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Children and professionals rights to participation: a case study

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the process of praxiological transformation developed in an early childhood education institution, in Portugal, within four activity rooms. It is a single case study using action research, context-based staff development and participatory childhood pedagogy as means to change educational practices. It undertakes thorough dialogues with the Childhood Association pedagogical approach for children learning and teachers' development, as well as with *Effective Early Learning Project* as reference for monitoring and evaluating quality co-construction. This has been a long and complex process that has had positive effects in the transformation of practices (staff development) and on children learning and participation. The reconceptualization of the image of the child has been a key for their right to participate and a professional motivation for educators to change practices.

RESUME: Cette étude analyse le processus de transformation praxéologique développée au sein d'une institution de la petite enfance, au Portugal, comprenant quatre salles d'activité. C'est une étude de cas unique, qui utilise la recherche-action-formation dans un contexte donné ainsi que la pédagogie participative comme supports en vue d'un changement des pratiques. Cette étude assume un profond dialogue non seulement avec la démarche pédagogique de *l'Association Enfant* sur l'apprentissage des enfants et le développement professionnel des E-éducateurs, mais aussi avec le projet *Effective Early Learning*, en tant que référentiel pour superviser et évaluer la qualité co-construite. C'est un long et complexe processus avec des effets positifs pour la transformation des pratiques (développement professionnel de l'équipe) ainsi que pour les apprentissages et la participation des enfants. La re-conceptualisation de l'image de l'enfant a été un moment clé dans son droit à la participation et a fourni une motivation professionnelle conduisant les éducateurs de jeunes enfants à changer leurs pratiques.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG: Der Beitrag schildert Veränderungsprozesse in den vier Räumen einer Kindertageseinrichtung in Portugal. Im Rahmen dieser Einzelfallstudie wurden Aktionsforschung, Teamentwicklung und eine partizipative Pädagogik als Mittel für die Veränderung der pädagogischen Praxis eingesetzt. Dabei fand eine intensive Auseinandersetzung mit dem pädagogischen Ansatz der portugiesischen *Childhood Association* sowie des *Effectice Early Learning Project* statt, die als Referenz für die Beobachtung und Evaluation der Ko-Konstruktion von Qualität fungierten.. Dies war ein langer und komplexer Prozess, der sowohl positive Auswirkungen auf die Praxis der Fachkräfte (Personalentwicklung) als auch auf das Lernen und die Beteiligung von Kindern hatte. Eine Rekonzeptualisierung des Bildes vom Kind wird als

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Schlüssel sowohl für die Beteiligungsrechte von Kindern gesehen als auch als Motivation für pädagogische Fachkräfte, ihre Praxis zu verändern.

RESUMEN: Este estudio investiga el proceso de transformación praxiológico de una institución de educación infantil en Portugal, con cuatro aulas. Se trata de un estudio de caso único, que utiliza la investigación-acción, la formación en contexto y la pedagogía participativa de la infancia como medios para cambiar las prácticas. A través de los diálogos, este estudio se compromete con los planteamientos pedagógicos de la *Asociación Infancia* para el aprendizaje y desarrollo de niños y profesores, también con el *proyecto Effective Early Learning* como una referencia para la supervisión y la evaluación de la calidad co-construida. Este ha sido un proceso largo y complejo que ha tenido efectos positivos en la transformación de las prácticas (desarrollo profesional) y en el aprendizaje y participación de los niños. La reconceptualización de la imagen del niño ha sido la clave para expresar su derecho a participar, y una motivación profesional para que los educadores hayan cambiado sus prácticas.

Keywords: praxiological research; Childhood Pedagogy; Evaluation Methods; Professional Development; Participation

Context of research

This study was developed in a Private Institution of Social Solidarity (IPSS), located in the north-eastern Portugal. The institution was founded in 1945 for educational purposes for children and youths and is managed by a congregation of nuns. The building, a former residential institution for boys, was thoroughly renovated to serve as kindergarten and primary school. In 2008, the institution opened the nursery (from birth to three), a construction made from scratch, next to the kindergarten.

