

# Paper boats and children in Early Childhood Education: creative stories exploring the water element<sup>1</sup>

*José Firmino de Oliveira Neto<sup>2</sup>*

*Priscilla de Andrade Silva Ximenes<sup>3</sup>*

*Raquel Pereira Soares<sup>4</sup>*

## ABSTRACT

This text is a study/research of a playful exploration with the water element and paper boats by a group of 5-year-old children from the Municipal Education Network of Goiânia developed in 2023. We aim to think play in the time and space of Early Childhood Education in the understanding that there is a close relationship between play and the development of the child's psyche, with an emphasis on the formation of the higher psychological functions of memory, imagination and creation. Based on the reflections of Vygotsky (1995; 2020), Leontiev (2010) and Elkonin (2009), who discuss the relationship between play and child development, as well as the weavings of Holm (2007) with the conception of “sublime narratives”, the reflections of Barbieri (2021, 2022) and other authors who dialogue with the field of Early Childhood Education, we developed a study to analyze the playful experiences of children by rescuing the records of the teacher (first author of this manuscript), especially images (photographs and videos). Thus, we conclude that play is the

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<sup>1</sup> English version by Alexandre Gomes Alves. E-mail: [luisagomesanimes234@gmail.com](mailto:luisagomesanimes234@gmail.com).

<sup>2</sup> Doutorado em Educação em Ciências e Matemática. Universidade Federal de Goiás, Goiânia, Goiás, Brasil. Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0782-2149>. E-mail: [josefirmino@ufg.br](mailto:josefirmino@ufg.br).

<sup>3</sup> Doutorado em Educação. Universidade Federal de Goiás, Goiânia, Goiás, Brasil. Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0683-6285>. E-mail: [priscilla\\_andrade@ufg.br](mailto:priscilla_andrade@ufg.br).

<sup>4</sup> Doutorado em Educação. Universidade Federal de Goiás - Câmpus Goiás, Cidade de Goiás, Goiás, Brasil. Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8178-203X>. E-mail: [raquel.pereira@ufg.br](mailto:raquel.pereira@ufg.br).

action by which the child attributes meanings and significance to their lived experiences. Through play and games, the child will appropriate, take possession of, this world of ours, as a world of human objects, and thus will objectify themselves in it.

**KEYWORDS:** Early Childhood Education; Play; Children; Paper boats; Water element.

*Barcos de papel e crianças na Educação Infantil: fabulações criativas na exploração do elemento água*

### RESUMO

Este texto é oriundo de uma exploração brincante com o elemento água e barcos de papel realizada em um agrupamento de crianças de 05 anos, da Rede Municipal de Educação de Goiânia em 2023. Objetivamos, (re)pensar o brincar no *tempoespaço* da Educação Infantil na compreensão de que há uma estreita relação entre o brincar e o desenvolvimento do psiquismo da criança, com ênfase na formação das funções psicológicas superiores da memória, imaginação e criação. Apoiados em Vigotski (1995; 2020), Leontiev (2010), Elkonin (2009), Holm (2007), Barbieri (2021, 2022) e outros autores, analisamos as vivências brincantes das crianças resgatando os registros do professor. Assim, concluímos que brincar é a ação pela qual a criança atribui sentidos e significados sobre suas experiências vividas. Por meio das brincadeiras e dos jogos a criança irá se apropriar, se apossar, deste nosso mundo, como um mundo de objetos humanos, e irá nele se objetivar.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Educação Infantil; Brincadeira; Crianças; Barcos de papel; Elemento Água.

*Paper boats and children in Early Childhood Education: creative stories exploring the water element*

*Barquitos de papel y niños en Educación Infantil: cuentos creativos que exploran el elemento agua*

### RESUMEN

Este texto es un estudio/investigación de una exploración lúdica con el elemento agua y barquitos de papel por un grupo de niños de 5 años de la Red Municipal de Educación de Goiânia desarrollada en 2023.

Nuestro objetivo es pensar el juego en el tiempo y Espacio. Educación Infantil en la comprensión de que existe una estrecha relación entre el juego y el desarrollo de la psique del niño, con énfasis en la formación de las funciones psicológicas superiores de la memoria, la imaginación y la creación. A partir de las reflexiones de Vygotsky (1995; 2020), Leontiev (2010) y Elkonin (2009), quienes discuten la relación entre el juego y el desarrollo infantil, así como los tejidos de Holm (2007) con la concepción de “narrativas sublimes”, las reflexiones de Barbieri (2021, 2022) y otros autores que dialogan con el campo de la Educación Infantil, desarrollamos un estudio para analizar las experiencias lúdicas de los niños recuperando los registros de la maestra (primera autora de este manuscrito), especialmente imágenes. (fotografías y videos). Así, concluimos que el juego es la acción a través de la cual los niños atribuyen sentidos y significados a sus experiencias vividas. A través del juego, el niño se apropiará, tomará posesión de este mundo nuestro, como mundo de objetos humanos, y así se objetivará en él.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Educación Infantil; Broma; Niños; Barquitos de papel; Elemento agua.

