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## Learning through play

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### Summary

This study aims to investigate the historical and cultural evolution of childhood and understand the role of play today. The research was conducted through a qualitative literature review, using works by authors such as Pavnoski, Oliveira, Sobral, and Ribeiro, in addition to analyzing the guidelines of the BNCC (Brazilian National Curriculum Base). The historical development of childhood reveals that, over time, the child was seen as a "miniature adult," disregarding their own needs and potential. However, with theoretical advances, play has come to be recognized as an essential tool for child development, helping the child to explore, learn, and interact. Piaget and Vygotsky contributed to understanding play as a process that drives cognitive and social development. The research also highlights the importance of the school, which should be a welcoming space that values play, integrating it into the school curriculum in a way that favors meaningful learning. The conclusion reinforces that playfulness is a fundamental right and should be respected and incorporated into pedagogical practices, promoting a more humanized and effective education, capable of forming critical and participatory citizens.

**Keywords:** Childhood. Early Childhood Education. Playfulness. Playing.

### Abstract

Childhood, a fundamental and unique phase of human life, has been the subject of study and reflection throughout history. Understanding the historical and cultural development of childhood allows for a reevaluation of the conceptions society has constructed about the role of children. This critical perspective emphasizes the importance of play, not just as a leisure activity but as a powerful tool for learning and social construction. Despite transformations, many societies still face challenges in recognizing childhood as a stage with its own needs and characteristics. Historically, children were seen as "miniature adults" devoid of subjectivity, which led to pedagogical practices that neglected the natural way children learn and develop. The primary aim of this study is to investigate the historical and cultural evolution of childhood and understand the role of play in the present day. The research was conducted through a bibliographic review using a qualitative approach, analyzing theoretical references from authors like Pavnoski, Oliveira, Sobral, and Ribeiro, who contributed to understanding child development and the importance of play. It also examined the guidelines of the BNCC, which values play as an essential part of learning. The study proposes strategies to integrate play into the educational curriculum, such as thematic corners, games, storytelling, and outdoor activities.

**Keywords:** Childhood. Early Childhood Education. Ludicity. Play.

## 1. Introduction

Childhood, a fundamental and unique phase of human life, has been the subject of study and reflection throughout history. Understanding the historical and cultural development of childhood allows... To rethink the conceptions that society has constructed about the role of children. This critical perspective. This highlights the importance of play not only as a leisure activity, but as a powerful tool. A tool for learning and social construction.

Despite the transformations, many societies still face challenges in recognizing the Childhood as a stage with its own needs and characteristics. Historically, the child was viewed as a "miniature adult," devoid of subjectivity. This view resulted in practices



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pedagogical approaches that neglected the natural way in which children learn and develop.

The main objective of this study is to investigate the historical and cultural evolution of childhood and to understand the role of play today.

First, childhood is analyzed as a historical and cultural phenomenon, influenced by conceptions throughout the centuries. Then, play is discussed as a pedagogical tool. essential. Pavnoski and Oliveira emphasize that play is not just entertainment, but a means for the child to explore, experiment and build knowledge.

Thirdly, the fundamental contributions of Piaget and Vygotsky are presented. to understand the role of play in child development. Piaget highlights the importance of Pretend play is important in the development of thought, while Vygotsky emphasizes social interaction in learning process.

Finally, the role of the school in promoting play is analyzed. Historically, education Early childhood education had a welfare-oriented character, without a focus on holistic development. However, the BNCC (National Common Core Curriculum) It reinforces play as a child's right and a structuring principle of early childhood education. The research It proposes strategies such as creating themed corners, using games, and storytelling. Outdoor activities as effective ways to integrate playfulness into the school curriculum.

## **2. Theoretical Framework / Results**

### **2.1 Historical and Cultural Development of Childhood**

Pavnoski (2019) states that the child is a historical subject who develops through interactions, with the adult being responsible for ensuring a cultural heritage for the child. Upon entering In a pedagogy course, students learn about different perspectives on how human beings learn and reflect. This relates to the concept of childhood. It is understood, therefore, that children have not always been seen as... Being a person with needs of their own; often, they were considered just a miniature adult.

Oliveira (2023) highlights that child psychology demonstrates that this perception is mistaken. Although the child has their own needs in the present, there is still a strong Focus on the future: what this child will become as an adult. Consequently, many adults They direct their efforts toward shaping and preparing her to be a functional adult, often disregarding their current wants and needs.

This historical thinking reflects a marginalization of childhood. In traditional education, The teaching was teacher-centered, with the student reduced to a mere receiver of knowledge. The child was seen as a being without its own culture, incapable of contributing to the process of learning. Over time, educational advances have brought a new perspective, promoting the Children's protagonism in learning. However, a mentality persists that underestimates play. treating it as less relevant than the responsibilities and needs of the adult.



