

“Playing saves us”: *playful dimension and resistance in USP kindergartens/preschools**

Patrícia Dias Prado¹

ORCID: 0000-0002-8790-1594

Viviane Soares Anselmo¹

ORCID: 0000-0002-6128-8111

Abstract

By investigating the possibilities of recovering the playful dimension of teachers working with young children, a main requirement for teaching, this article presents and discusses teachers' testimonies on their concepts and actions regarding plays/game, as well as observations of school days in one of the kindergarten/preschools of Universidade de São Paulo (USP). To do so, we did a qualitative case study with a group of 5-year-old children and their teacher, in addition to collective moments with the other children and teachers. We also conducted semi structured interviews with the observed teacher and the only male teacher in the staff. Moreover, we collected and analyzed documents, such as the Political Pedagogical Project of the institution. Data analysis was done articulating the Brazilian and foreign production of recent researchers on the field of childhood education pedagogy and social sciences (sociology and anthropology), and on the interface with arts, mainly corporal ones, in early childhood. When trying to understand how an education of sensitive listening and children protagonist, focused on the creation of playful spaces, times, and relations took place, we could see ways of fighting and territories of dispute for the right of kindergarten/preschool and, therefore, a reference and a resistance in favor of Brazilian Early Childhood Education.

Keywords

Early childhood education – University kindergarten/preschool – Plays/games – Teaching – Resistance.

1 – Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo/SP, Brasil. Contato: patprado@usp.br; vivianselmo4@gmail.com.

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Introduction

Play, despite being defined as a key axis in the educational work in Early Childhood Education (BRASIL, 1995 and 2009), finds many barriers in the institutions, as its elements can be considered antagonist to the learning objectives considered priorities (BROUGÈRE, 2002). Often, there is no space for uncertainty, to the unexpected, and the surprise that characterizes a game; not even for the children, who would have the right to play, but to whom are imposed tasks considered more important, productive, and serious by the adults who, on their turn, were also submitted to the rationalization of life, the denial of play, and the detachment from childhood, considered a non-productive phase to the capital.

Nowadays, during the pre and in-service teacher training, as well as in the pedagogical practices and discourses focused on Early Childhood Education, the actions that try to school the bodies and impose an adult centric condition of seriousness, productive, and maturity (PRADO, 2012) have been appearing earlier, despite the languages of the body, gestures, and movements – the leading and legitimate way for younger children to communicate (BUFALO, 1997; PRADO, 2009).

Recent researches on the playful dimension as a requirement to be a teacher in Early Childhood Education (GHEDINI, 1994; PRADO, 1999; FERNANDES, 2014; ANSELMO, 2017) and dance and theater for the training teachers in this segment (GOETTEMES, 2013; PRADO; SOUZA, 2017) show that the programs of pre and in-service teacher training are not enough to break with a lifetime formation logic, based on capitalism ideals of seriousness, rationality, and productivity (MARCELLINO, 1990).

Thus, to think about young children and their invasive and scandalous corporeity, which contraposes with the adult rationality learnt and incorporated to control emotions and physical sensations (SIEBERT, 1998), implies to review what Early Childhood Education daily imposes and reflect on the challenges posed to the professionals during their practices with the children.

Therefore, to resume the playful dimension is to value the playful being we were and that children provoke us to be, from and within multiple languages, as highlighted by Richter (2017, p. 14):

To be playful from and within language, from the everyday games with objects, toys, words, sounds, traces, silences, ground, water, and much more, breaks with the conventions of language to embrace them again with the language of body-empathy. To be playful implies demanding and questioning language experiences, as only when we let ourselves open to new interpretations – ruptures and reconnections – we can take forward our own future. This is the game: the joy of thought expansion. Play with meanings refers to the creative and inventive force of all that is done for the value itself, for no other reason, no 'previous knowledge, but to be where you are – here and now, that is, the 'not knowing yet'. This is the experience; this is the play.

Resuming the playful dimension is to make yourself open to these ruptures and reconnections, to rediscover with playfulness and with childhood language experiences, making ourselves corporally available to feel what is not previously known, provocations

of our state of presence and the children's (MILLER, 2014). However, it is important to highlight that there is no singular or universal playful dimension, but playful dimensions that can be diverse and part of a cultural and social system.

This dimension, however, seems to be increasingly distant from the adult world and, consequently, from teachers' actions, as shown by the previously mentioned researches, making fundamental the discussion on the possibilities to (re)construct it on adults, together with the children.