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## Introdução

The childhood is built as a territory - instance of development of a child - which when giving children since infancy at recognizing and knowing themselves, the *other* and, respectively, the world that encircles them, grants (re)inventions: TRANSFORMATIONS/MOVEMENTS. With this occasion, we allude the historical and social transformations (Vygotski, 1995; Leontiev, 2010; Ariés, 2017), about what is this *timespace*<sup>5</sup> of human development and, consequently, the comprehension about the children, the privileged subject of this time.

As such, as a result of the assumptions of the Cultural-Historical Activity theory, grounded on Vygotsky (2020), we conceived the child as a historical-cultural subject and the childhood as the *timespace* of the active

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<sup>5</sup>We chose for the usage of the term “timespace” written in a same word and in italics, since we understand the temporal dimensions and spatiality in a dialectic manner on the day to day of Early Childhood Education

appropriation of the human characteristics built socially throughout history. According with the Cultural-Historical Activity theory, the most essential in the development of a child and your conscience isn't just that their individual functions of conscience expand and develop on the transition of an age to other, but the essential is that the personality of the child expands and develops, and expands and develops the conscience as a total (Vygotsky, 2020, pp. 146). We assume play as the dominant activity of children and as such it is of major importance for their ontological development coming from the social practice, lived experience and the experiences which are represented in the symbolic activity. The lived experience from children is the base for the possibility of any development.

In other words, play makes the internalization of symbolic mediators and of the social relations possible, possibilitating the formation of new and more complex psychological functions. It's defended, as such, the school as the privileged *timespace* of interactions and mediations for the assimilation and internalization of experience of many generations and the formation of thought and speech by the children.

With that conjuncture in mind, the Early Childhood Education institutions are important referentials for the child(ren), which aids in the comprehension of the world, as such, they ought to (re)invent the way to grant an engaging education, whichever is, be it with the mobilization of an Education for insubordination. With that in mind, as such Oswaldo de Andrade learned with his ten year old son, in a way we can understand this territory in which "[...] poetry is the discovery of the things I have never seen", and that is this action, of DISCOVERY the centrality of childhood (Damasio, 1997) and, as such the educational practices which as teachers we make it possible to the children since infancy to experiment.

And thus, as teachers who maintain the green ears (making an allusion to the poem "The man of green ears", from Gianni Rodari), we understand that "the imagination, the spontaneity, the play and the creativity, the action and sensation aren't concepts that should be

elaborated into “to apply in” or “label” individuals” (Damasio, 1997, pp. 55). On the contrary, it is constituted in experiences which should be experimented/explored with the full body by teachers and children. After all, as is considered by Mello (2007, pp. 85), the institutions of childhood(s) “can and should be the best place for education of small children [...], as there it can intentionally organize the adequate conditions of life and education to grant the max appropriation of human qualities [...]”.

Meanwhile, as the collective experimentations get amplified, as it’s reiterated by Holm (2005, pp. 15), “[...] the children bring play inside themselves”. It’s necessary for contributing/aiding the children to explore the world, to stay side by side with them, making company, observing and listening to them (Ostetto, 2021). The children speak with: gestures, sounds (words or not), touching, but still with your way to (re)invent the play and to imagine new others, as it’s done by the character of the book “O lenço”, of Patrícia Auerbach, who with just an handkerchief, which looks like it was taken from her mom, makes braids, a bride’s dress, a skirt, wraps around a baby, builds a hut and a lot else. And still in “Maia e Mia”, written by Debora Barbieri and Vanessa Prezoto, who present us a child (Maia) and a cat (Mia) who loves boxes: “Maia’s boxes create life” (pp. 4), and they either transform itself in a rocket, another in a open market’s stand where it’s sold oranges, lettuce and carrot, or in a castle, since the girl also wants to be a princess and a lot more.

