

DOSSIER

Childhood(s), social movements and the city: curriculum(s) and teacher training

The child, city and heritage in the construction of the curriculum and teacher training in early childhood education***A criança, a cidade e o patrimônio na construção do currículo e na formação docente na educação infantil*****Lenira Haddad^a**

lenirahaddad@gmail.com

Maria Assunção Folque^b

maf@uevora.pt

Isabel Bezelga^b

imgb@uevora.pt

ABSTRACT

The article presents the project “The Child, City and Heritage: practices and knowledge about the communities of Penedo and Évora” carried out in the municipality of Penedo, AL, from 2018 to early 2020. It exhibits the premises of the project, its initial idea, the stages carried out, the methodologies used, highlighting some contributions to reflect on the curriculum of early childhood education and the training of its professionals. An important facet of the project is that in both cities, Penedo and Évora, the existing cultural references should be recognized and valued as essential resources for educating children, for training the professionals and shaping the curriculum, as well as for interactions and dialogues with families and communities at large. The research and actions carried out within the scope of this project provide clues as to how children, early childhood education and its curriculum can dialogue with cultural heritage, recognizing it, valuing it and enhancing the experience of children in their territories so as to strengthen the sense of identity and belonging to the city.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education. City. Heritage. Cultural References.

RESUMO

O artigo apresenta o projeto “A Criança, a Cidade e o Patrimônio: fazeres e saberes das comunidades penedense e eborense”, realizado no município de Penedo, AL, no período de 2018 a início de 2020. Apresenta as premissas do projeto, sua concepção inicial, as etapas realizadas, as metodologias utilizadas, destacando alguns contributos para se pensar no currículo da educação infantil e na formação de seus profissionais. Uma das premissas básicas do projeto é que as referências culturais existentes em ambas as cidades, Penedo e Évora, deveriam ser reconhecidas e valorizadas como recursos imprescindíveis para a educação da criança, a formação dos profissionais e o currículo, assim como para interações e diálogos com famílias e comunidades

^a Universidade Federal de Alagoas (UFAL). Maceió, Alagoas, Brasil.

^b Universidade de Évora (UE), Évora, Portugal.

em geral. As pesquisas e as ações realizadas no âmbito desse projeto dão pistas de como as crianças, a educação infantil e seu currículo podem dialogar com o patrimônio cultural, reconhecendo-o, valorizando-o e potencializando a vivência das crianças em seus territórios de modo a fortalecer o sentimento de identidade e pertencimento para com a cidade.

Palavras-chave: Educação Infantil. Cidade. Patrimônio. Referências Culturais.

Introduction

This article critically analyzes how the project¹ “The Child, the City and Heritage: practices and knowledge of the communities of Penedo and Évora” contributes to reflecting on the curriculum of early childhood education (ECE) and the training of its professionals. The project was carried out in Penedo, a city in the state of Alagoas, Brazil, in 2019 and 2020, through a cooperation agreement with the ‘Cidade Educadora’ of Évora in Portugal, which included three sectors: municipality, heritage and academia². Despite the enormous differences and singularities of Évora and Penedo, these two cities have historical and cultural characteristics that bring them together. In 1986, Unesco classified Évora as a World Heritage Site, and in 1996 the historical and scenic complex of Penedo was listed by Iphan/AL. In addition to the size of the population, of approximately 65 thousand inhabitants, both cities are committed to preserving and promoting their historical and cultural heritage, so that it can be used by everyone.

One of the project’s basic premises is that the cultural references in Penedo and Évora, – namely those that resulted from the playful and festive experience of popular performative manifestations of different origins and not just those that conformed to the historical, cultural and artistic heritage, – should be recognized and valued as essential resources for children’s education, professional training and shaping the curriculum, as well as interactions and dialogues with families and communities in general. In Penedo and Évora, children represent the present, as well as the future that will continue these practices, giving them new meaning and, thus, guaranteeing their sustainability regarding people’s sense of belonging and cultural appropriation.