The center works 11 hours a day (from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.), providing extracurricular activities and lunch, to respond to families' needs.

The contextual focus of this study was the kindergarten that has four classrooms with 25 children each, supported by an educator and an auxiliary. The educators are all graduates in early childhood education. One of them is, cumulatively, a pedagogical coordinator.

The children come mostly from familiar contexts consisting of father, mother and one or two children. Most of the parents have stable jobs.

Some conditions were taken into account in the choice of the institution for the development of the research, namely: the willingness of the organization and staff to engage in the project, the openness to change processes and the availability of time for cooperative work.

Theoretical foundations

At the level of staff development this piece of research is located in the socio-constructivistic approach that credits children and adults with competence and rights to participate in their own learning journeys, as well as desire to collaborate with peers and colleagues.

Staff learning and development is conceptualized from an ecological socio-constructivistic perspective that departs from the daily pedagogical situations, problems, challenges to processes of reflect-do-reflect and is aware of the ecological connections between micro and macro contexts. Indeed the study uses the socio-constructivist context-based staff development approach of the Childhood Association (Formosinho and Oliveira-Formosinho 2008).

The teacher education approach developed by the Childhood Association is a context-based approach that is a-here-and-now perspective or a situated pedagogy of teacher education. It assumes that the daily life problems should be the starting point for change processes that through reflexive processes allow the construction of social, interpersonal and intrapersonal consciousness about possible pedagogical modes of promoting voice and participation of children. In Freire's (1979) terms, it is a process of *conscientização* (conscientization) that precedes any transformative processes, developing awareness and consciousness as a basis for the transformation of the educational context (Oliveira-Formosinho and Araújo 2011).

Professionals when supported to look at daily pedagogical situations make a kind of immersion in their ways of thinking and acting to understand their pedagogical meanings and doings.

The Childhood Association approach to childhood pedagogy is called Pedagogy-in-Participation. One of its characteristics is the practice of listening as an active process where actors – children and adults – are involved in the discussion of everyday events and in the development of decisions and meaning-making processes. Children and adults alike are involved in daily decision-making about all the matters that affect their lives in the centre, including research. As participation implies sharing power, this practice is a process of empowerment. At the level of monitoring and evaluation of the overall process, the theoretical support is the Effective Early Learning (EEL) Project (Bertram and Pascal 2004). EEL constitutes a developmental evaluative strategy that supports the monitorization of change processes at the levels of both teacher and children's learning. It represents a holistic approach to change processes because it encompasses research strategies for the transformation of context, processes, outcomes. Child observations, adult observations, and interviews are key strategies for data collection at two points in time – the beginning and end of the process – thus resulting in knowledge about achieved gains.

Methodology

This study is carried out within the qualitative paradigm (Guba and Lincoln 2005; Denzin and Lincoln 2006) and is being conducted through a single case study (Stake, 2005, 2007) in the context of an action-research process. It takes the form of action research according to which all those involved can contribute both to the thinking that informs research and practice and to connected knowledge development (Máximo-Esteves 2008). It represents an experiential trial to follow Formosinho and Oliveira-Formosinho's (this issue) praxiological research path to change and to construct knowledge about change.

The main objectives of the study were defined around the reconstruction of children and educators' images, hoping to create democratic participatory understandings of central actors that will develop a situated pedagogy of respect and learning (Oliveira-Formosinho 2009).

Indeed the staff have been expressing concerns around the low level of self-initiative of the children, the regulatory attitude of adults, and a routinization and repetition of activities.

The study asks a central question: Which professional development strategies support educational transformation for the construction of children's participation and voice in their own learning?

We wanted to identify relevant problems in a specific context, through democratic research, in which educators and the researcher engaged collaboratively to gather and organize relevant knowledge, analyze data and design interventions for change.

The qualitative approach taken interconnects epistemology, ontology and methodology. The descriptive and interpretive analysis, attempted to access to the perspectives and practices undertaken by the educators at different stages of the process. The researcher/trainer, during the investigation, took an ethical return data with all stakeholders. The study aspires to be a collective narrative of the learning journey.