In that sense, we aim in this text to (re)think the play in the *timespace* of Early Childhood Education in the comprehension that there is a fine relation between the play and the development of the psychism of children, with the emphasis in the formation of the superior psychological functions of memory, imagination and creation, through the proposition of a play exploration with the water element and the paper boats in a group of 05 years old children in the Goiânia’s Municipal Network of Education (RME/GOIÂNIA), in 2023. For such, we rescued the documentation of the teacher (first author of this manuscript), above all in imagery (photographies

and videos<sup>6</sup>), with the certainty of: “to record is to leave marks. Marks which depict a lived history” (Warschauer, 1993, pp. 61), and still which “[...] writing, documenting observations, analysis and reflections and speaking about the own ideas, the teacher takes the objective of comprehending of what they make” (Magalhães; Marincek, 1995, pp. 3).

As such, as more experienced teacher(s) through the experimentation with children we propose to narrate/investigate, we make ourselves available to see-listen and observe-register poetic narratives, because they are captivating, potent and loving, as it was said by the danish artist and educator Ana Marie Holm (2007): “sublime narratives”.

In his threshold, we attest with Oliveira-Neto; Brito-Silva, Ostetto (2023, pp. 506) that the “feminine and masculine teachers who, making themselves researchers, can act as who seeks “breakthroughs” of childhood, as it would say the poet Manoel de Barros, in exercising this listening – which is time, calm, disposition, delivering, welcomed.”

The sublime narratives are for Holm (2005, 2007, 2015) as music that floods the space, but soon disappears. Therefore, in the *timespace* of Early Childhood Education, we can infer that it constitutes itself of instants captured by the masculin-feminine teacher in the territory of the institutions which possibilitate, as the poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade affirms (1974): “to the child the conditions to express their way of seeing and liking the poetic relation between the being and the things”.

In this sense, we consider a study/research that understands the play in theoretic, legal and normative apparatuses, to be known: Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para Educação Infantil (DCNEI), in the presumptions of the Cultural-Historical Activity theory and in the document Documentação pedagógica, planejamento e avaliação na Educação Infantil na Secretaria Municipal de Educação de Goiânia”, of 2023, which guides the pedagogical work in the RME/Goiânia. And

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<sup>6</sup> The photographic registration used in this manuscript, albeit it isn't allowed the visualization of the children's faces, it was authorized by the families.

reflections, stemming from Vygotsky (1995; 2020), Leontiev (2010) and Elkonin (2009), who argue the relationship between play and the childhood development, as much as organizations of Holm (2007) with the concept of “sublime narratives”, the reflections of Barbieri (2021, 2022) and other authors who dialog with the field of Early Childhood Education.

### **The play in the Early Childhood Education: children in movement and the creation-imagination**

Play is the predominant activity in childhood and it is being explored in the scientific field, with the objective of comprehending childhood development and for the school context. As it's said by Leontiev (2010), play is considered the principal activity of children in the preschool phase<sup>7</sup> and is directly related with the development of the superior psychic functions of human conscience.

Subsided by the Cultural-Historical Activity theory that we understand that the development of the human psychism jumped from the elemental forms to the superior forms, being the first biological form, instinctive in an elementary way and the second, mediated by culture, is superior, since it allows us to dominate the behavior (self-domination of conduct), the domination of memory, of thinking, of language (thoughts and words), of attention, the domination of emotions, constructing the dynamic of human conscience, conditioned by culture.

In this computation, imagination and creation are superior psychological functions, this is why cultural productions, and the play, in the conditions of the historical product and as consequence of the ruptures with the natural determinants, can itself be configured as a forming activity of qualitative leaps which transform the vital human activity into objectification production activity. As it's said by Vygotsky (1995), the play possibilitates that the children develop themselves in the processes

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<sup>7</sup> The preschool phase encompasses approximately from the three to six years of age.



of imagination and creation, taking in consideration that from the play, especially from the make-believe play, they (re)elaborate the lived experience in your social circle, building new realities in accord with their desires, possibilities and motivations.

The make-believe play in the Cultural-Historical Activity theory is taken as a necessity and main way of learning in the childhood world and of the superior psychic function. For the construction of play it's necessary that the child take on any role, which they feature, which isn't them. Without that the make-believe play doesn't exist. The moment the role appears, the make-believe play appears, and it doesn't consist solely just in the interpretation of the role of an adult, but also of another child. (Salva; Beltrame, 2022, pp. 156, our translation).

Thus, the play takes on a privileged role on the interaction and mediation of the child with the world, in other words, it isn't instinctive, but precisely human, objective activity, is born from the life conditions of this child in the society. Therefore, the richer the cultural mediations lived by those children, the more they can use their feelings in the experiences of those who they can, imagine, observate, interpret, touch, experimentate, being every time more able to learn, imagine and create.