Aiming to investigate the possibilities to resume playful dimension and body communication in the professionals working with young children, from the children themselves, in this study², we looked for institutions whose school day had times, spaces, and relations which could favor plays/games, to discuss the following questions: which are the possible contributions of the different languages in the everyday routine of an institution of Early Childhood Education to (re)construct the playful dimension in the professionals working in these places? What formative possibilities could favor this corporal availability, a playful dimension that consider the bodies, movements, gestures, theatrical and dance languages, among other forms of expression and communication? How to learn from what children teach, having their bodies as references?

From this, we defined as the field of research one of the kindergarten/preschools of *Universidade de São Paulo* (USP), considering the concept of childhood and education of the institution, as a possibility to find and investigate proposals involving games in the everyday lives of girls, boys, and teachers, in an educational and collective context in the public sphere. Besides this, there is a consolidated history of this institution to welcome formations and researches in different areas: 64 academic works in 5 years, according to data from the *Comissão de Mobilização de Pais e Funcionários das Creches da USP* (2015).

The research production in the field of pedagogy in Brazilian Early Childhood Education, from the social studies of childhood, revealed in the last years an emerging need to decolonialize the researches (ABRAMOWICZ; RODRIGUES, 2014; FARIA et al., 2015) which only reinforce the absences and denounce the, sometimes, precarious conditions of young children education in kindergartens and preschools. Therefore, the field, as well as the research presented in this article, also aim to appoint fields of research that are references in Early Childhood Education to break with prejudices, stereotypes, to scientifically advance educational concepts and practices, in the researches and in policies.

The article presents the analysis of data collected through a qualitative case study, which aimed to portray a reality in action, in a complex and contextualized way (LUDKE; ANDRÉ, 1986). The study was done through the observation of the school day of a group of young girls and boys and their teacher, as well as collective moments with all the other children and professionals, with a special highlight of informal conversations with the children and of the proposals involving games, which were later registered in a field notebook. The participant observation implies knowing how to listen, hear, see, use all senses (WHYTE, 2005), in an exercise of perception, penetration, participation, and

2- The result of a master's dissertation (ANSELMO, 2018).

interaction (MARTINS FILHO; PRADO, 2011) with the subjects of the research as a key part of the observation process.

The observations took place during a year, twice a week, and covered different situations in which all children from 3 to 5 years old were present, as the moments of entry or in the park, situations in which it was possible to be with the whole staff of teachers in action, besides witnessing the gatherings and interactions between girls and boys of different ages.

One of the ways to analyze the field observations was to elaborate scenes, in which some situations were described and discussed in more details. Besides this, as another data source, we recorded semi structured interviews with the first studied teacher and with another (male) teacher, with a pre-established script written based on the first observations made and with their authorization.

The kindergarten/preschools at USP: pioneering and excellence in Early Childhood Education

The history of kindergarten/preschools in the *University of São Paulo* started with the workers' revindications and fights to have a space for their children, since 1965 (PPP, 2013). Ten years later, after a historical baby parade, the first educational unit started to be implemented, the central kindergarten/preschool, which started to work July 1982. The 250 places were open to the children of students, professors, and University personnel.

The kindergarten/preschools of USP - Central and West (in *campus* Butantã, São Paulo), Saúde (at *Faculdade de Saúde Pública*, São Paulo), São Carlos (at the *campus* of São Carlos/SP), and Carochinha (at the *campus* of Ribeirão Preto/SP) are managed by the *Divisão de Creches* (Kindergarten Division), part of the *Superintendência de Assistência Social* (SAS - Social Assistance Sector), responsible for offering support services and social benefits towards students' permanence, personnel, and faculty.

These kindergartens/preschools are model educational spaces, nationally and internationally prominent in teacher training, research, and educational proposals together with children, families, university community, and beyond, establishing a model in the search for an emancipatory Early Childhood Education.

The pioneering and excellence of these spaces reveal a concept of childhood and young children education described in the political-pedagogical project (PPP) of the institution:

The kindergarten/preschool has been constructing a model of service and education in which children are the main focuses. This means that in the various situations favored by the institution prevails the assumption that each child is a unique being, with a life history, and a particular way to relate with the world. (Researched kindergarten/preschool, PPP, 2013, p. 8).

Beyond the documents that guide the work of the researched kindergarten/preschool, as the PPP (2013), the conception that each child is unique and the main focus of work was evident in all moments of the study: in informal conversations, in field observations, and

interviews with teachers. In these moments, the value given to plays/games, as a child's right and a privileged situation of teachers' work, was intense in the observations of young children, teachers' corporal availability, and the resume of their playful dimension.

