MAKING CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES MATTER: A QUALITATIVE APPROACH TO CHILDREN'S POINT OF VIEW WHEN PLAYING

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Abstract:

This is a qualitative, exploratory research aimed at understanding child's narratives on play. Based on a review of the literature on play and the contexts surrounding childhood, it was methodologically designed to use in interviews with 4- and 5-year-old children in four childhood education settings, in Porto, Portugal, listening to their opinions on their own experiences and opportunities to engage in play. It was also decided to keep observation records of their behaviour in play situations and to analyse children's productions (drawings) that would reflect their expression about playing. The results showed that there seems to be a clear notion on the part of the child of what play is and the use of toys are. For the child, the act of playing does not necessarily imply the use of toys; it seems to be more related to the action itself and the activity. This perspective may clash with the conceptions that adults have about playing. This study provides 10 recommendations for intervention in Early Childhood Education.

Keywords:
Children; Play; Education; Toys.

Resumen:

Se trata de una investigación cualitativa y exploratoria cuyo objetivo es comprender las narrativas infantiles sobre el juego. A partir de una revisión de la literatura sobre el juego y los contextos que rodean a la infancia, se diseñó metodológicamente para utilizar en las entrevistas con niños de 4 y 5 años en cuatro entornos de educación infantil, en Oporto, Portugal, escuchando sus opiniones sobre sus propias experiencias y oportunidades para participar en el juego. También se decidió mantener registros de observación de su comportamiento en situaciones de juego y analizar las producciones de los niños (dibujos) que reflejaran su expresión sobre el juego. Los resultados mostraron que parece existir una noción clara por parte del niño de lo que es el juego y el uso de los juguetes. Para el niño, el acto de jugar no implica necesariamente el uso de juguetes; parece estar más relacionado con la acción en sí y la actividad. Esta perspectiva puede chocar con las concepciones que los adultos tienen sobre el juego. Este estudio aporta 10 recomendaciones para la intervención en Educación Infantil.

Keywords:
Niños; Jugar; Educación; Juguetes.

Introduction

Playing is an action that is widely recognised as belonging to the intrinsic nature of the human being and, more evidently, of all children. Play is an expressive element of the child's well-being and potential for development and learning in the interaction with itself and the world around. The centrality of play in children's daily life is widely recognised (Kishimoto, 2011; Lancy 2020; Lester & Russell, 2010; Pramling Samuelsson & Björklund, 2022), although there is great complexity in its conceptualisation. This intrinsic nature of play, assumed as a child's right (UNICEF, 2019) to be guaranteed and promoted, requires that the educational contexts where the child is involved consider it as an undeniable and priority action. Therefore, it is essential that educators are able to foster children's learning and development in a way that is sensitive to their playing, bearing in mind that children are not mere recipients of actions, but rather active agents in their own learning and development (Pramling, Fink & Piton, 2016; Pramling Samuelsson & Björklund, 2022). Consider the child's agency (Mäkitalo, 2016) in an environment responsive to their initiatives and interests and be proactive, introducing and giving children ample opportunities to experience on their own. Fostering development and learning through play is fundamental. Agency, therefore, manifests the possibility for the child to change the course of the activity. The perception of the child, in these contexts, is based on a conception and belief of the child as the protagonist their development and learning process, as a decision maker, as a person with interests, needs and life experiences of their own, as a creator, who benefits from social interactions that support and challenge them.

Play deals with issues of gender, social environment, and ethnicity, with children having different play traditions, places and activities shaped by local cultures (Mouritsen, 1998; Veraksa, Pramling Samuelssom & Colliver, 2022) Children's play may sometimes express power structures and may also involve the assertion of power over 'less powerful' children and the upholding of cultural, gender and ethnic patterns and practices. However, although adults may want children's play to correspond to a socialisation process taking into account cultural belief systems, play can be transgressive considering adults' cultural expectations of children (Lester & Russell, 2010).

Kishimoto (2011) warns that "Many professionals, influenced by tradition, without thinking reflexively, leave the maturation of babies to natural development, and education at the mercy of chance, ignoring the consequences of this impetuous view. Others suggest external, mechanical aims, without the involvement of the child, without regard for their needs and interests, advocating a transmissive education, preparing for a remote and uncertain future". (p. 211). In this sense, she stresses the importance of reflecting on how society gathers knowledge and values about the young child itself (Who is this child? How does he/she live? Where does he/she live? Is it a boy or a girl?), how do adults design this image of the child? What culture do adults have regarding the child and education? And how do they recognise the child as a receiver or an agent?

