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Research articles

# Precocity in nursery school: what does it mean, teachers?

## Precocidade na creche: o que é isso, professores?

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**Abstract**

Precocity suggests high ability developed earlier than expected in childhood. Its investigation should begin as early as in nursery settings, where pedagogical practices may reveal exceptional potential across various domains. Teachers have a crucial role in identifying this condition and are pedagogically responsible for recognizing and addressing it. Accordingly, this study aimed to examine the meanings attributed by teachers at a public nursery school in Mato Grosso do Sul to the concept of precocity, to children aged between two and three years and eleven months who are identified as precocious children, and to the pedagogical approaches directed toward them. The study involved eight nursery teachers, whose perceptions were analysed using the Discourse of Collective Subject method. Findings show that significant investment in professional development, resources, and specific tools is urgently needed to support educators in addressing precocity effectively.

**Keywords:** special education; high ability; giftedness; precocity.

**Resumo**

A precocidade sugere capacidade superior desenvolvida antes do tempo na infância. Sua investigação deve ocorrer desde a creche, cujo trabalho pedagógico pode revelar potenciais sobressalentes em diferentes domínios. Para tanto, a classe professoral tem função basilar no reconhecimento dessa condição, incumbindo-lhe, pedagogicamente, a tarefa de detectá-la para atendê-la. Por isso, esta pesquisa objetivou verificar os sentidos atribuídos pelos professores de uma creche da rede pública de ensino de Mato Grosso do Sul à precocidade, às crianças com dois a três anos e onze meses precoces e ao trabalho pedagógico para elas. O estudo envolveu oito professores da creche, que tiveram as representações analisadas à luz do método do Discurso do Sujeito Coletivo. Os resultados revelaram que uma parte do professorado desconhecia a temática, enquanto poucos a conheciam cientificamente. Concluiu-se que investimentos contundentes em formação, recursos, instrumentais e conhecimentos são emergenciais para que os professores conheçam e intervenham à precocidade.

**Palavras-chave:** educação especial; altas habilidades; superdotação; precocidade.

## INTRODUCTION

Nursery school is part of Early Childhood Education, the first stage of Brazilian Basic Education, in which care and education are inseparable formative dimensions, planned for the full development of its public (Brasil, 1996, 2010). It is, therefore, a learning setting guaranteed to very young children[1], in order to ensure their access to educational activities – which grants citizenship *status* to children from zero to three years of age.

In view of the above, it is necessary to understand nursery school beyond the legal provisions: in fact, it is a dynamic pedagogical environment, composed of discoveries, possibilities, challenges,

[1] Terminologically, a specific designation is used to refer to children experiencing their first three years of life: "very young children." Similarly, the following terms are used to refer to the period covered by daycare: "very early childhood" and "early childhood" (Rodrigues, 2016; Rodrigues; Andrade; Souza, 2022).

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Study conducted at a public nursery school in Corumbá, MS, Brasil.

sensorialities, emotions, experiences, and diversities—aspects that irrevocably redefine the definitions surrounding this educational environment so rich in senses and kinesthetics.

In view of its multidimensional nature, specialized literature defines nursery school as the place for early childhood (Ariosi; Manfré, 2024; Rodrigues, 2016; Silva; Jurdi, 2019). This educational setting must be based on intentions that promote the overall development of children and encourage the expression of their potential, having such principles defined in the curriculum (Portugal, 2017; Richter; Barbosa, 2010; Sarmento; Carvalho, 2017).

In other words, nursery schools should be focused on the full development of children, allowing them to actively demonstrate the whole characteristics of their unique condition, such as individuality, interests, learning styles, and behavioural attributes (Akuri; Kohle; Pereira, 2020; Ariosi; Manfré, 2024; Portugal, 2017; Rodrigues, 2016).

In this scenario, many childhood expressions can be revealed through the pedagogical work of nursery schools, especially through the multiple playful learning experiences. This research argues that nursery schools are the first educational setting in which outstanding abilities and behaviours can manifest themselves. This suggests the existence of high potential developed ahead of schedule – and relatively common – to what is expected for early childhood.