The process: cycles

The methodological design of this study was configured in a cyclical process of thinking-do-thinking to research and create change. These cycles of research involved different phases and steps interconnect. Nonetheless, the cycle plan was a useful way to summarize the process of change.

The process of change is constituted as a dynamic, interactive and open process that includes the following phases: (1) a flexible plan; (2) act; (3) reflect; (4) evaluate/validate, where we describe and analyze the data, evaluating the decisions made and the effects observed; (5) dialogue in order to share the view with other partners (colleagues, or others). The scrutiny of the community allowed us to validate the research, emphasizing the importance of this methodology be developed within communities of practice.

The first cycle involved the informed consent of all stakeholders (technical staff, children and parents), accomplished through meetings and the preparation of a collaboration protocol. It was also the moment of reconnaissance, conducted through semi-structured interviews, which allowed us to know the beliefs of the stakeholders about the kindergarten. Later, using the child involvement scale and adult engagement scale, the staff evaluated the practices developed in that context.

In the second cycle the staff met monthly as a group to learning and reflects, about the instruments, data collection and socio-constructivist pedagogy approaches. Initially, based on the analysis of the data, the researcher pre-planned questions for reflection and discussion sessions. In a second stage, respecting the learning interests of the team, questions were raised collaboratively. In the context-based staff development approach, the role of the researcher was to prepare materials (texts, videos, photographs, field notes) and anticipate some doubts, leading the group to intentional reflections on childhood pedagogy and using documentation.

In subsequent cycles the planning, acting, observing and reflecting that are central to action-research happened in a more spontaneous than in the earlier cycles, within small changes being points of departure, characterised by uncertainty, unpredictability and irregularity. The process of analysis, reflection and action led the group to another vision of reality, making them more aware of the need for change. This conscientization (*conscientização*) has been complaining about the dialectic process (Freire, 1979) which referred to a new action and deeper understanding of social reality under construction.

Data collection: methods and techniques

For data collection the EEL Project research techniques were mainly used. The data that was gathered was systematically organized in a research portfolio.

The referential EEL (Bertram and Pascal 2004, 2006) has been used in a longitudinal mode. The data collection techniques were used in two moments spaced in time, thus allowing the understanding of the transformative dynamics developed in context. Main EEL techniques used in this study:

- (1) interviews to different actors to understand local actors meanings and their evolution;
- (2) the *Child Involvement Scale* (Laevers 1994), an observation technique which measures the level of a child's involvement in an activity. It is child-focused and attempts to measure the process of learning rather than concentrating on outcomes;
- (3) *Child Tracking Observation Schedule* (Bertram and Pascal, 2006) was used to gain a snapshot of the child's day and provides information of learning experiences;
- (4) the *Adult Engagement Scale* to evaluate the interaction between the practitioner and the child, an important factor in the effectiveness of the learning experience. This instrument measures three aspects of the adult's behaviour that affect the child's learning – sensitivity to the child, stimulation of learning processes and autonomy granted to the child (Laevers 1994).

The collective learning journey

The research group decided to make time available for the debate and learning of participatory pedagogies for children and adult learning including democratic monitoring and evaluation strategies. The process was conducted within the Childhood Association context-based staff development approach presented earlier in this study.

Childhood socio-constructivistic pedagogies under discussion gave rise to decisions about pedagogical experimentation within activity rooms monitored through the EEL techniques.

Local actors also identified the desire and the need for learning evaluation/research instruments. The first challenges for the research group were then learning about participatory pedagogies and theoretical foundations of the EEL research techniques and the practicalities of their use.

The learning of participatory pedagogies conducted through debates gave rise to experimentation about new modes of doing that were then reflected upon. This has been a long ongoing process reflected in the following table:

As far as the development of learning around research instruments is concerned, the first challenge was related to the interviews. This learning led the participants to reflect on the ethical issues involving its use. The researcher, playing a full role in this process, carried out all interviews of the adult actors in the context. The kindergarten practitioners conducted the interviews with the children.