The project aimed to identify, describe, and explore mutual contributions to education, culture and art in both cities, which includes promoting a set of educational and cultural actions, in addition to identifying, categorizing and promoting good training/research practices, in order to produce cartographies of the public space within the context of heritage.

¹ The project received financial support from the Municipality of Penedo, through the University Foundation for Extension and Research Development (FUNDEPES), Project no. 046/2019, and the University of Évora, through the Foundation for Science and Technology, Project no. UID/CED/04312/2019.

² This meant six partners in the Program, namely: the Municipal Council of Penedo and the Municipal Council of Évora (CME); the Institute of Historical and Artistic Heritage of Alagoas (IPHAN/AL) and the Regional Directorate of Culture of Alentejo (DRCA); the Federal University of Alagoas (UFAL) and the University of Évora (UÉ).

Theoretical contributions that support the project

In this project, the theme in question encourages discussing concepts that includes the participation of children in public spaces and in all areas of society, such as: identity, otherness, appropriation, belonging, sustainability, and visibility. The starting point is the discussion about the children's rights to the city's public spaces and, in particular, the right to participate in deciding how they are used in order to guarantee the children's rights as citizens in the present time and not only in the future. The project is centered on studies of heritage cities that are based on a critical perspective, mobilizing elements of reflection such as the phenomena of gentrification³, in which the commodification and touristification of places, as conceptual mottos for education, culture and contemporary artistic creation, act on the symbolic elements, memory and everyday experience of the present and the future.

In *The Right to the City*, Lefebvre (1996, n.p) argues about the impossibility of considering the hypothesis of reconstituting the ancient city, since this satisfied the needs of a moment in the past. In the context of Évora and Penedo, the sociopolitical construction of the space was considered, as well as the presence of all sorts of intersubjectivities in the way its inhabitants see and read the landscapes, places and performances of popular cultures that intersect them. According to Lefebvre (1996, n. p), in its syntagmatic dimension, the city is a privileged subsystem

[...] because it is able to reflect and expose the other sub-systems and to present itself as a 'world', a unique whole, within the illusion of the immediate and the lived. In this capacity resides precisely the charm, the tonicity, and the tonality specific to urban life. But analysis dissipates this impression and unveils a number of systems hidden in the illusion of oneness. The analyst has no right to share this illusion and to consolidate it by maintaining himself at an *urban* level. He must uncover instead the features of a greater knowledge.

Thus, the author calls for hidden systems to be considered and unveiled, in order to dispel the false illusion of organicity and sole totality that the urban plan presents.

Cultural, artistic and heritage education practices related to training and community contexts represent an opportunity to examine and scrutinize issues of identity, alterity, memory and dreams of the future, in a relationship of creative dialogism, in the city/place/territory relationship. The performative occupation of public space is seen as a right, as well as simultaneously portraying itself as a phenomenon of cultural resistance to which childhood education cannot be immune. Thus, the value of performative practices that substantiate popular cultures represents a condition of hybrid poetics and significant actions. Therefore, the experience of the physical body involved in a process of creating images, significations and meanings is irreplaceable. The shared construction of knowledge is the driving force of individual and perhaps social development and transformation, which is

³ According to Bataller e Botelho (2012, p. 10), gentrification is a phenomenon that "[...] consists of a series of physical and material improvements and immaterial changes – economic, social and cultural – that occur in some old urban centers, which experience considerable elevation of their status". According to the author, this process usually occurs in industrialized countries throughout the post-industrial or post-modern stage and is fundamentally characterized by the occupation of city centers by a high-paying middle class, which displaces inhabitants of the lower class, lower income, who had lived in the urban center.

perceived as eminently procedural, promoting co-investigative, co-creative and co-evaluative skills of an educational, cultural, social and aesthetic scope within the group (Bezelga, 2021).

