliveira-Formosinho; Formosinho, 2013, p. 7). It is towards this idea that the subsequent report points out:

At this institution where I have my internship, *language is that of freedom*, children can access the discoveries they want and can cause *adults to interfere very little, but to mediate*. I noticed that there is tireless attempt by the teacher and everyone else in the institution to be truly inclusive, not only with disabled children, but with all children. As we have already seen, *inclusion* is not only about disability, but about each one’s peculiarities, specificities and needs. [...]. There is a little voice inside me telling me that it’s gonna work out, this voice tells me: *“research more, read more, investigate more, actions won’t change by themselves, stigmas won’t change by themselves”, and I am aware that this is my fight, our fight.* (Gilton, from the full-time program, emphasis added).

Only theorizations seem not to be enough to give substance and robustness to the training they intended to themselves. As we could notice in their Portfolio narratives, the students extract from the experience in the Early Childhood Education institutions, through the interactions with the teachers and the children, the link between the theory they learn at the university and the reality of the events within a Early Childhood Education unit where they serve their internship. Complementarily, this relation between theory and practice seems to favor and to arise in them the need to deepen what they already know about teaching children in



nursery schools and preschools, taking to themselves the responsibility in this knowledge construction process.

I'm more optimistic, rescuing old dreams and look for new ones. The child that lives in my heart dreams of knowing other counties, in founding 'Inclusion TV', with accessible programming for everyone, 24/7, with audio description, sign language window, captions, giving people with or without disabilities the opportunity to work, presenting news shows, live-audience shows, children's shows, sports shows, reality shows, to be the main characters in soap operas, movies and series, produced by themselves. [...]. *I dream of founding a public, inclusive school* [...] accessible for everyone, with a ramp, elevator, tactile paving, wide doors, and with numbers in Braille, Brazilian sign language and in high-relief ink, bigger letters, with the most qualified professionals to everyone's teaching and learning, where no potential is ever wasted, *breaking up from traditional teaching that separates the head from the body and that does not want to see each human being as a whole*. (Gilton, from the full-time program, emphasis added).

Due to the impossibility of dissociation their individual and social natures, neither the individual nor their knowledge is constructed in a void. They derive simultaneously from contextualized processes in which the teacher learns, in a progressive manner, the rules for teaching action, which will be transformed in the constituent parts of their "practical consciousness" (Tardif, 2002). This is justified because teachers, as individuals, take hold of their professional activities in a certain place, at a specific moment of their life paths, under different conditions of time and, certainly, counting on the collaboration of people who help them understand (Lomonaco, 1998). Therefore, we can notice in these in-training students' writings that, to become teachers, entering an internship environment is what intensifies learning the profession, bringing about very personal investments in this task.

In this regard, it seems that the consciousness that, to learn, children need freedom, and teachers need respect to the children's productions, is not enough by itself. According to what we could apprehend from the students' reflections in their portfolios, they consider equally relevant to take on, as Early Childhood Education teachers-to-be, the commitment with self-training and political engagement. Apart from being very praiseworthy, it seems to us that the student's perception of learning how to teach is very correct, since, to become professionals in this field, the process involves a much bigger engagement than simply knowing what to do in the reference classrooms with the kids and in other spaces in nursery schools and preschools. In this perspective, Freire (2015, p. 93, emphasis added) adds that: "[...] progressive educators need to convince themselves that *they are not pure teachers* — that does not exist —, pure teaching specialists. We are political militants because we are teachers."

The subsequent narrative also points to important aspects that make up the specific professionalism of Early Childhood Education teachers.

In this classroom, we approached *the teacher's identity* and reflected about the figure of the teacher being associated with the female gender, that is, a view as mother and responsible for educating/teaching as if it were something natural, *without the need of appropriate training*. We must fight this thought, as *teachers [both male and female] are professionals with a specific training*, based on epistemologies that guide their daily practice with small children, *and this should not be confused with social stereotypes*. (Marcelo, from the evening classes, emphasis added).