Therefore, this learning setting is a favourable *locus* for the presence of very young children with signs of high performance: even at an early age, they are able to demonstrate their precocity in different domains (linguistic, logical-mathematical, artistic, creative, psychomotor, and even leadership[2]). Thus, by covering different educational areas in which multiple intelligences[3] are stimulated, nursery schools provide an opportunity to observe the first signs of high abilities, making them a privileged setting for children to express their developed skills at an early age.

It is important to clarify that precocity is a typical phenomenon of childhood and, in fact, it entails high evolutionary development of some ability(ies) in any field of knowledge and/or human production. Covered by giftedness, this condition refers to childhood behaviours with high potential that differ from other abilities present in the same environment (Martins, 2020; Martins; Chacon, 2023).

Consequently, precocious children require specific Special Education services from nursery school onwards, so that their potential can be enhanced and their needs met. According to the Law No. 14.880, of June 4, 2024 (Brasil, 2024)[4], the development of these children and other Special Education child populations should be promoted through playful and meaningful activities, in order to enable their global learning, with attention to intellectual, physical, and social and emotional aspects. In this regard, detecting and assisting precocious children in nursery schools, corresponds to the realization of their educational rights from an inclusive perspective.

Thus, precocious children tend to show: a) high levels of interest in topics related to their fields of preference, differing from their peers; b) acquire knowledge rapidly, techniques, and procedures related to the domains that they are interested in; and c) engagement in their favorite areas, seeking to master them (Winner, 1998). Therefore, they require educational proposals and enriched curriculum projects adapted to their characteristics, so that their emerging abilities are not obstructed throughout their school life (Martins; Chacon, 2016; Terrassier, 2005, 2011).

Thus, precocity must be tracked and monitored throughout the child´s development. The observation of potential is crucial for designing and implementing educational measures (Mendonça; Rodrigues; Capellini, 2023; Rech; Negrini, 2019) – from academic to productive-creative fields – which requires public policies capable of ensuring the identification and fulfilment of different developed abilities (Almeida, 2011; Costa; Araújo, 2021; Koga; Tolon, 2019; Koga; Rangni, 2020).

It is worth noting that the evolution of human potential is also subject to environmental stimuli, that is, to the influences of different contexts. As a result, precocious children may have their potential enhanced or obstructed in the educational environment (Martins; Chacon, 2018). It is important that teaching strategies are heterogeneous in view of the interests and

[2] Superior potential can manifest itself, either in isolation or in combination, in academic or productive-creative areas, giving rise to rich and heterogeneous behavioral capacities and nuances (Brasil, 2006, 2008; Braz; Rangni, 2019; Ourofino; Guimarães, 2007; Renzulli, 2004).

[3] A parallel is drawn between the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1994) and the pedagogical work of daycare centers: this environment, by encompassing different fields, also stimulates the development of multiple intelligences, which can enable the observation of different early developed abilities.

[4] Amends Law No. 13,257, of March 8, 2016, to establish the National Policy for Specialized Educational Care for Children from Zero to Three Years of Age (Early Care).

abilities of this group of children, whose specific needs must be taken into account from the pedagogical work carried out in nursery schools.

Although relevant, precocity is a topic that has been little explored scientifically. Marques and Costa (2018) reveal the scarcity of studies on this phenomenon, which can cause many conceptual barriers for teachers working in early childhood education. Along the same lines, Braz and Rangni (2021) highlight the lack of studies of research that employs this child development stage for the investigation of high potential.

If lack of research about precocity in general is already evident in early childhood education, it is even more pronounced in relation to precocious children in nursery school, underscoring the need for further investigation on this topic.

Given the above, the following questions arise: what do teachers in a public nursery school think about precocity? What are their conceptions about this phenomenon, about very young precocious children, and about pedagogical practices for this population?

In light of these questions, the purpose of this study was to examine the meanings attributed by teachers at a public nursery school in Mato Grosso do Sul to the concept of precocity, to children aged between two and three years and eleven months who are identified as precocious children, and to the pedagogical approaches for this group.