Cultural heritage actions are also discussed in Childhood Sociology studies regarding childhood, which recognize children as social actors, subjects producing culture, active beings situated in time and space. Thus, in this project the assumed notion of childhood moves away from a solely adult-centric view and attempts to break with the traditional views of children as unfinished beings. For Qvortrup (2010, p. 635, emphasis added), childhood perceived in structural terms, but not as a period, “[...] breaks with personal life plans; it makes one ponder not in terms of the child’s development, but particularly on the development of childhood.” According to several authors who research children’s cultures and ways of living and experiencing their childhood (Sarmiento, 2005; Müller; Nunes, 2014; Trevisan, 2014), thinking about childhood development requires expanding spaces, territories and places to experience childhood. It demands accountability from society so as to guarantee discourse amid the different systems and with other generations, promoting exchange and continuity of actions between members of society within the space they live in.

To bring the city/place/territory closer to children requires creating cultural routines (Corsaro, 2011) expanding their horizons, integrating them into a larger network that relates to their local culture, something that is nearer, as well as closer to the world, creating opportunities for visibility, to be heard, a respected presence.

Therefore, the idea is to expand the public dimension of the learning processes that can enhance the experience of children living in the city, by giving them the conditions to appropriate and occupy public spaces, to continue to participate in their community’s performative manifestations, thus allowing them to expand their way of being in the world.

Other concepts will be brought up as the various specific actions that compose the project are explained in the following sections.

The project in its initial conception

In Penedo and Évora, children are the subject of multiple actions that give shape to the project “The Child, City and Heritage”, which cover four interconnected and interrelated contexts. The first, referred to as *City/place/territory*, mobilizes historical aspects, social uses, and heritage itself, based on the already mentioned perspective of critical heritage studies. The local knowledge and cultural practices of both cities represent an important element of this context. They are related to the geographical and economic issues, allowing us to understand what makes the city a city and not have it disappear or remain with diminished or increased importance. Thus, through cartography, the focus of the project was to give visibility to and enhance the existing structures, cultural equipment, artisanal, artistic and cultural practices, and make use of public spaces, whether heritage or not, occupying available locations. Another important element is policy, which includes coordinating the city management with the various departments or secretariats, for example, Education and Culture, which regulate the organization of cities, as well as the main partners, for example, Iphan, which are responsible for managing cultural heritage in Penedo, and the Regional Directorate of Culture of

Alentejo, responsible for cultural heritage in Évora. All these elements are based on the perspectives of the Children's City⁴, Educating City⁵ and Creative City⁶.

The second context is *Early Childhood Education* institutions – the broad educational scope – which comprise educational structures and units and education agents that include not only teachers/educators, but also directors and coordinators. A preliminary action linked to this context was to analyze the situation of the municipal early childhood education network in Penedo, in terms of supply, quality of internal and external spaces, furniture and materials, as well as their use by children, current pedagogical models and the organization of pedagogical work.

Based on the analysis of the situation, the training and mediation plans to be carried out throughout the project, scheduled for three years, would be derived, in a participatory manner. This context also comprised: the scope of the research that covers master's and doctoral research, as well as research carried out by the researchers from both universities to support the project; the scope of cooperating early childhood educators and cooperating institutions that host internships at the University of Évora; and the national guidelines coming from the Ministry of Education, that guide state and local analyses.

The third context is *training/mediation* in the educational, artistic and heritage fields and in the design of equipment and furniture, which was needed especially in Penedo. Training actions would be differentiated for teachers, management, pedagogical coordinators and cultural agents. In the educational field, the aim was to offer a wide range of training opportunities which include: knowledge about children aged 0 to 6; and pedagogical approaches that bring different perspectives on children's education, the organization of pedagogical work (spaces, times and relationships) and the role of adults. In the artistic field, the focus was on expanding the ECE teachers' artistic-cultural repertoire (literature, visual arts, music, dance, theater, and different artistic manifestations of popular cultures). In terms of heritage, training encompassed a social, historical and environmental dimension. While the training actions brought together professionals from different educational units in different locations within the city's cultural heritage, the mediation actions were in the educational context, focusing on educational practices and the organization of pedagogical work as a whole. In the institutional context, the focus was to introduce participatory methodologies⁷ to promote the child's autonomy, initiative and mobility in internal and external spaces, as well as participation and a sense of cooperation and community life. Beyond the school walls, the aim was to solidify practices aligned with the vision of the child as a citizen "[...] who, from an early age, participates in the life of the city and therefore not only has the opportunity to be part of a social network support and resources, but is also involved in identifying problems and resolving them." (Folque, 2017, p. 85).

