

The alphabetization of the six-year-old children in a nine-year-long Elementary School¹

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ABSTRACT

The article reflects on the alphabetization and literacy process in the 1st grade of elementary school after the implementation of Law 11.274/2006, which changed the length of elementary school from eight to nine years. It is field research carried out through observations and interviews, analyzed from the perspective of the alphabetization and literacy process according to the dictated policies for a nine-year-long elementary school. As a result, we infer that it is necessary to change the current situation so that six-year-old children (in the 1st grade of elementary school) may have alphabetization with literacy conditions that respect their singularities. After all, they are still children when they get to school. There is also a predominance of synthetic and analytical methods used to the detriment of understanding the social function of writing.

KEYWORDS: Alphabetization and literacy; Nine-year-long elementary school; Law 11.274/2006.

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A alfabetização da criança de seis anos no Ensino Fundamental de 9 anos

RESUMO

O artigo tem como objetivo refletir sobre o processo de alfabetização e letramento, no 1º ano do ensino fundamental, depois da Lei 11.274/2006, que alterou o tempo do ensino fundamental de oito para nove anos. Trata-se de uma pesquisa de campo realizada por meio de observações e entrevistas, analisada sob a perspectiva da alfabetização e letramento, conforme as políticas para o ensino fundamental de nove anos. Em termos de resultados, pode-se inferir que há necessidade de condições diferentes das atuais, para que as crianças de seis anos tenham, na escola, condições efetivas de alfabetização com letramento, no 1º ano do ensino fundamental com respeito às suas singularidades. Afinal, elas continuam sendo crianças, quando chegam à escola. Há, ainda, uma predominância do uso dos métodos sintético e analítico, em detrimento da compreensão da função social da escrita.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Alfabetização e letramento; Ensino fundamental de nove anos; Lei 11.274/2006.

La alfabetización del niño de seis años en el enseñanza primaria de nueve años

RESUMEN

El artículo tiene como objetivo reflexionar sobre el proceso de alfabetización y letramento en el primer año de la enseñanza fundamental, después de la Ley 11.274/2006, que alteró el tiempo de la Enseñanza Primaria de ocho para nueve años. Se trata de una investigación hecha en campo realizada a través de observaciones y entrevistas, analizada bajo la perspectiva de la alfabetización dentro de las políticas para la enseñanza de nueve años. Dentro de los resultados, se puede inferir que existe una necesidad diferentes de las actuales para que los niños de seis años tengan en la escuela condiciones efectivas de alfabetización con letramento en el primer año del ciclo de alfabetización. Después de todo, todavía son niños cuando llegan a la escuela. Todavía existe un predominio del uso de los métodos sintéticos y analíticos en detrimento de la comprensión de la función social de la escrita.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Alfabetización y letramento; Enseñanza fundamental de nueve años; Ley 11.274/2006.

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Introduction

Based on Federal Law 11.274/2006 (BRASIL, 2006), regarding the expansion of elementary schools from eight to nine years, all six-year-old children were, from there on, placed in the 1st grade of basic education. Therefore, a change in the curriculum structure was required, specifically in the first years, with the creation of the literacy cycle (first, second, and third years), which should last three years.

Considering that it has been many years since this law was sanctioned, there are still some concerns on the subject: How was the implementation process of a nine-year-long elementary school in the first years after the sanction of Law 11.274/2006? How were the schools/classrooms organized to attend the six-year-old students in literacy classes? Is alphabetization with literacy, as determined in the official documents that guide the implementation of nine-year-long elementary schools, feasible for six-year-old children?

These questions were part of a broader scientific initiation research developed between 2016 and 2017, aimed at understanding the alphabetization and literacy processes within the scope of state public schools in Tubarão, a micro-region of the Association of the Municipalities of the Laguna Region (Associação dos Municípios da Região de Laguna - AMUREL), years after the extension of the literacy process, with the inclusion of six-year-old children in elementary school. The research was conducted in a specific school selected through the following criteria: It should belong to Tubarão municipality since it has the highest population index in the region, have obtained the lowest ranking in the Index of Development of Basic Education (IDEB) of 2015 in the initial years, have two or more 1st-grade classes, and be accepted by the school unit to participate in the research.

The study was conducted in a school in Tubarão/SC, which, at the start of 2016, had four first-grade classes. We selected one class for our research through a random draw. The school is in a neighborhood populated by low-income, self-employed and unemployed residents. Daily, these dwellers face problems such as drug trafficking, substandard housing, and lack of basic sanitation. These are common daily problems faced by the residents of peripheral communities nationwide.

