The participatory and inclusive 2-years-old infant classroom.

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Infant school as inclusion site. Learning from a participatory project in a 2-year-old classroom.

Abstract

The objective is to analyse the progress of a two-year-olds classroom in a school in X(Spain) towards an inclusive participation project. The research, carried out over three school years, has been based on the qualitative paradigm and ethnographic approach. A variety of research strategies have been employed: participant observation; discussion groups; informal conversations; ambulation and child conferencing using image elicitation. The results show the transformation process each school year. In the first year, the focus was on transforming the proposals, offering decision-making spaces to children. The second year saw a transition from structured materials to others that were open ended. The third year focused on the research process carried out by the teachers and the transformation the idea of childhood and their role as a teacher. We conclude that teachers who inquiry their educational reality by listening to children embark on a process of transformation towards a more participatory education.

Keywords: pedagogy of inclusive participation; ethnographic approach; participatory strategies with children; classroom for two-year-olds; Practitioner enquiry

Introduction

~~In this article, w~~We present the main results of an ethnographic-oriented research project[1] carried out over three years in a school in ~~Name of~~ city (Spain) that analyses how a classroom with two-year-old children aligns its educational proposal with democracy and inclusive participation. Early childhood education in our context ~~(Name of city, Spain)~~ is recognised as a distinct stage~~, separate from primary school,~~ with an educational value but of a non-compulsory nature for children from birth to six years of age. It is organised based on two cycles (0-3 years and 3-6 years) with obvious differences in relation to: organisation, material conditions, and composition and training of the professional staff. While the second cycle (3-6 years) is located in primary schools, the first cycle takes place in institutions with various purposes (childcare being the most common), a plurality of management modes (although the private model dominates), and heterogeneous forms of financing (mostly by the families). In ~~Name of~~ city, since 2004, classrooms for two-year-olds have been implemented in primary schools. These classrooms take eighteen children, supervised by a teacher (university degree) and an educational technician~~.~~ (professional training). ~~This educational policy, defined as an opportunity to expand early childhood care, shatters the identity of the first cycle and incorporates increasingly younger children into institutions with a school culture that is far removed from their needs and characteristics.~~

The classroom for two-year-olds of our research is located in a public school for children from two to twelve years old in an industrial city~~, the second largest in Name of city~~. It is characterised by receiving students from diverse cultural (Arabic, Chinese,

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Moldovan, Romanian, Russian, Portuguese and Ukrainian), economic and social diversity and because it is a preferred school for children with motor difficulties.

Conceptual framework

Our central purpose is to learn how to move towards an inclusive participation pedagogy in a classroom with children of two years of age. We advocate the need to go beyond rhetoric (changing terms but not practices) or symbolic actions (punctual and superficial), to reflect on the challenges of transforming schools into spaces for democracy and inclusive participation that permeate the day-to-day life of the classroom and the school.

We draw on the extensive experience ~~of the Name of the research team~~ with the critical model of "student voice" (Authors, 2022; ~~Authors, 2022;~~ Susinos, 2020~~Authors, 2020~~) and the key principles described by the Portuguese Associação Crianca (~~Formosinho & Oliveira-Formosinho, 2008;~~ Oliveira-Formosinho ~~&~~and Formosinho, 2013, Oliveira-Formosinho ~~&~~and Araújo, ~~2015,~~2018) to define what we understand by an inclusive participation pedagogy.

The first key principle (being-feeling) refers to the pedagogy of identities ~~, both individual and collective,~~ based on the recognition and respect for diversity (Oliveira-Formosinho ~~&~~and Araújo ~~, 2015,~~2018). The development of identity is a need that is affective, cognitive (awareness of oneself and the "other" as different people) and active (awareness of doing and deciding~~) (Arnaiz, 2012). It is not unique or static, but rather multiple, provisional and in development. Identity is something that we "do", that we build in a continuous process of negotiation~~ in various contexts and in time~~), and not something that we "have"~~ (Thomson, 2007). ~~This implies accepting that there is no single right way of "being" and "becoming" in the world.~~ At the same time, this diversity forms

the collective voice (Christensen ~~&~~and Prout, 2002), though this is not homogeneous for the whole young children group ~~either, in this case young children~~ (Blaisdell et al.,~~Arnott, Wall & Robinson,~~2018; Authors; Fielding ~~&~~and Moss, 2011; Murray, 2019; Wall et al., 2019). ~~This represents a challenge for the carrying out of pedagogical projects that respect and embrace this diversity, while generating opportunities and contexts for experience and multiple and plural relationships.~~

The key principle of belonging-participation focuses on the pedagogy of relationships and the development of linkages ~~and involves taking a closer look at the feeling of belonging.~~. Belonging refers to the degree to which individuals feel accepted, respected, connected, included and supported by others ~~in their social environment (Baumeister & Leary, 1995)~~. The sense of belonging is not a static state but rather a dynamic process that can be experienced in various and multiple ways (~~Yuval-Davis, 2006;~~ Shaw et al.,~~Messiou & Voutsina,~~ 2019). Inclusive participation is conceived as an orderly process that makes it possible to employ the capacity of children (agency) to influence, intervene and provoke changes in the common space (~~Authors~~Susinos, 2020). This makes it essential to abandon the adult-centred nature of daily life in order to move towards a pedagogy based on dialogue, listening and recognition. Genuine listening must be accompanied by action that is coherent and respectful of children, their needs and meanings (Bourke ~~&~~and Loveridge, 2018; Fielding ~~2004,~~ 2011; Lundy, 2007~~; Rudduck & Fielding 2006~~). Consequently, the proposals and scenarios must be configured based on the children's preferences, offering them decision-making possibilities. We define the proposals as learning experiences of different natures with characteristics in common:

- They are based on free play
- They promote autonomy
- Children make decisions about their play: what to play, with whom, what materials, etc.
- They are oriented to manipulation, experimentation and creation.

- Adults do not intervene, they only accompany.

The third key principle, languages-communication, defines a pedagogy of language based on experience, reflection and communication. ~~On a daily basis, c~~Children ~~– especially non-verbal young children – demonstrate that they~~ are capable of sharing their ideas, experiences and meanings through multiple languages: body language, crying, facial expressions, noises and movements (Clark ~~&~~and Moss, 2011; Ceballos~~, Susinos, & Saiz,~~ et al., 2016; Authors, 2022). The challenge is to employ genuine listening strategies and processes to access these forms of communication. ~~(Clark, 2005), as well as to offer children a variety of scenarios for expression so that they can share their experiences. These strategies must be in tune with children's experiences, interests and everyday life in order to be meaningful to them (Christensen & Prout, 2002). It must also be emphasised that t~~The use of diverse strategies does not guarantee participation if the listening is not genuine, if adults reject the children's ideas or are accommodated to our purposes. This is an especially pressing challenge with non-verbal children (Wall, 2017) where adult mediation is constant (Spyrou, 2011).

The last of the key principles, the narration of what has been experienced, refers to the pedagogy of meanings~~, that is to say,~~; the interpretation of experiences and the meaning they acquire for the subjects. Sharing these various meanings favours bringing different narratives about education to the community and ~~,~~challenging ~~and replacing the dominant discourses (Moss, 2014)~~. In this process of construction of narratives, pedagogical documentation is a valuable strategy for building a shared narrative that combines the adult and children's perspective.

These key principles give coherence to a pedagogical project that is intended to be participatory and inclusive, but it is also necessary to pay careful attention to the decision-making that will put these ideas into practice in the day-to-day life of the schools.

This is the aim of this research, which investigates how a classroom of two-year-old children gives shape to an inclusive participation project focusing on day-to-day activities and the making of decisions about the educational environment (spaces, materials and times), relationships, projects and activities.

Methodology

~~The purpose of this research was to analyse how a two-year-olds classroom in Name of city (Spain) progressed towards an educational project that employed the principles of inclusive participation.~~ We adopted a qualitative paradigm with an ethnographic orientation to learn about and understand the experiences that took place in ~~the school~~two years old classroom (Beach, 2011~~, 2017~~; Hammersley, 2018). It was characterised by a prolonged period of field work, three school years (2017-2020), in which the researcher shared entire days with the participants. Each year, the classroom is home to eighteen two-year-old children, a teacher and an educational technician.[2]~~.~~ While educators and researcher were involved throughout the three school years, a new group of children joined in each year. The researcher has a teaching background oriented to early childhood education and a broad experience in the promotion of participatory processes. Likewise, one academic year before, she conducted a brief research with 3- and 4-year olds in the same school. This provided the researcher with extensive knowledge about the organization and culture of the school.

Research fieldwork took place in the natural context of the school, on a day-to-day basis, and we joined in the actions and processes that took place in order to study what people did and said (Hammersley, ~~2006~~2018) and to be able to give an account of the cultural processes that took place (Beach, 2011). Although the research context was

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[2] ~~From this point on we will use the term "educators" to refer to both figures, except when it is necessary to distinguish between them.~~

the classroom, we also spent time in other spaces, such as the ~~school~~ playground and the entrances and exits. This allowed us to adopt a holistic approach.

The field work was an orderly process involving the following phases:

- Access to the field. The researcher ~~had already collaborated with the school in previous projects, allowing her to make initial contact with the educators and to~~ negotiate_d_ her presence with the management team. ~~With regard to this project,~~ ~~t~~The entry into the classroom began with a meeting with the educators in which we presented the purpose of the work, the conditions of access, how it would be carried out, and we requested informed consent.

- Understand the pedagogical project. We undertook a process of enquiry that sought to understand the educational project ~~taking place on a day-to-day basis in the classroom~~ from the different perspectives of the people involved. ~~For this purpose,~~ ~~t~~The researcher attended the school for an extended period of observation (several sessions over two months) and take notes, photograph and video records. In addition, she held informal conversations with the different agents. The diverse information gathered takes the form of the feedback reports, which record critical incidents (~~Flanagan, 1973~~Douglas et al., 2009).~~) about what was observed.~~ Discussion groups were formed with the educators to discuss these reports with the aim of promoting reflection and defining the issue for improvement (Figure 1).

- Process of genuine listening to young children. ~~With the goal of promoting transformations based on the voice of the students, strategies aimed at listening to children were undertaken (Blaisdell, et al., 2019; Authors, 2022).~~ The diversity of strategies allowed us to access the ideas and experiences of the young children through multiple languages (body language, facial expressions, noises and

movements) (Clark ~~&~~and Moss, 2011~~; Authors, 2022~~), something particularly relevant for young children where oral language is in development. Listening processes take time if we are to properly understand children's preferences, meanings and experiences. ~~And p~~Participation is not inherent in the strategies ~~(Thomson, 2005)~~, it depends on how they are put into practice and how power is exercised. ~~Sometimes, as adults, we believe that we have the correct answer ("He always plays ...", "He likes it a lot ...") and when the children's response does not coincide with this, we value it less. Therefore, w~~We must assume a critical and reflexive positioning for "authentic listening" with regard to the process of listening and the relationships and interactions (~~Punch, 2002;~~ Wall, 2017; Authors, 2022). ~~Genuine listening provided extensive and diverse information that served as the seed for the improvement project.~~

Figure 1. ~~Question-guide of the projects.~~

- Improvement project phase. The process of genuine listening allowed us to get deeper to the ideas, needs and proposals of children, but a participatory process is reduced to a figurative experience if it is not accompanied by action (~~Authors;~~ Lundy, 2007; Palaiologou, 2014). Taking action represents a major challenge, involving many uncertainties and revisions so that the design of the proposals converges with the preferences and needs of the children ~~and does not employ processes of accommodation~~..