⁴ Project created by Italian thinker, pedagogue and designer Francesco Tonucci (2022).

⁵ Charter of educating cities (2023).

⁶ For additional information access: Reis and Kageyama (2011).

⁷ Examples of pedagogies that promote the participation of children, with decades of work and internationally known, such as the High/Scope educational approach, the Portuguese Modern School Movement (MEM), the Reggio Emilia approach and Danish pedagogy.

Finally, there is the context of *families and the local community*. In addition to cultural heritage, spaces for local associations spread throughout the city were the target of investigation, constituting interactive spaces, leisure, culture, artistic enjoyment and also religious expression, which can be enhanced as spaces for civic participation, through joint actions with early childhood education professionals, children and families.

One of the premises of the project is related to the ECE context, which as a privileged space for intermediation between the family and the world, needs to establish intermittent dialogue with local cultural production and its school community. Therefore, dialogues with the knowledge and practices of the Penedo community were planned as meetings with children and professionals, to be explored in their various dimensions: musicality, corporeality, rhythm, materiality. This conversation was designed in a twofold approach, enabling popular cultures to reach schools, as well as in the opposite direction of this flow, understanding the city also as a space for education for future generations.

These four contexts cover the dimensions through which the project was conceived, revealing the inherent interdisciplinarity and transversality.

Exchanges of knowledge – in search of horizontality

The focus of the Penedo-Évora connection was considered from the perspective of technical cooperation on a horizontal rather than vertical level. The project design included finding a point of dialogue and exchange between the two cities. What resources could come from Penedo that could be mobilized in Évora and vice versa?

Initially, a more solid educational potential was observed in Évora, with actions already established in terms of implementing participatory methodologies in early childhood education. Early childhood education institutions adopt pedagogical models such as the Portuguese Modern School Movement (MEM), or High/Scope, or a mixed system, in addition to following the fundamental principles set out in the country's curricular guidelines. The strong presence of MEM represents a pedagogical approach in collaborative early childhood education institutions (which host internships). The movement itself is constantly fed by an ongoing process of self-education that promotes cooperation and the exchange of experiences and results for empowering and appropriating practices. The strong connection between the University and cooperating institutions is built on solid foundations committed to the co-participation between the two bodies.

Furthermore, the city of Évora already had several quality experiences with children in its relationship with the city through a cooperation agreement between the City Council and the University of Évora, the latter working directly with Basic Education through courses for Basic Education Teaching Degree and master's degree in Pre-School Education and Pre-School Education and Teaching of the 1st CEB. These experiences allow children to experience the city in a cultural, artistic and exploratory way, appropriating the spaces and streets, and with the help of adults, observing and intervening, understanding that the equipment (museums, churches, monuments, squares, streets, etc.) belong to them, thereby having to undergo participatory and joint interventions

and directions on behalf of the community, focusing on local sustainability in order to construct a more participatory democracy (Folque, 2017; Folque; Aresta; Melo, 2017). Penedo, on the other hand, has a traditional artistic and cultural vocation. In addition to the historical heritage explained as a preserved architectural framework, Penedo is one of the oldest municipalities in the state. It has a vast wealth of cultural references, such as celebrations, forms of expression, places and crafts. These references can promote forms of rapprochement and connection between local artists and expressions of traditional culture and children, and involving the child-city relationship. This could add value to practices already consolidated in Évora. Furthermore, the project envisioned visits by local artists from traditional and contemporary groups between the two cities in order to put forward presentations, exchange of experiences, knowledge and practices specific to each place.