Regardless the children's background, they engage in playful activities and play is considered a universal activity (Gaskins, Haight & Lancy, 2007; Lancy 2020). As Lancy (2020) and Gosso (2010) have noted, children all over the world engage in play activities. Yet, there are cultural differences in play (Gaskins, Haight & Lancy, 2007) and empirical evidence supports a relationship between play and culture (Göncü, Jain & Tuermer, 2006; Holmes, 2011, 2013). Some studies have shown the role of culture in shaping and guiding children's activities and interactions. In play, children acquire cultural values and skills that are embedded in their everyday experiences, including when playing with peers and interacting with adults.

Although there is ample evidence of children in all societies engaging in some form of play (Gosso, 2010), attention has been growing regarding the role of culture in child development in general, and play in particular, and some studies show evidence and reflections about how play reflects cultural mastery and, in a bidirectional way, how cultural values shape the expression of play, the time allocated to play and attitudes towards play (Gaskins, Haight & Lancy, 2007).

Holmes (2011), on an island in the Pacific Rim, explored children's play preferences across generations. She argues that play is intricately linked and depend on a variety of factors including economic, technological, cultural and historical aspects. For example, she found that today's children prefer more technologically advanced toys that are mostly played with indoors, while previous generations played more outdoors. She also noted the ongoing tendency for children to prefer playful activities and toys stereotyped by gender.

Examining play among children in Nigeria, Salamo-

ne and Salamone (1991) focused on the children's genuine play and its social, cultural and psychological implications. They found that when adults intervene in children's play, it does not become more fun and enjoyable since, in essence, it ceases to be play. It is acknowledged that the means for the acquisition and reproduction of culture, by children, include various types of play - for example, make-believe and games - in which they participate as observers in family moments, cooperating in household chores, participating in various activities with peers, etc. (Lancy, 2016). It is important, however, to understand the child's perception of their action. Challenged, they are given the opportunity to express and record their point of view.

In this sense, the educator needs to create conditions that ensure and promote children's play in terms of space, time and interactions. The starting points are children's manifestations, creating opportunities for listening, observing, questioning, with the perspective of obtaining in-depth knowledge on their point of view, their wishes, their opinions, their preferences. Play makes children happy and it provides satisfaction (Hong, Kim & Jeun, 2016). Children play anywhere and they play differently everywhere because they are also part of a context.

Method

In order to analyse children's depictions about playing and play itself in the different contexts, we tried, in a first moment, to formulate a set of theoretical problems related to these themes, exploring some concepts and rehearsing some interpretative hypotheses that would steer us in the search for contextual normalities, as well as for the diversity and uniqueness of the experiences/lives of pre-school age children. Our expectations as researchers were a better understanding of the realities - the understanding of the realities as perceived by children - and the meanings that are associated with the notion of playing and the idea of play that ultimately represented our object of study. The aims were useful for identifying and assessing the core concepts that were used to address the field of research.

For the development of this research, a qualitative methodological strategy was designed (Czarniawska, 2004; Amado, 2017) resorting to semi-structured interviews (one interview of 1:30 per child), observation and dialogues about children's drawings. The participants were 15 children aged 4 and 5 years old, as it was considered that these would allow for the simultaneous mobilisation of the individual and social dimensions of the phenomenon under analysis. About the children involved, they attend early childhood education settings that collaborate with the researchers in other training activities related to early childhood educators training. The aim was therefore to get to know children's narratives on play and toys, as well as the contexts and forms of play chosen. In addition, we considered the possibility of analysing comments made by the children, when asked to draw about their favourite games and toys, and the collection of observational records (OR) of the playing activities of 4 and 5-year-old children in kindergarten Portuguese classrooms (Ribeiro, 2021). As the researchers were a familiar visitor in theses classrooms, the observation, the interviews and drawings collection were undertaken naturally and within the usual conversations with children. Children were observed for 10 days, one hour a day.

We know that interviews conducted with children are conditioned by a set of factors such as child's age, cognitive, emotional and social development; the verbal reconstruction of the event (which in turn is conditioned by the child's verbal development); the type and number of details of the events (the

child's memory), the information the child receives from other people (particularly from their family), the relationship established with the interviewer, the structure of the interview and the child's own personality (Toeplitz-Winiewska, 2007). Thus, based on an analysis of the content of the interviews, the observational records and comments on the drawings, it was necessary to reach a compromise between the subjective version of the children who participated in this research and the interpretative version developed to explore their subjectivities.