## METHOD

This is a descriptive study in its nature, considering that research conducted from this perspective primarily aims to describe the particularities of phenomena and populations (Gil, 2002). For data collection, a semi-structured interview was selected, as it favours the description of the aspects under investigation (Duarte, 2004).

This technique was conducted with eight teachers from a public nursery school in Mato Grosso do Sul, from the morning and afternoon shifts. Teacher participation was individual and in person, after signing the Informed Consent Form.

It should be noted that this research was submitted for review by the Research Ethics Committee in accordance with the regulatory standards of the National Health Council. Its approval is registered under the Certificate of Ethics Approval (*Parecer do Certificado de Apresentação de Apreciação Ética*) – CAAE No. 83794024.8.0000.0021.

Furthermore, the data collected were transcribed and analysed according to the Discourse of the Collective Subject (DCS) method (Lefèvre, 2017), which investigates the social representations present in individuals' discourse and organizes them into a collective thought.

In this regard, the participants' statements are gathered to represent socially shared conceptions (Lefèvre, 2017). These sources of argumentation give rise to the "Discourse of the Collective Subject" which gives "voice" to the thoughts extracted from the collective framework. The DCS consists of five phases, namely:

1. Obtaining statements: Full information is gathered for the elaboration of the DCS;
2. Discourse reduction: The contents of the statements are extracted, and the significant parts form the Key Expressions (KEs), the central information of the DCS;
3. Search for meanings: Positions are ascertained in response to questions for the formulation of Central Ideas (CI), semantic labels created by the researcher based on the meaning attributed to the responses.
4. Categorization: Grouping, by category, of discourses composed of similar CIs; and
5. Collective Subject Discourse (DCS): The contents are gathered to form the DCS, using the first person singular to represent collective thoughts.

It should be clarified that the teaching staff participating in this study worked pedagogically with children enrolled in nursery school aged between two and three years and eleven months.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first category of this research is "Representations of precocity" and verified the concepts developed by teachers regarding the phenomenon in question:

> "In my view, precocity is something that happens ahead the schedule, with regard to the development of certain skills. I believe that precocious children, from an early age, have knowledge beyond what is expected for their age: they do things ahead of time; they stand out in terms of understanding things and demonstrate intelligence in certain types of subjects that they are more interested in. In nursery school, I think precocious children arrive at the institution with knowledge beyond what is natural, as they have skills that are far beyond their level. An example of this is when they speak very well or read ahead of schedule. I therefore understand that these are children who reach a level of maturity before the expected time."

Initially, when the group reports that precocity "is something that happens ahead the schedule," there are clearly concepts aligned with the theoretical definitions of the specialized literature related to this phenomenon, which conceptualizes it as a condition established prior to what is expected for an age group, in terms of high abilities (Martins; Chacon, 2016; Martins, 2020; Winner, 1998).

Following this line of reasoning, precocity needs to be monitored throughout childhood, as it may be developmental prematurity or, conversely, it may indicate abilities that are stable in development (Martins, 2020). Therefore, identification is fundamental for the procedural assessment of this condition. In the educational setting, it is important to emphasize that the assessment process and care should be conducted from nursery school onwards, which can favour the development of precocity with different stimuli, affection, playful, and multisensory activities.

Regarding precocious children, the DCS indicates some characteristics: "they do things ahead of time"; "they stand out in terms of understanding things"; and "they demonstrate intelligence in certain types of subjects that interest them most." Undeniably, this group shows high performance that distinguishes them from their peers, manifesting a diversity of interests and emotional, psychological, intellectual, and behavioural aspects (Ourofino; Guimarães, 2007).

However, developmental prematurity is not only related to intellectual issues, but also to outstanding behaviours that are expressed in different fields, since high potential belongs to academic and/or productive-creative domains (Renzulli, 2004). Thus, high psychomotor, artistic, and leadership abilities can be noticed, as long as attention is paid to them.