The process of making the familiar strange to promote reflection and to reconstruct our ideas and promote changes (~~Delamont & Atkinson, 1994;~~ Beach ~~&~~and Vigo, 2021),

Infant school as inclusion site.

prompted us to adopt different strategies~~, some of them common in the field of ethnography and others that sought genuine listening to children.~~:

- Participant observation was carried out by the researcher and the educators. The researcher adopted this strategy throughout the entire process, taking notes, audio recordings and images (photography and video) from the first contact (Raggl, 2018). This information was transformed into deep descriptions, questions and impressions in a multimodal research diary. Observation is a central strategy of ethnography (Hammersley, 2018) but it also has a strong tradition in early childhood education as a tool for understanding children's needs and interests (~~Clark, 2005;~~ Clark ~~&~~and Moss, 2011). For this, educators assumed the role of observers at specific moments. ~~This strategy allowed access to what, how and why is happening in the context (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1994).~~ In this way, detailed observations allowed us to understand the children's perceptions ~~of their world~~ and the relationships they experienced (Degotardi, 2011)~~; [ORIGEN]~~, which is particularly relevant with children with oral language is still developing.

- The discussion groups with the educators sought to explore the ideas that emerged from the observations ~~in more depth~~, questioning these and adding detail, and offered spaces for deliberative decision-making on the improvement ~~issue~~ project or the design of the proposals.

- Informal conversations with adults ~~(educators, other teachers, families, etc.)~~ took place throughout the process and also made it possible to explore further and obtain more precise details ~~(Lincoln & Guba, 1985)~~. ~~These conversations offered more relevant information as the atmosphere of trust was established.~~ Informal conversations with children took place during interaction in small groups and in the natural play-time (Blaisdell, et al., 2018). There were two premises: do not

intervene in the play to modify their action (avoid telling them what to do) and do not ask confirmative questions. These dialogues acquired the complexity of the different levels of development of children's oral language. ~~While some children engaged in lengthy conversations, others resorted to words, noises or short phrases which, accompanied by gestures, made sense.~~

- Child conferencing using image elicitation is a particular informal structured interview (~~Clark, 2005;~~ Clark ~~&~~and Moss, 2011; Formosinho ~~&~~and Araújo, 2007). The dialogue began with the presentation of photographs about the different activities carried out in the classroom. ~~These images of usual activities were not created for this project (Mannay, 2017).~~ Educators frequently use them to explain what carried out during the day or the week (Mannay, 2017). Their main strengths were their everyday use and familiarity ~~(Authors, 2022).~~.

- Classroom deambulation. Children led the walks around the classroom, deciding where to go, what to point out and what to explain to the educators (Clark, 2010). Adults accompanied them, documented and encouraged the conversation. ~~In order to document this process,~~T the conversations were recorded in audio and photographs were taken of the items pointed out by the children.

Figure 2. ~~Strategies employed to listen to the children~~

These strategies produced a large volume of multimodal data (written, audio, video and photographs) that were categorised in a recursive process (Miles ~~&~~and Huberman, 1994). These categories resulted from a process of organising the information fragments that shared patterns ~~and common elements~~ (inductive process) that were completed in accordance with the theoretical framework (deductive process). The process of analyzing the ideas and experiences of the youngest children, especially those who do not have a developed oral language, requires an ethical and reflective process of data

Infant school as inclusion site.

(Ceballos and Susinos, 2022). Following the proposal of Sommer et al. (2013), we assume

an empathetic imagination towards the child's actions, responses and expressions.

Table 1. Categories of analysis

Categories	Codes	
Childhood image	Restrictive	
	Empowered	
Proposals	Characteristics	
	Type	
	Opportunities for children to make decisions	Start, development and finish play
		Materials
		Play partners
	Materials	
	Play	Explore
		Find solutions
		Experience-based previous experiences
		Conceptualization
	Barriers of participation	
	Teacher role	
Childhood activity preferences	Open proposals	
	Directived proposals	
	Free play	
Listening process	Strategies	
	Teaching role	
	Barriers of participation	
	Listening interpretation process	

Results

We present the main results for each year, focusing on how improvement proposals promoted a pedagogical project based on inclusive participation.

First Year: What decision space do children have in the proposals?

~~A prolonged period of field work allowed researcher to access to the educational proposals on a daily basis. The diverse ideas resulting from several strategies formed the feedback report that served to elicit dialogue between the researcher and the educators.~~

The dialogue <u>about feedback report</u> led us to focus our attention on what characterised the ~~proposal and~~ activities that were carried out. These are defined by being task-based (topic-based) and having few opportunities for children to choose. All the children carried out the same activity at the same time and this had been defined by the educators (teacher-based). There was no opportunity for children to decide when to start it or under what conditions.

~~Image~~<u>Figure</u> 3~~1~~. Feedback report. First year

In the artistic activity described ~~in image 1~~ (artistic expression with a single colour), it might seem that the children have the opportunity to choose the colour with which to paint~~, since each one is directed to the colour of the emotion that they have expressed in the previous activity:~~

~~One of the days included the activity of the emotions. In this we listen to them and how they participate in an activity, with their decisions, more or less. (Discussion group)~~

However, ~~this is an illusory choice (tokenism participation). In reality, t~~<u>t</u>he choice of colour, a single one, is determined by an activity (the choice of emotion) without any link to the art activity. This previous choice limited the options for artistic expression, since they did not have the option to choose the colour, to change it, or to choose their

classmates. A participatory proposal must allow children to start their own play and activity, choosing from diverse options, and select with whom to play. For this to happen, it is essential that the spaces are defined and the materials accessible to children at all times so that they can select any resource and use it in the way they want (Ephgrave, 2020).

ImageFigure 42. Feedback report. First year

Similarly, it is important to pay attention to the interaction that takes place between the educators and the children. ImageFigure 42 shows two critical incidents in this regard. L. decided to leave the table of the assigned colour and change to another space where he shared conversations and glances with A. The teacher, noticing the change, insistently returned L. to his initial position. The protagonist of the other incident is K., who observes the actions of her classmates for long periods. The teacher's interpretation is that K. is not involved in the activity because he is not drawing, and she invites his to join in by moving the arm that is holding the brush. This upsets K., which can be seen from his gesture and also in the sound he makes (not word).

Through their gestures, sounds and actions, the children expressed their preferences and also their discomfort when they were interrupted by adult intervention. Careful observation would have allowed the teacher to understand that L. needed to change materials and start a shared activity with A., because learning and play take place in relation to others. Or that K. was involved in the activity, not based on action but through observation, breaking an educational norm that associates involvement with action.

The dialogues related to these critical incidents brought to light the need to reflect on the possibilities of choice (of activity, material, play and relationships) for the children in the proposals, giving rise to a number of questions:

- What decision space do children have in the proposal?

- Can children make decisions about materials or plays?

- Can they decide when to start, change or end an activity?

- Can they choose the classmates they want to be with?

- What level of involvement in the activity do children have?

These initial reflections were followed by the process of authentic listening to the children through child conferencing using image elicitation, informal dialogues with the children and the observation of the teachers and the researcher.

ImageFigure 53: Feedback report. First year

We found that two activities stood out in the children's choices: activities geared towards manipulation and experimentation (experimentation trays and installations) and those related to movement. Although the play with sounds was not a majority choice, we decided to incorporate it so that all the children could see their preferences included. We did so on the basis that the exclusively exercise of the majority is not an adequate system for respecting the children's' rights. What about those children whose preferences are not aligned with the majority?

Within this framework, several meetings took place to design different two activities that responded to the preferences expressed by the children. while at the same time being configured as open proposals, offering decision-making opportunities to the

~~children. Two proposals were defined.~~ The first was a motor story in which the technician led the activity and the children imitated her gestures, movements and actions.

<center>~~Imagen~~Figure 6~~4: Motor story~~</center>

This activity provided a response to the children's demand for movement. However, it was a directed activity, with a single possibility, where the adult defined the action and the children reproduced what they were shown without the possibility of choice.

The second activity was an experimentation with and manipulation of sound ~~through various objects~~. In addition to the objects made by the adults, the children found materials and resources that they could manipulate and combine as they wish. This proposal responded to the interests of the children (manipulation and sound) but was also presented as an open activity, with possibilities of choice for the children.

<center>~~Image~~Figure 7~~5: Experimentation with sounds~~</center>

Comparing the characteristics of the two proposals invites us to reflect on how children's opportunities for choice are defined by the environments and materials available. This implies making resources available and accessible to children at all times since children should be able to select any resource and use it in any way they want. When an environment is organised in this way, children have the power to influence their activity and learning~~, to choose what to play with, the materials they will use and what they will do with them. Obviously, their options are limited by the spaces and resources~~

available and therefore it is crucial to have sufficient and diverse materials and resources (Ephgrave, 2020).

Second Year: What materials and resources are made available to the children? Are their different interests considered?

The researcher returned to the classroom for an extended period of time to find out more about the pedagogical approach employed and meet the new group of children[3]. Educators were the same as in the previous year, but the group of children was new. Observation and informal conversations contributed to the new feedback report.

ImageFigure 86. Feedback report. Second year

During the dialogue about the activities carried out with this new group (ImageFigure 86), the technician stated:

(T) The materials … When someone says, "Play" …well, I play, but what at? With all the elaborate material that we have … (M) The thing is, we don't know what materials and objects they like (open materials, structured objects, etc.). (T) Some materials are elaborate and are more aimed at what interests us and others offer more freedom. We have to ask about that. (Educators discussion group)

These words marked a turning point. The materials became the focus of pedagogical concern.

The educators carried out a period of observation over three weeks and focused on identifying the materials that were available to children. They presented the analysis of materials using a traditional classification: symbolic play, motor or sensory

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[3] It should be remembered that, although the teacher and the technician were the same as in the previous year, the group of children was new, so it was essential to get to know the characteristics of the new group.

development, manipulation and observation, musical or plastic expression, oral development or logical thinking. This organisation denotes a way of understanding the meaning and role of the materials, linked to the objectives and disciplines of learning and to their unique and predetermined function (each material is only in one category).

ImageFigure 97. Feedback report. Second year

The dialogue about these materials was intended to broaden this initial restricted view. The following questions were proposed:

- What resources are made available to children (single-use, open-ended)? What characteristics do they have? Which ones do they prefer?

- Are they adapted to the different types of development of the children?

- How are they organised and sorted in the classroom? Does this favour autonomy?

- Are they presented in any aesthetic way?

- Are they accessible?

- What games do these materials promote? Are there several materials that allow the same actions to be carried out? Are there games that don't have materials?

The variety of materials available to the children throughout the sessions was noted, as well as their different sources, showing a preponderance of market materials (puzzles or toys) and those made by the educators. The main characteristic of these is that they are designed for single use. Even resources that may suggest an open purpose (buttons, fabrics and boxes) were organised and arranged for a single purpose. An example was the "button box". Two items (a box and buttons) that could generate endless possibilities, were presented as an activity limited to inserting the buttons through the slot in the box. In addition, not all the materials were accessible to the children, especially

those related to art and natural items (wood, cork, leaves, nuts, etc.) whose use was restricted to specific moments.