The play with paper boats, the make-believe play, is characterized by itself as an activity derived from the process of imagination of children, built always by the elements taken from reality and present in their prior experience. The boats are set themselves not only as a pedagogical resource, but as a mediation of instruments which interpose between the subject and the object of their activity, in other words, their imagination and lived experience of the things which they wouldn't have access in their childhood everyday, as an example to navigate boats. Furthermore, we are sustained on Vygotsky (1995) to explicitate the behaviors mediated by signs as "game



changer” between the human psychism and the animal, with the highlight at the concept of mediation in the sphere of the inner bonds between the essential propriety of things, asserting itself as an interposition which provokes transformations and promotes the human development.

Vygotsky (2009), in his work “Imagination and creativity in Childhood”, postulates about the relation between the processes of imagination and creation, taking emphasis to the instruction of the drawing, theater and play. According to the author, the creation of the children isn’t something spontaneous, linear or natural, but rather overarches the work of building of men about the own men, in other words, it’s about the social relations in which the individual is molded. Therefore, the creative imagination have origin in the work and is the condition for the technical creation which is orientated by the search of the satisfaction of the necessities of the individual, in other words, “on the base of creation there is always the unadaptation in which appears necessities, yearnings and desires” (Vygotsky, 2009, pp. 40, our translation.)

Early Childhood Education should consider that good education anticipates development, comprehending that creative activity is motivated by social necessities, in other words, it is the necessities which emerge from social practice which demands and impulsionate the creation of something new, of development.

When it’s provided that children imitate, imagine, experimentate, manipulate through play, the Early Childhood Education characterizes itself as a *timespace* of rich mediations for human development, as an activity of imagination-creation. No creation does without the objective conditions in which it happens. Despite imagination commonly being portrayed as an exclusively internal activity, your creation arises from necessities of social practice, human necessities, in other words, the imagination is a psychic process which develops and complexifies itself as long as it also complexifies of the activity and of the person in the world.

As such, when richer the mediations possibilitated by the school are, more will be the qualitative leaps. Comprehending the play as the main/major activity of children in preschool age, in other words, with the origin of qualitative changes in the children's psyche, we defend that this action is the structural element of the processes of educating-learning in Early Childhood Education. Throughout this process humanization occurs, which consists in the subjectivation of the objective phenomena, as it is, in the transformation of the material processes into symbolical productions, said processes which are mediated and regulated by language.

For Leontiev (2010), the main/major activity is the activity in which the form arises from other types of activity and inside which they aren't differentiated. It's the one in which the particular psychic processes take form or are organized, in which depends, in an intimal way, of the main psychological changes of the childhood personality, observed in a certain period of development (Leontiev, 2010, pp. 64).

Thus, the importance of play for the development of children from the preschool age is determined by affecting the more important aspects of children's psychic development of personality, the development of conscience, which by being human is always social and collective. Play doesn't solely embody the childhood knowledge about the social reality, but also elevates them into a superior level, conveying them in a social and generalized aspect. Throughout the play the world of social relations, much more complex and accessible to children in your non-ludical activity, it's introduced in their lives and elevates them into a more significantly higher level (Elkonin, 1987).

This consists of the main contributions of the Cultural-Historical Activity theory to Early Childhood Education, at systematizing who the children are, how they develop themselves, how they learn and how they humanize themselves. Therefore, theorizing about the relation between instruction and development of the conscient personality, presents some possibilities of implementation of education for the process of humanization.

## **The context of exploration with children: in the institutions of childhood(s) (re)creations with paper boats and water**

The organization and planning of the institutions of Early Childhood Education of the Goiânia city is structured coming from the orientations of the document “Documentação pedagógica, planejamento e avaliação na Educação Infantil na Secretaria Municipal de Educação de Goiânia” (2023, pp. 12), in which, it grasps “the development of pedagogical work situated in the strategy of pedagogical documentation” is structured in two axis: documentation and communication.

Guided by this documented process, this article sought the photographic records of a playful exploration that happened in the year 2023 in a Early Childhood Education school in the city. Anchored in these images and on the report of activity lived by the children we build the visual and written narratives of the plays to (re)think the play and comprehend the possibilities in which he represented the creative process of the children involved in this process. For the construction of the narratives, beyond the registration of records, , it was observed the children’s play, building their play and their relations with the object boat. In this movement, the play, the bodies that play, the boats and the possibilities of play earned life and got constituted on the activity which will be reported on and analyzed.