This pioneering marks the perspective of play as aesthetic and cultural (VIEIRA; GOZZI, 2010), confirmed in several researches done in the kindergartens/preschools from USP (CORSI, 2010; MACEDO, 2010; PRADO, 2008, 2015, 2016; PRADO; SOUZA, 2017), in the participation of the school staff in important events in the educational area, as well as during the guided visits from other institutions they have received throughout the years, reinforcing and consolidating its role as a key reference to the academic community, and the scientific developments to the essential political and social fights in favor of Early Childhood Education (ARELARO, 2005).

According to a survey done by the *Organized Committee of Parents and Workers for the Kindergartens/Preschools in Universidade de São Paulo (2015)*³ (*Comissão de Mobilização de Pais e Funcionários das Creches da USP (2015) to Dossier in Defense of the kindergartens/preschools*⁴ of Universidade de São Paulo (*Dossiê em defesa das creches/pré-escolas da Universidade de São Paulo*), 64 academic works had as an object, or research field, the kindergarten/preschools Central and West, in *campus* Butantã (São Paulo), between 2009 and 2014, including Doctoral thesis, Master's dissertations, Undergraduate researches, and Final Undergraduate projects. Besides this, 105 works were presented by the team of principals, coordinators, and teachers in congresses, seminars, workshops, and 2,231 guided visits, between 2009 and 2014, of education professionals, students, and international visitors.

The playful dimension at scene and children's tips

During the field research it was common that the teachers and principal mentioned the importance of the tips given by the children, in the everyday life of Early Childhood Education, as key elements for new plans and a more meaningful translation of their wishes and interests.

In the Political Pedagogical Project (PPP, 2013) there is a definition of these tips and the objective of the personnel to register them:

The teachers daily recreate their planning, from observing children's movement. This so-called 'children tips' are registered on the back of the plan and, often, transformed in work proposals and/or activities. (Researched kindergarten/preschool, PPP, 2013, p. 26).

If such tips start from children's movement, there is a daily attention to what is said and not said, what is expressed through the body, gestures, actions, sounds, words (from

3- Organized Committee of Parents and Workers for the Kindergartens/Preschools in USP : a movement organized by students' parents and workers who tried to revert the decision to close places for babies and children in the kindergartens/preschools in USP.

4- Dossier in Defense of the kindergartens/preschools in the Universidade de São Paulo: A written material organized by the Committee with relevant data and documents to defend the continuation of kindergartens/preschools in USP. Available at <https://crechecentraluspcom.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/dossie12.pdf>.

older children), cries, laughter, and emotions, from the relations that are daily established with different materialities, games, times, spaces, and partnerships.

Fabiana⁵, teacher of the group of 5-year-old children observed during the research, is a Historian and undergraduate student in Pedagogy, she has worked for over 10 years in the kindergarten/preschool. In one of the interviews given, she highlighted the challenges involving this daily listening and observing of the tips given by the children:

- We observe all the time the plays, so you see what they are doing, what they are saying, what they are bringing, and then you can see these tips, really. It is impossible to capture all the tips, because the children bring so many.

So, when we say that we catch the children's tips, we catch some, because there are many; so, from those many, we can translate some. For example, the really small ones, that can't speak orally, they have other type of tips... I always say that it is not a lack, not speaking is not a lack, in fact what they [very young children] have is one more resource, corporal, that we grow up and stop using it, we immobilize this body communication that is so important. They talk a lot this way, so we need to have a very different attention, very particular, much more sensitive, to listen much more attentively to notice what they are "saying" and also to understand that, which are also hypothesis that you have and that can be many things. (Interview with the teacher, March 17th, 2016).

By highlighting how much we stop using the body as a resource, abandoning it as a way to express and communicate, typical of very young children, the teacher mentions the importance of an availability to relearn with them, from a very specific observation, sensitive, particular, and different – in her words. It is exactly this availability of adults-teachers referred by Faria (1999), which require time, theoretical knowledge, patience, and discipline to observe without interfering, to (re)learn how to play, recovering, and recovering their playful dimension from the present.

Therefore, it is important to "nourish our inventive capabilities", believing in the complexity of the expressive capabilities of the little ones, that can "lull creational processes in others, not only in children" (GOBBI; PINAZZA, 2014, p. 38).

When we say resume, recover and, mainly reconstruct – considering the etymology of the term that is "to put together again" (from the Latin *re*, "again, once more"; *con*- "together"; and *struere*, "to pile up, build, erect")⁶, we can understand that it is a search for the playful dimension in each of us, considered key to effectively connect with young children. Thus, it is not about an exterior search, that needs to be reached but, as highlighted by teacher Fabiana, what we let ourselves experience when we become adults.