Furthermore, precocious children do indeed express emphasized interests in their favourite areas, as indicated by the DCS. In terms of intelligence, there are multiple forms, manifested at different levels (Gardner, 1994). Thus, the precocious child population has more developed intelligence in some fields and, at the same time, presents difficulties in other domains of this construct—which is possibly common, since high ability is not evident in all areas.

Finally, the discourse emphasizes that precocious children show "knowledge beyond what is natural." Socially, they have always inspired fascination because their potential causes strangeness, eccentricity, or admiration (Winner, 1998). However, precocity is not supernatural: its biological roots, associated with environmental stimuli, enable high abilities to become evident (Winner, 1998). Therefore, these children "have abilities that are beyond" and "speak very well or read ahead of schedule," depending on the areas in which high performance manifests itself.

The second category of this study, "Access to knowledge about precocity," investigated the sources through which the nursery school teaching staff learned about this topic (Figure 1).

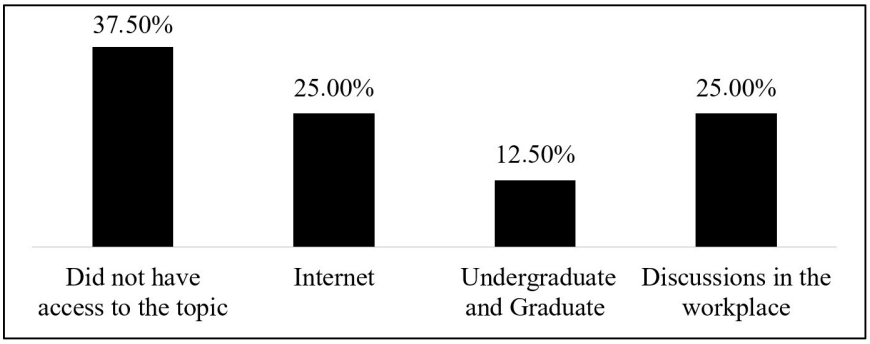


**Figure 1.** Category "Access to knowledge about precocity".
**Source:** Prepared by the authors.

The information contained in the Figure 1 above reveals an alarming picture: a significant portion of nursery school teachers (37.50%) did not have access to the topic of precocity during their training and professional practice. As previously noted, this phenomenon is evident in early childhood (Martins, 2020; Martins; Chacon, 2023), which highlights the need for nursery school teachers to have access to scientific information about it and about precocious children. The lack of knowledge about precocity, already reported in the literature in this area (Braz; Rangni, 2021; Marques; Costa, 2018), urgently needs to be addressed with responsibly disseminated knowledge, with a view to demystifying this condition.

On the other hand, some of the teachers (25.00%) reported that they learned about the topic in question on the internet, while another group (25.00%) stated that they had access to information about precocity in conversations at work. Although they are common sources of communication in the teaching profession, digital media do not always convey credible knowledge: information that is not relevant to the nature of the phenomenon can be propagated and, therefore, replicated. Similarly, the knowledge shared in everyday teaching requires caution and investigation, and its veracity must be analysed.

Only a minority (12.50%) had contact with scientific knowledge produced on precocity during undergraduate and graduate studies. This suggests that this phenomenon may not be addressed in teacher training processes, making its inclusion in academic subjects and continuing education essential, especially those focused on the characteristics of childhood. Teacher training should provide a theoretical basis that favours the observation and pedagogical care of precocious children from the early stages of life.

The third category of this study, "Presence of precocity in nursery school," analysed representations in relation to this educational environment as a possible *locus* for the manifestation of high potential. This resulted in two DCS: one that emphasizes nursery school as an environment conducive to precocity and another that illustrates the non-recognition of this condition in this learning setting. It is worth explaining the first discourse:

> "In nursery school, I notice that precocious children develop activities quickly, that is, they respond very quickly to the proposed activities. I believe that there are skills that can be noticed during the routine and experience in nursery school, because it is in this specific age group that children begin to demonstrate their abilities and, because of their traits, they show signs that they are different. For this reason, they may end up being misunderstood. But, on the other hand, I also think that we have to take a more refined look at precocity: sometimes, that precocious child is smart because of the stimuli they received at home and the help they got from their parents. In addition, I believe that access to information contributes even more to bringing out the precocity and intelligence of these children."