This article focuses on the research results on alphabetization and literacy in the 1st grade of elementary school. The objective was to reflect on the alphabetization and literacy processes in the 1st grade of the literacy cycle a few years after the implementation of Law 11.274/2006.

To attain our objective, we needed to examine how the first grade is organized regarding time, space, and furniture (including structure adaptation and organization), investigate the school and teacher's coordination of the literacy environment, describe the children's interaction with the space and document and analyze the literacy process within the classroom.

Data were collected through observations, interviews, and documental analysis. The observations were carried out in the 1st-grade morning class during ten periods of four hours each, and the actions were registered in notebooks and through photos. After the observations, we held semi-structured interviews with the class teacher based on her availability. We noted and read the answers with her to ensure accuracy and agreement. Additionally, the children's notebooks, considered research documents, were utilized to supplement information and highlight observed situations.

In the initial analysis of the gathered information, some issues were highlighted, either by the time allocated to them by the emphasis they received during the class observations or by the significance given to them in the classroom or the teacher's speeches. Given the themes listed in the research, the following stood out for this article: alphabetization and literacy within the literacy cycle; the organization of the school and classroom in the

beginning (1st grade) of the literacy cycle; and the reading and writing practice and examples presented to first-grade children. Throughout the research and writing of the article, we carried out analytical readings such as Soares (2010, 2021) and Gouveia and Orensztejn (2006) for literacy issues, Viñao Frago and Escolano (1998) and Lima (1989) for school space organization, Garcia (1986, 1988) for the relationship between context and learning, and on alphabetization methods, Mortatti (2006), Soares (2019) and Cagliari (1998), among others.

Alphabetization and literacy: challenges for the 1st grade of elementary school

Extending elementary school time from eight to nine years in 2006 added one year to the initial literacy process. A three-year-long “childhood cycle” dedicated to alphabetization and literacy, the development of various expressions, and learning of the areas of knowledge were also established (BRAZIL, 2008).

Universal alphabetization and literacy for children can also be considered a challenge, given that many children fail to learn how to write and read. In 2012, of the children enrolled in the 3rd grade of public schools, 12.6% failed, and 21.3% presented age/grade distortion (BRAZIL, 2014). In 2013, in Santa Catarina, of all children enrolled in the 3rd grade of the elementary education level in public schools, 7% failed in the literacy process, and 9.4% were in condition of age/grade distortion (BRASIL, 2013). In rough numbers, 6.404 out of 91.484 children enrolled in state-public elementary schools in Santa Catarina failed to write and read at the end of the literacy cycle. According to the 2010 School Census, considering children and young people who did not attend school, it is possible to perceive that a contingent of 3.8 million Brazilians was illiterate, i.e., about 8.5% of the population in this age group (composed of 45.4 million).

Considering the pandemic scenario experienced in 2020, these data were substantially aggravated. Preliminary results of the Brazil 2023 survey, recently released by MEC, show that more than 56.4% of Brazilian children are not literate.

It is noteworthy that most of them are poor, black, and live in the countryside, meaning that historically, they are the victims of this exclusionary economic system (SCHMIDT, 2017).

According to Law 11.274/2006, a new perspective of alphabetization was imposed on schools throughout Brazil, alphabetization and literacy, which was in itself a positive thing, as it would make it possible to form readers capable of reading and interpreting reality if one considers the meaning of the concepts of alphabetization and literacy. As defined by Soares (2010, p. 31), these concepts are understood as follows: “Alphabetization is to make the individual able to read and write. [...] Alphabetization is the action of alphabetizing, of learning the alphabet”. And literacy:

[...] it results from teaching and learning the social practices of reading and writing. The state or condition that a social group or an individual acquires due to having appropriated writing and its social practices. (SOARES, 2010, p. 39)

We must remark that appropriating writing differs from learning to read and write. Soares (2010, p. 39) states that “[...] learning to read and write means acquiring a technology, that of coding in a written language and decoding the written language; to appropriate writing is to make writing one’s own”, which, according to the numbers presented above, is not happening for all children.

Soares (2010, p. 39-40) emphasizes the difference between alphabetization and literacy, saying:

[...] an alphabetized individual is not necessarily a literate individual; alphabetized is that individual who can read and write; on the other hand, the literate individual, the individual who lives in a state of literacy, is not only the one who can read and write, but the one who socially uses reading and writing, practices reading and writing, responds adequately to the social demands of reading and writing.