The playful exploration revisited in this text happened in the *timespace* of a grouping of 05 year olds. Thus, we alluded a territory of Early Childhood Education (re)constituted in an Elementary School and subjected, a lot of times, by the narratives of the procedures of educating-learning of the latter, harming the prerequisites of the work with children since babies, in which to play and the indissociability between caring and educating.

Remembering the document “Critérios para um atendimento em creche que respeite os direitos fundamentais das crianças” (Brasil, 2009b, pp. 17, our

translation), the colocation is that “the children have the right to a welcoming, safe and stimulating place”. And still, how it’s added by Castro (2019, pp. 47, our translation), an encouraging place, in the sense of a territory which invites the children since they are babies and teachers “[...] to action, to imagination and to creation [...]”.

However, in a scenery of structural and pedagogical adversities, we seek to flourish the flame of knowledge of the world with children in the day-to-day of the institution. Spinning threads of an engaged teaching and committed with the children we (re)find the gaps for to know-make the contradiction and possibilitate to them a territory full of invention and transformation. From the ordinary we sought to create the extraordinary and imagined for the children to make and think to self, other and the world.

Meanwhile, 25 children of this grouping explored each side of the reference classrooms and of the institution, with freedom and support for experimentation, seeking the world and constituted themselves as discoverers, creative and inventive. Therefore, on the day-to-day movement of work and experimentation with the children emerged their interest, and also of the teacher, to explore the nature elements and between these we started with the water element, in a way to possibilitate “the broad relocations and movements of the children in the internal and external space to the reference classrooms of the classes and of the institution” (Brazil, 20091, pp. 3, our translation).

In this proposal, we prepared two different moments in the external space of the institution, between the space with grass and the cemented floor, proposals of playful and investigative exploration of the water element. In a way of de-walling children and pedagogical practice we urge on the territory of the institution to (re)find small-big corners (small in the spatial dimension, but giant of possibilities to play and fabulate), with preference where could have nature elements, to mobilize our movements of playful exploration. As Oliveira puts (2021, pp. 24, our translation): “School is the place for us to

inhabit”, which means to live and (re)create spaces, specially in our case which we found ourselves in an Elementary Education institution, for the full (re)existing and movement of child bodies.

We still recall that on the planning and materialization of an investigative context with children it's necessary to build it in a way that it's allowed to the different relocations (Barbieri, 2021a). And, therefore, to seek the external space is in the case of the fundamental proposition: all the spaces of the Elementary Education institution can be formed as a territory of learning! With this threshold, body, space and time are constituted as a major triad for the activity of planning in a playful and investigative context with children.

And as the object that conducts the lived experience that we narrate in a reflective way, the paper boats. Important to infer that the children and teacher knew well the bond paper of which the boats were made with, in the exploration 1, with the certainty of “knowing the constitution of the materiality or of the material and its properties feed the proposition for investigations” (Barbieri, 2022, pp. 51, our translation). Purposely, we (re)elaborate the context for investigation of the children with intentionality, in a way of permitting them to question the nature of the materials (water and paper) and the relation in the space and the other classmates to (re)create life.

Still about the materials, we corroborate Barbieri (2022), when it's postulated that children when they (re)find with different materials in the day-to-day of the Elementary Education institution drive a new set of investigations, fabulations and learnings. Thus, in this movement we feed and preservate the poetic being of children “in the manner to contribute with the amplifying of the cultural, artistic and aesthetic children's repertoire” (Santos; Ostetto, 2018, pp. 97, our translation).

As masculine-feminine teachers we grasp that our role while the playful investigation was of “[...] aiding the child to have fun and learn, sharing their discoveries, stimulating to think creatively and to seek

peace solutions, transforming the unrest of the day-to-day into moments of learning” (Melis; Andreetto, 2024, pp. 57, our translation). Therefore, to believe in the potency of children to live and create sublime narratives coming from the playful and investigative exploration with water and paper boats consists in elucidating that the imagination have its origin in the elements taken from reality and it’s sustained by the triad: perception, speech and memory (Vygotsky, 2009). The first, perception, is responsible for capturing the information and external objects, of which they are signified with the aid of speech and stored in the memory.

This way, memory, perception, imagination and thought act in a dialectical way, furthermore to differentiate themselves, in other words, the basis of imagination will always be real. In this sense, the external elements (paper boats, small containers and water bowls) allow the children to imagine, think through images, a process which is referred to as the internalization of the object with the aid of memory, perception and speech.