The collective statement indicates that "precocious children develop activities quickly," thus offering "a very quick response." Due to the characteristics they demonstrate, often related to agility and mental acuity, precocious children can provide immediate educational feedback on activities. For this reason, they need a curriculum adapted to their potential, and their identification should occur at an early age (Terrassier, 2011).

Part of the discourse emphasizes that "there are skills that can be noticed during routine and experience in nursery school." It is argued that this context is conducive to the observation of precocity and the beginning of pedagogical care, being able to offer adequate educational attention to precocious children. Otherwise, as the curriculum, educational practice, and teaching organization tend to normalize abilities, these children are particularly vulnerable to the detrimental consequences associated with the negative "Pygmalion effect": over time, they will camouflage their potential in order to be socially accepted, overshadowing their own personality and identity traits—which leads to a deteriorated self-concept and expression that falls short of their abilities (Terrassier, 2011).

The collective argument emphasizes that, in early childhood, "children begin to demonstrate their abilities," showing that nursery school is conducive to the presence of high potential. It was therefore considered that this space can be marked by behaviours related to precocity, suggesting that nursery school is probably idealized, by some teachers, as a

rich and fertile setting for diversity, in which respect and educational attention should be given to differences.

On the other hand, the DCS suggests that precocious children "may end up being misunderstood." This refers to the concept of social dissynchrony (Terrassier, 2005), which indicates lack of synchronization in peer interaction and causes relational difficulties due to a mismatch between interests. This disparity does not constitute a pathology, as it is a characteristic that can be part of the individuality of a person with high potential.

Dissynchrony can socially manifest itself in incompatibility between games, conversations, tastes, activities, and matters, which consequently leads to misunderstanding of this child population. To minimize its effects, it must be addressed in a positive and pedagogical manner, with an emphasis on valuing human diversity (Terrassier, 2005), and offering, from an early age, services and resources appropriate to the needs of precocious children, such as Specialized Educational Services (SES), which should favour their full development, with attention to the various aspects of their identity (Brasil, 2024).

The discourse suggests that these children are "smart because of the stimuli they receive at home and their parents helping them," reinforcing the myth that the social environment and stimuli are responsible for the emergence of high abilities. These, in turn, are not the result of parental or pedagogical stimulation, since the child must possess the genetic predispositions necessary for the emergence of high potential (Winner, 1998). Environmental influences are relevant to the development of high potential, but they do not generate them on their own; such influences only enhance high potential when the genetic conditions are already present.

The DCS also reports that "access to information further contributes to the emergence of these children's precocity and intelligence." Once again, we have a mythological representation, since, as indicated, high abilities do not result from environmental and/or technological stimuli, such as access to digital resources. Although environmental and/or technological influences can stimulate high abilities, these, in turn, require the genetic component to become evident (Winner, 1998).

From another angle, certain discursive contributions by teachers indicated the lack of recognition of precocity in nursery school, which led to the following statement by DCS:

> "I think, in particular, that it is not possible to recognise precocity in nursery school because children at this stage are very young. They have access to so many stimuli that it is not possible to say that they are precocious. Is it, then, precocity? We have to consider development and stimulation from home as factors."

These data converge with the results of the second category of this study, which revealed that a portion of the teachers (37.50%) had no access to the topic of precocity. Consequently, the lack of recognition of this condition could permeate some teaching concepts due to the lack of knowledge about the characteristics of the phenomenon and precocious children. As is already known, precocity does not come from stimuli, and this indicates the need for nursery school teachers to have access to scientific information to understand it.

