

Literacy And Reading: Incorporating Playful Activities Into The Teaching-Learning Process In The Early Years Of Elementary Education

Kanidja Estrela Fernandes¹, Maria De Fátima Martins Maciel²,
David Bastida Santos³, Adams Ricardo Pereira De Abreu⁴,
Maria Alexandra Abreu De Sousa⁵, Mariana Maria Gomes Sampaio⁶,
Michael Douglas Sousa Leite⁷, Gildeilson Silva Paulino⁸,
Denys Ferreira Leandro⁹, Gonçalves Marques Rocha Filho¹⁰,
Helen Batista Silva¹¹, Audilene De Andrade Figueiredo¹²

¹(Instituto Federal de Goiás - IFG)

²(Centro Universitário Venda Nova do Imigrante - UNIFAVENI)

³(Universidade Federal de Campina Grande - UFCG)

⁴(Universidade do Estado do Rio Grande do Norte - UERN)

⁵(Universidade Federal de Campina Grande - UFCG)

⁶(Universidade Federal de Campina Grande - UFCG)

⁷(Universidade Federal de Campina Grande - UFCG)

⁸(Universidade Federal de Campina Grande - UFCG)

⁹(Centro Universitário Santa Maria - UNIFSM)

¹⁰(Universidade Federal de Campina Grande - UFCG)

¹¹(Universidade Federal de Campina Grande - UFCG)

¹²(Universidade Federal de Campina Grande - UFCG)

Abstract:

This work focuses on the literacy and learning process in Brazil, emphasizing the importance of introducing playfulness into this process during the early years of elementary education. The main objective is to understand the role of playfulness in the literacy process in the early years of elementary education. Methodologically, this is a bibliographic research study, conducted through data collection from the Latin American and Caribbean Health Sciences Literature (LILACS) database and the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD). To extract studies from these databases, the following descriptors were cross-referenced: Illiteracy, Early Years, Elementary Education. The boolean operator and was used for this cross-referencing. The inclusion criteria for the research were: scientific articles, monographs, dissertations, and theses that were complete, addressed the topic, were in Portuguese, freely accessible, and published between 2018 and 2023. The theoretical framework of the research covered two distinct points: the first addresses the panorama of literacy in Brazil, and the second discusses the importance of playfulness for teaching and learning in the early years. From this, it is possible to conclude that playfulness plays a significant role in student learning during the early years of elementary education. This is particularly relevant in the first three years, as it is crucial for children to feel comfortable exploring the new reality presented to them. Therefore, it seems essential that teachers integrate playfulness into the literacy and learning process, enabling children to develop a passion for reading and writing, driven by the interest and curiosity sparked by playful activities included in this process.

Keywords: Literacy; Playful Learning; Early Years.

Date of Submission: 10-12-2024

Date of Acceptance: 20-12-2024

I. Introduction

Literacy is one of the fundamental pillars of education, playing a crucial role in the cognitive, social, and emotional development of children. In the Brazilian context, the integration of playful activities into the literacy and reading processes in the early years of elementary education has proven to be a promising approach to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning outcomes. This study aims to explore the relevance of playfulness

in this specific context, investigating how its application can enrich the literacy process and contribute to the holistic development of students.

Over the past decades, numerous researchers have highlighted the effectiveness of playful practices in the teaching-learning process, demonstrating that playfulness goes far beyond entertainment. It serves as a powerful pedagogical tool, capable of engaging students, promoting social interaction, and stimulating cognitive, emotional, and social skills. Studies such as those by Simão and Poletto (2019) and Pereira and Ferreira (2022) emphasize that playful activities not only spark interest in reading and writing but also encourage creative thinking, problem-solving, and motivation to learn.

Despite its evident benefits, playfulness is still underestimated in the educational environment, often relegated to a secondary role by educators and parents. In this context, it becomes essential to discuss more deeply the role of playfulness in literacy in the early years, seeking to understand how it can be strategically incorporated to promote a more dynamic and effective teaching process.

This research aims to investigate the impact of using playful activities on the development of reading and writing skills, addressing the following research question: What is the role of playfulness in the literacy process in the early years of elementary education?

The relevance of this investigation is directly tied to the importance of literacy in the educational context, especially during the early school years. Literacy not only underpins children's academic development but also serves as an essential element for their social inclusion and future success.