The protection of children in this study meant that their rights, their physical and psychological integrity as research participants, and the guarantee of confidentiality were upheld. Therefore, children and carers were asked to participate in this study. Having in mind the importance of informed consent and the need for anonymised data, all names registered in the paper do not correspond to the real ones (UNICEF, 2019, Graham et al., 2013, Mesquita, 2020).

Results

MEANINGS

For the children who were interviewed, the act of playing seems to mean action and activity. Playing seems to imply the construction of something and is certainly enjoyment. The drawing in figure 1, from a 4 year old child, mirrors this interest in constructing something that the child has observed in the adult's interaction. They specifically describes: "That's me putting on a play at the puppet show like you did. I drew myself in clown clothes like in the theatre the trainees put on. I'm ready for the show!"

Figure 1 – Drawing of a 4-year-old child

It was noticed that for some, playing does not always imply the use of toys and that these may even be excluded from the more pleasurable playing activities. These children specifically mention: "It's running and having fun" (I8); "For me it's playing catch, running" (I2); In the observational records of children's play, the action/construction component is different by observations such as the following: "children M., N., F. and D. build a city using bricks. In this city, we can find several very tall buildings, several cars scattered around the streets, a fire station, a shopping mall with several dolls and a children's park" (OR 7).

PLAY WITH TOYS

The association with objects (toys) is also regarded by the children as a definition of what it is to play and they specifically state that "It's playing games, playing in the living room, with people I like" (I7). "For me, playing is playing with things, playing with toys" (I3); "For me, play means a toy room" (I4); "Toys" (I6). Or also: "Hum… for me, what is playing? It's me

playing with the toys in here and I also play with the toys in the yard of my house which is a bicycle, a tricycle, but it's only to use when I go to my grandmother's in the summer, so I can ride there, back and forth" (I13). Through observational records it is also possible to reinforce this idea that playing becomes interesting when supported by the use of toys: "During a play moment, in the playhouse area, a child picks up a toy mobile phone and with their index finger fictitiously selects the camera, stretches out their arms and grasps it with both hands, in a horizontal position. Moves around the playhouse area for a while imitating the action of filming while the rest of the children play normally. At the end says: "Done! I made a video, let's watch it…". All the children gather around the mobile phone" (OR 10).

When asked about how they play, whether they play with toys or without toys, all children mentioned that they play with toys and some verbalised that they prefer to have toys as a support element for their playing activities. They mention, for instance: "I prefer to play with a lot of toys" (I5). When referring to play without toys, preferences seem to be directed towards dynamics that promote movement. They mention that they play "catch" (3), "hide and seek" (2) or races (1). When asked to draw their favourite playing activities, some children mention the outdoors and the equipment they have access to. A child (Figure 2) describes their drawing: "My favourite playing activity is to play in the park on the slide".

Figure 2 – Drawing of a 5-year-old child

Regarding their favourite toy, children show that Legos are an attractive resource because they allow for building. Soft toys and dolls (dinosaurs, teddy bears, etc.) are also mentioned among children's preferences. Dolls are a toy mentioned by female children, with some even claiming: "Dolls. Because it's something that girls really like." (I3).

From the children's verbalisations, some aspects associated with experiences of a cultural nature were detected, such as associating toys with gender or even the need to get more toys at Christmas time. With regard to how they got these toys, some children mentioned that they were bought in shops, gifted by someone or simply that they can be found in places where they usually are, such as their house, their grandmother's house or at school. When asked about some special toy that the child would like to have, answers varied. Two children answered "no", that they already have all the toys, and the rest mentioned toys such as: "An action figure"(I2); "A doll that can go to the pool and take a bath. Because I don't have it, and that's what I'm asking for Christmas" (I3); "I asked for another plane because I think I don't have many" (I9); "A car because I like them." (I11); "A real digger, because I really love cranes, diggers and garbage trucks" (I12). From the answers, it could be seen that the children's reasoning focuses not only on their preference for certain toys, but also on the perception of the quantity of objects needed for play, and on the clear idea that Christmas is the time to ask for presents.

PLAYMATES

Play without support objects is also associated with playing with others. From the children's perspective, it also seems to be very clear that they associate having fun with playing with a partner, when they mention, for instance: "It's doing fun things with the people I like the most" (I9); "It's playing with friends" (I12). Four children simply state that they play with other people, without referring to the type of play: "I play with my brother who is called X" (I3); "With friends" (I10); "I play with friends" (I12); "I play with other stuff. I play with my friends".