Learning to observe was another challenge. EEL videos were an important way of learning. We started with *Adult Engagement Scale* following the procedures stated in the EEL manual.

Child Involvement video helped the team to understand the criteria for involvement and then to conduct the coding.

The learning around *Child Tracking Observation Schedule* (Pascal, Bertram, Ramsden, Georgeson, Saunders, and Mould 1998; Bertram and Pascal 2009) led practitioners to understand that there was a direct relationship between how they work and the initiative and involvement of children. Questions were raised and discussed about

Table 1. Professional learning processes.

Key steps in the action-learning	Timings
Step 1. Researchers clarify the project's goals to stakeholders (educators, parents, children).	June 2007
Step 2. Signing of the cooperation protocol.	September 2007
Step 3. Collaborative work of the participants to document and assess the quality of learning. Learning to use the research techniques (interviews, <i>Child Involvement Scale</i> , <i>Adult Engagement Scale</i>). Data collection.	October 2007 to February 2008 Weekly reflections (three hours each)
Step 4. Presentation and discussion of the results.	March 2008
Step 5. Reflections to draft action plans to implement the priorities defined by the group.	March 2008 to April 2008 Fortnightly reflections (three hours each)
Step 6. Developmental action to improve the quality. Workshops about socio-constructivist approaches.	May 2008 to December 2008 Monthly reflection (three hours each) Workshop (30 hours)
Step 7. Collaborative work of the participants to document and assess the changing process.	January to April 2009
Step 8. Reflection on the processes of evaluation and quality improvement. Judgment on the impact of experience.	June 2009

how educational environments can support and challenge children's learning and what the role of adult-child interactions on children's involvement and learning is.

The observation process was not a mere exercise in data collection but created awareness of what was experienced in each classroom, enhancing professional reflection about learning opportunities for children and responsive adults.

The empowerment process of being able to use research instruments has been very important for the research team and has created a shared language, thus facilitating debate and decision-making processes for change.

Later, the research team identified that the learning of pedagogical theories and of the EEL instruments caused the emergence of feelings of anxiety and restlessness but also wonder and comfort.

Decisions about pedagogical experimentation with these and other new ideas were taken into account and the process of reflection-do-reflection entered an experiential systematic approach to change. This has been a long and complex process that will now be analysed through two 'windows': *Child Involvement Scale* and *Adult Engagement Scale*.

Windows to change processes: children involvement and adult engagement

Context-based democratic staff development is a complex and slow process that achieves long term results (Formosinho and Oliveira-Formosinho 2008). At the level of praxiological research, there is the need to research reflexive processes of transformation in order to gain knowledge about change processes (Formosinho and Oliveira-Formosinho this issue). Apart from the researcher field notes, the EEL process research techniques were used to monitor the change process. The triangulation of data gathered by the field notes with the data of the observational instruments constitutes a quality strategy and allows knowledge development.

A large database has been constituted, but for this study two windows to change process are to be used: *Child Involvement Scale* (Laevers 2005) and adult engagement (Laevers 1994).

The *Child Involvement Scale* uses a list of signals that are recorded on a five-point scale. These signals range from level 1 – ‘where a child may seem absent and display no energy, activity is simple, repetitive and passive,’ to level 5 – ‘where a child is concentrated, energetic, and persistent with intense activity revealing the greatest involvement’ (Laevers 2005).

Initially 40 children were observed on two different days, four observations per child were conducted, thus a total of 160 observations ($n = 160$).

The results reveal (see Figure 1) that level 3 was the one that had the highest percentage of observations. The overall level of involvement was 3.11 which represents a value below 3.5 points, indicated by Laevers (2005) as a value to consider in the quality of educational contexts.

The analysis of the child’s initiative revealed the existence of moments in which the children had free access to work areas, while others were to do the activities proposed by the adult. It should be noted that the high number of children per classroom (25) made the choice of work areas more difficult. The average child’s initiative stood at 2.5 which sets a low value on opportunities for choice. The child’s initiative as reported by Laevers (2005) should be strengthened by the quality of materials and encouragement from adults to ensure deeper learning opportunities.