The fourth category of this research, "Representations of precocious children in nursery school," addressed conceptions regarding the presence of this population in early childhood education and resulted in two DCS: one aligned with the characterizations of the precocious population described in scientific literature and another with inaccurate perspectives. The first discourse is presented below:

> "I understand that precocious children in nursery school stand out from other children and are ahead of their class. In other words, they demonstrate greater understanding of certain subjects than the average child. For me, this means that they respond quickly to objectives and work dynamics, quickly achieving the proposed activity. I can mention the characteristics of these children when they are present in nursery school: even at a young age, they read or perform small mathematical calculations, sometimes even with two digits; they may know all the letters of the alphabet, including starting syllabication early; motor coordination may also develop earlier, whether for painting or holding a pencil; these children can play an instrument, sometimes just by listening; and, finally,

> they can even paint small pictures, managing to paint within the lines, with different colours, expressing perfection in what they do."

Some excerpts from this DCS characterise precocious children in nursery schools, highlighting that they "respond quickly to objectives and work dynamics"; "read or perform small mathematical calculations" and "know the letters of the alphabet." These data are theoretically close to the information disseminated by the specialized literature on this audience (Martins, 2020; Ourofino; Guimarães, 2007): fluency in oral/written expression; few instructions for learning; analytical speed; refined logical-mathematical ability, with ease in abstracting and operationalizing concepts; a taste for intellectual activity; aptitude for internalizing/externalizing knowledge; vocabulary diversity, with lexical variation (use of different, unusual, and complex words in relation to age), among other characteristics that can be observed from nursery school onwards.

However, it should be noted that high potential is not only manifested in academic domains: it is also expressed in productive-creative areas, giving rise to other abilities and behavioural traits. Thus, when the discourse emphasizes that, in precocious children, "motor coordination can also develop earlier" and that they "can play an instrument, sometimes just by listening" or "can paint," these representations correspond to attributes in non-academic areas.

Motor skills tend to be more precise in artistic fields such as drawing, for example (Winner, 1998). Musical precocity, in turn, can be present from early childhood, highlighting the need for music to be integrated into the curriculum of educational institutions so that potential in this domain can be identified and improved (Koga; Tolon, 2019; Koga; Rangni, 2020). High abilities in the visual arts (such as painting) can be observed through different materials and/or techniques, but, unlike academic potential, these expressions are rarely valued, which calls for public policies that recognize artistic talent (Costa; Araújo, 2021).

Regarding the idea that precocious children demonstrate "perfection in what they do", it should be clarified that they express a certain obstinacy in their areas of interest, dedicating much of their time to mastering them (Winner, 1998). This characteristic should not lead to misconceptions, as these children require stimulation and attention to their development, just like any other child. The interpretive view of "perfection" perpetuates the myth that precocious children are self-sufficient in their development.

In addition, another DCS constitutes the fourth category of this research and reflects inaccurate perspectives on precocious children in nursery school:

> "I think precocious children stand out in everything they do because of the ease with which they do it, because they already have a foundation beyond what is being offered. I believe they receive stimuli and acquire skills that do not require so much repetition. Thus, I do not have to provide new stimuli because these children already come with this maturity. Therefore, I think they really come prepared for nursery school, which allows their precocity to be noticed. However, I also understand that the precocity of these children is not only perceived in the big things, but in the little things they do: entering the room, wiping their feet, and washing their hands before eating, for example. So, in my understanding, precocity is acquired in this way, allowing children to express a skill as a physical competence"

The above statement is full of myths. The first states that "precocious children excel in everything they do with ease because they already have a foundation beyond what is being offered," suggesting that high potential is evident globally in all domains (Winner, 1998). The high ability of these children is only expressed in some areas; in others, they may develop as expected or show underdevelopment—a concept aligned with the multidimensional understanding of intelligence, which recognizes that this construct does not develop fully in all fields (Gardner, 1994).

Still in this DCS, more inappropriate representations were developed, especially with regard to the ideas that precocious children "receive stimuli and acquire skills that do not need so much repetition"; "they come to nursery school already prepared, which allows their precocity

to be repaired"; and also the perspective that "I [the teacher] don't have to provide new stimuli because these children already come with this maturity."