These activities spark curiosity, engage students, and make the teaching process more meaningful. Recent studies, such as those by Sali, Magnani, and Patella (2023), support these observations, highlighting that playfulness not only facilitates the teaching of reading and writing but also fosters holistic development, encompassing cognitive, social, and emotional aspects.

In this context, the objective of this research is to understand the role of playfulness in the literacy process in the early years of elementary education.

II. Materials And Methods

This study is characterized as a bibliographic research, grounded in the in-depth analysis of secondary sources. According to Sousa, Oliveira, and Alves (2021), bibliographic research serves as a fundamental pillar underpinning the entire scientific framework, providing a solid foundation for the construction of knowledge. This approach enables a comprehensive review of existing literature, allowing for the exploration of new perspectives and the establishment of innovative conclusions.

Data collection for this research was conducted through a meticulous search for previously published studies indexed in renowned databases, such as the Latin American and Caribbean Health Sciences Literature (LILACS) and the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD). The selection and extraction process was guided by the combination of relevant descriptors, using the boolean operator "and" to refine the results.

The inclusion criteria for this research encompassed the selection of scientific articles, monographs, dissertations, and full theses written in Portuguese and published between 2018 and 2023. Conversely, works that did not meet the inclusion criteria, as well as those that were duplicates, incomplete, written in foreign languages, or with restricted access, were excluded.

This methodology, grounded in rigorous scientific principles, provides a robust structure for conducting the research, ensuring the validity and reliability of the results obtained.

III. Results And Discussions

To outline the panorama of literacy in Brazil, it is necessary to briefly revisit the colonial period, when the social structure was based on enslaved labor working in agricultural production on large estates, forming a patriarchal society characterized by the unlimited authority of landowners (Araújo, 2018).

Andrade and Moreira (2019) note that in 1549, when the Jesuits arrived, their goal was to educate and catechize the Indigenous peoples, suppressing native cultures and assimilating them according to Luso-Catholic teachings. This was achieved through the establishment of schools for Indigenous children and the offspring of settlers in economically strategic locations. In 1759, after the expulsion of the Jesuits, there was a period without schools, during which only sporadic lessons were conducted. In 1808, with the arrival of the Portuguese Crown in Brazilian territory, the need for vocational education arose to meet the demands of new inhabitants.

With Brazil's independence in 1822, a Constitution was drafted in 1824, declaring free primary education for all citizens. However, there were no adequately trained professionals to address literacy needs. Progressing further, Brazil underwent modernization with the abolition of slavery and the arrival of immigrants bringing new ideologies. These ideologies significantly influenced the 1891 Constitution, including the abolition of the census-based vote. However, the Constitution maintained the literacy census, with approximately 85% of the population being illiterate at the time (Andrade & Moreira, 2019).

According to Silva, Ferreira, and Boeing (2020), debates in the late 1870s, such as those on electoral reform, framed illiteracy as a national public issue. These discussions led to the expansion of the education system and the stigmatization of illiteracy, accompanied by the exclusion of illiterate individuals from voting and formal labor markets.

Araújo (2018) states that the situation began to change in the 1920s, with the expansion of schooling driven by industrial development in major urban centers. In 1934, a new Constitution was introduced, prioritizing education as a national goal and establishing educational guidelines in Brazil. Among other measures, it allocated a minimum budget for education and recognized the right to education for all.

From the 1930s onwards, Andrade and Moreira (2019) explain that significant changes occurred in the electoral process, such as the creation of the Electoral Justice system, mandatory registration, and secret voting. However, illiterate individuals, who constituted a large portion of the population, remained deprived of political rights, excluded from the electoral process throughout the Estado Novo and the Military Regime (1945–1985).

Based on Silva, Ferreira, and Boeing (2020), several efforts have been made over the years to eradicate illiteracy in Brazil, such as the Adult Education Campaign (1947), the National Campaign for the Eradication of Illiteracy (1958), the National Literacy Program inspired by Paulo Freire's methods (1964), and the Brazilian Literacy Movement (Moblin) (1968–1978). Other initiatives include the Educar Foundation (1985), the National Literacy and Citizenship Program (PNAC) (1990), the Solidary Literacy Program (PAS) (2001), the Brazil Literate Program (PBA) (2003), the Pro-Literacy Program (2007), the Teacher Training Program (PROFA) (2008), the National Pact for Literacy at the Right Age (PNAIC) (2012), the More Literacy Program (2018), and the National Literacy Policy (2019).