The “Child, City and Heritage” project in action

As mentioned earlier, the “Child, City and Heritage” project was conceived in a comprehensive and multidimensional way. Originally, the project, which later became a program, was designed to be carried out in three stages: analysis of the situation of the municipal early childhood education system; Penedo-Évora pedagogical and cultural exchange; and formative and propositional actions derived from the two preceding stages. The multidisciplinary team formed covered the areas of education, culture, architecture and, later, tourism, including teachers and undergraduate, master’s and doctoral students. As a result of the pandemic caused by the new coronavirus SAR-S, which resulted in Covid-19, only the first and second stages were fully carried out, in addition to specific actions in the third stage.

This section of the article presents and analyzes some of the actions developed that we believe contribute to discussing demands that the cultural references of the communities they belong to should be recognized and valued as essential resources for the education of children, for the training of professionals and the curriculum, as well as for interactions and dialogues with families and communities in general.

Getting to know Penedo’s cultural references

The partnership with Iphan/AL provided us access to the National Inventory of Cultural References (INRC), carried out by a multidisciplinary team in 2015, which had not yet been published. The following cultural references were inventoried in the municipality of Penedo: five celebrations – *Festa do Bom Jesus dos Navegantes*, *Festa da Patroeira Nossa Senhora do Rosário*, *Festa de Santo Antônio*, *Lavagem do Beco* and *Corrida de Vessels*; two buildings – *Casa de Axé do Pai de Santo Bobô* and *Casa de Farinha de Manoel Vieira (Tabuleiro dos Negros village)*; five forms of expression – *Guerreiro*, *Pastoril*, *Coco de Roda*, *Banda de Pífano* and *Lenda do Túnel do Convento Nossa Senhora dos Anjos*; two places – *Feira Livre* and *Várzea da Marituba*; and thirteen crafts – Fishing ways and knowledge, Alligator hunting, Ways of cooking, Alligator *Moqueca*, *Macasada* and *quebra-queixo*, Ways and practices of rice farming, *Ouricuri* straw Crafts, saint-making crafts, production of stone

sculptures, Miniature wood crafts, How to make carnival dolls, Practices and ways of building with stucco (*taipa*).

This was the starting point to investigate the local artists' production and organization modes, especially those focused on knowledge and practices from Penedo, and the flows established between this cultural production and its insertion in the ECE community. To understand the cultural heritage of Penedo, the artists and cultural groups active in the city were identified, as well as their places of activity and residence, the production, dissemination and insertion of their works in the community of Penedo. In addition to surveying public bodies, the places of artistic production and dissemination were visited, and the creators were interviewed. One of the objectives of this program was getting to know their cultural practices, local knowledge and production, and identifying potential partners to get closer to the ECE community, namely children and their teachers.

Another action carried out was creating a collection of knowledge and practices of the Penedo community through field and bibliographical research. The idea was that this could provide actions to expand the cultural repertoire of professionals who work with early childhood education and enhance the child's experience in the city, in addition to giving support to develop curricular guidelines for early childhood education in the municipality of Penedo, which valued the knowledge and practices of the local culture. Research carried out within the scope of the Institutional Program for Scientific Initiation Scholarships (PIBIC) focused on surveying academic production based on the cultural practices of popular tradition in the municipality of Penedo, between 2013 and 2020 (Nascimento, 2022), in the Capes Theses and Dissertations Catalog. A cultural reference that highlighted the presence of children is a master's thesis (Araújo, 2019, p. 93) on the educational practice of *Mandiocada* (processing cassava) in two quilombola communities: *Tabuleiro dos Negros*, located in the municipality of Penedo; and *Sapé*, located in the neighboring municipality, Igreja Nova.

Inserting Penedo culture into the school community

Given this diversity of cultural references that not only combine the period of Portuguese and Dutch colonization, but also the expressions of African and indigenous resistance still present in the municipality of Penedo, the question is whether this knowledge and practices that interconnect generations, that connect memories and give meaning to local social practices, were recognized and valued in ECE contexts as important components of the curriculum. Thus, a question that guided the project was: what place does cultural heritage occupy in the contexts of ECE in Penedo?