Regarding the preferred play activity, children show a greater preference for activities involving movement, like playing football, races and playing catch, hide and seek, as shown in table 1.

They explain their preferences by highlighting, for instance: "Playing catch because I really like to run when playing, and with my dog" (I8); "Playing catch because there's running around." (I2); "Playing catch, because it's a game where one boy runs and the other tries to catch him" (I6). The children's reasoning, besides having to do with wider range of movements when playing, as highlighted above, once again emphasises the child's need to play with a partner. Du-

Table 1 – Children's favourite playing activities (N=15)

	Playing football	Playhouse with dolls	Hide and seek	Castles	Garage and cars	At the park	Races and playing catch
Number of children	2	2	1	1	2	1	6

ring the interviews, it was found that children also seem to value companionship much more than more complex resources, and they mention: "With my family, we play pirates and all it takes is pillows" (I8); "With my father, we play aeroplanes and we don't need toys because we just use our arms" (I9). These two children point out the fact that although they do not use any toys bought for such purpose, play, for them, seems to be just as meaningful.

About playmates, children differ in the answers and options they seem to take. They do, however, have a clear idea of what they like when it comes to people as playmates. When asked whether they play by themselves or with someone, most said they play accompanied, as shown in table 2. Only two children expressed they usually play by themselves.

Table 2 – Children who usually play by themselves (N=15)

	Yes	No	Did not answer
Number of children	2	11	2

Although this study is focused on a specific context and its aims are more related to understanding and reflecting than generalising data, it is important to highlight the importance of observation and data collection in the educational intervention, thus addressing the specific needs of specific children, as may be the case of two children who mentioned playing by themselves and two who did not answer. This set of children have an opinion towards solitary play contexts. Those who say they play by themselves say: "I often do. I play with things I don't like. But, sometimes, I also play with things that I like." (I13); Of the children who say they usually play with other people, two main groups are identified: their schoolmates or their parents: "No. I usually play with my friends" (I1); "No, I don't like to play by myself" (I6); "No. With Eva, Dinis and Martim." (I14). It is, however, important to acknowledge that playing by oneself may not stem from a mere context that the child is faced with, but rather from a choice made by the child, as mentioned: "Sometimes yes, because sometimes I don't feel like playing with friends" (I8). In the observational records that were collected, within the context of the kindergarten classroom, playing with peers was

one of the most frequently observed aspects. The perception of the importance of friends and parents in play is therefore very clear when children are asked who they like to play with (table 3). Parents and friend are probably the closest people in this research context.

Table 3 – Who the child likes to or usually plays with (N=15)

	Friends	Parents	Other relatives	Animals
I like to play with	5	5	1	0
I usually play with	2	4	4	1

It is interesting to realise that preferences regarding play partners do not always coincide with the people children actually have opportunities to play with. As an example, friends and parents, though emerging as clear preferences for interaction, do not necessarily constitute opportunities for play. One other aspect that is worth mentioning refers to the contexts in which children usually play with other family members, but, in fact, do not point them out as a preferred interaction.

In make-believe play, for example, children already seem to take on culturally inclusive roles: "Three boys play in the playhouse and explain to the adult: Boy 1 - I'm the father; Boy 2 - I'm the baby and he's the father; Boy 1 - I'm the father and I'm going to make dinner. You have to eat!" (OR 6). The three boys playing in the playhouse each take on roles in their make-believe family, very much geared towards the awareness that chores in the household are not just down to women.

PLACES
Many of the children's favourite playing activities seem to be associated with larger spaces and often associated with the outdoors, for instance, when they mention: "Playing catch and hide and seek. Football" (I3); "It's almost always football with a sponge ball." (I7) This aspect becomes particularly interesting considering that children today play less and less outside, especially in urban settings. Understanding children's perspectives on their preferred play spaces allows us to reflect on the need to adopt a more tailored educational intervention. Throughout the interviews, it became clear that the preferred play areas of these children were either outside or, if indoors, in wider spaces. They reflected a need and interest in

playing activities that involved some physical activity. When asked about where they usually play, the places mentioned were centred around the household and school, possibly reflecting the child's daily life between home and school (Holmes, 2011; Lester and Russell, 2010), mentioning, for instance: "At school, at my home" (I1); "I usually play at home at the weekend, and I usually play at school when it's a school day" (I13); "I usually play at my godfather's house and at my house with my cousin" (I14). Hence, there seems to be an imbalance between the spaces that adults can provide and the wishes and needs expressed by the child.