The numerous projects and programs addressing illiteracy reveal that, for many years, the primary focus of these policies has been on young people and adults. At other times, the emphasis was placed on training teachers for literacy classes (Silva, Ferreira & Boeing, 2020). In light of this scenario, Amaro (2022) highlights that illiteracy remains a persistent issue in Brazilian statistics, prompting the continued proposition of policies to combat it. For example, the National Education Plan (Law No. 13.005), valid from 2014 to 2024, outlines goals and strategies aimed at expanding literacy.

In addressing the history of literacy in Brazil, the history of literacy methods is also considered. Since the early 19th century, discussions have focused on which methods are most effective in solving the problem. Regarding the concept of literacy methods, Silva and Oliveira (2019, p. 286) define them as “a set of procedures based on theories and principles that guide the initial learning of reading and writing.” In Brazil, six literacy methods stand out: a) synthetic method; b) analytical method; c) constructivist perspective; d) historical-cultural perspective; and e) literacy perspective.

According to Santos, Vidal, and Gutiérrez (2018), literacy methods can be divided into two approaches: synthetic and analytical. Synthetic methods progress from smaller to larger units, starting with letters, phonemes, or syllables (alphabetic, phonetic, and syllabic methods). In contrast, analytical methods follow the opposite path, moving from larger to smaller units, focusing on the meaning of words, phrases, or short texts. This method encourages intuitive processing, treating literacy as a global action divided into three stages: word recognition, sentence recognition, and global comprehension.

Considering the above explanations, Marinho and Bochembuzio (2021, p. 89) explain that:

Word recognition (Palavração): The foundation is the word, which is constructed to form sentences and then deconstructed to study smaller units.

Sentence recognition (Sentenciação): The student visualizes and memorizes the words within a sentence to create new words and sentences.

Global approach (Global): Focuses on understanding that reading is about discovering what is written, breaking down short stories into increasingly smaller parts.

Regarding the constructivist perspective on literacy, Maria (2022) explains that, as a result of research on the psychogenesis of written language conducted by Argentine researcher Emilia Ferreiro, teachers began diagnosing students' initial writing and the hypotheses they formulated about the alphabetic system. This mapping of writing allowed educators to plan their interventions based on this overview. Thus, even though Ferreiro's discussions were theoretical rather than methodological, her studies contributed to a period marked by efforts to demethodologize literacy and critique the use of primers, granting teachers greater autonomy.

Concerning the historical-cultural perspective, Silva and Oliveira (2019) state that this approach considers humans in their entirety, as both body and mind, biological and cultural beings, shaped by historical processes. From Vygotsky's perspective, language has two basic functions: the first is characterized by social interaction, corresponding to communication with others through systems of language created and used by humans; the second refers to generalizing thought, which is determined by the organized language of reality, grouping all occurrences of the same class of objects, events, or situations under the same conceptual category.

The term literacy (Literacy Development) emerged around the 1980s as a way to distinguish phenomena separate from those defined as literacy (Literacy Acquisition). However, while this phenomenon occurred in Brazil and simultaneously in other countries, in practice, the discussion of literacy in Brazil has always been rooted in the concept of alphabetization. In contrast, in countries such as France and the United States, literacy (illettrisme, literacy, illiteracy) has been debated independently of alphabetization (Iglesias, 2020). According to Borges et al. (2022), the concept of literacy arose from a progressive expansion of the concept of alphabetization itself. Thus, as one masters this practice, they begin developing basic reading and writing skills (reading and writing), as literacy evolves continuously.

When addressing the literacy process, it is understood to be inherently complex, shaped by political, social, economic, and cultural factors. In the pedagogical process, writing cannot be taught as if it were neutral; literacy can also be playful. In this sense, playfulness can be understood as a fundamental principle for the development of children's intellectual activities, making it indispensable to educational practices. Thus, associating pedagogical practices with playful activities highlights that school activities can not only foster the learning of academic knowledge but also provide enjoyment, promote interaction, and simulate real-life social situations (Sali, Magnani & Patella, 2023). In essence, playful teaching primarily focuses on the child (Aguar, 2018).