In this report by Marcelo, we can notice how much he has learned about the challenges waiting for him in Early Childhood Education teaching, one of which is professional recognition. This lack of professional recognition concerning institutionalized education for infants, toddlers, and small children is a legacy of our country's public policies that have been unveiled for years. Furthermore, we cannot forget that, despite all the advances achieved by Early Childhood Education in the legal field, since the 1988 Brazilian Constitution (Brasil, 1988) and the 1996 National Guidelines and Bases Act (Brasil, 1996), specially regarding the requirement of Higher Education professional qualification in Pedagogy for teachers working in the first state of basic education, there is still a too strong association between the *status* of the teacher's profession and the age of their students. Thus, "[...] the smaller the child to be educated, the lower the

salary and professional prestige of the educator [...] and their professional appreciation” (Campos, 1999, p. 131).

Despite that, the analysis of the narratives extracted from the five portfolios referred to in this text confirmed what other authors already postulate about the internship experience: it is a privilege space of construction of knowledge and actions that connects theory with practice in collective, non-domestic, formal education environments, such as nursery schools and preschools. It also became clear from the reports presented in this paper that the personal life contexts since childhood influence specially the values and knowledge that will form the professional profile of future teachers, even if this influence means an opposition to the characteristics that marked their first school experiences. In addition to this, it was also possible to identify, in the highlighted excerpts, the social and relational origin of teaching knowledge, as well as the unfinished status of the process of learning how to teach, which starts when a child first enters a formal education facility. This learning therefore predates university qualification and extends throughout the learner’s whole life.

## FINAL REMARKS

Considering the Internship in Early Childhood Education an important locus of learning how to teach children, the analysis of the Reflective Portfolios allowed us to understand that this experience provided students with the consolidation of knowledge that was still in their infancy since the beginning of the program, and that were extended, especially, in mandatory courses related to the first stage of basic education. Among the types of knowledge that the Internship experience allowed students to consolidate and construct, the conviction stands out that being a Early Childhood Education teacher means, for them, acting in a stage of basic education which is deeply marked by a broadened field of interactions and subtleties. In this regard, the understanding is evident that teaching Early Childhood Education is directly linked to the children’s characteristics and rights.

From these aspects, it is possible to apprehend that, for students, knowledge, practices and beliefs mobilized by Child Pedagogy contribute to demystify the idea that teaching infants, toddlers and small children would be something innate, inherent to mothers. In addition, it becomes clear to them that everyone needs to assume the (self-)responsibility by their professional training. Finally, the recognition by students of the challenges involving Early Childhood Education teaching — among which professional appreciation stands out — generated another equally important knowledge: the need of political engagement in issues involving this area.

The distinction between Early Childhood Education and the other stages of basic education was another significant knowledge, consubstantiated by the students from the interactions established with the children, their families and guardians, as well as with the teachers and class assistants in the institutions hosting the internship. Furthermore, the reflections about each student’s experience, considering the theoretical references required by the topics arising out of the situations reported, also contributed to the understanding of these specificities: *education*, not *teaching*; *child* instead of *student*; *reference room* and *multiple experiences* in lieu of *classes* and *classrooms*; *teacher*, not *uncle/aunt* (Freire, 2015).

The way the Internship in Early Childhood Education was conducted considered the active role each student assumed in their own learning process. Moreover, we tried to break from the linear view that teaching is only transmitting, and that serving an internship is simply applying a set of theories. Nursery school and preschool, spaces where the Internship takes place, are not labs, and the children, as well as the whole community present in these contexts, are not abstract individuals. All are concreated, situated individuals, endowed with powers, knowledge and experiences, with which it is only possible to learn from the knowledge and interaction with them.

By experiencing teaching in Early Childhood Education throughout the Internship, students are not only rehearsing to be teachers. It is through participative observation and the development of activities *with* and *to* the children that they will gradually become teachers, learning and teaching, mobilizing knowledge, values, beliefs, and actions accumulated throughout their professional training — training that we understand as a continuous process, started in the first

school experience, deepening at the university, and extending over their whole teaching career. In this regard, we think it is fundamental to invest increasingly more in learning situations in which students can broaden the relationship between theory and practice, aiming especially in the unpredictability of pedagogical action.

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#### Authors contribution

MD: Contributed to the theoretical discussion on the topic, Assisted in writing the data analysis and interpretation. RCAC: Expanded the theoretical discussion, Prepared the Informed Consent Form (ICF) during the data construction phase, Collected the participants' signatures on the ICF, Conducted the fieldwork, Interpreted the data and deepened its analysis, Co-authored and revised the submitted manuscript.

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