Therefore, alphabetization with literacy is much more than learning how to read and write or to know the letters of the alphabet. According to Soares (2010), it is necessary to teach literacy so that children not only learn to read and write but also how to use these skills in their lives. This is the purpose of alphabetization and literacy.

In this sense, Smolka (2012, p. 154) recalls the importance of valuing the “*saying* of children through writing, the various positions they occupy, the different roles they assume – as readers, writers, narrators, protagonists, authors...” so that different voices can emerge considering the distinctive social places of speech.

In accordance, as Beatriz Gouveia and Miriam Orensztejn argue in “Práticas de Leitura e Escrita” [Practices of Reading and Writing] (2006), a document produced by the Ministério da Educação, in the school context, literacy means opening possibilities to the right to learn the practices of writing and reading in a socially situated context. In doing so, the school allows students to participate in the world of written culture in different social spheres. This conception involves thinking about a pedagogical proposal in which children are the protagonists of the different situations of the language, in which they learn the characteristics and functioning of writing in different social contexts, but as Soares (2019) warned, always considering its *interactive* and *linguistic facets* in an indissociable way.

From a legal point of view, the issue of alphabetization through the perspective of literacy was ensured, which does not mean, however, that it has been successful in school practice, as observed in this article.

According to Gouveia and Orensztejn (2006, p. 35):

[...] Creating a context of literacy in school from Early Childhood Education to Youth and Adult Education is one of the most important tasks when the goal is to form readers and writers from the beginning of the literacy process, which takes place long before students are formally literate.

Thus, the school must offer a literate environment where adequate conditions are settled for children to appropriate written language and reading. However, in some situations, the school wants to exemplify writing, intending to facilitate the literacy process, also relying on synthetic or analytical methods, which do not enable a relationship with the social meaning of reading and writing.

The organization of the school and classroom for the 1st grade of elementary education

When analyzing the data collected in the school and the class, one of the issues that drew our attention was how the school implemented Law 11.274/2006. The study of the collected data led us to infer that the 1st-grade, six-year-old children class entered elementary school without stops for training, analysis of the institution's structure to receive these children, or updating the Pedagogical Political Project (PPP). Although we perceived the teacher's and the pedagogical coordination's dissatisfaction with the school conditions and the State's neglect to deal with such problems, we verified that the institution did not take any moment to address and take a stand before these issues.

In the school's PPP, for instance, there are no records on the implementation of the nine-year-long elementary school, not even indications about the "childhood cycle" and its implementation conditions. In the interview with the pedagogical coordination, we realized that there had been no meeting or conversation to address the development of the nine-year-long curriculum. The interviewee emphasized that the law has been established for quite some time, implying that educators should be well aware of it, highlighting a broader issue of mutual blame and accountability. Instead of viewing the school as a collective, they point fingers at each other, resulting in a lack of joint responsibility when it comes to implementing significant changes in the curriculum as mandated by the law. It is always necessary to consider that there are internal and external determinants to the school.

Since there was no information regarding the alphabetization and literacy cycle nor on the entrance of the six-year-old child into the school's PPP, and there was also no pedagogical discussion in the institution, we believe that teachers worked alone on what concerns the literacy process in the institution.

The locus of this research –the classroom– was organized like many other schools. The classroom contained a whiteboard, tables, chairs, a television with a DVD player, cabinets that only the teacher could open, and windows at the top, preventing children from looking out. At the back of the room was a space with a rug and shelves with children's books, magazines, and toys. The teacher's desk was at the end of the room, and the teacher informed me that it was easier to observe each child that way.

That class space was designed to receive the students as if, upon entering elementary school, the child ceased to be a child. There was an erasure in the perception of children as the subjects of learning, and the school, whose social function is to disseminate the systematized knowledge, needed to be prepared to receive them according to their specificities.

According to Lima (1989, p. 38):

[...] the school space could not be different: uninteresting, cold, standardized, and standardizing, in form and organization of the classrooms, closing children to the world, policing them, disciplining them. On behalf of the economy, solutions were more compromised: the width of passageways, corridors, and stairs reinforced the permanent will of adults to put children in rows; the tiny openings to prevent external access by strangers also served to prevent children from being distracted by the outside world.

FIGURES 1 and 2: Observed classroom.



Source: Researchers' personal archive (2017).