#### *Exploration 1 - With big boats/dreams, sailing the waters of imagination*

The exploration 1 opportunized to children has as the motto the collective experimentation of big paper boats in water bowls which were spread in the external space of the institution. Each child received a small blue paper boat (Figure 1). According to the children’s affinity, they drove to the bowls, sometimes alone, majority of the time in groups of two, three, four or more children, who in a lot of moments changed and/or interacted between themselves to create a common narrative.

**Figure 1:** Exploration with big boats/dreams in the water.



**Source:** Documental archive from the teacher José Firmino de Oliveira Neto.

The initial movement of the children was in close relation with the following question: What will happen with the paper boats when they come in contact with the water element? That way, the children with already knowledge of the material used for the confection of the boats and who had experimented in other moments of the day-to-day life to what happens to the paper when it's in contact with the water were initially wary in the experimentation process. In time, they went placing the boats in the water in a cautious way, be it, trying the smallest possible contact surface between the materials, but didn't inhibit the play.

In these intricacies, it ought to refer that only a child was reluctant to place their boat in the water. When asked by the teacher about the reason that drove them to not play-create like the other classmates, emphasized that desired to maintain the paper boat intact with the wish to take it home so their mom could see.

What is understood is, as soon as the children had confidence in moving by context. And soon, the fabulations started to appear and much were the narratives (re)elaborated by the children. In a way enmeshed and in symbiosis the body-boat moved by the waters of rivers and seas.

The available photographic records in the figure 2 are able to elucidate the narrative movement that the children create during the exploration of the



material. It's perceptible that with the hands a child stirs the water-sea to move the paper boats, while another appears to push the boat. In another moment the boats already are on the other side of the bowl-sea and, following, for some reason deriving from the narrative that they elaborate, the boat looks to gain the air. Would it be a storm that had taken the boat to leave the waters and take the skies? Would the crewmen of said boat be safe? And or, had the boat sunken through such a storm?

For the children there aren't limits, after all as we remember Barbieri (2021, pp. 16, our translation): "the children carry with them the possibility of inventions of worlds". And in the movement of investigation during play they are able to handle "with curiosity with what moves them - they experiment, build, pile, turn upside down and invent problems". In the action of playcreate-investigate with presence, perplexity and affection (re)affirm the poetic nature which constituted them, create culture and affect themselves and others by the ways of sensibility.

As how Hortélio reflects (2012, pp. 23, our translation), "it's necessary to play to affirm life. [...] They have to play to be happy". Thus, the children replicated with the paper boats and the water element the life seized in the day-to-day. Although the majority of them never had known the sea, they were knowledgeable of its existence, beauty, wickedness and potential, resulting from tales told by family, cartoons, movies and others.

According to Brougère (2010, pp. 69, our translation) "through the toy, the child enters in contact with a cultural discourse, about society, made for them, as it's made, or was made, in the short stories, books, cartoons. It's propositions which propose an eye over the world, sight which takes in consideration the special recipient, who is the children". This allows us to think that even not knowing the sea, not having lived in this place and in the seafaring context, children are able through the cultural discourse to dive in this universe and create stories and play born from the paper boats.

In the words of Barbieri (2021, pp. 18, our translation), “the children are impacted by the experiences, they get charmed or weirded out by the happenings and its mysteries”. Therefore, the narratives ended up being filled with a lot of said beauties, to cite the fact of the paper boats sail with tranquility by the water-sea and/or the appearance of maritime creatures like whales and sharks, the latter which would earn in the children’s narratives the role of a villain, which would attack crewmates, like in the cartoons and movies.

**Figure 2:** Experimentations with the paper boats and water.



**Source:** Documental archive of the teacher José Firmino de Oliveira Neto.

In other moments, interacting with the nature elements present in the territory of the institution, the children searched leaves to represent the crewmen/sailors. The leaves-characters earned their own plots and moved between the paper boats and the water-sea. And we ask, the desire of the children to be at sea as leaves-characters? Would they desire to enter the sea and taste the salty water?

In a lot of cases, the children didn’t look to be in institutional territory anymore. After all, through the imagination they were in other lands, even better, seas living such adventures. We highlight that, for Vygotsky (2009), the advance of imagination amplifies the experience of the subject, who is able to perceive the facts and phenomena which go beyond the direct-observation and constitutes the second level of relation of the imagination and reality.

Since the moment in which the child is developing, it's formed new and more complex mental functions in accordance to the social practice of which it is exposed to. The child, through the play, can reach a functional definition of concepts or of objects.