It refers to the daily exercise of encountering the whole transgressing potential of playing/games, of intensively living ludic experiences in the everyday life, considering the definition of ludic experiences presented by Richter (2017, p. 13):

5- Names are fictitious.

6- English definition from < <https://www.etymonline.com/word/construct> > Accessed on December 4th, 2019.

[...] openness to the cultural game of signify and produce meanings with others in a time when the playfulness of the surprise and unexpected can take place and weave realities in the common world.

In the researched institution, the unusual events, full of uncertainties and surprises, are normally welcomed and valued by the teachers, what allows an opening to important spaces within the plans and the transgression of linear times, as can be seen in the following scene:

Scene 1:

There was a previous agreement between the teachers and children that in that day, before the juice break, they would watch a film that the children have been asking to watch. For those who did not want to see it, they created other options and spaces of games/plays, but many children, of different ages, opted to participate in the coziness of the "cinema", with mattresses and pillows spread on the floor. By the end of the session, some children started to pile up some of the mattresses and tried to jump over them, jumping high, and falling, laughing a lot with the different possibilities of fallings. Teacher Fabiana stood up to turn off the television, when she turned to look at the game, she observed for a while. A child saw that she was observing and invited her to try, an invitation that was promptly accepted. The game lasted a while, the teacher, girls, and boys experiencing the pleasure and joy of jumping and falling in different ways. (Research notes, September 8th, 2015).

The teacher's plan did not include this play/game that took place, changing the times and proposals previously predicted by her. Her view on children's ideas and creations and her availability to follow the time of their actions, beyond the chronological time, allowed her to experience unexpected moments with the children, typical of plays. Her participation in the play was marked by a genuine commitment to pleasure and freedom (BENJAMIN, 1984) provided by the moment.

Often, play is set aside in the interactions of adults and children, prevented to appear in the everyday life of educational institutions as a human dimension (BORBA, 2014). Playing, according to Huizinga (2001, p. 11), is characterized by a voluntary, free activity, a possibility to "scape real life to a temporary sphere of activities with its own guidance", considering a satisfaction that is own its own realization, a break from everyday life. Besides this, it

[...] adorns life, expanding it, and in that extent, becomes a need for the individual as a vital function and for society, due to the meaning it encloses, its signification, its expressive value, and social and spiritual associations, summing up, as a cultural function. (HUIZINGA, 2001, p. 12).

Therefore, it is not an activity exclusive to children, but a human dimension, in which the players' initiative (be them children or adult) connect them to the search for pleasure and fun (BROUGÈRE, 2008).

When dealing with elements related to children and adult games, Brougère (1999) highlights that it is not children on one side and adults on the other, but other factors that influence the possibilities of play/game.

We witness the domination of the game [among adults] and the apparition of new forms of simulation that replace the pretend play of the young child. The characteristics remain the same but are expressed in different forms and content. (BROUGÈRE, 1999, p. 141).

About this, one day at the researched preschool, a teacher was drawing a giant hash game with chalk on the floor, excitedly telling the children around her what were the rules of the game and inviting them to play. Many children participated in the game, showing interest and curiosity, presented ideas that gave new meanings to the traditional of hash, with other shapes beyond those presented by the teacher. The exchanges that took place among the participants were very intense and the teacher seemed to enjoy the moment, celebrating the points scored, giving tips, and telling them how good she was in that game when she was a child.

That does not mean becoming a child again, or to be able to play exactly like them, but to consider that it is possible and important that both can share a ludic culture (BROUGÈRE, 2008; BORBA, 2014). It also relates – especially in the educational everyday life of the institutions in which takes place those privileged encounters between teachers and children of different ages–, to play/game as a fundamental axis in the interactions and education (BRASIL, 1995, 2009). Everyone, with their different specificities, can learn together during games, re-appropriating themselves of the games and creating diverse types of knowledge.

As Brougère (2008, p. 23), we understand ludic culture as a “set of rules and significations typical of the game that the player acquires and masters in the context of the game”. According to the author, the game is:

[...] the place of emergence and enrichment of this ludic culture, the same that makes game possible and allows to progressively enrich the ludic activity. The player needs to share this culture to be able to play. (BROUGÈRE, 2008, p. 23).

Thus, the actions of reliving, resuming, and reconstructing the playful dimension in the encounter with children, from the adult centric condition in us and recover the sleeping childhoods in ourselves, becoming an exercise of coming and going between them and an attempt to understand them.

When we recover our playful dimension, we deny the historic heritage of the pedagogues that, according to Ferreira-Santos (2014, p. 3), “do not know how to play. Much less dance. Nothing farther to our African-Indigenous roots of plays and dances”. For the author, plays/games are “the epistemological model per excellence of the human species: experimentation, without which, we do not put into motion the imagination and creative processes” (FERREIRA-SANTOS, 2014, p. 4-5).