There were no children's productions on the wall, only materials provided by the teacher, such as a poster with class combinations, the alphabet on top of the board with each letter containing a drawing and the name of something that begins with that letter, a calendar, the helper of the day, a call list and a poster about *How many we are today*. In other words, the class walls were decorated, but the children produced none of it. When the students got to the classroom, everything had already been prepared for them.

This evidence indicates that children were not encouraged to participate in this space. They were not encouraged to leave their marks in the environment where they would become literate. We know that class space must be built by the subjects who study and work there, i.e., teachers and children who make sense of the classroom and to whom it should be a living space that changes with the children.

Lima (1989, p. 59) highlights how important it is for children to leave their marks at school: “The appropriation of a space by the children is based on the possibility that they will leave their mark on it, change it in some way”.

During the observation period, the classroom was always the same. The cabinets, tables, chairs, and the reading corner remained the same, and this was the literacy environment in which the children and teachers spent a part of their time. The classroom space also needs to be considered by the teacher in the planning process of pedagogical actions as a place to meet children’s needs. The way class space was organized during the observation days seemed to aim at keeping children quiet and disciplined. We noticed that children could hardly explore this space. They were not allowed or did not want to transform this area into a place of conviviality and interaction, fundamental issues in the construction of autonomy and learning development.

Viñao Frago and Escolano (1998, p. 61) bring the idea of transforming space into place: “Based on the flow of life and with space as support; space, therefore, is always available and willing to become a place”.

In this sense, the place is always significant, and the children, accompanied by the teacher, create new learning conditions in the classroom. This requires the teacher to notice children and pay attention to what they say and do so that the classroom space can be transformed into a place where the children like to be, feeling safe and cosy, with learning conditions.

In the observed classroom, the children were kept in line, unable to leave their places to help a friend, look around, ask questions, or pick up/observe something. Only the teacher moved around in the space. The children had no autonomy, freedom, or permission from the teacher to explore the classroom environment. One could observe that it was not a place designed according to the definition given by the previously mentioned authors.

The teacher affirmed that she always used the last class to let the children be free. According to her, besides this moment, as the children had a day in the park and the toy library, she did not need to include other classes of this nature. On some days, she lets the children watch cartoons (anyone) or play with the toys available in the classroom. She also states that:

Here, I teach the children in a very playful way. The kids have a lot of time to play and watch the movies they like. They have a park and a toy library. I am worried about providing moments of learning, but they are children who need to play. They like it and need it. Work in a playful way that draws more attention to them, with games, putting your hand into practice... You did not have the opportunity after the 'invitation activity', which was all about contextualization, with the theater, with the study. I am working on recipes. Each student brought a recipe from home, and we are going to make a recipe notebook they will take home. We made candy in the classroom, followed a recipe, and made *dulce de leite* of Ninho, a powdered milk brand. All of this in a way that is playful [sic]. (TEACHER, April 2017)

This report shows a distance between the teacher's testimony and what was observed in practice. Even in the weekly schedule, planned for using the toy library, park, and television, and time for toys in the room,

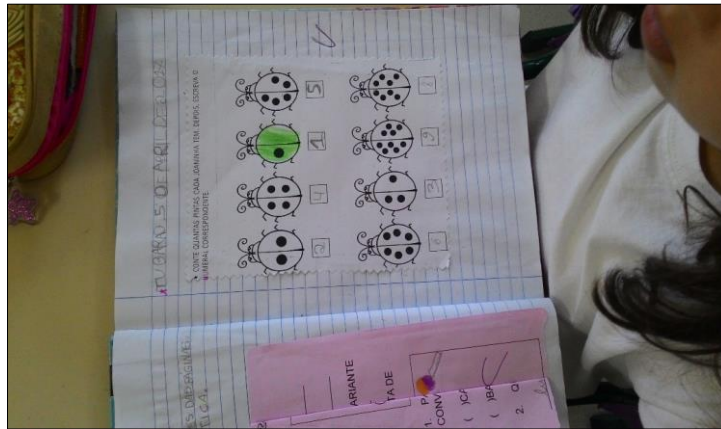
the teacher determined some conditions. During the observed days, the children went to the toy library only to watch a cartoon on television. In those weeks, the park and toys were not available to the children as punishment for their misbehavior. The teacher also mentioned: “I’ve prepared very cool things for you, but you won’t have them because you never behave, you don’t know how to be quiet. So you will have it when you learn to behave” (TEACHER, 2017).