It is worth reflecting that precocious children are genetically predisposed to their potential (Winner, 1998), but this does not guarantee that they are "prepared" to enter any educational environment, nor does it ensure that they will develop on their own. Stimuli, on the other hand, are not linked to mechanical "repetition" and must be diverse in order to improve early emerging potential so that it is not wasted (Martins; Chacon, 2023). Thus, this population needs educational support; otherwise, they may become frustrated or have their potential obstructed, emphasizing their levels of dyssynchrony (Terrassier, 2005).

Other myths from the same DCS deserve attention: "the precocity of these children is not only perceived in big things, but in the little things they do: entering the room, wiping their feet, and washing their hands before entering, for example" and, consequently, "in my understanding, precocity is acquired in this way, allowing children to express an ability as a physical competence." High potential in the psychomotor area does exist, but it is not related to automated and routine actions in terms of the use of the body because it is associated with high performance in terms of agility of movement, endurance, motor skills, muscle strength, and speed (Brasil, 2006).

It can be inferred from this discourse that the psychomotor domain lacks research that clarifies high abilities in this area. Such a study is necessary from early childhood education onwards so that precocious children in the psychomotor domain are given opportunities to have their potential noticed and developed through different stimuli.

Finally, the last category of this study, "Pedagogical work for precocious children in nursery school," explored teachers' perceptions of possible pedagogical approaches for addressing the needs of precocious children in early childhood settings. Only one discursive activity was written:

> "I understand that nursery school is a fundamental part of children's development. At this stage, children, whether precocious or not, develop more broadly in all senses: motor coordination, reading, mathematics... and it is usually in this context that we want to show them the world, teach them, and develop their skills. But when a child with this ability arrives, it is challenging, especially for the teacher. It is a challenge because we are prepared for children who do not yet have as much knowledge. On the other hand, I still believe that precocity can be worked on in nursery school and that it can further develop the precocious child. So, yes, we can stimulate this child through the activities we propose. In general, I usually say that, in Early Childhood Education, working on inclusion is easier, but we need to have a more refined view; we need a little more guidance. As much as I argue that nursery school can indeed accommodate these children, this needs to be worked on much more by superiors, by educational management. Especially because, as much as I want to, I don't know how to develop activities with these children. That's why I still think it's useless to identify a precocious child and try to work on something different, since they don't have the tools and structure. We need to take a close look at this: the necessary tools to support and continue the pedagogical work with precocious children. Although I would like to, I think that in reality, in practice, considering the lack of attention given to, the poor training of teachers, crowded classrooms, tired teachers working double shifts, my answer is that, unfortunately, we are unable to work with these children."

The DCS offers a multifaceted perspective on nursery school, understood as a "fundamental part of children's development," which allows them to progress "in every way: in motor coordination, reading, math...". Thus, the pedagogical work of nursery school should provide children with meaningful opportunities for development and vivid learning experiences, combining care and education with a view to enriching childhood through playful activities (Portugal, 2017; Richter; Barbosa, 2010).

Nevertheless, the discourse indicates concerns with precocious children, illustrating that when they are present, "it is challenging, especially for the teacher." There are many challenges that

this audience poses for pedagogical practice, because of a) their behaviours, psychological or identity traits, and b) social dissynchrony, given the divergence between games, interests, and activities. These characteristics make teaching more dynamic, highlighting the need for teacher training and support for educational practice (Martins; Chacon, 2018; Ourofino; Guimarães, 2007; Rech; Negrini, 2019).

From another perspective, importance is attributed to the fragment of the DCS that highlights the discussion that "precocity can be worked on in nursery school and it can further develop the precocious child." Due to its multidimensional nature, this learning context tends to favour the observation of very young children and their potential, allowing them to actively express their individuality, interests, learning styles, and behavioural traits (Akuri; Kohle; Pereira, 2020; Ariosi; Manfré, 2024; Portugal, 2017; Rodrigues, 2016). The earlier precocious children are identified, the greater their chances of developing and improving their own potential (Terrassier, 2011).