Within this framework of reflection, the process of listening to the children began. The deambulation strategy was employed using the following question: Which classroom material do you like the most? Among the materials highlighted by the children we found commercial toys (plastic animals, a garage and cars, and stories) and, to a lesser extent, materials made by the educators (the button box). They referred to natural, unstructured or artistic materials on only a few occasions. These were not visible in the classroom and, therefore, they could not identify them during their deambulation. For this reason, we accompanied this strategy with observations and informal conversations with the children at different times (free play and proposals designed by teachers), allowing dialogue about materials that were only present in specific activities:

B: "*With a brush and the colour red.*"

A: "*Stones, a shower of stones.*"

S: "*The yellow brush.*"

Al: "*Crayons and pine cones.*" *(Informal dialogues with the children)*

All the reflections and ideas that arose were organised in order to design proposals that incorporated the children's preferences regarding materials. As in the first year, the process was slow.

ImageFigure 108. Feedback report. Second year

To begin with, we chose the art activity materials as the epitome of an activity where children could only perform the defined action and whose materials were only use with strict rules such as no mixing (brush only, play dough only or markers only, etc.). In

order to break these patterns, an art environment was designed in the classroom. ~~It was presented an artistic proposal~~ that sought to offer children a wide range of resources and materials. The artistic environments were designed around four spaces whose materials were placed ~~in an orderly and~~ aesthetic way:

- Offer different materials: ~~different~~ drawing surfaces (white or brown paper or chalk board); ~~different~~ resources (chalk, paint, markers or play dough); tools (brushes, modelling knives, etc.) and natural-based materials (pine cones, stones, etc.).
- Present the materials in different ways. Extremely long pieces of paper (at least 2m in length) were chosen to break with the idea of individual use and remove limitations set by size.
- Locate the materials using an aesthetic approach that will invite children to take part in a creative play.

~~Image~~Figure 911~~. Art proposals. Second year~~

The children chose the space in which they wanted to be, the materials to use and the activity to undertake, in addition, transferred materials from one environment to another. The only rule was respect for the creative activity of their classmates. This activity was extended beyond the time initially planned as a result of the level of engagement that was observed.

The children were invited to observe how the class was arranged and what material was available to them. Some put words to what they observed. They began to distribute themselves within the space, each one freely choosing where they wanted to be as they played and experimented, creating their drawings, creating rain with the stones, talking with each other to share what was

happening, forming spirals with the chalk, and covering the paper. (Teacher's

notes)

Third Year: What action do children take when the context offers them opportunities for choice?

The previous transformation processes had permeated the daily basis activity in such a way that, when the researcher return to the school, the educators had already begun to carefully observe the children's play and the materials they chose. "*We have been observing and we have some ideas.*" (Informal Conversation-Teacher). After a few weeks of observation by the researcher, we shared our reflections, impressions and ideas. On this occasion, the children were incorporated from the beginning through informal conversations during play time. Consequently, the feedback report incorporates the three views (educators, researcher and children).

ImageFigure 120. Feedback report. Third year

The dialogue focused on three issues. During the previous academic years, activities in which all the children did the same action – previously defined by the educators and geared towards instrumental learning – prevailed. However, in the third year, the children carried out different activities at the same time, being able to choose the activity they wanted to start and when to change their activity. Although the majority of these were defined as open, some structured activity was offered (serialisation of natural elements). This presence may be an attempt to minimise the tension felt due to the pressure of the curriculum.

Sometimes, pressured by the results-based paradigm and instrumental learning, we forget the richness of experiences that allow us to experiment, create hypotheses, test, etc. (Teacher's diary)

The classroom also had a greater number of unstructured materials. During informal conversations with the children, they highlighted their preference for playing with natural elements in an open-ended way. It should be noted that some acquired single-purpose resources were kept (the garage, puzzles, etc.). However, the children diversified their use (for example, building a tower with the puzzle pieces).

Finally, the dialogue addressed the interventions of the educators during the children play. While the children were creating towers with the puzzle pieces, the technician introduced wooden pieces of different shapes and sizes, offering new alternatives in their construction play. ~~This is in sharp contrast with the first-year intervention processes that directed and limited the children's choices.~~ Now the educators sought to act without interfering with the children's play (Fisher, 2018) through a recursive process of observation, reflection and action. ~~This opened up a new scenario for reflection.~~

While in previous years, the improvement projects were about concrete aspects (materials and activities, etc.), this time we talked about the political issues: What role do I assume as an educator? Do I interact and offer help or do I interfere and direct the action? What are children capable of when the context offers them opportunities, when we do not direct the action?

On this occasion, the proposals designed sought to become scenarios that would allow us to answer these questions. It was necessary to reflect on how to establish the conditions to create appropriate contexts, capable of drawing on the potential of the children and also challenging. Bringing everything we had learned into play, we designed

a proposal that included the most relevant activities and materials for this new group of children. In this academic year, our aim was to design a play scenario that would provoke, inviting children to investigate, combine elements, create challenges (Oliveira-Formosinho and Formosinho, 2013Formosinho & Oliveira-Formosinho, 2008; Robson, &and Mastrangelo, 2017) and support them in their process of developing experiences, relationships, knowledge and learning (indirect pedagogical approach).

- Priority was given to materials, objects and pieces of different qualities and origins that allowed the playing of an exploratory play about the qualities of the world using these objects (loose parts). Hence the presence of wood (in different shapes and sizes), stones, pine cones, cardboard, etc.

- They were aesthetically arranged in space presenting provocation, but leaving the control of the play (what to play and how) to the children (Hyndman and Lester, 2015). For example, the children spent time sliding cars or animals down the ramps, so panels were placed at different angles of inclination.

- The construction games plays were recursive, especially the one of stacking and creating towers, and some materials were therefore provided to simulate their creations.

The documentation of this proposal epitomises the actions and strategies employed by the children in a provocative that offered multiple opportunities for play.

ImageFigure 1⅓. Children as co-constructor of knowledge. Third year

We found that manipulation and exploration are essential actions for two-year-olds. Children use their hands as tools to investigate the qualities of objects and their possibilities for action.

K. is sitting on the floor and in her hand, she has a small tube, a lion and a walnut. She tries insistently to insert the lion into the tube. It won't go in. She is concentrating and does not pay attention to the games that her companions are playing next to her. ~~She keeps trying to get the lion into the hole.~~ After a while she picks up the walnut. ~~She performs the same operation.~~ This does go in and slips through, falling to the ground. She looks at the other end of the tube. (Researcher diary)

This activity may appear disorganised and ~~its results arbitrary (~~the fact that the walnut enters the hole is a chance discovery~~)~~. However, the actions that children undertake have an order and a meaning. K. repeats the same process with the lion and the walnut and gets different results ~~(one goes in and the other does not)~~. Her recursive process is the following: choice of object-observation-manipulation and discovery.

Another activity that takes place is exploration. This involves carefully examining an object or space to discover the elements that compose it. ~~Returning to the images related to the creation of "the cave", t~~The educators offered ramps in response to the children's interest in rolling objects. However, without intending to do so, they created a space that acted as a hiding place.

A. is the first to approach. First, he observes the space and then bends down to look inside. He looks at the sheets of cardboard. This is the first time that there has been a proposal like this in the classroom. After this moment of observation, he hides in the hole. (Research diary)

When the sheets fell, they considered how to rebuild the shelter. Their actions, and essentially their mistakes, helped them understand that they could not put the sheet vertically because it did not leave space to hide, nor too steep because it fell over. The

sheet only worked if it was at an angle. The ultimate purpose of manipulation and exploration is to know and understand how reality works, and to achieve this, children analyse the play scenario and become familiar with the object's thoughts different actions. In this way, they test their thoughts and their hypotheses (Murray, 2017).

ImageFigure 124. Children as co-constructor of knowledge. Third year

Sometimes exploration converged with the search for solutions. The children employed multiple alternatives to respond to a problem or situation. Educators did not offer an answer. Instead, they allowed exploration, testing and redefined. Each child set out on a journey.

M. chooses to sit down and cover herself with the sheet. K. tries to place the sheets of wood at different angles. When it falls, she puts it back. And so, on until it stays in place. (Research diary)

This demonstrated that there were many different ways of doing it, all of them useful for the purpose. Problem solving has a social component (Murray, 2007), and although in two-year-old children this is still incipient, we saw glimpses of some collective actions, small opportunities to help each other.

ImageFigure 153. Children as co-constructor of knowledge. Third year

Some decisions that the children made, when faced with a challenge, were based on previous experiences. After the challenge of rebuilding the cave, tTwo children were playing with the animals and the wooden ramps. When the ramp fell they tried to rebuild it. To do this, they employed the same actions that they had used to remake the cave, but this time they did not insist as much on repeating actions that were not successful the previous time and attempted to try out new options (holding it themselves). From their

previous experience they had learned that some actions did not solve the problem and they tried to find new options.

ImageFigure 164. Children as co-constructor of knowledge. Third year

We also found the representation and creation of invented scenes or characters (conceptualisation). In the representation, the boys and girlschildrens used objects to make constructions to which they attached meanings: "It's a tower." During the symbolic game we found creations of scenes. "It's a little house," says A. while playing with the panda bear.

In conclusion, these observations have provided us with an insight into the culture of childhood, the particular way in which children approach reality through objects and relationships with others, and the strategies they employ to think about, conceptualise and interpret it and to make decisions. We have done these recognising children as agents with the ability to build knowledge through processes of inquiry into their environment from an early age (Murray, 2017; Ephgrave, 2020).

Conclusions

Throughout this project, wWe have analysed the transformation of the educational approach in a classroom for two-year-olds into a pedagogy of inclusive participation. We see how the educational scenario has been in a constant process of reflection and change transformation, and that and how the project has drawn attention to the fact that the pedagogy of inclusive participation requires an organisation of the educational environment that offers opportunities for children to explore, give meaning to and express their experiences of the physical, cultural and social worlds (Oliveira-Formosinho and Formosinho, 2013Formosinho & Oliveira-Formosinho, 2008).

Also, worth highlighting is the way the classroom has been conceived as a laboratory for experimentation that encourages us to imagine and try out different ways of doing things, to delve into the unknown, so that we leave behind the security provided by the familiar and the expected (Moss, 2014). The approach has changed from the design of thematic activities directed by adults and with few opportunities for choice for children and the use of structured materials, to the design of play scenarios in which autonomy, the ability to make decisions and open-ended materials predominate (Ephgrave, 2020); and a curriculum understood as content becomes onewas defined by the conditions required for encounter, relationships and shared experiences (Fortunati, 2018), and by the opportunities offered to each child according to their needs, interests and actions, in a way that gives meaning to their experiences, relationships, knowledge and learning.

At the same time, we have introduced methods of analysis based on pedagogical planning in motionaction. In this way, the processes of adult planning, predetermined and offering a single option, have given way to planning with children, to the creation of opportunities for children to act in accordance with their own intentions, preferences and decisions (*progetazzione*) (Rinaldi, 2016). Thus, after designing the scenarios, the teachers observe and listen to what the children do and think and how they relate, factors that determine whether they act, intervene in the action or neither, and in what sense (Ephgrave, 2020). According to Fisher (2018), the most complex challenge is the subtle balance between interacting and not interfering when children are involved in an exploration process.

It is also worth noting that the commitment to an inclusive participatory pedagogy has invited us to reflect on the idea of childhood and the role of the teacher. Throughout these three years covered by the project, an attempt has been made to overcome the restrictive and limiting ideas of childhood (as a time of waiting or marked by biological

determinism, for example) that resulted in activities focused on activity and directed by adults. This has given way to understanding children as subjects of rights, in possession of their own culture (the culture of childhood) and agents with the ability and knowledge to understand, make decisions and give meaning to their experiences. This reconstruction of childhood implies transforming the school and the experiences it is home to. In this way, learning is defined as a continuous process, built on the relationship with others and with objects, which is determined by the spaces, times and materials that make up the environment and the opportunities for interaction. The role of the teacher is also realigned to follow a more relational and systemic sociocultural pedagogical model that understands teachers as researchers who create listening spaces and ask themselves questions about their daily tasks in order to improve their teaching practice (Araújo, 2012, 2018; Oberhuemer, 2004; Oliveira-Formosinho &and Araújo, 2011) and to organise the environment according to the needs and characteristics observed in childhood.