In the next episode, about a gathering in the researched institution, the playful dimension of all involved is at play, involving body languages and taking them as principles (BOLONHENSE, 2003), in an exchange that, literally, has put into motion creation processes. Ostrower (1999, p. 142) defines creative processes as global constructive processes that “involve the whole personality, the way a person differs within themselves, of ordering, and relate with themselves and with others”. Create is structure, communicate, integrate meanings, and convey them.

The same author affirms that, for children, these processes take place in a particular way, because:

[...] creativity is manifested in all its loose, diffuse, spontaneous, imaginative actions, on playing, dreaming, associating, creating symbols, faking reality and that in the end it is nothing but real. For the child, creating is living. (OSTROWER, 1999, p. 127).

Scene 2:

The moment in the patio is finishing and all are organizing the toys, putting away the costumes and materials used. Fabiana and Marcelo step away from the group for some minutes and return carrying instruments: she has a tambourine; he has a drum. As they start to play, with a song known by all, the children and the teachers get closer, little by little, creating a great circle. “At the sea there is sand... Sand! There is sand in the see... Sand” There is good sand.... Sand! For us to sift...”. The voices are mixed with claps, drums, children from all ages and adults go in and out of the circle, creating dances and role plays, in a corporal, playful, and dancing experimentations, which died down little by little, leaving an atmosphere of euphoria and pleasure in the groups going to their classes. (Field notes, September 8th, 2015).

In this scene, the forms of communication and the construction of meanings and sensations was intense among people from different ages and in different moments in their creative processes. Processes of continuous development, involving the “ordering and configuring faculty, the ability to approach in each lived moment the unicity of experience and interconnect it to other moments, transcending a particular moment” (OSTROWER, 1999, p. 132).

When retaking this human dimension on children’s everyday life, we move forward in the search for the under-construction identity of Early Childhood Education teachers, which considers play/game, on the interface with arts, a fundamental axis in the relations and the educational work in early childhood. Play presupposes “the ability to consider an action differently, because the potential partner will have given it a particular communication value” (BROUGÈRE, 2010, p. 105).

In this sense, playful bodies would be available to share a ludic culture, to surprises, and to the unpredictability of this special communication – the body communication, stated by teacher Fabiana–, which can be found in other ways in the everyday life of the institutions, knowing themselves, transgressing the seriousness and productivities of our society and enjoying their human potentialities. It would be

[...] refusing what you simply are, to interact with other and question what can exist beyond stable patterns. These decision-making demands simultaneously curiosity and trust in the world to throw yourself into it. Therefore, it is not the domain of children, by a cultural expression that specify humans. (RICHTER, 2017, p. 15).

According to Brougère (2008), the experiences and interactions in ludic culture vary according to the different social environments, ages, gender, among other aspects associated to the construction of the history of each individual or group, resulting in different ways and not a single line of development through which all would pass.

Reconstructing playful dimensions when planning, proposing, observing, registering, reflecting, and (re)planning, in a cycle that is daily redone and reconstructed when working with children in kindergarten/preschool, means breaking with the capitalistic logic of productivities and seriousness (MARCELLINO, 1990), in which body languages lose their values for a mechanized action, with tasks to fulfil automatically.

A great obstacle, [...] is considering the action of playing as useless faced the technical and instrumental tendency of a global market guided by the profit logic. A logic of economic growth that also guides an educational program towards the acceleration of productivity and success. (RICHTER, 2017, p. 15).

In this profit logic, “worker’s body is not only an alienated body, but a body deformed by mechanization and the precarious conditions to move” (GONÇALVES, 2005, p. 63). It is no coincidence that “we grow up and stop using it, we immobilize this body communication”, as affirmed by teacher Fabiana during her interview.

As bodies can be understood as social institutions, they have history. A history that is not general, of all bodies, times, and societies, but a specific history in a particular society, in a specific time in different institutions in the same society, showing that today’s bodies are different from those from yesterday (RODRIGUES, 1987).

The challenge posited by Fabiana, the teacher interviewed, is trying to understand what children say with their bodies, from our own adult corporeity, immobilized by a lifelong formation that favors productivity over creation and free body expression. According to Gonçalves (2005), we see in school the characteristics of a civilizing process to formalize human actions, trying to dissociate them from corporal participation, privileging abstract cognitive operations, “disconnecting them from concrete sensorial experiences, also forgetting the existential meaning of the present due to an abstract future” (GONÇALVES, 2005, p. 36).