As children place greater value on outdoor spaces, parks, fields, and playgrounds (in kindergarten), when asked to draw their favourite places to play, they maintained the same opinion, even though we know that early childhood settings where children were observed ii is also a privileged space for children to play. They draw and describe outdoor spaces as meaningful places of play. A child explains his/her drawing (Figure 3): "I drew myself playing in the park with Maria. I drew a slide because I like to ride the slide and a swing."

Figure 3. Drawing of a 5-year-old child

Similarly, a child, who drew another picture (Figure 4), shows an identical space rather than the interior of a kindergarten room full of materials and games, or even the house, and mentions as his/her favourite game "Playing with my sister in the park. We went down the slide and played football with my cousin."

Also in the observational records, it was found that the interests that children develop in outdoor spaces are often opportunities for discovery and learning (Pramling, et al. 2019): "While moving freely around the outside space, the children found a spider and

showed some fear, asking for it to be killed" (OR 13). In the case of a group of children, this encounter with the spider provides a great moment of interaction. They get together as a group, identify a problem and provide the adult with a solution. Also, regarding the children's drawings, these also convey the idea that playing is exciting and promotes their well-being, given its interactive and affective component with relatives or friends, as shown in the following image (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Drawing of a 4-year-old child

In indoor play situations, children also find solutions to their space issue. If a child wants to play with their dog and has to do so indoors, their will opt for the living room since it allows for a greater range of movement: "In the living room because I play with my dog; because it's more spacious" (I8). It is also noteworthy that no child mentioned their bedroom as a play space at home. Without knowing the motivations for this context, this evidence should be considered for future studies on the choices, or opportunities for choice, of play spaces indoors.

TIME TO PLAY
When asked about whether they think they have a lot or little time to play during the day (Table 4), 7 of the children said that they have a lot of time (table 4). Some say that there are days when they can play a bit more or a bit less (2) and that this also varies depending on the time of day (1).

Table 4. Time that the child, from his/her point of view, has to play (N=15)

	A little	A lot	Depends on the day	At night, I have to sleep and during the day I play a lot
Number of children	5	7	2	1

Six children report that they spend more time on other activities than playing. In this sense, they state, for instance: "I spend more time drawing than playing" (I10); "I only play sometimes at home, because I usually do things other than playing" (I9). These statements led us to a need to better understand the concept of play for the child and to understand how it coincides with the concept of play for the adult.

Some children mention specific periods when they play more (5), pointing out, for instance: "In the afternoon at school, at night there isn't much time. On Sundays I play a lot, it's a quiet day. I spend more time playing, I don't usually spend too much time on the tablet" (I7); "Afternoons and evenings and also the weekend. I spend more time playing" (I8); "I think I like playing more than doing activities" (I14).

FEELINGS AND WELL-BEING

All the children that were interviewed revealed that they like to play and that it is part of their culture (Mouritsen, 1998; Gaskins, Haight & Lancy, 2007; Göncü, Jain & Tuermer, 2006), their way of being with themselves and with others. Thus, playing seems to be a vital activity in their daily lives because of the enjoyment and pleasure it provides. When interviewed, children expressed positive feelings and well-being: ""I feel joy when I play" (I4); "Happiness" (I5); "I feel happy" (I6); "Happy and amused" (I7); "Joyful, happy and I'm also having a lot of fun." (I8); "I feel my heart and I feel amused" (I9); "I feel my playfulness. I feel happy!" (I13). In this context, the interviewed children also expressed feelings of enthusiasm and satisfaction, due to the interactive and affective components involved in playing, since they are either with their friends or with their families at such moments: I feel that my friends are playing with me (I2); That I'm with my family. That I'm with my whole family (I3); I miss Mateus (I12); Playing with Azenha (I1) (presumably a friend).

Using the observational records, we can also reinforce the same idea of interaction being linked to pleasure: "While two children perform a puppet theatre, made up by themselves, three children play the audience (…)". Relationships between children and between children and adults foster children's learning and well-being. One interviewed child (I14), when expressing something negative about playing by themselves, also revealed and reinforced the value of the interactive and affective components of playing displayed by most of the children that were interviewed: "I feel lonely. (And here at the school?) Here at school, I don't feel anything" (I14).