Finally, this study shows how educators progress towards a "critical ecology of the profession" (Ardnt et al., 2018; Dalli, Miller & Urban, et al., 2012; Urban, 2007; Urban &and Dalli, 2010, 2012; Authors, 2022), which, as defined by Urban (2008), is based on a new way of being a teacher. Teachers thus (re)construct themselves throughout their professional development through relationships between agents – educators, children and researchers, in this case – and the co-construction of knowledge and professional practices is promoted (Urban, 2008).

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Infant school as inclusion site.

31

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Infant school as inclusion site.

32

Figure 1. Question-guide of the projects.

First Year	Second Year	Third Year
• What decision spaces/autonomy do the children have? How do these respond to their interests?	• What materials do we make available to the children? What actions do they promote?	• Through the proposals, do we observe an image of the child as a researcher and builder of knowledge?

Figure 2. Strategies employed to listen to the children

First Year	Second Year	Third Year
• Participant observation by the researcher and educators • Child conferencing using image elicitation • Informal dialogues with the children	• Participant observation by the researcher and educators • Deambulation • Informal dialogues with the children	• Participant observation by the researcher and educators • Informal dialogues with the children

Infant school as inclusion site.

At 10 a.m. the children who are missing arrive at the classroom (the entrance is staggered from 9 a.m. onwards). They take off their coats, hang them on their hangers (identified by a photo), take their cushion and sit in the assembly [...]. The teacher greets each child with the "colour monster" stuffed animal. While she deals with each in turn, the rest are playing, talking, looking the other way, etc. They do not pay attention to what the teacher is doing. One by one they stand in front of the "emotionometer" (each panel identifies an emotion of the monster by means of the colours). Each child indicates the emotion that he or she is experiencing that day (some use words, others point) and places the clip with their photo in the corresponding colour. [...]

Once they have finished the "emotionometer" activity, the "art" activity begins. The educators have prepared tables with fanfold paper and paint. Each table has one of the colours that is identified with a particular emotion. The idea is that each child must go to the table which has the colour of the emotion that they have chosen from the emotionometer in the previous activity. For example, K. is feeling calm today (represented by the colour green), so he has to go to the table with the green paint. The educators check that each child is in the "chosen" colour, or, where appropriate, relocates them. There are tables in which there is only one child (calm/green) and others in which 5 or 6 are

ImageFigure 31. Feedback report. First year

Infant school as inclusion site.

34

K. spends long periods of time observing me (researcher) or looking what his colleagues produce. He barely paints on his mural. During the activity L. changes tables. She had chosen sadness and the teacher had reinforced her choice by remembering that her mother had been cross with her today for wetting herself. The teacher notices the change of table and relocates her to her initial choice. [...] After authorisation from the teachers, some children go to another table where all the colours are available. Some children, for example K., do not get permission and are made to continue in their colour. I'm not sure why.

ImageFigure 42. Feedback report. First year

Infant school as inclusion site.

constructions

trays

installations

colour

monster

I told M. (T) that if we have one painting, everyone will want to paint, because that's what happens. That's why we decided, along the same lines as deciding what emotion you have today, to ask what activity you like the most using the sequence of images. They didn't think it was strange. […] It's common for them to choose from among the options with their peg, so exchanging emotions for class activities didn't seem strange to them. They knew how it worked, what you were going to ask them, and that each one was going to have their space.

story

psychomotor education

playing with sounds

We have been discovering things that we already knew well enough. Because S. didn't surprise us with what she told us about auditory discrimination, […] before asking them, we already knew what they liked. But giving the opportunity for all that to come together …

(T) We were struck by the choice of some children. Those who find it more difficult chose language stimulation. They feel comfortable there. (M) When we said that it was difficult for them and an effort. […] You imagine that they are going to say X and it surprises you. It amazes you.

ImageFigure 53: Feedback report. First year

(T) Another turning point was when we got together and talked about what we could do with what the children said. Each of them had said something, and how were we going to do just one thing? We can't put five here doing one thing, five there doing something else, etc. (M) It was a very

The session began with a brief spell of movement and free play in the room (a large space without objects). The technician asked the children if they wanted her to tell them a special story (motor story). The children agreed. "We have to take a boat and cross a river to get to the safari." In the central part of the room there is a structure with mats in the form of a boat and movements were proposed by the students following the instructions that the teacher gave through the story.

(M) Perhaps the proposals are simple, but we could have made it more complicated, forgetting what the children told us and …

ImageFigure 6n 4: Motor story

Infant school as inclusion site.   36

Containers
☐ Bottles of different materials and sizes
☐ Boxes
☐ Cardboard tubes
☐ Plastic buckets
☐ Jars

Beaters
☐ Rolled up newspapers
☐ Ladle
☐ Plastic and metal spoon
☐ Grater

To create sounds
☐ Stones
☐ Pulses, rice, etc.
☐ Shells
☐ Rattles

~~Image~~Figure ~~7.5:~~ Experimentation with sounds

Circles, squares, stars, triangles.
Red, green, yellow, blue or brown.

Oh! It tickles.

We are looking for blank spaces.
The edges, the corners invite us to create.

We unstick carefully, choosing the colours.
Should we glue them together or separately?
We each have a territory although sometimes we share the space.

We hide. We look at each other. We talk to each other. We play together in silence.
We collaborate. We play alone or together.

What are you doing?
A face.

They form groups, choose, rearrange, decide together.

~~Image~~Figure ~~68~~. Feedback report. Second year

Infant school as inclusion site.

During free play they choose...

... from the available materials.

~~Image~~Figure 9~~7~~. Feedback report. Second year

Infant school as inclusion site.

38

Each activity has its technique and they don't choose it. One day it's the cork technique, and another day using the brush, and so on (Discussion group with the educators).

Large or small paper, with paints or markers.
Materials for drawing, creating and imagining

Small drawings, attention to detail.
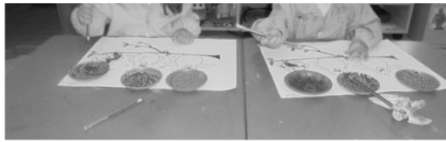Creating in intimacy,
the minimum space.
Other times enormous creations,
using all the space of the paper.

One painting or two at a time.
One colour or multiple colours.
On a blank space or on what has already been created.

Sometimes, we like to mix, to combine, to try.
Painting off paper
Dots, lines, circles...

~~Image~~Figure 108. Feedback report. Second year

Infant school as inclusion site.   39

Different scenarios of expression.

Exploring the material

There are no limits to the size of the painting.

I use any object.

What did you like the most?
M. "Painting with a brush and with markers"
B. "With a brush and the colour red"
E. "Everything" "The paints"
En. "With the brush"
S. "The yellow brush"
M. "I loved everything"
M. "The blue brush"
Á. "Crayons and pine cones"
V. "The brush"
Ad. "Stones, a shower of stones."
T. "The red jar, the brush"
E. "Stones"
U. "The stones and the paints"
N. "The chalk"
V. "The paint"
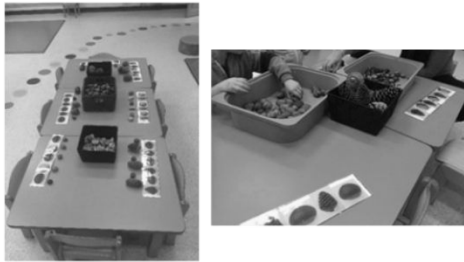Al. "Crayons and pine cones"
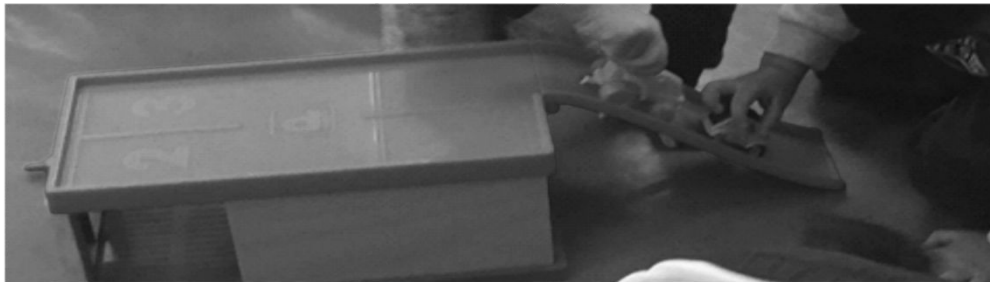Ma. "Stones"

I mix

We do it together

WE CREATE

Image Figure 119. Art proposals. Second year

On the table there is a basket with pine cones, another with walnuts and another with hazelnuts. We also find strips of images with photographs of these objects in sequences. The teacher invites four children to join this activity. [...] (Teacher with a walnut in her hand) "Look C., where does this one go?" (C. points to a hazelnut on her strip). The teacher says in a disapproving tone, "Uh-uh." "C., where does the pine cone go?" C. points to the picture of the pine cone and says, "Here." The teacher offers reinforcement: "Very   good!"

M. is doing the sequencing activity. She puts the hazelnut in the wrong place. As she does it, she looks at the teacher. She is waiting for her reaction. The teacher tells her that it doesn't go there. She removes it, laughs and puts it in the expected place. Meanwhile, the rest of the children are playing freely in the classroom.

hree of them are playing with the garage. Although they have the cars they use the animals more. The activity is somewhat repetitive: the animals climb up the road to the top of the garage and are then dropped down the slope. I approach them. They look at me but they don't say anything to me. They continue with their game. I ask them about it. "The elephant goes up and then crash!" says K., making a gesture of forcefully putting the elephant on top of the garage. I ask why it does that. He looks at me and makes a gesture (shrugging his shoulders) suggesting he doesn't know. Perhaps it's not important why, and my question seems irrelevant to them. [...] A. starts a conversation with me. She tells me, "I love animals." G. is in the same space, playing with cars in the garage. He pushes them along, launches them down the track, and collides with K.'s elephant.

When I get to the classroom some children are already there. A group are at a table with a puzzle whose pieces are wooden cubes. They don't put the puzzle together (the activity for which it was designed), but are building towers, trying to see how high they can make them. When they fall over, they laugh and start again. The technician who observes this puts pieces of wood of different sizes and shapes within their reach. This gives a new boost to their building game. The children don't say a word, but little by little they begin to use the wooden pieces and abandon the puzzle. I ask them if they are not interested in it any more. N. (holding a wooden triangle in her hand) replies, "I like this one better." She begins to sing (I don't know what) and to "walk" the piece of wood around the table.

~~Image~~Figure 12~~10~~. Feedback report. Third year

They explore

One of the most common activities are the exploration and manipulation of materials.
What happens if I put the hazelnut into the tube?
How tall can the tower be?
What happens if I knock the tower over?

ImageFigure 131. Children as co-constructor of knowledge. Third year

There are some sheets of cardboard leaning against the furniture forming a small secret hideaway. A. finds it. She hides. She looks at me and smiles. The others can't see her but she can see them through the cracks. She invites more children to join her. When M. is about to get in, the sheets fall over. They put them back in place. They do it in such a way that the space created is very small and when they get in, the sheets fall again. M. sits against the wall, takes the sheet of cardboard and places it in front of her. In this way she hides herself.