Rodrigues (1987) highlights how education marks children themselves, while Daolio (2000) defines gestures and movements as symbolic expression of the values accepted in a society, passed from a generation to another. Throughout our lives and experiences, in a historic, social, and political context, our stories are been engraved in our bodies, as these:

[...] are themselves sociopolitical, cultural, and historical nets of relations. All that we teach and learn in/through our bodies will, consequently, affect the sociopolitical and cultural relations we take part. (MARQUES, 1997, p. 76).

Therefore, the experiences lived inside and outside the educational institutions, inserted or not in formal contexts of education, as kindergarten and preschools, will mark our bodies and the ways we build our corporality, in relation to a certain education, culture, and society, which we also, simultaneously, build.

“Playing saves us”: ways of fighting and resistance in favor of Early Childhood Education

During the field research, the researched kindergarten/preschool attended 55 children, in classes with a small number of students and a new organization of two educators for each group, due to amount of non-used school places in that moment.

This arrangement and dynamic took place because, despite the excellence in children's education evident during the research, the kindergarten/preschools of USP were (and still are) fighting to continue their work for the community.

In 2015, one of the main fights in all units started when SAS stopped the admission of new children, even after the admission process. According to the beforementioned *Dossier in Defense of the kindergartens/preschools in the Universidade de São Paulo*, the main reason alleged to cut those places was the Incentive Program for Workers' Resignation (PIDV- *Programa de Incentivo à Demissão Voluntária*), created as a strategy to mitigate the financial crisis in the university. However, according to the same document, the program had a small impact and the number of existing workers would still allow serving a much higher number of children than the amount of places open for the community, indicating the start of a dismantling of the kindergarten/preschools.

Faced by the decision of not opening places, justified by SAS and the Rectory of USP, through PIDV, the managers of the kindergarten/preschools mobilized themselves with proposals to attend the new children, whose places were denied by SAS. In this context, parents and staff created the *Comissão de Mobilização de Pais e Funcionários das Creches da USP* (Mobilization Commission of Parents and Workers of USP Kindergartens) (2015), which, together with the associations of parents and workers of each kindergarten, fought and continue to fight to change this scenario, with different actions in favor of maintaining the program of Basic Education in the University, with petitions, marches, and other types of demonstration.

In the end of 2016, some months after finishing the field research, the University Council approved that the kindergarten/preschools could receive children again, a news that was greatly celebrated by the whole community.

However, in the beginning of 2017, one week before the return from vacations, the rectory of the University did not enforce the decision of the University Council and determined the closing of one of the kindergartens, transferring the enrolled children to another unit. They informed the families and workers few days before the children

returned to school. Faced by the seriousness of the situation, the community of workers and families decided to occupy the space of said kindergarten/preschool, protesting for months against the closing and the arbitrary way this took place, even forbidding a truck to remove the school furniture.

In the same period, a call was opened to receive new children in one the kindergartens/preschools, but with a much lower number than possible: from 700 viable places, only 210 would be filled.

In March 2016, when the kindergarten occupation completed 64 days, a mandamus was given in favor of the Association of Parents and Workers, accepting their demand to reopen the kindergarten/preschool that had been arbitrarily closed. Until the end of 2017, the mandamus was still not enforced by the University and the community continued to occupy the space and to organize events to gather support to demand from the rector the full enforcement of the legal decision.

In 2017, in this context of occupation and manifestation to enforce the mandamus, the children and teachers of the researched kindergarten/preschool started to attend another unit—called by the Rectory, according to the interviewed teacher, unified kindergarten/preschool.

Then, a second interview was done with both teachers previously interviewed and observed (Fabiana and Marcelo) to discuss with them this new context of the kindergarten/preschool. Both described the difficulties faced during 2017, when the peaceful manifestations in favor of children's rights received violent and truculent answers. They highlighted how turbulent was the transition to the other unit

- The “Unified Kindergarten”, as it is called by the Rectory, does not consider the history of each institution. There is a reason why it is this kindergarten/preschool, there is a reason to be that other [kindergarten/preschool]. There is a history. And people were affected by that, with this change. Each worker reacts in a way, some more apathetically, others with more fight. But the conflicts emerge.

[...] The violence of this change, I wouldn't do that to anyone, this “shoving down our throats”. We, who work with education, it is exactly what we don't want to do with the other. (Fabiana, September 29th, 2017).

- There were two years of fighting and we could admit the children this year, however the way this was done can be questioned [...] But it is already an effort that encourages our resistance. Now we all are here, building our identity. There is all the baggage and history of this kindergarten/preschool, there is the baggage of the other one [the researched kindergarten/preschool], that has at least 10 years less, but that has a strong mark, an identity as well. So sure, this merge causes conflict.