It is important to note, however, that the teacher plays a crucial role in the teaching-learning process, acting as the mediator of all learning. The teacher provides space for children to make their own decisions and choices based on their interests and curiosity. The success of the teaching-learning process depends on the teacher-student interaction, making the set of practices and activities carried out by the teacher a fundamental element in the educational process, particularly during literacy instruction. In this context, the teacher should be a facilitator of learning, creating conditions for children to explore movement, manipulate materials, interact with peers, and solve problems in a playful environment.

Focusing on the early years of elementary education, from 1st to 5th grade, Melo (2023) asserts that the cycle from 1st to 3rd grade is particularly dedicated to literacy, making it a strategic phase for teaching literacy and introducing scientific concepts across various curricular components. Regarding this dedication to literacy, the National Curricular Guidelines for Basic Education emphasize the central focus on literacy during the first three years, as established by the CNE/CEB Opinion No. 4/2008, dated February 20, 2008.

Regarding literacy, Santiago (2021) states that the first three years of basic education do not exhaust all the linguistic and communicative knowledge developed throughout the entire school process and the demands of social interaction. In this context, for knowledge to flourish, a literate environment must function within the classroom. This environment involves guiding children in the literacy phase to use written language even before mastering the "first letters," organizing the classroom around writing (e.g., routine logs, reference lists, calendars, movable alphabets, labels for organizing materials, attendance boards, among others).

Furthermore, Santiago (2021) argues that creating a literate environment involves teaching the purpose of writing, such as its functions for record-keeping and distant communication, and understanding its use in social practices. Classroom organization, including establishing rules for school behavior, for example, helps children become literate. Each year of the literacy cycle aims for students to achieve clearly defined levels.

Magalhães, Villagrà, and Greca (2020) support Santiago's (2021) ideas, explaining that the teaching process essentially aims at learning. It is structured as an intermediate activity that fosters not only meaningful learning but also its critical dimension. Consequently, this involves choosing methodologies and resources that meet learning objectives and, more broadly, align with psychological and epistemological conceptions of learning.

IV. Conclusion

Throughout this investigation, we have explored various aspects of literacy in Brazil, from its historical trajectory to the value of play in the educational process. The intricacy of this journey became evident, marked by political, social, and cultural challenges over time.

Reflecting on the literacy landscape in Brazil, we observed numerous attempts to combat illiteracy, highlighting the persistence of this challenge over the years. However, we also emphasized the progress made and the governmental actions aimed at promoting basic education and eliminating illiteracy, including the multiple programs and campaigns implemented throughout history.

Furthermore, we analyzed the importance of play in the educational process, particularly during the early years of elementary education. Play is not limited to recreational activities but stands out as a crucial pedagogical tool for developing children's reading and writing skills. The educator plays a central role as a facilitator of this process, creating an environment conducive to exploration and learning through playful activities.

Thus, we conclude that play assumes a vital role in the educational context, especially during the early years of elementary school. Integrating play into the literacy process is essential to fostering meaningful learning,

sparkling students' interest and curiosity. By associating play with literacy, teachers can significantly contribute to cultivating a love for reading and writing, preparing students for a more robust and fulfilling education.

In summary, this study highlights the importance of addressing literacy holistically, considering not only the technical aspects of teaching but also the need to promote a stimulating and engaging educational environment. By gaining a deeper understanding of the challenges and potential of the literacy process, we can develop more effective strategies to ensure quality education for all.

This research offers valuable contributions to the understanding and improvement of literacy practices in the Brazilian context, emphasizing the relevance of play as an essential pedagogical tool. It is hoped that the findings and ideas presented here will inspire future research and educational initiatives aimed at promoting literacy in our country.