They find solutions

ImageFigure 142. Children as co-constructor of knowledge. Third year

Infant school as inclusion site.   42

M y E. están jugando con los animales. Se dirigen a la zona del armario, allí hay dos rampas. Comienzan a lanzar el oso panda por la rampa hasta que la madera se cae al suelo. Intentan colocarla de nuevo: en vertical y en horizontal. No sirve para deslizar el oso. La apoyan contra el armario. Se cae. Lo repiten. Vuelve a caerse. Prueban a sostenerla con la mano, pero quién la sostiene no puede lanzar el oso. Piden ayudan a T.

They take decisions

~~Image~~Figure 15~~3~~. Children as co-constructor of knowledge. Third year

They conceptualise

From the beginning of the session A. is playing with the panda bear. She is the protagonist of her game. When he has the purple tube, the bear is working. "It's so heavy! Crash! It falls down." When she picks up the stiff cardboard tube, she pushes the bear into the hole. "He's inside. He's in his house." She creates stories, gives meaning to materials. A piece of wood is a house.

~~Image~~Figure 16~~4~~. Children as co-constructor of knowledge. Third year

Infant school as inclusion site.   1

The participatory and inclusive 2-years-old infant classroom. ~~Infant school as inclusion site. Learning from a participatory project in a 2-year-old classroom.~~

Abstract

The objective is to analyse the progress of a two-year-olds classroom in a school in Cantabria (Spain) towards an inclusive participation project. The research, carried out over three school years, has been based on the qualitative paradigm and ethnographic approach. A variety of research strategies have been employed: participant observation; discussion groups; informal conversations; ambulation and child conferencing using image elicitation. We have analysed the transformation of the educational approach in a classroom for two-year-olds into a pedagogy of inclusive participation. These transformation process have deployed through three practitioner enquiry cycles with different focuses: materials and proposals; curriculum as *progetazzione*; decision-making opportunities and child participation. These transformation processes have also allowed educators to move towards a critical ecology of the profession perspective. Finally, the teachers who inquiry into their educational reality by listening to children embark on a process of transformation towards a more participatory education.~~The objective is to analyse the progress of a two-year-olds classroom in a school in X(Spain) towards an inclusive participation project. The research, carried out over three school years, has been based on the qualitative paradigm and ethnographic approach. A variety of research strategies have been employed: participant observation; discussion groups; informal conversations; ambulation and child conferencing using image elicitation. The results show the transformation process each school year. In the first year, the focus was on transforming the proposals, offering decision-making spaces to children. The second year saw a transition from structured materials to others that were open ended. The third year focused on the research process carried out by the teachers and the transformation the~~

Infant school as inclusion site.   2

idea of childhood and their role as a teacher. We conclude that teachers who inquiry their educational reality by listening to children embark on a process of transformation towards a more participatory education.

Keywords: inclusive pedagogy, ethnography, child participation, 2-year -olds, practitioner enquiry. pedagogy of inclusive participation; ethnographic approach; participatory strategies with children; classroom for two-year-olds; Practitioner enquiry

Introduction

We present the main results of an ethnographic-oriented research project carried out over three years in a school in ~~city~~ Cantabria (Spain) that analyses how a classroom with two-year-old children aligns its educational proposal with democracy and inclusive participation. Early childhood education in our context– is recognised as a distinct stage with ~~an~~ educational value but of a non-compulsory nature for children from birth to six years of age. It is organised ~~on the based on~~in two cycles (0-3 years and 3-6 years) with obvious differences in relation to: organisation, material conditions, and professional composition and training ~~of the professional staff~~. While the second cycle (3-6 years) is located in primary schools, the first cycle takes place in institutions with various purposes (childcare being the most common), a plurality of management modes (although the private model dominates), and heterogeneous forms of financing (mostly by the families). In ~~city~~Cantabria, since 2004, classrooms for two-year-olds have been implemented in primary schools. These classrooms ~~take accommodate~~host eighteen children, supervised by a teacher (university degree) and an educational technician(professional training).

The classroom for two-year-olds of our research is located in a public school for children from two to twelve years old in an industrial city. It is characterised by receiving students from diverse cultural (Arabic, Chinese, Moldovan, Romanian, Russian, Portuguese and Ukrainian), economic and social diversity and because it is a preferred school for children with motor difficulties.

Conceptual framework

Our central purpose is to learn how to move towards an inclusive participation pedagogy in a classroom with children of two-years- ~~of age~~old. We advocate the need to go beyond rhetoric (changing terms but not practices) or symbolic actions (punctual and superficial), to reflect on the challenges of transforming schools into spaces ~~for~~ of

democracy and inclusive participation that permeate the day-to-day life of the classroom and the school.

We draw on ~~the~~ extensive experience with the critical model of "student voice" (~~Authors~~Ceballos and Susinos, 2022; Susinos, 2020) and the key principles described by the Portuguese Associação Crianca (Oliveira-Formosinho and Formosinho, 2013, Oliveira-Formosinho and Araújo, 2018) to define what we understand by an inclusive participation pedagogy.

The first key principle (being-feeling) refers to the pedagogy of identities based on the recognition and respect for diversity (Oliveira-Formosinho and Araújo~~,~~ 2018). The development of identity is a~~n~~ ~~need that is~~ affective, cognitive (awareness of oneself and the "other" as different people) and active (awareness of doing and deciding in various contexts and in time) need ~~(~~Thomson, 2007). At the same time, this diversity forms the collective voice (Christensen and Prout, 2002), although this is not homogeneous for the whole young children group (Blaisdell et al.,2018; ~~Authors~~Ceballos and Susinos, 2022; Fielding and Moss, 2011; Murray, 2019; Wall et al., 2019).

The key principle of belonging-participation focuses on the pedagogy of relationships and the development of ~~linkages.~~ linkages. Belonging refers to the degree to which individuals feel accepted, respected, connected, included and supported by others~~.~~. ~~The~~ A sense of belonging is not a static state but rather a dynamic process that can be experienced in various and multiple ways (Shaw et al.2019). Inclusive participation is conceived as an orderly process that makes it possible to employ the capacity of children (agency) to influence, intervene and provoke changes in the common space (Susinos, 2020). This makes it essential to abandon the adult-centr~~ism~~ed ~~nature~~ of daily life in order to move towards a pedagogy based on dialogue, listening and recognition. Genuine listening must be accompanied by action that is coherent and

respectful of children, their needs and meanings (Bourke and Loveridge, 2018; Fielding 2011; Lundy, 2007). Consequently, the proposals and scenarios must be configured on the based basis of on the children's preferences, offering them decision-making possibilities. We define the proposals as learning experiences of a different natures with characteristics in common characteristics:

- They are based on free play
- They pPromote autonomy
- Children make decisions about their play: what to play, with whom, what materials, etc.
- They are oriented towards manipulation, experimentation and creation.
- Adults do not intervene, they only accompany.

The third key principle, languages-communication, defines a pedagogy of language based on experience, reflection and communication. Children are capable of sharingto share their ideas, experiences and meanings through multiple languages: body language, crying, facial expressions, noises and movements (Clark and Moss, 2011; Ceballos et al., 2016; AuthorsCeballos and Susinos, 2022). The challenge is to employ genuine listening strategies and processes to access these forms of communication. The use of diverse strategies does not guarantee participation if the listening is not genuine, if adults reject the children's ideas or are accommodated to our purposes. This is an especially pressing challenge with non-verbal children (Wall, 2017) where adult mediation is constant (Spyrou, 2011).

The last of the key principles, the narration of what has beenthe experienced, refers to the pedagogy of meanings; the interpretation of experiences and the meaning they acquire for the subjects. Sharing these various meanings favours bringing different narratives about education to the community and challenging them. In this process of construction of narratives, pedagogical documentation is a valuable strategy for building a shared narrative that combines the adult and children's perspective.

These key principles give coherence to a pedagogical project that is intended to be participatory and inclusive, but it is also necessary to pay careful attention to the decision-making that will put these ideas into practice ~~in~~ on a~~the~~ day-to-day life ~~of the~~in schools. This is the aim of this research, which investigates how a classroom of two-year-old ~~children~~ gives shape to an inclusive participation project focusing on day-to-day activities and the decision-making ~~of decisions~~ about the educational environment (spaces, materials and times), relationships, projects and activities.

Methodology

We adopted a qualitative paradigm with an ethnographic orientation to learn about and understand the experiences that took place in two-~~-~~years-~~-~~old classroom (Beach, 2011; Hammersley, 2018). It was characterised by a prolonged period of field~~-~~work, three school years (2017-2020), in which the researcher shared entire days with the participants. Each year, the classroom host~~is home to~~ eighteen two-year-old children, a teacher and an educational technician. While educators and researcher were involved throughout the three school years, a new group of children joined ~~in~~ each year. The researcher has a teaching background ~~oriented to~~in early childhood education and a broad experience in the promotion of participatory processes. Likewise, one academic year before, she conducted a brief research with 3- and 4-year olds in the same school. This provided the researcher with extensive knowledge about the organization and culture of the school. The R~~r~~esearch fieldwork took place in the natural context of the school, on a day-to-day basis, and we ~~joined~~ were embedded in the actions and processes ~~that took~~ taking place in order to study what people did and said (Hammersley, 2018) and to be able to ~~give an~~ account of the cultural processes ~~that took~~taking place (Beach, 2011). Although the research context was the classroom, we also spent time in other spaces, such as the playground and the entrances and exits. This allowed us to adopt a holistic approach.

The field-work was an orderly process involving the following phases:

- Access to the field. The researcher negotiated her presence with the management team. The entry into the classroom began with a meeting with the educators in which we presented the purpose of the work, the conditions of access, how it would be carried out, and we requested informed consent.

- Understand the pedagogical project. We undertook a process of enquiry that sought to understand the educational project from the different perspectives of the people involved. The researcher attended the school for an extended period of observation (several sessions over two months) and take took notes, photograph and video records. In addition, she held informal conversations with the different agents. The diverse information gathered takes the form of the feedback reports, which record critical incidents (Douglas et al., 2009).Discussion groups were formed with the educators to discuss these reports with the aim of promoting reflection and defining the issue for improvement (Figure 1).

- Process of genuine listening to young children. The diversity of strategies allowed us to access the children's ideas and experiences of the young children through multiple languages (body language, facial expressions, noises and movements) (Clark and Moss, 2011), something particularly relevant for young children where whose oral language is in developingpment. Listening processes take time if we are to properly understand children's preferences, meanings and experiences. Participation is not inherent in the strategies, it depends on how they are put into practice and how power is exercised. We must assume a critical and reflexive positioning for "authentic listening" with regard to the process of listening process and the relationships and interactions (Wall, 2017; AuthorsCeballos and Susinos, 2022).

Figure 1.

- Improvement project phase. The process of genuine listening allowed us to geotget deeper intoto the ideas, needs and proposals of children, but a participatory process is reduced to a figurative experience if it is not accompanied by action (Lundy, 2007; Palaiologou, 2014). Taking Moving to action represents a major challenge, involving many uncertainties and revisions so that the design of the proposals converges with the preferences and needs of the children..