It is a moment of identity construction but, at the same time, with the legal issues, with the win of the researched kindergarten, we are also fighting to make this achievement worthwhile. There is the injunction, it is on and USP is paying a fine.

We have a consideration for that place [the researched kindergarten/preschool]. I can talk for myself... I have a special consideration for that place. So we have to see how we will celebrate

and savor this victory... the space is there. The injunction was given. USP has, somehow, to enforce it. (Marcelo, October, 27th, 2017).

In this second interview, both teachers talked about how this situation strengthened the community in some way, though it also created several requests of transference – even to areas far from Education – from professionals that did not want to face this wearing scenario. On one hand, a united community strengthened by the fight, as it has not been seen in a long time, according to teacher Fabiana; on the other, a very worrying situation of possible loss of part of the team, what hinders the resistance and the continuation of the service for the children, in the format demanded. About this topic the teachers interviewed highlighted:

- On one hand, we see the collective fading, the relationships wearing out, relations that were not close getting even farther. On the other, people who bought these fights, hands who were already there to act, minds who were there to think how to do, we saw that this was strengthened. We sign Organized Committee for the Kindergartens. We say: "fight for the kindergartens". Then, we ended up forming a community that has really strengthened the relationships. (Marcelo, October, 27th, 2017).

- The community understood that it is not only a kindergarten, a space to let the children, to answer their demands of food, hygiene, and education. It is all that, aligned in place that has a different project of education, at least that tries to do that. It is about thinking a different Early Childhood Education... So all this mobilization is very important. (Fabiana, September 29th, 2017).

When questioned on the way they analyze the playful way to be a teacher in Early Childhood Education, in the context they are living, related to the political, educational, professional situation, both highlighted the importance of their daily encounter with the children to continue to resist, to fight, and finding in their relationships with them a new meaning to follow this path. Fabiana highlighted the sadness felt in the kindergarten/preschool, for a while, with the forced relocation, with episodes of police physical aggression during the manifestations and how children noticed this and positioned themselves.

- All those things children bring to us, the joy...They won't stop! They do have their concerns, but they still want to play, they still want to make some art, to be a handful...And this feeds us a lot! We can't be sad for long in a place like this. With children doing everything all the time...And it is beautiful, isn't it? How they see things differently from us! So, when you dive into the things of the group, of each class, you get the energy to keep going (Fabiana, September 29th, 2017).

- Play is the main language in the kindergarten, it always has been. In this moment, playing saves us. It is what feeds all I've talked about in the first question: the resistance, the fight, the strength... It is what feeds us; it gives meaning. I stop and think: What way is this, where do we go now? What do we do with USP's inflexibility, the difficulties to work, on the conflicts? The

possibility is to be with the kids, playing, to me, it is what gives sense to all this. It is the way I see: I'm here for this. This is what gives me meaning to be here.

For me, personally, I'm in a time of questioning. To me, it is not just the work for the work. Of course, I like what I do, but to what point is it worthy, only doing what you like, in all this context, that is so hard? There is no recognition anywhere! Then it is hard to have the energy, and we know the energy comes from this, from playing. The work more meaningful here (now that I'm with the 3-4-year-old group) was the work to integrate the children focusing on playing with the whole group. (Marcelo, October 27th, 2017).

Regarding plans and future perspectives, both teachers are optimistic and have clear opinions that the fights will continue to be essential, so the teams need to stay engaged and willing to stay, insistently, persistently, and resiliently, as do the children:

- We have many ideas, we have been thinking about many things, many projects for the next year [2018]. The formations, that has been the agenda" First, we tried to solve the problems of this year, more immediate questions, people that want to transfer.

The kindergarten is here, the people are here. Since we were at the other kindergarten/preschool, with many adults and few children, when we were concerned on how it would be, we always said: With 100 or 10, we will guarantee the same work! We have been doing this. There, last year and here too.

We hope to have people that want to innovate, to discuss, reformulate, to re-found the kindergarten. I hope next year will be better than this. We do have projects! (Fabiana, September 29th, 2017).

- The plan is to keep fighting, resisting, continuing to defend, playing, being happy with the children, but the perspective is one of fight, it is not much different from up till now. If we talk about children's admission is an even bigger fight, because we are dealing with the transfer of workers, we are thinking about this, we are dealing with this.