The analysis of inserting Penedo culture in the ECE community was carried out through a questionnaire answered by coordinators, teachers and assistants and complemented by interviews. Some data showed the possibility of enhancing the discourse between cultural heritage and educational practice, since approximately 50% of ECE teacher stated they work with children on aspects of Penedo culture, such as historic buildings and manifestations of popular tradition, however, limited to the space of the institution. Visits to the Historic Center were generally restricted to specific events, such as the city's anniversary month, and were usually carried out only once a year; activities were mostly focused on the arts on commemorative dates, and with rare exceptions,

the professionals of artistic knowledge of early childhood education indicated a lack of exchange with local artists. Actions to expand the cultural repertoire of professionals who work with childhood education and support projects that enhance children's experiences in the city were planned for the third stage.

Survey of resources, equipment and spaces for public use

If the goal is to awaken a feeling of identity and belonging to the city one lives in, in order to help preserve its cultural heritage, one must know it, experience it, and get significantly closer to the contexts it is inserted in. Thus, a survey was carried out about the resources, equipment and spaces for public use and heritage in Penedo. This was conducted to understand its potential for the children's systematic use or only visitation, for continued training, and also as a place to manifest popular culture expressions. A wide collection of well conserved cultural and heritage equipment was detected, which offers the possibility of hosting various new and older activities already in place, and can be used for continued ECE teacher training, with some spaces used for children's ambiance. However, it was observed that these heritage buildings were underutilized in their potential for cultural action, due to financial and personnel difficulties in maintaining the space open, and also because of the failure to identify demands coming from the city's cultural producers. Thus, the need for qualified informants to interpret this heritage and develop strategies for didactic-pedagogical visits. Consequently, the expanded proposal intended for continued training regarding this profile, informants or cultural agents, in order to raise awareness of how to welcome children.

The Pedagogical and Cultural Residency Program (PRPC) in Évora as an experience in exchanging knowledge and cultural references

A strategy to enhance expanding experiences and exchange knowledge and practices between Penedo and Évora, the *Pedagogical and Cultural Residency Program (PRPC)* was carried out in Évora. It comprised the central action of the program's second stage. 15 professionals from Penedo – 12 ECE teachers and three technicians from the Municipal Department of Early Childhood Education of Penedo (SEMED) participated in the PRPC during an intense two-week program. This means immersing these professionals in ECE institutions that work with the city/community, as well as participating in actions offered by the University of Évora, i.e., seminars, experiences in culturally relevant places and meetings at the Évora City Council.

Inspired by exchanges carried out in a seaside municipality in the State of São Paulo (Haddad, 2022) and also by Nóvoa's (2017) ideas of reducing the gap between the university and the contexts of the profession, and the assumptions of the sociocultural matrix of learning (Folque, 2017), considering that constructing professional teaching knowledge requires participating in activities that take place in the contexts of the profession, the PRPC provided meeting with ECE teachers from different cultures for the opportunity to experience the various realities that shape the teaching field. The PRPC is also based on the Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of learning in communities

of practice, on the experience of artistic residencies for research and creation, and on Larrosa's (2014) concept related to subject of experience, among other references. Fundamental concepts for discussing the relationships that operate in these environments, such as time, space and intercultural exchanges, also support the experience of "being" in residence.

In general, immersion in institutions, with joint action proposals between ECE teachers from Évora and from Penedo, displaced from their usual contexts, and monitoring the children's out-of-class activities and projects carried out on the streets with the city theme, contributed to the immediate interrelationship between theory and practice. The echoes and impacts on these professionals' continued training experience were reported in two publications (Haddad *et al.*, 2023; Haddad; Folque; Amaral, 2022). The following stand out, based on the viewpoint of Penedo ECE teachers: renouncing pedagogical determinism, expanding perspectives on changes in pedagogical practice, reconsidering children's vision, as well as their role in the pedagogical process; and other ways of observing, valuing and occupying the city of Penedo, recognizing itself as part of its city. The narratives offered by the participants emphasize the effectiveness of this residency model when compared to training based on methodologies that do not displace or destabilize pre-established knowledge, which can be exemplified in this statement "[...] *I studied for almost seven years and didn't learn as much as I learned in those two weeks of experience*, of touching and smelling and feeling and stepping, of seeing that it works, that it's real (Haddad *et al.*, 2023, p. 89, emphasis by the authors).