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## **2.2 Playfulness as a Learning Tool**

Pavnoski (2019) emphasizes that the concept of playfulness has different characteristics and interpretations throughout history. For a long time, play was seen as an act without seriousness, restricted to entertainment. As studies on child development advanced, it became clear that play goes beyond mere fun: it is an essential tool for learning and for understanding social and cultural aspects.

Oliveira (2023) complements this discussion by highlighting that, in the past, children were often silenced and their interests disregarded. The school exerted a strong influence, controlling the spontaneous expression of children. Even when play was allowed, there was strict control, compromising the creative freedom of childhood. In more traditional societies, play was also marked by gender and class distinctions, limiting the possibilities for exploration and creativity.

## **2.3 The Value of Play in Contemporary Society**

With the growing debate about respectful education, opposition from some segments is observed, whether out of fear of losing adult authority or due to a tendency to adopt a more nuanced upbringing. Technology, which is increasingly present, also intensifies the discussion about play. Children are spending more time on electronic devices, which raises questions about the quality of their screen time and their impact on child development.

Oliveira (2023) points out that it is during playtime that the child finds a safe environment to experiment, discover, and interact. Even when playing alone, she learns and develops their skills. Play is the primary form of communication for children. In this space, through play, children can express their feelings and ideas without fear of making mistakes. Symbolic actions allow the child to process real-life situations, understand social roles, and develop their problem-solving skills.

## **2.4 Theoretical Contributions to Understanding Play**

Sobral and Ribeiro (2022) analyze different perspectives on play. Piaget recognized the importance of play, especially in the sensorimotor and preoperational stages, highlighting that symbolic play reflects the development of thought and language. Pavnoski (2019) points out that, during the pre-operative stage, the child begins the process of representation, acquiring a more concrete understanding of writing and symbolism.

Vygotsky, in turn, emphasizes the Zone of Proximal Development, highlighting that play is an essential tool for a child to reach their potential. Through play, the child internalizes social behaviors and practices. Play not only reflects development, but also drives it. Pavnoski (2019) synthesizes these perspectives by stating that the child is not just a passive being, but a subject capable of recreating and transforming their reality.

### 3. Materials and Methods

The research was developed through a literature review, using a qualitative approach. The analysis was based on theoretical references from authors such as Pavnoski, Oliveira, Sobral and Ribeiro, in addition to the BNCC guidelines, observing how the document values the Play as an essential part of learning. Pedagogical practices were also analyzed that They encourage playfulness in schools, proposing strategies to integrate play into the curriculum. educational.

### 4. Results and Discussion

In contemporary times, the school plays a crucial role in welcoming children and in valuing play. Oliveira (2023) recalls that early childhood education arose as a result of Urbanization. While working-class mothers sought safe places to leave their children. During work, wealthier families sought early educational preparation for their children. This context resulted in a functional early childhood education, often neglecting the importance of play.

As children grow older, their playtime is often reduced. Oliveira (2023) problematizes the fact that the first year of elementary school is often treated as a break from early childhood education, when this transition should preserve play. as a learning tool.

School can and should be a space for playful experiences. Environments enriched with Toys, varied materials, and open-ended approaches allow the child to explore and build. knowledge in a meaningful way. Interdisciplinary projects that integrate playfulness into Curricula make learning more enjoyable and effective. The BNCC (Brazilian National Curriculum Base) reinforces play as one of the... fundamental rights of the child, guaranteeing experiences that enable development. integral.

#### **To encourage play in the classroom, educators can:**

- Create themed corners with diverse materials for symbolic play.
- Incorporate board games and traditional play into lesson planning.
- Use storytelling as a stimulus for pretend play.
- Promote outdoor activities that encourage movement and exploration.
- Respect children's free playtime, without excessive adult intervention.
- Observe and value the cultural and creative expressions of children during play.
- Working on interdisciplinary projects involving different areas of knowledge through

of playfulness.

While the systematization of knowledge has its value, excessive control can...  
To harm the child's overall development. Free and spontaneous play must be respected.  
as part of the pedagogical process. Oliveira (2023) reinforces that the child possesses their own culture and  
This aspect should be recognized. Pavnoski (2019) concludes that play is a powerful means.  
of transformation and growth, it is essential to guarantee spaces and opportunities for play.

### Final Considerations

This study concludes that recognizing the child as an active subject and creator of culture...  
It is essential for building a more empathetic and inclusive society. Valuing play is key.  
It contributes to the individual development of the child and promotes a more humanized education and  
effective.

The school should be a welcoming environment where play is integrated into the learning process.  
pedagogical approaches, balancing curricular content and playful learning. Thus, playfulness becomes...  
It is configured as a powerful tool to ensure meaningful and enjoyable learning.  
contributing to the development of more confident, critical, and participatory individuals in society.  
through their educators

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