I don't know if it is our job or not to do this, but the community that will be part of the kindergarten in 2018 has to know that the perspective is of fight, of resistance. Of course, there will have joy, and a lot of playing. When I said that our way is through playing, I remembered that one of the manifestations we used to do, that we would talk about the chants in the kindergarten. The interventions we used to do to talk about the kindergarten, the non-admission of children in the kindergarten, were through chants, with families, workers, and children. We would go and do a circle and chant in the restaurant of FEA [School of Economics and Business Administration, and Accounting], for example, and later a small play in which one would speak, than the other even louder, what was going on. So, our way of fighting is this. And the perspective is not much different from what has been happening until now. It is more fight, more battle, more resistance. I reckon that the place of Basic Education in USP is resistance. They had put us in this trench, in this place, and we resist. You can be sure, we won't give up (Marcelo, October 27th, 2017).

This place which has welcome the research and showed such a respect on how they see the children, on what teachers can do with them and the richness of these encounters, in a pioneering institution, a reference on Early Childhood Education, continues to be threatened by the own university which, historically, do not value or recognize the kindergarten's excellency and its place as a reference on national and international Early childhood Education, research, culture, and university outreach.

The daily challenges and the necessary energy to keep fighting together with the children, as pointed out by the interviewed teachers, are the hope of this project, so that all USP kindergarten/preschools, each with their own history, baggage, and identity, can be kept, supported, and recognized as a model of provocation and inspiration to be followed, aiming to consolidate an Early Childhood Education that is emancipating, national, public, collective, from the university, innovative, and scientifically developed.

Final remarks

Thinking on ways to be a teacher of young children means having an openness to look and really see, be able to listen, and be available to feel, to be and really meet them, with their tips, needs, wishes, and expressive manifestations. It means taking stock of all the endless ways to be a child (MACHADO, 2010), to be willing to teach them how to read and write their multiple languages, to be attentive to the contributions of such types of knowledge to plan the educational times and spaces, lived with the protagonism of children and teachers in Early Childhood Education institutions.

The data on the encounters lived in the kindergarten/preschools reaffirm the importance of spaces that welcome young and very young children as privileged places of experimentation and interaction, full of potential to transgress normative, segregating, and school-bound practices, when giving the conditions to do so, with times and spaces to play, the observation and care towards children's creations, allowing children to express themselves in a playful way and through multiple types of language. The researched space persists while resists, despite the political context, and insists on defending children's right to a childhood of playing, an axis of educational work and in-service training, creating a territory of playful and inventive dimensions (RICHTER, 2017), aiming to learn with the children about themselves (SARMENTO; PINTO, 1997).

In this sense, what are the specificities in Early Childhood Education to the professional that daily meets children, with a childhood that:

[...] unsettles what we know (and unsettles the pride of our will to know), as it suspends what we can (and the arrogance of our will of power) as it puts into questions that places we build for it (LARROSA, 1998, p. 185)?

What are the challenges on the training and daily practices of this profession, still under construction (MANTOVANI; PERANI, 1999)? If we are building the specific and needed knowledge in the educational practices with young children, would it not be an

opportunity to re-think what we already know and the ways we act when looking for a pedagogy that respects childhood?

Thus, the sensitive experiences of the bodies, here related to playful creations, appear as essential ways for boys and girls, as well as their teachers, to fully live the possibilities of their playful dimension, supported by the potentialities of their creations and freedom, as requirements to make them happen.

Such creations so intensively observed in the researched kindergarten/preschool through proposals that reveal a powerful model to consolidate a pedagogy of childhood continue, in a way, on the teachers that currently work in another USP kindergarten/preschool. Their ideas, plays/games, their ways of perceiving and meeting with the children continue. We wish that this can also happen by the dissemination of such actions through studies as ours, what we believe reinforces even more this important fight.

As affirmed by teacher Marcelo in one of the interviews “[...] playing saves us”, it is what allows us to learn, in encountering young girls and boys, about them, about ourselves, and about our paths as playful, sensible, and available teachers.

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Patrícia Dias Prado is a Professor at the Education School of Universidade de São Paulo (FEUSP), in the childhood area. Master and Doctor from the Education School of Universidade Estadual de Campinas (UNICAMP), postdoctoral studies on Performing Arts at the School of

Communication and Arts of Universidade de São Paulo (ECA-USP). Coordinator of the Research Group (CNPq) Pesquisa e primeira infância: linguagens e culturas infantis (Research and early childhood: children's languages and cultures).

Viviane Soares Anselmo is a pedagogue, has a Master's in education by the Education School of Universidade de São Paulo (FEUSP). Works with in-service training for childhood teachers. Is a member of the Research Group (CNPq) Pesquisa e primeira infância: linguagens e culturas infantis (Research and early childhood: children's languages and cultures).