*Exploration 2 - Sparkling small boats which navigate in the hands/waters*

Ostetto (2016, p. 315, our translation) punctuates that if we consider the children as active subjects and producers of culture, form them creators implies the maintenance of their poetic being, which implies following “feeding, and amplifying, their leadings of sensibility, curiosity and multiplicity”. Given this consideration, we (re)elaborate other contexts of the playful and investigative exploration employing the same previous elements: paper boats and the water elements, but on a smaller scale. The intentionality was given in possibilitating to the children other lived experiences-explorations and, consequently, the weaving of other narratives.

In exploration 2 the children had access to small containers filled with water and got many small paper boats. The paper boats this time weren't made from bond paper, but made from a sparkling paper proper for folding and which represented a resinated surface which made it harder to be easily destroyed when in contact with the water element.

Again the children gathered themselves in small communities for the exercise of exploration of the boats. The affection relations and the trust which the children had with each other then possibilitate the movement of playful and investigative exploration. And in this path, the children soon realized the paper used for the confection of the small boats was different from those used for the construction of the bigger boats and, as such, they behaved differently at being in contact with water, to start for their bigger durability.

The concept of experience (perejivanie) in Vygotsky (1999) allows us to comprehend the play, as a qualified experience, as a typical human

possibility, in which the biological and social establish an unit, an systematic human activity, enabling that the children can amplify their references, their comprehension of the world, their repertoire, their humanity. Therefore, they appropriate not only the material and symbolic objects accessible to them, but also of the objects handled by the adults, but that they still aren't able to handle if not by the content of their imagination.

Differently from exploration 1 the children looked more intrigued with the type of paper used for the confection of the paper boats and/or in how it would be possible to build them in such small size. Therefore, astonished by the shimmer of the paper and its size, they went already to dismantle the small paper boat (figure 3). As they held more than one paper boat they didn't get intimidated by this movement which provoked a lot of children to retake their previous repertoire to understand the new lived experience-exploration.

**Figure 3:** Child dismantling the small paper boat.



**Source:** Documental archive from the teacher José Firmino de Oliveira Neto.

Albano (2006, p. 17, our translation) considers that “to create is to give form to chaos and to create it's necessary be able to take choices. The choice is the limit that creates the form. We only learn to choose our own path when we have the freedom to choose.”. That way, the children when they have more

paper boats and being knowledgeable of the process of confectioning them in paper were able to take the option of dismantling the small boats. Autonomy and freedom were then the essence of this movement!

### **Poetic (re)inventions: the children as inciting of new fabulations**

In the movement of playful and investigative exploration materialized with the children we were able to understand the inventive nature of them. Like Holm (2005, 2007, 2015) we offered small things to children and they tried new things, and were able to achieve, in the search to satiate their inquiries and understand the interior and exterior world.

Initially, we returned the movement of child bodies by the nature space of the institution in the search for elements which configure objects and/or characters of their narratives. In this conjecture, as it's considered by Barbieri (2021, pp. 10, our translation), "territory isn't just a space, and what exists inside its borders says more about the signs than the spatial borders. To inhabit a territory is to immerse in a system of concepts, materialities and relations". Therefore, the children knowledgeable of the spaces and its potentialities knew what they were able to find and use in their plays with the boats, and followed up showing the importance of the new artifacts used in the play, said as they transformed themselves into objects and/or characters who had clear and objective functions in the narratives that they (re)elaborate.

In this context of experimentations and plays, the paper boats and the nature elements are turned into toys. According to Brougère (2010, pp. 66-67, our translation) "the toy is what is used as a support to the play; it can be a manufactured object, an object made for who plays, a metal scrap, ephemeral, which only has value for the time of the play", therefore, in the hands of the children who play with everything can be turned into a toy, even the boat and nature elements.

Wrapped by their memories, the children transformed the materials. The paper boats which in contact with the water started to dissolve were torn