Freitas (1986, p. 31) points out that: “[...] the threat creates a stressful environment by anticipating the consequences of ‘bad actions’”. This tension is constantly maintained by what Foucault (1977, p. 159) calls micro-penalties: “[...] everything that can serve to punish the least thing [...]”. Likewise, Sacristán (2005) points out that children acted as subjects, as they could only do what they were told, and if they did not like something, they should silence their manifestations and comply with the teacher’s orders; otherwise, they would be grounded.

It was also possible to observe that the time allocated for playing, as the teacher stated in the interview, was shorter than the length of class with content (writing activities copied to the notebook and reading these activities). Children were released to go to the toy library or watch a cartoon only if time was left. Or, when they did not behave, the children continued with the class, performing memorization and repetition activities.

Regarding the situation described above, we can say that those meaningless copied activities were what mattered. Children just received the paper sheet without receiving any explanation about what they were doing. As can be seen in Figure 3, the teacher read to the children, wrote the answer on the board, and then they copied it.

FIGURE 3: Activity with content.



Source: Researchers' personal archive (2017).

For the class, playing was treated as a reward: it could be performed only if there was time, as if it was not fundamental to the teaching-learning process. Playing cannot be regarded as a reward. It should be understood as a structuring element of children's culture and should be present daily in literacy classes, especially for children aged six and seven. It is this playing, inherent to the child's uniqueness, that expands their cultural repertoire, which, in turn, drives their development and learning (VIGOTSKY, 2021).

Borba (2007) states that playing is no longer necessary in elementary school because there is nothing productive about it. Children from an early age, especially those who study in public schools, must be prepared for the world of work. As a rule, children from working-class families in a divided society as the capitalist must remain in it.

Therefore, playtime was restricted to the recess space. Within the classroom, time was allocated to what, according to the teacher, really mattered: the content of the classes, which is synonymous with productive work.

Six-year-olds need time and space to live out their childhoods. From this perspective, one should remember what the nine-year elementary school guidelines produced by the Ministry of Education (MEC) point out:

Concerning **school time** – Curricula and programs have been organized in time units with defined schedules, which are interrupted by the ringing of a bell. Thus, the school ends up reproducing the organization of time originated in the manufacturing organization of society. This situation reminds us of Rubem Alves, who states that: *“the children must stop thinking what they were thinking and start thinking about what the program demands them to think at the moment”*. Hence, the questions about the need to rethink the organization of school time, according to the concerns of Rubem Alves: *‘Does thought obey the orders of the ringing bells? Why is it necessary for all children to think the same things at the same time and at the same pace? Are all children the same? Is the goal of the school to make the children all the same?’* In sum, what has been learned through a curriculum that fragments reality, its concrete and lived spaces? It is a disciplinary model aimed at transmitting specific contents, organized in a rigid schedule and centered on individual teaching work, often lonely due to the lack of spaces that provide a dialogical interlocution between teachers. (BRASIL, 2004, p. 10, original emphasis)

Thus, it is necessary to think about a curriculum that meets children’s needs, in this case, six-year-olds. Still, it is essential to define a curriculum in which the children have in school a place for their development, in which playing can be regarded as part of teaching practice and as a mediating element of learning. Therefore, one can understand the importance of the simultaneity of the alphabetization process with literacy and the interdependence between planning, learning processes, and teaching practices (SOARES, 2021).

Consequently, we could say that the classroom should be designed for children as a space made available for productions and interactions between

them and adults instead of a lifeless, voiceless, and meaningless place. This space should encourage children's learning.

As Garcia states (1988, p. 8):

The environment in which the child lives, regardless of the desire or intentions of those with whom they live, those who educate them. In daily coexistence, values, norms of behavior, types of relationships, and information about the world are passed on. A literate environment alphabetizes.

Thus, the importance of creating a space of opportunities and dialogue between the class must be reiterated. Providing the most varied resources, such as books, magazines, newspapers, leaflets, labels, recipes, and packaging, can help children learn to read and write and understand their role in the social context.

Garcia (1986, p. 19) affirms:

Children who live in a stimulating environment pleausurably build their knowledge of the world. When writing is part of their cultural universe, they also build knowledge about writing and reading. Reading is knowing. When children learn later to read the word, already enriched by so many previous readings, they will appropriate yet another instrument of knowledge of the world.

There were children's books and several other resources in the investigated classroom. However, we noticed that the children and teachers did not use those resources.