According to the perspective of ECE teachers from Évora, this coexistence raised awareness of their own knowledge and practices to the point of choosing aspects of their professional practice that could influence the residents' training. Furthermore, sharing strategies for occupying the city by children, as citizens – with their own views and voices, which can greatly contribute to a more plural and friendly city – through the various ongoing projects, has resulted in visibility and recognition of what has been systematized for some years.

The pandemic caused by the new SAR-S coronavirus prevented the ECE teachers from Évora from going to Penedo, as scheduled.

Future perspectives

Based on the results of the actions and activities of the initial stages, the third stage of the "Children, City and Heritage" program was meticulously designed to enable the children and their teachers' experiences in the city, in dialogue with cultural heritage through a pedagogical, cultural and heritage based continuing training program. It also entailed the ambiance of school and non-school spaces, visibility, recognition, as well as bringing closer together the expressions of popular tradition culture to the ECE community.

It also targeted opening ECE contexts to various members of the community, cultural agents, artisans, recreational groups and professionals from different areas. Above all, the goal was to value a view of children as citizens and to imprint a pedagogical practice that is distributed across different spaces in early childhood education units and the community. In other words, on neighborhood streets, in shops, in the squares, next to the river, in the various cultural facilities of the city, etc.

Therefore, a set of interrelated actions was proposed. The main pillars revolved around a vast training program for ECE teachers from the early childhood education public network in Penedo and cultural agents; establishing ECE reference centers; the ambiance of spaces for children, school and non-school children; and cultural dialogues between children, city and heritage, involving local cultural and artistic partners. Penedo-Évora intercultural dialogues with other forms of pedagogical and cultural exchange were also planned. All of these actions would add to the development of curricular guidelines for Early Childhood Education in the municipality of Penedo, with an emphasis on local culture. Some of the initiatives carried out before the project was suspended included: renovation and ambiance projects for several institutions studied; design of two non-school spaces to be used as children's spaces; a line of toys and furniture with regional characteristics to be used in school and non-school spaces. Furthermore, potential artistic-cultural groups had already been defined to strengthen the children's dialogue with the city and with the knowledge and practices of the people of Penedo (as ways of being in the world). Finally, in partnership with the Tourism course, planned itineraries for children were drafted.

The pandemic and social distancing measures, followed by changes in municipal administration, prevented the program from continuing, and a proposal for children to occupy the city from being implemented, based on the perspective expressed in this article. But it did not prevent a pilot project from being carried out with children, as shown below.

The elements that enable the relationship between children, city and heritage within the scope of early childhood education

A doctoral research (Amaral, 2020)⁸, carried out during the first two stages, depicts the construction of the dialogue between Évora and Penedo and investigates the theoretical and practical dimensions of the relationship between children, city and heritage in the context of early childhood education. The research included the researcher's intense participation in the two historic cities at three times.

Firstly, based on experiences in the professional field of Évora, the researcher accompanied the work carried out by ECE teachers with children in the city, supported by initiatives of the City Council, the University of Évora and early childhood education contexts. Later, she accompanied teachers from Penedo in PRPC activities, in partnership with the ECE teachers from Évora. Finally, in Penedo, she created possibilities for children to experience extramural situations, collaboratively, with a preschool teacher from the municipality. It involved two classes of children aged 5 to 6 from two municipal preschools, one located in the historic center and the other in the countryside. Going through these three moments, a correspondence project was carried out between children from Évora and Penedo, around the theme "My city" (Amaral; Haddad; Folque, 2021), in order to communicate characteristics of their cities to children from different countries.

⁸ This research was awarded the Ana Maria Vieira de Almeida award in Lisbon on 11/3/2023, in the Pedagogical Innovation category.