The process of making the familiar strange to promote reflection and to reconstruct our ideas and promote changes (Beach and Vigo, 2021), prompted us to adopt different strategies:

- Participant observation was carried out by the researcher and the educators. The researcher adopted this strategy throughout the entire process, taking notes, audio recordings and images (photography and video) from the first contact (Raggl, 2018). This information was transformed into in-deepth descriptions, questions and impressions in a multimodal research diary. Observation is a central strategy of in ethnography (Hammersley, 2018) but it also has a strong tradition in early childhood education as a tool for understanding children's needs and interests (Clark and Moss, 2011). For this, educators assumed the role of observers at specific moments. In this way, detailed observations allowed us to understand the children's perceptions and the relationships they experienced (Degotardi, 2011), which is particularly relevant with children with whose oral language is still developing.

- The ~~discussion~~ focus groups with the educators sought to explore the ideas that emerged from the observations, questioning ~~these~~ them and adding detail<u>s</u>, and offered spaces for deliberative decision-making ~~on~~ about the improvement project or the design of the proposals.

- Informal conversations with adults took place throughout the process and also ~~made it possible~~<u>allowed</u> for deeper and more ~~to explore further and obtain more~~ precise details <u>to be elicited</u>~~.~~. Informal conversations with children took place during interaction in small groups and <u>in</u> ~~in the~~ natural play-time (Blaisdell, et al., 2018). There were two premises: ~~do~~ not <u>to</u> intervene in the play to modify their action (avoid telling them what to do) and ~~do~~ not <u>to</u> ask confirmative questions. These dialogues acquired the complexity of the different levels of development of children's oral language.

- Child conferencing using image elicitation is a particular informal structured interview (Clark and Moss, 2011; Formosinho and Araújo, 2007). The dialogue began with the presentation of photographs about the different activities carried out in the classroom. Educators frequently use them to explain what carried out during the day or the week (Mannay, 2017). Their main strengths were their everyday use and familiarity.

- Classroom deambulation. Children led the walks around the classroom, deciding where to go, what to point out and what to explain to ~~the~~ educators (Clark, 2010). Adults accompanied them, documented and encouraged the conversation. The conversations were recorded in audio and photographs were taken of the items pointed out by the children.

Figure 2.

These strategies produced a large volume of multimodal data (written, audio, video and photographs) that were categorised in a recursive process (Miles and Huberman, 1994). These categories resulted from a process of organising fragments of the information fragments that shared patterns (inductive process) that were completed in accordance with the theoretical framework (deductive process). The process of analyzinganalysing the ideas and experiences of the youngest younger children, especially those who do not have a developed oral language, requires an ethical and reflective process of data (Ceballos and Susinos, 2022). Following the proposal of Sommer et al. (2013), we assume an empathetic imagination towards the child's actions, responses and expressions.

Table 1. Categories of analysis

Categories	Codes	
Childhood image	Restrictive	
	Empowered	
Proposals	Characteristics	
	Type	
	Opportunities for children to make decisions	Start, development and finish play
		Materials
		Play partners
	Materials	
	Play	Explore
		Find solutions
		Experience-based previous experiences
		Conceptualization
	Barriers of participation	
	Teacher role	

Childhood activity preferences	Open proposals
	Directived proposals
	Free play
Listening process	Strategies
	Teaching role
	Barriers of participation
	Listening interpretation process

Results

We present the main results for each year, focusing on how improvement proposals promoted a pedagogical project based on inclusive participation.

First Year: What decision space do children have in the proposals?

The dialogue about feedback report led us to focus our attention on what characterised the activities that were carried out. These are defined by being task-based (topic-based) and having few opportunities for children to choose. All the children carried out the same activity at the same time and this had beenwas defined by the educators (teacher-based). There Children did was not have the opportunity for children to decide when to start it or under what conditions.

Figure 3

In the artistic activity described (artistic expression with a single colour), it might seem that the children have the opportunity to choose the colour with which to paint with.

However, the choice of colour, a single one, is determined by an activity (the choice of emotion) without any link to the art activity. This previous choice limited the options for artistic expression, since they did not have the option to choose the colour, to change it, or to choose their classmates. A participatory proposal must allow children to start iniciate their own play and activity, choosing from diverse options, and to select with

whom to play. For this to happen, it is essential that the spaces are defined and the materials are accessible to children at all times so that they can select any resource and use it in the way they want (Ephgrave, 2020).

Figure 4.

Similarly, it is important to pay attention to the interaction that takes place between educators and children. Figure 4 shows two critical incidents in this regard. L. decided to leave the table of the assigned colour and change to another space where he shared conversations and glances with A. The teacher, noticing the change, insistently returned L. to his initial position. The protagonist of the other incident is K., who observes the actions of her classmates for long periods of time. The Tteacher's interpretation interpreted is that K. is not involved in the activity because he is was not drawing, and she inviteds his to join in by moving the arm that is holding the brush. This upsets K., which can be seen fromwas noticeable in his gesture and also in the sound he makes (not words).

Through their gestures, sounds and actions, the children expressed their preferences and also their discomfort when they were interrupted by adult' intervention. Careful observation would have allowed the teacher to understand that L. needed to change materials and start a shared activity with A., because learning and play take place in relation to others. Or that K. was involved in the activity, not based onby action but through by observation, breaking an educational norm that associates involvement with action.

The dialogues related to these critical incidents brought to light the need to reflect on the possibilities of choice (of activity, material, play and relationships) for the children in the proposals, giving rise to a number of questions:

- What decision space do children have in the proposal?

- Can children make decisions about materials or plays?

- Can they decide when to start, change or end an activity?

- Can they choose the classmates they want to be with?

- What level of involvement in the activity do children have?

These initial reflections were followed by the process of authentic listening to the children through child conferencing using image elicitation, informal dialogues with the children and the observation of the teachers and the researcher.

Figure 5:

We found that two activities stood out in the children's choices: activities geared towards manipulation and experimentation (experimentation trays and installations) and those related to movement. Although the play with sounds was not a majority choice, we decided to incorporate it so that all the children could see their preferences included. We did so on the basis that the exclusively exercise of the majority is not an adequate system for respecting the children's rights.

~~Within~~ In this framework, several meetings took place to design two activities that responded to the preferences expressed by the children. The first was a motor story in which the technician led the activity and the children imitated her gestures, movements and actions.

Figure 6

This activity provided a response to the children's demand for movement. However, it was a directed activity, with only a single possibility, ~~where~~ in which the

14

adult defined the action and the children reproduced what they were shown without the possibility of choice.

The second activity was an experimentation with and manipulation of sound. In addition to the objects made by the adults, the children found materials and resources that they could manipulate and combine as they wished. This proposal responded to the interests of the children (manipulation and sound) but it was also presented as an open activity, with possibilities of choice for the children.

Figure 7

Comparing the characteristics of the two proposals invites us to reflect on how children's opportunities for choice are defined by the environments and materials available. This implies making resources available and accessible to children at all times since children should be able to select any resource and use it in any way they want. When an environment is organised in this way, children have the power to influence their activity and learning (Ephgrave, 2020).

Second Year: What materials and resources are made available to the children? Are their different interests considered?

The researcher returned to the classroom for an extended period of time to find out more about the pedagogical approach employed and meet the new group of children. Educators were the same as in the previous year, but the group of children was new. Observation and informal conversations contributed to the new feedback report.

Figure 8

During the dialogue about the activities carried out (Figure 8), the technician

stated:

(T) The materials … When someone says, "Play" ... well, I play, but what at? With

all the elaborate material that we have … (M) The thing is, we don't know what

materials and objects they like (open materials, structured objects, etc.). (T) Some

materials are elaborate and are more aimed at what interests us and others offer

more freedom. We have to ask about that. (Educators discussion group)

The educators carried out a period of observation over three weeks and focused

on identifying the materials that were available to children.

Figure 9

The dialogue about these materials was intended to broaden this initial restricted view.

- What resources are made available to children (single-use, open-ended)? What

  characteristics do they have? Which ones do they prefer?

- Are they adapted to the different types of development of the children?

- Are they presented in any aesthetic pleasing way?

- Are they accessible?

- What games do these materials promote? Are there several materials that allow

  the same actions to be carried out?

The variety of materials available to the children throughout the sessions was

noted, as well as their different sources, showing a preponderance of market materials

(puzzles or toys) and those made by the educators. The main characteristic of these the

latter is that they are designed for single use. Even resources that may suggest an open

purpose (buttons, fabrics and boxes) were organised and arranged for a single purpose.

An example was the "button box". Two items (a box and buttons) that could generate endless possibilities, were presented as an activity limited to inserting the buttons through the slot in the box. In addition, not all the materials were accessible to the children, especially those related to art and natural items (wood, cork, leaves, nuts, etc.) whose use was restricted to specific moments.

Within this framework of reflection, the process of listening to the children began. The deambulation strategy was employed using the following question: Which classroom material do you like the most? Among the materials highlighted by the children we found commercial toys (plastic animals, a garage and cars) and, to a lesser extent, materials made by the educators (the button box). They referred to natural, unstructured or artistic materials on only a few occasions. These were not visible in the classroom and, therefore, they could not be identifyied them during their deambulation. For this reason, we accompanied this strategy with observations and informal conversations with the children at different times (free play and proposals designed by teachers), allowing dialogue about materials that were only present in specific activities:

B: "*With a brush and the colour red.*"

A: "*Stones, a shower of stones.*"

S: "*The yellow brush.*"

Al: "*Crayons and pine cones.*" *(Informal dialogues with the children)*

All the reflections and ideas that arose were organised in order to design proposals that incorporated the children's preferences regarding materials.

Figure 10

To begin with, we chose the art activity materials as the epitome of an activity where children could only perform the defined action and whose materials were only use with strict rules such as no mixing (brush only, play dough only or markers only, etc.). In order to break these patterns, an art environment was designed in the classroom that sought to offer children a wide range of resources and materials. The artistic environments were designed around four spaces whose materials were placed aesthetic way:

- Offer different materials: drawing surfaces (white or brown paper or chalk board); resources (chalk, paint, markers or play dough); tools (brushes, modelling knives, etc.) and natural-based materials (pine cones, stones, etc.).

- Present the materials in different ways. Extremely long pieces of paper (at least 2m in length) were chosen to break with the idea of individual use and remove limitations set imposed by size.

- Locate Place the materials using according to an aesthetic approach that will invites children to take part in a creative play.

Figure 11

The children chose the space in which they wanted to be in, the materials to be used and the activity to be undertaken, in addition, transferred materials from one environment to another. The only rule was to respect for the creative activity of their classmates. This activity was extended beyond the time initially planned as a result of the level of engagement that was observed.

The children were invited to observe how the class was arranged and what material was available to them. Some put words to what they observed. They began to distribute themselves within the space, each one freely choosing where they wanted to be as they played and experimented, creating their drawings,

creating rain with the stones, talking with each other to share what was happening, forming spirals with the chalk, and covering the paper. (Teacher's notes)

Third Year: What action do children take when the context offers them opportunities for choice?

The previous transformation processes had permeated the daily basis activity in such a way that, when the researcher returned to the school, the educators had already begun to carefully observe the children's play and the materials they chose. "*We have been observing and we have some ideas.*" (Informal Conversation-Teacher). After a few weeks of observation by the researcher, we shared our reflections, impressions and ideas. On this occasion, the children were incorporated from the beginning through informal conversations during play time. Consequently, the feedback report incorporatesd the three views (educators, researcher and children).

Figure 12

The dialogue focused on three issues. During the previous academic years, activities in which all the children did the same action – previously defined by the educators and geared towards instrumental learning – prevailed. However, in the third year, the children carried out different activities at the same time, being able to choose the activity they wanted to start and when to change their activity. Although the majority of these were defined as open, some structured activity was offered (serialisation of natural elements). This presence may be an attempt to minimise the tension felt due to the pressure of the curriculum.