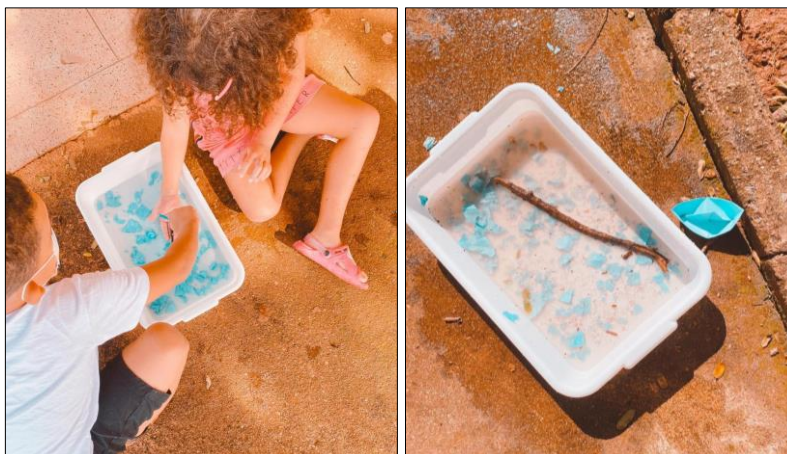


apart and soon gave place to bigger witches' and wizard's cauldrons (Figure 5). With the aid of big sticks they started to create magic spells and/or magic potions with different finalities.

For the child there is no hesitation in knowing something. They take, smell, tear apart, feel... This feeling in the child is moved primarily through curiosity, as, finally it's this way they learn something about the world and generate a memory of smells, flavors, textures and colours.. (Melis, Andreetto, 2024, pp. 59, our translation).

In this threshold, materials and materialities (re)invented by the children awoke such memories and emotions that allowed them to live a much feared character in the fairy tales, the witches and wizards. However, different from what a lot of times we listen and read, the witches and wizards who were made didn't look to make harmful magic spells and/or magic potions. On the contrary, they were affectionate and helped their colleagues.

**Figure 5 - Poetic (re)inventions: the cauldron of witches and wizards.**



**Source:** Documental archive from the teacher professor José Firmino de Oliveira Neto.

This movement was a part of the investigation of the children about space, materiality and space. As talented as they were, the children soon

(re)created life and allowed themselves to sail on such rivers and seas, with courage and boldness, without fear of its depth.

Thus comprehended,

The children should learn and research, to have confidence in themselves and to have courage to put themselves to work in new things. Learning that a task can have many solutions, we acquire force and courage. The children acquire this in an art workshop. I present to you a challenge, which never has a defined answer. (Hohm, 2004, p. 84, our translation).

Intrigued about everything, the children allowed themselves to make it live the words of Holm (2007) and in a trajectory of learning and research started from the amazement about the materials and excitement of (re)invention. About this fact, we can infer with the author that the children felt safe in the institutional territory, as also the proposed and experimented practice, to make happen the sublime. And as teachers, “if we allowed the space and the opportunities for the occurrence of the sublime, the children would automatically experiment an artistic day-to-day” (Holm, 2007, pp. 14, our translation) and, still, an ethical, political and aesthetic formation in the territory of Early Childhood Education.

## Final Considerations

Subsided by the Cultural-Historical Activity theory we comprehend that the human being is constituted in defined cultural and historical contexts, assuming the play as a pedagogical, social, imaginative, creative practice and, as such, fundamental for the ontological human development. The play is the action of which the child attributes senses and meanings about your lived experiences. Through the plays and of the games the child will appropriate, take ownership, of this world of us, as a world of human objects, and thus will concretize themselves in it.



When we rescue the children's movement through paper boats, small containers and water bowls, we highlight the importance of the play in the formation of the child's psychism, constituted as the dominant activity of childhood, throughout which the child can appropriate not only of the materials and symbolic objects accessible for them, but also of the objects with which the adults handle and of which they aren't able to handle. For Elkonin (1987) the play has the importance not only for the psychic processes which are directly involved in it, like the imagination, the creation and the thought, but also for those which are present in the play in indirect form, like the memory and perception.

Therefore, to assume that the basis of imagination and creation is always concrete doesn't consist in comprehending the relation between imagination and reality is interdependent, but in attributing the importance of play in the formation of concepts for children. In this lot, the external-visual elements, possibilitated by the play with the paper boats, create a narrative which goes to form the experience of the child, constituted as a content of their imagination.

Furthermore, we comprehend that there is a close vinculation of imagination with the affective dimension, the emotion, once that for Vygotsky (2009) all the sentiment and emotion interfere in the way we learn the reality, to the point of our attachments turn congruent to the images, impressions and ideas of reality.

Lastly, we alluded to the need to redeem Andrade's speech (1974, our translation): "why children, generally, are poets and, with time, stop being?", as an alarm to the territories of Early Childhood Education. As the formative stage of children since babies it's made urgent and necessary to possibilitate many explorations, in different *timespaces* and with vast materials and materialities, with the intention to possibly feed and preserve the poetic being of them. After all, as it's put by Holm (2005, 2007, 2015), to the children it's desired grand things!

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