On a given day of observation, when the children returned from Physical Education class, we noticed that some of them asked if they could get a book to read (books located on the shelves in the corner of the room). As the bell had already rang and the class teacher had not yet arrived, the

researchers authorized the children to pick them up. The children were euphoric and excited. However, it was short-lived: soon, the PE teacher arrived and, yelling, told everyone to sit down. When she saw some children with books, she asked them to put the brochures away, but the children did not want to, as they had been allowed to take the books. The teacher then took the book out of one of the children's hands and shouted: "I want everyone sitting with heads down and sniffing the table without looking sideways" (Quotation from the Physical Education teacher, 2017).

This situation created some embarrassment. If the classroom is a place of learning, why could the children not pick up a book? Soon after, still in this embarrassing situation, the teacher pointed out: "This is the worst class I've ever worked in. These students won't stop, they just want to play and I can't teach them" (Quotation from the Physical Education teacher, 2017). Situations like this became more frequent every day, considering the number of complaints to the Conselho Tutelar [Children's Protection Council] and news in the media. In the face of that, one question stands out: What makes a teacher take such an aggressive attitude? Can children learn and develop in such an environment?

From the beginning of the literacy process, the children must trust their teacher. A relationship of trust and respect facilitates learning writing and reading, aiming at forming an autonomous subject capable of thinking about reality and making decisions.

On this, Cagliari (1998, p. 48) affirms that:

Children need their own space and favorable conditions to be able to build their knowledge at school. However, they also need the teacher to help them, when necessary, explaining what they already know, what they have done, and why they have done it, in their learning attempts; what they need to do and how to do it, to take a step forward and make progress, especially if they, on their own, fail to discover what they should do to make progress.

Another point to be highlighted concerns the lack of consideration for the children’s knowledge of the class topic: they would not be allowed to talk to each other or the teacher. During our observations, the teacher seemed unaware of what the children already knew and what they needed to learn. Consequently, she taught what she believed the children needed to learn.

Moll (1996) emphasizes that the school needs to know its children and understand that they are the starting point for what the teacher needs to show them. Otherwise, children will not understand what the school wants by passing on knowledge they regard as meaningless.

Based on the collected data, we noticed that the classroom environment and playing activities are not viewed as essential for the learning and development process, including alphabetization and literacy of 1st-grade children. (SOARES, 2021).

Reading and writing: reflections on the investigated context.

During the observation period, the children were learning the letter “B” and the syllabic family of this letter and, according to the teacher, also a song. The song was the “Preguiça” [Laziness], which the children sang every day at the beginning of class to scare away laziness and study.

Regarding letter “B”, one of the proposed activities can be seen below.

FIGURE 4: Notebook activities.



Source: Researchers’ personal archive (2017).

The analysis of the children's notebook revealed that the method used in the 1st-grade class followed the traditional perspective, using the synthetic approach, which starts from the part to reach the whole. The image above (Figure 4) presents an activity with syllabic families and the formation of words through the syllables studied. It was very similar to the booklet activities.

In this sense, Soares (2003, p. 19) points out that the texts in the booklets, such as “a vaca voa, Ivo viu a uva”⁵, do not add anything to the alphabetization process, as they are activities with loose words, meaningless and with the sole objective of training the studied syllabic families. For literacy to happen, from the perspective of alphabetization with literacy, the teacher would have to present real-life texts, bringing books and magazines. In short, there is a need for practices and actions that stimulate children through literacy.

According to Soares (2000, p. 3),

[...] alphabetization with literacy means guiding the child toward learning to read and write, leading through real reading and writing practices: replacing traditional and artificial booklets with books, magazines, and newspapers. In short, using reading material that circulates in school and society, and creating situations that make text production practices necessary and meaningful.

Historically, activities carried out in isolation have not encouraged children, not having taught them to read or write with meaning and significance. So, one question remains: Why do children need to do this? Just for training and checking whether they have memorized the syllable and vowel families?

⁵ TN: The literal translation is “The cow flies, Ivo saw the grape”.