Sometimes, pressured by the results-based paradigm and instrumental learning, we forget the richness of experiences that allow us to experiment, create hypotheses, test, etc. (Teacher's diary)

The classroom also had a greater number of unstructured materials. During informal conversations with the children, they highlighted their preference for playing with natural elements in an open-ended way. It should be noted that some acquired single-purpose resources were kept (the garage, puzzles, etc.). However, the children diversified their use (for example, building a tower with the puzzle pieces).

Finally, the dialogue addressed the interventions of the educators during the children play. While the children were creating towers with the puzzle pieces, the technician introduced wooden pieces of different shapes and sizes, offering new alternatives in their construction play. Now the educators sought to act without interfering with the children's play (Fisher, 2018) through a recursive process of observation, reflection and action.

While in previous years, the improvement projects were about concrete aspects (materials and activities, etc.), this time we talked about the political issues: What role do I assume as an educator? Do I interact and offer help or do I interfere and direct the action? What are children capable of when the context offers them opportunities, when we do not direct the action?

On this occasion, the proposals designed sought to become scenarios that would allow us to answer these questions. It was necessary to reflect on how to establish the conditions to create appropriate contexts, capable of drawing on the potential of the children and also challenging. Bringing everything we had learned into play, we designed a proposal that included the most relevant activities and materials for this new group of children. In this academic year, our aim was to design a play scenario that would provoke,

inviting children to investigate, combine elements, create challenges (Oliveira-Formosinho and Formosinho, 2013; Robson, and Mastrangelo, 2017) and support them in their process of developing experiences, relationships, knowledge and learning (indirect pedagogical approach).

- Priority was given to materials, objects and pieces of different qualities and origins that allowed the playing of an exploratory play about the qualities of the world using these objects (loose parts).

- They were aesthetically arranged in space presenting provocation, but leaving the control of the play (what to play and how) to the children (Hyndman and Lester, 2015).

- The construction plays were recursive, especially the one of stacking and creating towers, and some materials were therefore provided to simulate their creations.

The documentation of this proposal epitomises the actions and strategies employed by the children in a provocative that offered multiple opportunities for play.

Figure 13.

We found that manipulation and exploration are essential actions for two-year-olds. Children used their hands as tools to investigate the qualities of objects and their possibilities for action.

K. is sitting on the floor and in her hand, she has a small tube, a lion and a walnut. She tries insistently to insert the lion into the tube. It won't go in. She is concentrating and does not pay attention to the games that her companions are playing next to her. After a while she picks up the walnut. This does go in and slips

through, falling to the ground. She looks at the other end of the tube. (Researcher

diary)

This activity may appear disorganised and the fact that the walnut enters the hole is a chance discovery. However, the actions that children undertake have an order and a meaning. K. repeats the same process with the lion and the walnut and gets different results. Her recursive process is the following: choice of object-observation-manipulation and discovery.

Another activity that takes place is exploration. This involves carefully examining an object or a space to discover the elements that compose it. The educators offered ramps in response to the children's interest in rolling objects. However, without intending to do so, they created a space that acted as a hiding place.

A. is the first to approach. First, he observes the space and then bends down to look inside. He looks at the sheets of cardboard. This is the first time that there has been a proposal like this in the classroom. After this moment of observation, he hides in the hole. (Research diary)

When the sheets fell off, they considered how to rebuild the shelter. Their actions, and essentially their mistakes, helped them understand that they could not put the sheet vertically because it did not leave space to hide, nor too steep because it fell over. The sheet only worked if it was at an angle. The ultimate purpose of manipulation and exploration is to know and understand how reality works, and to achieve this, children analyse the play scenario and become familiar with the object's thoughts different actions. In this way, they tested their thoughts and their hypotheses (Murray, 2017).

Figure 14

Sometimes exploration converged with the search for solutions. The children employed multiple alternatives to respond to a problem or situation. Educators did not offer an answer. Instead, they allowed exploration, testing and redefined. Each child set out on a journey.

M. chooses to sit down and cover herself with the sheet. K. tries to place the sheets of wood at different angles. When it falls, she puts it back. And so, on until it stays in place. (Research diary)

This demonstrated that there were many different ways of doing it, all of them useful for the purpose. Problem solving has a social component (Murray, 2007), and although in two-year-old children this is still incipient, we saw glimpses of some collective actions, small opportunities to help each other.

Figure 15.

Some decisions that the children made, when faced with a challenge, were based on previous experiences. Two children were playing with the animals and the wooden ramps. When the ramp fell down they tried to rebuild it. To do this, they employed the same actions that they had used to remake the cave, but this time they did not insist as much on repeating actions that were not successful the previous time and attempted to try out new options (holding it themselves). From their previous experience they had learned that some actions did not solve the problem and they tried to find new options.

Figure 16.

We also found the representation and creation of invented scenes or characters (conceptualisation). In the representation, childrenschildren used objects to make constructions to which they attached meanings: "It's a tower." During the symbolic game

we found creations of scenes. "It's a little house," says A. while playing with the panda bear.

In conclusion, these observations have provided us with an insight into the culture of childhood, the particular way in which children approach reality through objects and relationships with others, and the strategies they employ to think about, conceptualise and interpret it and to make decisions. We have done these by recognising children as agents with the ~~ability~~ capacity to ~~build~~ construct knowledge through processes of inquiry into their environment from an early age (Murray, 2017; Ephgrave, 2020).

Conclusions

We have analysed the transformation of the educational approach in a classroom for two-year-old children ~~s~~ into a pedagogy of inclusive participation. We see how the educational scenario has been in a constant process of reflection and transformation, and that the pedagogy of inclusive participation requires an organisation of the educational environment that offers opportunities for children to explore, give meaning to and express their experiences of the physical, cultural and social worlds (Oliveira-Formosinho and Formosinho, 2013).

Also, worth highlighting is the way the classroom has been conceived as a laboratory for experimentation that encourages us to imagine and try out different ways of doing things, to delve into the unknown, so that we leave behind the security provided by the familiar and the expected. The approach has changed from the design of thematic activities directed by adults and with few opportunities for choice for children and structured materials, to the design of play scenarios in which the ability to make decisions and open-ended materials predominate (Ephgrave, 2020); and a curriculum was defined by the conditions required for encounter, relationships and shared experiences (Fortunati,

2018), and by the opportunities offered to each child according to their needs, interests and actions, in a way that gives meaning to their experiences, relationships, knowledge and learning.

At the same time, we have introduced methods of analysis based on pedagogical planning in action. In this way, the processes of adult planning, predetermined and offering a single option, have given way to planning with children, to the creation of opportunities for children to act in accordance with their own intentions, preferences and decisions (*progetazzione*) (Rinaldi, 2016). Thus, after designing the scenarios, the teachers observe and listen to what the children do and think and how they relate, factors that determine whether they act, intervene in the action or neither, and in what sense (Ephgrave, 2020). According to Fisher (2018), the most complex challenge is the balance between interacting and not interfering when children are involved in an exploration process.

It is also worth noting that the commitment to an inclusive participatory pedagogy has invited us to reflect on the idea of childhood and the role of the teacher. Throughout ~~these project~~these projects ~~has~~have given way to understanding children as subjects of rights, in possession of their own culture and agents with the ability and knowledge to understand, make decisions and give meaning to their experiences. This reconstruction of childhood implies transforming the school and the experiences. In this way, learning is defined as a continuous process, built on the relationship with others and with objects, which is determined by the spaces, times and materials that make up the environment and the opportunities for interaction. The role of the teacher is also realigned to follow a more relational and systemic sociocultural pedagogical model that understands teachers as researchers who create listening spaces and ask themselves questions about their daily tasks in order to improve their teaching practice (Araújo, 2012, 2018; Oliveira-

25

Formosinho and Araújo, 2011) and to organise the environment according to the needs and characteristics observed in childhood.

Finally, this study shows how educators progress towards a "critical ecology of the profession" (Ardnt et al., 2018; Dalli et al., 2012; Urban and Dalli, 2012; AuthorsCeballos and Susinos, 2022). Teachers thus (re)construct themselves throughout their professional development through relationships between agents – educators, children and researchers, in this case – and the co-construction of knowledge and professional practices is promoted (Urban, 2008).

Infant school as inclusion site.

26

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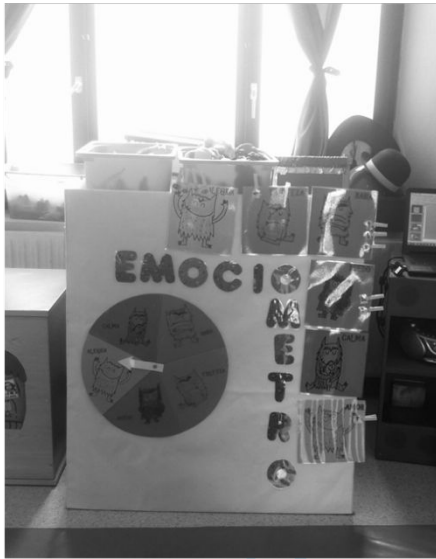
Infant school as inclusion site.

28

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Figure 1. Question-guide of the projects.

First Year	Second Year	Third Year
• What decision spaces/autonomy do the children have? How do these respond to their interests?	• What materials do we make available to the children? What actions do they promote?	• Through the proposals, do we observe an image of the child as a researcher and builder of knowledge?

Figure 2. Strategies employed to listen to the children

First Year	Second Year	Third Year
• Participant observation by the researcher and educators • Child conferencing using image elicitation • Informal dialogues with the children	• Participant observation by the researcher and educators • Deambulation • Informal dialogues with the children	• Participant observation by the researcher and educators • Informal dialogues with the children

Infant school as inclusion site.   30

At 10 a.m. the children who are missing arrive at the classroom (the entrance is staggered from 9 a.m. onwards). They take off their coats, hang them on their hangers (identified by a photo), take their cushion and sit in the assembly [...]. The teacher greets each child with the "colour monster" stuffed animal. While she deals with each in turn, the rest are playing, talking, looking the other way, etc. They do not pay attention to what the teacher is doing. One by one they stand in front of the "emotionometer" (each panel identifies an emotion of the monster by means of the colours). Each child indicates the emotion that he or she is experiencing that day (some use words, others point) and places the clip with their photo in the corresponding colour. [...]

Once they have finished the "emotionometer" activity, the "art" activity begins. The educators have prepared tables with fanfold paper and paint. Each table has one of the colours that is identified with a particular emotion. The idea is that each child must go to the table which has the colour of the emotion that they have chosen from the emotionometer in the previous activity. For example, K. is feeling calm today (represented by the colour green), so he has to go to the table with the green paint. The educators check that each child is in the "chosen" colour, or, where appropriate, relocates them. There are tables in which there is only one child (calm/green) and others in which 5 or 6 are

ImageFigure 31. Feedback report. First year

K. spends long periods of time observing me (researcher) or looking what his colleagues produce. He barely paints on his mural. During the activity L. changes tables. She had chosen sadness and the teacher had reinforced her choice by remembering that her mother had been cross with her today for wetting herself. The teacher notices the change of table and relocates her to her initial choice. [...] After authorisation from the teachers, some children go to another table where all the colours are available. Some children, for example K., do not get permission and are made to continue in their colour. I'm not sure why.
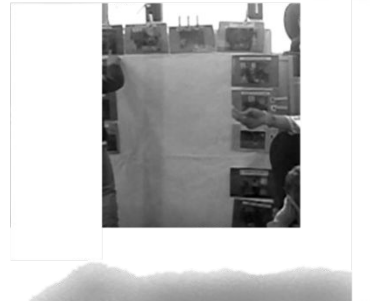
~~Image~~Figure 4~~2~~. Feedback report. First year

Infant school as inclusion site.   32

constructions

trays

installations

colour

monster

I told M. (T) that if we have one painting, everyone will want to paint, because that's what happens. That's why we decided, along the same lines as deciding what emotion you have today, to ask what activity you like the most using the sequence of images. They didn't think it was strange. […] It's common for them to choose from among the options with their peg, so exchanging emotions for class activities didn't seem strange to them. They knew how it worked, what you were going to ask them, and that each one was going to have their space.

story

psychomotor education

playing with sounds

We have been discovering things that we already knew well enough. Because S. didn't surprise us with what she told us about auditory discrimination, […] before asking them, we already knew what they liked. But giving the opportunity for all that to come together …

(T) We were struck by the choice of some children. Those who find it more difficult chose language stimulation. They feel comfortable there. (M) When we said that it was difficult for them and an effort. […] You imagine that they are going to say X and it surprises you. It amazes you.