We hoped that this evidence would help the research group to develop a critical view and create the need for transforming the educational environment. Long hours of discussion and experiential learning on creating supportive environments were fed by sources such as *Educating Young Children* (Hohmann and Weikart 2007) and the Pedagogy of Listening (Dahlberg and Moss 2005). The process of recreating the educational environment was long. This was conducted over a three-year period from 2007 to 2009. However, changes were slowly being made and their consequences represented moments of joy for the research team that could see the enhancement of children’s voices.

Later in the process, staff were highly motivated with the children’s involvement in play that was understood as a door to participation.

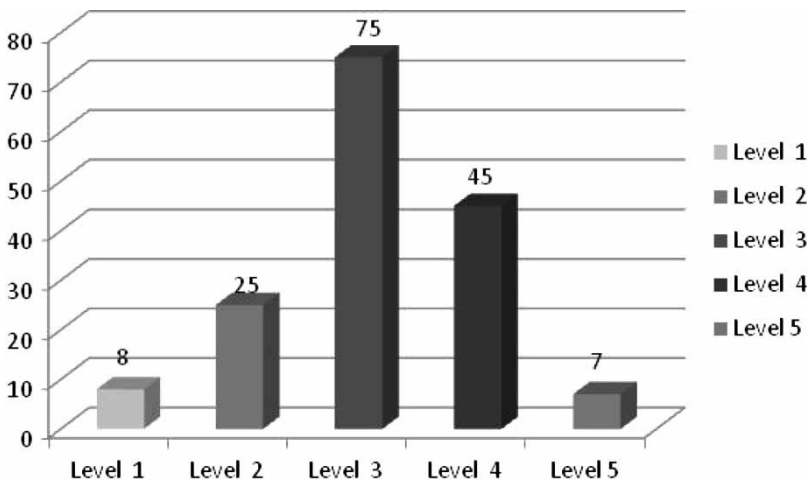


Figure 1. Involvement of children’s 1st moment.

First evidences of respect for the children's voice

In all classrooms, we observed changes in the organization of space, daily routines, and interactions that worked as new possibilities for the adults to listen and respond to the children.

The importance of an enabling environment was so revealing that all educators decided to reorganize it. The first action was to build a plant room that respects certain criteria. Each educator defined areas of interest in sufficient numbers so that children have a choice; ensured the visibility and flow of materials between areas in order to expand the learning experiences of children. Materials were arranged in consistent places and the shelves were tagged with child-friendly labels so that children could get out and put away materials themselves (Hohmann and Weikart 2007)

An intentional daily routine that provides a balanced variety of experiences and learning opportunities was created. Children engaged in both individual and social play, participated in small- and large-group activities, assisted with clean-up, and developed self-care skills.

Children felt safe to communicate their choices and asked for help in their activities. Educators were available to observe children and to support their choices. It seems that connecting to others (peers and children) has become an ethical professional responsibility. Children and educators developed a sense of belonging, encouraged by the relationships of solidarity and respect (Oliveira-Formosinho 2009).

Data analysis from the *Child Involvement Scale*, at the second moment, reveals children initiative and agency.

The data show that children have more initiative. The initiative of the child has a global average of 3.6, showing a gain of 1 point compared to the first time. The changes made in space and daily routine extended the choice of children, the intentionality of their actions and the possibility of sharing them with peers and adults.

The atmosphere of the kindergarten was strongly affected by the relationships among the children themselves and with practitioners. They consciously enhanced a sense of belonging by creating pleasant moments with the group and by helping the children to develop a positive relationship with each other and with the adults around them. The enabling environment that was created had produced significant changes in the children's choices, in their learning experiences, in the interactions with a wide variety of pedagogical materials and persons.