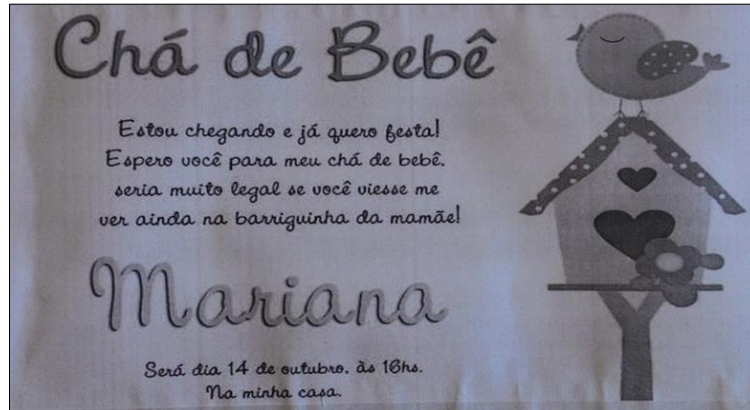
Morais (2013) states that teachers want their children to be able to read and write overnight, that is, to rote learning syllabic letters and families, without grasping the sense of what is being conveyed. According to the author, teachers use the booklet, and that is it. They do not bother to explain what the letters represent and how they work to create words, phrases, and texts. Therefore, to teach children to read and write, teachers perform repetitive exercises and copy extracts from the book or board, waiting for children to understand in a snap how letters work and are used to write and read. However, what is not perceived is that when teachers use only alphabetization methods, children do not understand the social function of writing and reading because there is no magical formula for which all children will learn everything the same way.

Different from all the classes observed in this research, there were glimpses of another alphabetization perspective on one occasion. The teacher proposed an activity about writing invitations. She said she wanted the children to make a wedding invitation for Dona Baratinha⁶ [Ms Coachroach], as she had told them this story a few weeks before. For them to better understand this textual genre and its structure, the invitation would be delivered to the 2nd-grade class. This delivery was made with the presentation of Dona Baratinha's wedding with Dom Ratão [Mr Mouse], and the children of the 2nd year were invited to attend the ceremony.

For the development of this work, the teacher first brought several invitations for the children to read, such as invitations to graduation ceremonies, baby showers, birthday parties, and weddings. She read all of them and asked the children what each invitation was about.

⁶ TN: Children's song.

FIGURE 5: Invitation presented by the teacher.

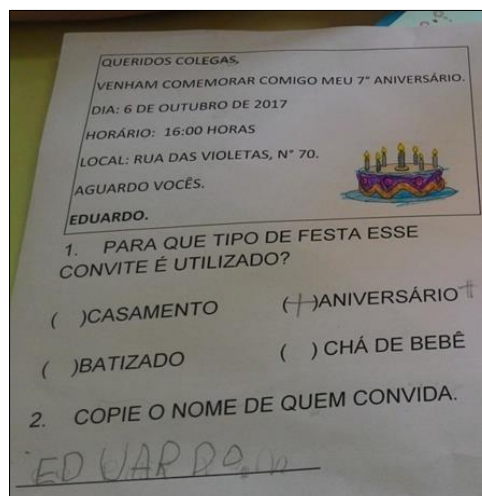


Source: Researchers' personal archive (2017).

After reading this invitation (Figure 5), the teacher asked what it was about, what day the baby shower would take place, the time, and the place. By doing so, she explained that every invitation needed a time, a place, and a date. Finally, the wedding invitation was presented. That was when she explained that every wedding invitation must include the bride's and groom's name, the date, the time, and the place.

Once all the invitations and their structure were presented, the teacher proposed an activity in the following way: she read the enunciate (Figure 6), answered it, and then passed through the desks to see if the children were doing the exercise.

FIGURE 6: Activity concerning the invitations.



Source: Researchers' personal archive (2017).

When the children finished the activity, she gave them a paper sheet so that they could write Dona Baratinha's wedding invitation. The teacher wrote it on the board, and the children copied it.

Although the children had the chance to interact with a different textual genre, they were not allowed spontaneous writing. Furthermore, the teacher also dictated the size of the letters and their drawing. If it was too large and she did not like it, it was erased, and the child should do it again.

To make it worse, she roamed from table to table and, realizing that she had already given time for the children to do the exercise, went to the desks of children who had not yet finished and copied it herself because the activity time was over. By doing so, we inferred that, for the teacher, all children needed to have the same rhythm.