ImageFigure 53: Feedback report. First year

(T) Another turning point was when we got together and talked about what we could do with what the children said. Each of them had said something, and how were we going to do just one thing? We can't put five here doing one thing, five there doing something else, etc. (M) It was a very

The session began with a brief spell of movement and free play in the room (a large space without objects). The technician asked the children if they wanted her to tell them a special story (motor story). The children agreed. "We have to take a boat and cross a river to get to the safari." In the central part of the room there is a structure with mats in the form of a boat and movements were proposed by the students following the instructions that the teacher gave through the story.

(M) Perhaps the proposals are simple, but we could have made it more complicated, forgetting what the children told us and …

Figure 6: Motor story

Infant school as inclusion site.   33

Containers
■
☐ Bottles of different
  materials and sizes
☐ Boxes
☐ Cardboard tubes   Beaters
☐ Plastic buckets   ■
☐ Jars
                       ☐ Rolled up newspapers
                       ☐ Ladle
                       ☐ Plastic and metal spoon
                       ☐ Grater   To create sounds
                                      ■
                                      ☐ Stones
                                      ☐ Pulses, rice, etc.
                                      ☐ Shells
                                      ☐ Rattles

Figure 7. Experimentation with sounds

Circles, squares, stars, triangles.
Red, green, yellow, blue or brown.

Oh! It tickles.

We are looking for blank spaces.
The edges, the corners invite us to
create.

We unstick carefully, choosing the
colours.
Should we glue them together or
separately?
We each have a territory
although sometimes we share the
space.

We hide. We look at each other. We
talk to each other. We play together
in silence.
We collaborate. We play alone or
together.

What are you doing?
A face.

They form groups, choose, rearrange, decide together.

Figure 8. Feedback report. Second year

Infant school as inclusion site.   34

Figure 9. Feedback report. Second year

Infant school as inclusion site.   35

Each activity has its technique and they don't choose it. One day it's the cork technique, and another day using the brush, and so on (Discussion group with the educators).

Large or small paper, with paints or markers.
Materials for drawing, creating and imagining

Small drawings, attention to detail.
Creating in intimacy,
the minimum space.
Other times enormous creations,
using all the space of the paper.

One painting or two at a time.
One colour or multiple colours.
On a blank space or on what has already been created.

Sometimes, we like to mix, to combine, to try.
Painting off paper
Dots, lines, circles...

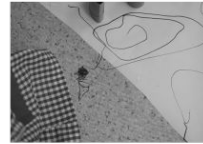Figure 10. Feedback report. Second year

Infant school as inclusion site.   36

Different scenarios of expression.

Exploring the material

There are no limits to the size of the painting.

I use any object.

What did you like the most?
M. "Painting with a brush and with markers"
B. "With a brush and the colour red"
E. "Everything" "The paints"
En. "With the brush"
S. "The yellow brush"
M. "I loved everything"
M. "The blue brush"
Á. "Crayons and pine cones"
V. "The brush"
Ad. "Stones, a shower of stones."
T. "The red jar, the brush"
E. "Stones"
U. "The stones and the paints"
N. "The chalk"
V. "The paint"
Al. "Crayons and pine cones"
Ma. "Stones"

I mix

We do it together

WE CREATE

Figure 11. Art proposals. Second year

On the table there is a basket with pine cones, another with walnuts and another with hazelnuts. We also find strips of images with photographs of these objects in sequences. The teacher invites four children to join this activity. [...] (Teacher with a walnut in her hand) "Look C., where does this one go?" (C. points to a hazelnut on her strip). The teacher says in a disapproving tone, "Uh-uh." "C., where does the pine cone go?" C. points to the picture of the pine cone and says, "Here." The teacher offers reinforcement: "Very   good!"

M. is doing the sequencing activity. She puts the hazelnut in the wrong place. As she does it, she looks at the teacher. She is waiting for her reaction. The teacher tells her that it doesn't go there. She removes it, laughs and puts it in the expected place. Meanwhile, the rest of the children are playing freely in the classroom.

hree of them are playing with the garage. Although they have the cars they use the animals more. The activity is somewhat repetitive: the animals climb up the road to the top of the garage and are then dropped down the slope. I approach them. They look at me but they don't say anything to me. They continue with their game. I ask them about it. "The elephant goes up and then crash!" says K., making a gesture of forcefully putting the elephant on top of the garage. I ask why it does that. He looks at me and makes a gesture (shrugging his shoulders) suggesting he doesn't know. Perhaps it's not important why, and my question seems irrelevant to them. [...] A. starts a conversation with me. She tells me, "I love animals." G. is in the same space, playing with cars in the garage. He pushes them along, launches them down the track, and collides with K.'s elephant.

When I get to the classroom some children are already there. A group are at a table with a puzzle whose pieces are wooden cubes. They don't put the puzzle together (the activity for which it was designed), but are building towers, trying to see how high they can make them. When they fall over, they laugh and start again. The technician who observes this puts pieces of wood of different sizes and shapes within their reach. This gives a new boost to their building game. The children don't say a word, but little by little they begin to use the wooden pieces and abandon the puzzle. I ask them if they are not interested in it any more. N. (holding a wooden triangle in her hand) replies, "I like this one better." She begins to sing (I don't know what) and to "walk" the piece of wood around the table.

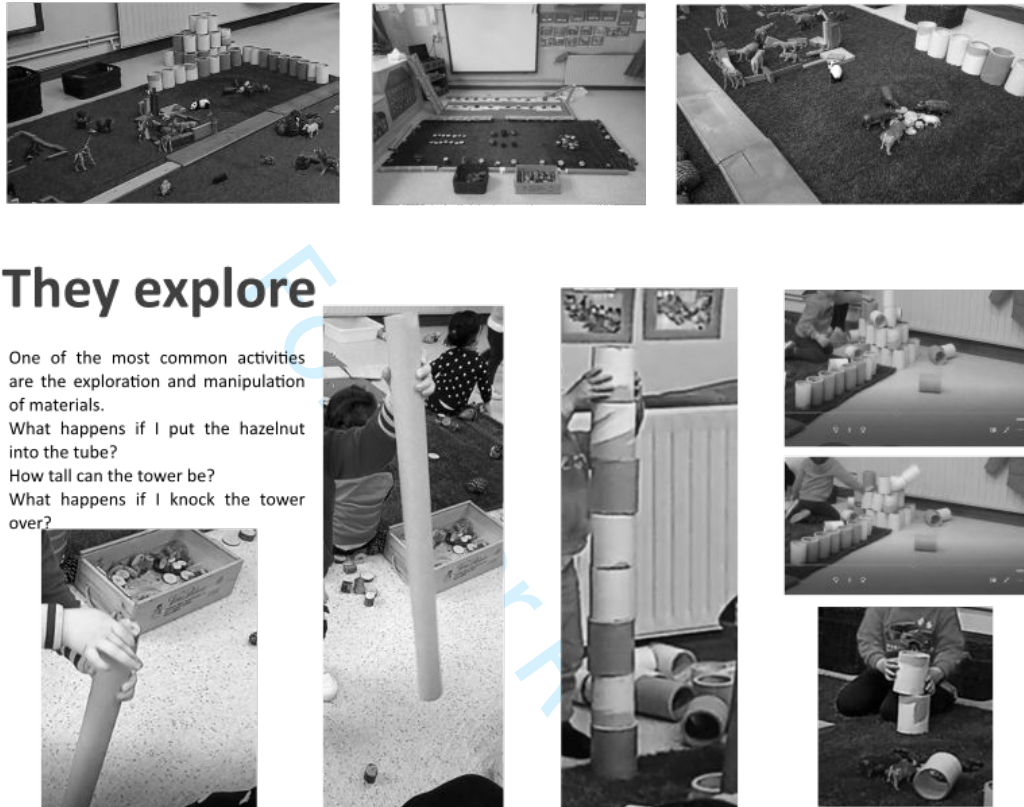Figure 12. Feedback report. Third year

Infant school as inclusion site.

38

They explore

One of the most common activities are the exploration and manipulation of materials.
What happens if I put the hazelnut into the tube?
How tall can the tower be?
What happens if I knock the tower over?

Figure 13. Children as co-constructor of knowledge. Third year

There are some sheets of cardboard leaning against the furniture forming a small secret hideaway. A. finds it. She hides. She looks at me and smiles. The others can't see her but she can see them through the cracks. She invites more children to join her. When M. is about to get in, the sheets fall over. They put them back in place. They do it in such a way that the space created is very small and when they get in, the sheets fall again. M. sits against the wall, takes the sheet of cardboard and places it in front of her. In this way she hides herself.
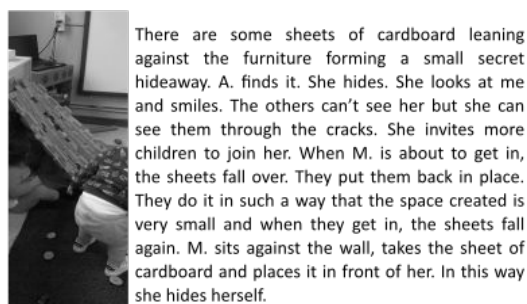
They find solutions

Figure 14. Children as co-constructor of knowledge. Third year

M y E. están jugando con los animales. Se dirigen a la zona del armario, allí hay dos rampas. Comienzan a lanzar el oso panda por la rampa hasta que la madera se cae al suelo. Intentan colocarla de nuevo: en vertical y en horizontal. No sirve para deslizar el oso. La apoyan contra el armario. Se cae. Lo repiten. Vuelve a caerse. Prueban a sostenerla con la mano, pero quién la sostiene no puede lanzar el oso. Piden ayudan a T.

They take decisions

Figure 15. Children as co-constructor of knowledge. Third year
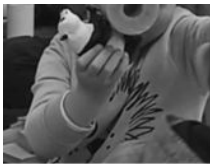
They conceptualise

From the beginning of the session A. is playing with the panda bear. She is the protagonist of her game. When he has the purple tube, the bear is working. "It's so heavy! Crash! It falls down." When she picks up the stiff cardboard tube, she pushes the bear into the hole. "He's inside. He's in his house." She creates stories, gives meaning to materials. A piece of wood is a house.

Figure 16. Children as co-constructor of knowledge. Third year

Report on modifications

The article has been modified following the indications received, most of which have been addressed in the new draft. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the suggestions.

The changes we have made are summarised below:

- Incorporated the suggested keywords.
- Title proposal received has been accepted
- Revised the article to eliminate grammatical and syntactical errors.