Discussion

The contexts for childhood establish themselves as favourable and stimulating environments for the child's action. The adult takes responsibility for creating and providing such contexts for the child to play. It is within this stance that this study fits, in an attempt to understand the child's perspective on their action. The study was guided by the need to listen to the child and their opinions. A methodological design that takes into account and registers the child's perspective, allows for new ways of analysing reality and, consequently, an intervention that is more adjusted to the children's interests. Realising that this methodological design does not allow generalisation, it is possible to reflect on the data collected and, when comparing it with theory, to develop intervention indicators and confirm evidence, seeking to contribute to richer contexts for childhood. The data collected shows the need and interest that the child placed on play partners. Interaction seems to be preferably with friends from class and close relatives. These new times also raise an alert to the need to promote the outdoors as a privileged space for intervention and seem to highlight these contexts as preferential. We are probably keeping the children closed inside the house and the classroom for too long. Another aspect that warranted our attention was related to the use of toys according to gender, a reality theoretically addressed by Holmes (2011) and Gaskins, Haight, and Lancy (2007) in the literature review. The child's statement about dolls being toys associated with girls reflects a culturally rooted concept that spans generations.

Based on children's contributions, some recommendations for childhood intervention are outlined in an exploratory way:

1. To discuss in a broader way, among professio-

nals of Early Childhood Education, the concept of playing, from both the child's and the adult's point of view, in order to raise awareness of what playing is, as expressed by children, as opposed to the 'disguised' playing activities that fill some children's daily lives;

2. To create conditions for kindergarten to become a true place of childhood, a place of well-being, satisfaction and leisure for the child, where the place to play is to be honoured;

3. To recognise that playing is part of the child's nature, giving up the countless activities focused on early schooling of the child;

4. To create opportunities for the child to make their choices by playing alone or with partners, friends and/or family. Playing accompanied by parents (or other relatives), in a Kindergarten context, implies letting families in and, systematically, creating spaces and moments that allow playing without production goals, but rather with the aim of being freely with the child. It is also recommended to raise the awareness of family members to arrange playtime with the child in the context of their homes. In this sense, it is necessary to remind parents of the balance between the hours that children spend in kindergarten and at home;

5. To provide opportunities at school for the child to choose between playing with or without toys;

6. To create, on a daily basis, playing conditions that favour the fulfilment of a wide range of motor functions. To this end, use the outdoor spaces of the kindergarten, and also the resources available in the community. Use such resources for recreational purposes, diversified leisure experiences and active motor activities which the playgrounds and the size of kindergarten classrooms usually do not allow. These contacts with diverse outside realities also foster physical contact, cooperation and interaction with others, especially when the adult realises that their group has a very sedentary environment at home and in kindergarten spaces;

7. To provide, on a daily basis, symbolic play and 'make believe' dynamics that, being typical of this age, foster an interaction enriched by the contact with peers;

8. To critically reflect on the selection of toys and resources provided to children by kindergartens. More broadly, it is recommended that adults make conscious choices of materials, as what they make available in kindergarten is also central to the child's development;

9. To be mindful of time management and learning routines, which are two aspects to consider in kindergarten. Adopting a schedule conditioned by the programming and intentions of the adult and forgetting that the child has the competence to participate, have a voice and express their opinions, which is their right, is not a good practice;

10. To balance the time for curricular learning, to be occupied by adult's guidance/obligations, and moderation in the time dedicated to extracurricular activities, which fill up the day of some Kindergarten children's groups. Time spent in such a manner conditions the moments and opportunities for the child to play spontaneously and naturally, with consequences on relevant aspects of their development.

We consider that the concept of play may vary having in mind the influence adult's speech can have in child's answer. However, from our own perception over the years, we tend to think that the opportunities children have to play "their own way" in urban contexts, such as the one in this research, have been decreasing. These concerns should continue to form the basis of research in early childhood education. From our exploratory approach, further research should be developed seeking on the one hand, to understand the concept of play from the point of view of the early childhood educator and from the point of view of the child and, on the other hand, to seek to recover opportunities for play in urban contexts.

This study highlights the child's outlook on their daily life, their opinion, the choices and opportunities provided by the adult. Their wishes do not always fit in with the adult's intentions. At a time when adults have less and less time to play with children, the child's point of view calls on adults to constantly reflect on time, spaces, resources, and interactions. Most importantly, it highlights the child's opinion and contributes to a more enlightening listening.

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