The data on the involvement of the child (Figure 2) show that level 4 starts to dominate the highest percentage of observations reaching 36%, followed by level 3 with a rate of 33% of observations. Level 5 has a higher incidence than previously, being verified in 18% of the observations. Levels 1 and 2 have become less observed, registering an incidence of 2% and 11%, respectively. There is a substantial change in the involvement of children, considering that the sum of the two higher levels of the scale (4 and 5) shows a rate of 54% of the observations, while the intermediate and lower levels (1, 2 and 3) have an incidence of 46%. This means that children felt drawn to the activities, truly interested in them, and driven to engage in them. They have shown a high persistence in solving problems, higher levels of complexity and creativity, demonstrating they worked with confidence and perseverance for incredibly long periods of time. The overall level of involvement at this second moment has an average of 3.6, which shows a gain of 0.5 compared to the starting point.

These results are similar to the studies developed by other researchers, such as Craveiro (2006), which highlight that the improvement of involvement is related to

the enrichment of space and materials, the organization of a flexible and stable daily routine, of humanizing interrelationships, and shared control that promotes freedom, agency, and cooperation. The reflection among children and adults enhances the construction of meanings and leads to creativity.

Field notes describe enhanced interactions of reciprocity. Field notes data show the existence of spaces and times of interaction between the child and his/her peers, the child and the adult, the child and the peer group.

Practitioners focused their practice on social constructivist principles, although they still had difficulties in a congruent professional performance.

To overcome this difficulty, in group sessions the practitioners were asked to reflect on data. Often they tried to justify their thoughts and practice. Sometimes they found in their own justification the necessity to change. Other times this awareness was slower, requiring patience and constant encouragement to lead them to understand the importance of intentional practices (Formosinho and Oliveira-Formosinho 2008).

Increasingly they found ways to engage with the children, observing and supporting their initiated activity and play, getting involved to scaffold and extend learning and play.

The Adult Engagement Scale results

The adult observational data recorded the levels of sensitivity, stimulation, and autonomy displayed by practitioners in their educative interaction with children. A score from 1 to 5 was recorded for each of the three subscales in each observation.

When we compare the results of the *Adult Engagement Scale* from the three domains, taking all scores as a whole, at the first and second moments, we verify an overall increase of 0.9 in all domains (Table 2). The results of the *Adult Engagement Scale*, at the 2nd moment, reveal that the scores range from level 2 to level 5. There was a higher concern with the children's stimulation and autonomy. The values observed in these domains show an increase of 0.1. Nevertheless, the data continues to reveals higher levels on sensitivity (0.7) than in stimulation and autonomy.

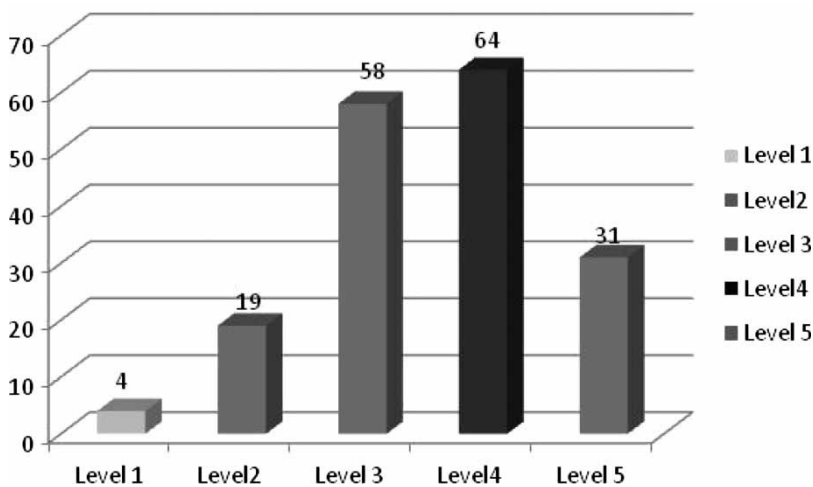


Figure 2. Involvement of children's 2nd moment.

Table 2. Average *Adult Engagement Scale* 1st and 2nd moments.

Domains	Average 1 st moment	Average 2 nd Moment
Sensitivity	3.19	4.06
Stimulation	2.32	3.4
Autonomy	2.69	3.4

There were improvements in monitoring the activity of the child based on listening and open questioning. The practitioners were learning to listen and give voice to children. As Oliveira-Formosinho (2009) pointed out, ‘listening is not about extracting information in a one-way-process but rather a democratic and dynamic approach of collaboratively creating situations that allow meaning making’ (243). This was a complex process which involved the reconstruction of the child’s and educator’s image.