References

- [1]. Aguiar, N. L. The Importance Of Playfulness In The Early Years. Undergraduate Monograph (Education) – University Of Brasília, Brasília, 2018.
- [2]. Amaro, E. C. Practices For Tackling Illiteracy In Brazil: An Analysis Of The National Literacy Policy. Master's Dissertation (Education) – Franciscan University, Santa Maria, 2022.
- [3]. Andrade, A. C.; Moreira, M. S. Recognition And Citizenship Of Illiterate Individuals In Brazil: A Historical And Political Issue. *Fides, Natal*, V. 10, N. 2, P. 1-20, 2019.
- [4]. Araújo, L. De S. L. Functional Illiteracy, Literacy, And Learning: School Actions In Research Production Between 2011 And 2016. Master's Dissertation (Education) – Pontifical Catholic University Of São Paulo, São Paulo, 2018.
- [5]. Borges, E. G. Et Al. Literacy And Learning In The Early Years Of Elementary Education: A Bibliographic Review. *Faculdade Multivix*, 2022. Available At: <https://multivix.edu.br/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Alfabetizacao-E-Letramento-Nos-Anos-Iniciais-Do-Ensino-Fundamentaluma-Revisao-Bibliografica.Pdf>. Accessed On: Jan. 21, 2024.
- [6]. Constant, E.; Machado, M. L. C. De A.; Lopes, P. Da S. V. C. Literacy Processes: Principles, Policies, And Strategies For Diverse Learning And Teaching Modes. *Revista Linhas, Florianópolis*, V. 23, N. 51, P. 36-63, 2022.
- [7]. Ferreira, M. I. C. V.; Muniz, S. De S. Playfulness As A Support Strategy For Learning Among Students In The Early Years Of Elementary Education. *Revista Humanidades E Inovação*, V. 7, N. 8, 2020.
- [8]. Gerhardt, T. E.; Silveira, D. T. *Research Methods*. 1st Ed. Porto Alegre: Editora Da Ufrgs, 2009.
- [9]. Iglesias, K. S. Digital Technologies In Pedagogical Practices For Literacy And Learning In The Early Years Of Elementary Education: Contributions And Challenges. Master's Dissertation (Education) – Catholic University Of Santos, Santos, 2020.
- [10]. Magalhães, A. P. C.; Villagrà, J. A. M.; Greca, I. M. Analysis Of Skills And Attitudes In Meaningful Critical Learning Of Physical Phenomena In The Context Of Early Education. *Ciência E Educação*, V. 26, 2020.
- [11]. Maria, M. S. E. Literacy From A Historical-Cultural Perspective – The Word As The Embryo Of Writing: A Commitment To The Humanization Of Individuals. Doctoral Thesis (Education) – Federal University Of Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, 2022.
- [12]. Marinho, A. K. B.; Bochembuzio, C. M. F. Literacy And Learning: A Critical View Of The Phonics Method. *Reeduc*, V. 4, N. 2, Aug. 2021.
- [13]. Melo, J. S. Teaching Geography In The Early Years: Panorama, Challenges, And Possibilities. Master's Dissertation (Geography) – Federal University Of Goiás, Goiânia, 2023.
- [14]. Oliveira, M. F. *Scientific Methodology: A Manual For Conducting Research In Administration*. Postgraduate Manual – Federal University Of Goiás, Catalão, 2011.
- [15]. Pereira, V. L. L.; Ferreira, B. M. Literacy And Learning From A Playful Perspective In The Early Years. *Revista Acadêmica Educação E Cultura Em Debate*, V. 8, N. 2, 2022.
- [16]. Sali, J. J.; Magnani, C. S.; Patella, M. B. Literacy And Learning In The Early Years Of Elementary Education. *Revista In Litteras Do Unisanta Cruz, Curitiba*, V. 8, N. 1, P. 47-70, 2023.
- [17]. Santiago, S. F. F. Literacy In The Early Grades Of Elementary Education. Undergraduate Monograph – Federal Institute Of Espírito Santo, Santa Maria De Jetibá, 2021.
- [18]. Santos, D. S. T.; Vidal, E. R. S.; Gutiérrez, A. J. C. Analysis Of The Qualitative Aspects And Effectiveness Of Literacy Methods In Brazil. *Pedagogia Em Ação, Belo Horizonte*, V. 10, N. 2, 2018.
- [19]. Silva, S. C. V.; Ferreira, V. S.; Boeing, R. F. R. Policies To Combat Illiteracy In Brazil: Continuities And Discontinuities. *Usf Horizontes*, V. 38, N. 1, 2020.
- [20]. Silva, S. A.; Oliveira, T. R. Literacy: Reflecting On Methods. *Revista Plurais – Virtual, Anápolis*, V. 9, N. 3, P. 283-302, 2019.
- [21]. Simão, J. H. M. N.; Poletto, L. The Importance Of Playfulness In The Development Of Learning And Motor Skills In Children In The Early Years Of Elementary Education. *Revista Educação E Cultura Em Debate*, V. 5, N. 1, 2019.
- [22]. Sousa, A. S.; Oliveira, G. S.; Alves, L. H. *Bibliographic Research: Principles And Fundamentals*. *Cadernos Da Fucamp*, V. 20, N. 43, P. 64-83, 2021.