The group also mentions that "in early childhood education, working on inclusion is easier." Irrevocably, the environmental richness of this formative stage can foster children's respect for their own characteristics and those of their peers, as it emphasizes playfulness, different forms of communication, stimuli for development, and coexistence with differences (Brasil, 2008) – conditions that provide opportunities for pedagogical work to contemplate diversity and the appreciation of potential.

In the following excerpt, nursery school is identified as appropriate for working with precocious children, but "this needs to be worked on much more by superiors, by educational management." According to Braz and Rangni (2019), educational managers' knowledge of high abilities may be limited; therefore, it is urgent that the management body acquire knowledge on the subject, since its duties directly reflect on the institutional organization.

Another noteworthy point in the DCS refers to educational support for pedagogical practice with precocious children: "I still think that it is useless to identify a precocious child and try to work with them differently, since we do not have the tools and structure." This statement highlights the importance of "the necessary tools to support and continue pedagogical work with precocious children." From this perspective, it is emphasized that support for teachers is essential to the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process, especially when it focuses on precocious children.

Teachers lack the theoretical and practical basis to understand precocity and precocious children, as meeting their needs depends on identification (Mendonça; Rodrigues; Capellini, 2023), which must be comprehensive, including qualitative parameters—such as *checklists,* questionnaires, self-assessment, and peer nomination—and quantitative parameters, through standardized tests indicated for each area of development, for a fair assessment of children's abilities (Marques; Costa, 2018).

Identification, incidentally, is still carried out sporadically and is subject to a shortage of instruments for the most diverse age groups and domains in which high performance manifests itself (Almeida, 2011). It is therefore relevant to develop instruments that detect signs of high ability as early as nursery school, enabling children to develop their full potential, personality, and interests. Although precocity does not guarantee eminence in subsequent school stages and in adulthood (Winner, 1998), the diversity of this population requires attention from the early stages of childhood (Brasil, 2024).

Finally, the DCS denounces adversities such as: "the lack of attention to nursery schools; poor teacher training; crowded classrooms; tired teachers working double shifts," which can hinder the provision of "[...] individualized, empathetic, and inclusive care" (Portugal, 2017, p. 58). Even in the face of these barriers, which require structural changes and public policies focused on the quality of teaching and learning, teachers must consider the relevance of their formative role in children's development (Silva; Jurdi, 2019), helping those with high potential through playful and creative strategies.

Investments in pedagogical work, with the provision of resources, materials, instruments, and knowledge, are urgently needed so that educational actions in response to precocity become feasible and are adjusted to the interests and needs of children, challenging them to explore their potential and develop self-confidence from nursery school onwards.

## CONCLUSION

This research examined the meanings attributed by teachers at a public nursery school in Mato Grosso do Sul in relation to precocity, to precocious children aged two to three years and eleven months, and to pedagogical work for them, so that the topic could be examined both in light of the teachers' discourse and the specialized literature that investigates this condition.

The results revealed that some of the teachers were unaware of the topic, while few had scientific knowledge about it. This scenario suggests that precocious children may be subject to deprivation of their educational rights from nursery school onwards, as the lack of teacher knowledge affects pedagogical care and their referral to Special Education services. Although they belong to this category, precocious children remain invisible in terms of their needs, developing below their potential.

It is emphasized that the educational system and public policies must implement proposals that recognize and consider the characteristics of this population, removing them from neglect in the early stages of schooling, in order to ensure adequate conditions for their development, with attention to their diversity and expansion of their potential. In this sense, nursery schools need to meet specific requirements, as determined by law, by being a *locus* that welcomes, stimulates, and enhances early manifestations of abilities.

To this end, investments in training, resources, tools, and knowledge that support the work of teachers with precocious children are indispensable. Even though the findings of this research do not allow for generalizations, they still encourage necessary reflections on the attention given to precocity in nursery schools. It is therefore recommended that future studies explore this subject in greater depth, including considering high potential expressed at an early age in different areas.

There is much to be done in favour of the education of precocious children. Therefore, the role of nursery school is as follows: to contribute to the identification and pedagogical care of such children. Devoting attention to them in the early stages of school life is an urgent imperative in the current context.

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