Conclusions and implications for policies and practice

The context-based staff development approach in use encouraged the involvement of teachers in praxiological transformation. Professional practice has been reconstructed with the collaborative support of the pedagogical mediator (the researcher) within a reflexive community.

The reconceptualization of the image of the child has been a key for their right to participate and a professional motivation for educators to change practices. The learnings about participatory childhood pedagogies created the dream of a pedagogy of respect and led to the understanding of changes that are required to build an environment which encourages the involvement of children in decisions, actions and reflections. It also led to an understanding of a collaborative educational environment and the role of respectful adult–child interactions.

The research group slowly constituted itself as a reflexive community that facilitated the debates between the local group of educators and the pedagogical mediator (the researcher). We are all committed to the project and have been working collaboratively for the ongoing reconstruction of praxis, in the process, as researchers.

The atmosphere of dialogue, with its possibility to share ideas and information, encouraged practitioners to reflect about their practices and their beliefs. The practitioners shared their own pedagogical beliefs with peers, subjected them to their scrutiny, questions, critiques, and revision. The pedagogical mediator helped to build a climate for deeper discussions among the research group by introducing pedagogical materials such as texts, videos and even visits to other settings that have already gone through a praxiological research approach to change (Oliveira-Formosinho and Formosinho 2012).

The results of the second set of observations were highly stimulating and caused perplexities and prompted deeper reflections and experimentations. The staff wanted a deeper understanding of their curriculum, of how children construct knowledge and meaning, and how to provide an enabling environment where children could learn in freedom and confidence. The data gathered reveals the new understanding of children as competent persons and active learners who construct complex forms of thought and action.

The reconstruction of the self-image of educators as professionals with agency and creativity has allowed, for the rejection of work sheets and of a ready-to-wear, one-size-

fits-all curriculum (Formosinho 2007). The understanding of the interdependence between children's and adults' images as persons and learners with agency has been a key achievement.

This long process of learning led the participants to realize the importance of participatory childhood pedagogies.

The processes of transformation were created through context-based staff development approach that emphasizes the daily life of the classroom as the focus to identify challenges for transformation. This pedagogical approach to staff development connects children's rights in the activity room to more democratic societies, because it believes in the need to regard small children as citizens.

The organization has established itself as a gathering space for professional development opened to new learning opportunities. The teachers found time to observe, listen to, support and encourage children. Children as agents, together with the adults, were building knowledge, constructing meanings, and co-participating in the daily life of the centre.

The pedagogical mediator (researcher) was able to expand knowledge and create new understandings at the levels of childhood pedagogy, staff development and research methodology. Apart from that, the challenge to create and sustain a research portfolio that systematically and intentionally documented the whole process in its various aspects allowed key understanding about change processes. This professional development approach recognizes the importance of contextual and experiential learning based on the needs and motivation of the practitioners.

This study taught us that working towards praxiological transformation is more than a technical exercise. This requires thoughtful intentional work with practitioners and institutions, where pedagogical democratic ideals that are sought for society must be employed with practitioners themselves.

Because it was a complex process of observation, reflection, research and action, and a pedagogical transformation, the context-based staff development approach requires a lot of practitioners and the mediators that embrace it.

Being a mediator implies being able to create a space of welfare where everyone feels free to express their ideas, is respected by others, pays attention to individual needs in the shared effort to build a learning community.

Therefore, we are more conscious now, that inviting others into this work should be done with regard to the risks involved and the consideration of the consequences that transformation requires (Freire 1979). This work requires openness, respect for others' thinking, time to ensure that change is a conscious act, and the ability to question our certainties. And because of that the mediator need's are also to be supported.

All this is a contribution for the development of new policies for teacher education and staff development that need to support context-based staff development as opposed to mere traditional continuous education processes that are remote from professional settings and provide abstract information selected by the trainer.

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