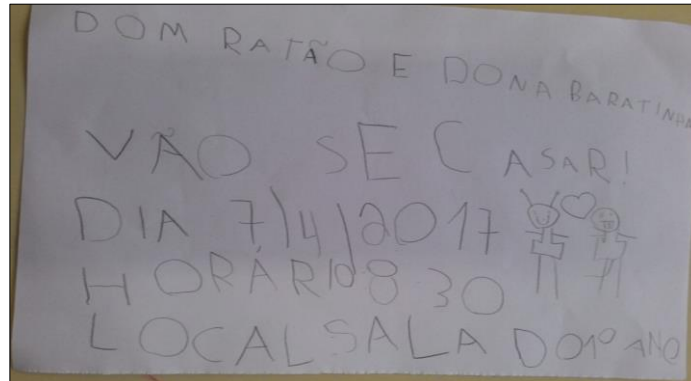
In this regard, Sacristán (2005, p. 149) says:

If the subject student's time (their learning pace, what they need to accomplish a given task) does not accommodate the regulated school time and the established time to develop the curriculum because it is slower than the provided time, then the student will be labeled late and may even be excluded.

It is worth mentioning that the children were excited with the completion of the invitation activity, especially because they would deliver it to the 2nd-grade class.

In the invitation, they wrote the names of Dona Baratinha and Dom Rato, the date, time, and place where it would happen, in this case, the classroom. The children would play the part. The invitation is presented in Figure 7:

FIGURE 7: Making the wedding invitation.



Source: Researchers' personal archive (2017).

When everyone finished copying the invitation on the sheet, the teacher asked them to sit down so she could make the envelopes to put the invitations. There was never an opportunity for incentives to stimulate the autonomy of the children. On the contrary, they only did what the teacher ordered.

In any case, we must emphasize that when the teacher proposed the elaboration of an invitation and brought elements of the children's knowledge to the classroom (about invitations and parties), she gave meaning to the activity, fostering children's involvement in the process. On this occasion, it was possible to perceive the difference a planned activity makes, considering elements and the contexts of the children's reality. Reading and writing had meaning for them.

Conclusion

Considering that, as Federal Law 11.274/2006 determines, elementary school lasts nine years, and the children now begin to reach the literacy cycle earlier, it was also necessary to think of a curriculum that met these students' needs, ensuring playtime as an indispensable element for the teaching-learning process in that cycle. However, what the law dictates is not effective in the vast majority of schools.

During the observation, the researchers verified that the children had no autonomy to enjoy the classroom and saw that they were repressed. The time to play was significantly reduced, considering the age of the children and the importance of playing in the learning process. Having more time to play and autonomy to express themselves often depended on their behavior.

Playing is not regarded as a children's right, but it should. It must not be neglected because entering elementary school does not mean they stop being children. They remain children, and actions regarding the literacy process also require conceiving them as children, breaking with the traditional logic of the school. It also implies developing a plan for the initial process of learning to write that considers the children in their specificities. At first, the teacher knew the importance of playing and its importance in children's lives. However, in practice, she put it aside because there were other things considered more important to be done.

The literacy environment is organized and thought of by the adult for the adult; thus, the classroom cannot be considered an environment for alphabetization and literacy of children (SCHLICKMANN, 2015). The method used, primarily, was the synthetic one, anchored in the traditional teaching perspective, in which the main actions are repetition, motor training, and rote learning. The children's action was to recognize the letters being studied and their syllabic families in a loose and meaningless way. We found that the perspective of alphabetization with meaning and respect for the singularities of children, recommended in the official documents of the nine-year-long elementary school, was not materialized in the daily life of the analyzed class.

Finally, regarding the observations and reflections made, we noticed that neither the school nor the teacher had been carrying out pedagogical work, aimed not at meeting the needs of six-year-old children but at meeting the needs of students who reach the first grade. They think that children are now grown-ups in elementary school and need to "really learn", according to the logic of traditional teaching, leaving the games, fantasies, and make-believe for

early childhood education. It is necessary to break with this logic since literacy cannot be restricted to acquiring mechanical skills. It is fundamental to “increase the possibilities for children to deal with broader and higher levels of objectification of the human race”. (GONTIJO, 2002, p. 138).

However, for a better understanding of this process, other relationships must be built, such as initial and continuing teacher education and improving their working conditions, as making alphabetizing and literacy available for all children requires thinking of issues internal and external to the classroom. This challenge is now even more significant due to weaknesses caused by the pandemic, which increased the number of illiterate children in the country.

Therefore, it is urgent that we increasingly recognize “the school as the place of the more elaborate culture” (MELLO, 2010) and create the conditions for all Brazilian children to have ensured the right to full literacy.

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Recebido em 16 de setembro de 2021.

Aprovado em (mês) de (ano).