The correspondence projects allowed developing proposals with children, in Penedo and Évora, that included: contextualized visits to historic buildings; discovering cultural heritage; contact with natural heritage; exploring open public spaces; and unplanned walking incursions, adrift through the city. Correspondence between groups of children from both countries using various resources (maps, postcards, messaging apps, maps, notebooks, cameras) served as a methodology to broaden the children's perspective about their own city.

Some experiences with children from the two preschools in Penedo, mentioned in another publication (Amaral; Haddad; Folque, 2021), illustrate the multidimensionality of the program and its potential to encourage discussing a curriculum based on the history of the city and local culture.

One of them represents going to the city's open market, a cultural heritage listed by Iphan as a place of popular tradition. The children had the opportunity to enjoy the fair, negotiate with vendors, consume fruits and vegetables and have contact with everyday people and local artists, such as *Poderosa*, a party entertainer who dresses like a doll, and local crafts, such as *Dona Neide da Banana's* straw craft stall.

Figure 1: Children's encounter with the *Poderosa* doll at the street market in Penedo/AL



Source: Amaral (2020, p. 255).

Another unique experience was a chance encounter between the children and an amateur musician singing at the door of his house, which resulted from wandering through the streets of the Historic Center of Penedo. Attracted by the sound of music, the children stopped on the sidewalk where the musician was sitting, who allowed the children to sit there and to sing a song from their repertoire.

Figure 2: Children sitting on the sidewalk singing with an amateur musician.



Source: Amaral (2020, p. 286).

In another experience for a photo exhibition of animals from the Atlantic Forest, at the entrance hall of *Teatro 7 de Setembro*, the children came across the rehearsal of a play called “The Territory is a Book⁹,” which portrays the street market of Penedo and pays homage to the vendor *Neide da Banana* whose stall had been visited by children on their way to the fair. The Coco melody sung by the theater group reproduced the street market’s call: “Who wants to buy, who wants to buy!” It was soon assimilated by the children, who continued their journey singing the chorus.

In an experience of the children from the rural preschool, which involved a correspondence project between children from Penedo and Evora, one of the children, referred to as Gabriel, indicated the flour house to show the children from Evora a place that characterized the city of Penedo. When trying to explain where the flour house was located, the boy described, in his own words and gestures, the ways of doing that involve this complex cultural practice known as *Mandiocada*.

We put the cassava on the thing and do it like this, and the cassava comes down (he starts moving its body to show how it kneads the cassava), then we take it and put it in the box, then we make the flour, and put it on the fire, like this (making gestures like someone stirring a pot), and then it gets done.

[...] Take the cassava, put it in the bag, put it inside the thing, lower the stick and start doing this (moves his whole body to show how to stir the cassava). [...] And then things get started (moving his body again). [...] Take something from one bag and then take it from another and put it in the other (making gestures), then the milk flows down, then remove it, put it in the thing, then take it out of the bag, put it in, scrape it, then when the milk comes out, take it and put it inside something, then put another bag, then it can flow down, then it makes the flour” (Amaral, 2020, p. 290-291).

⁹ Play directed by Alê Santos, director of Cia. de Teatro Lampejo, one of Penedo’s amateur theater groups.

Thanks to the bibliographical research on cultural references of Penedo mentioned above, it was possible to understand that *Mandiocada* is a practice to make sour and sweet flour, which produces knowledge such as territoriality and ancestry, which are “[...] fundamental for the feeling of belonging to a group of African origin” (Araújo, 2019, p. 19). The ethnographic research carried out by the author allows to understand that the sequence of actions described by the boy, Gabriel, corresponds to the process that characterizes this tradition of popular culture of African origin, which begins with the harvest of cassava, goes through the stages of scraping, grating, resting in the warehouse, pressing, sieving, cooking, sieving again and storing the product for consumption.

We also learn from Araújo (2019) that *Mandiocada* is a pedagogical practice that assigns a defined place and role to children. According to the author, children do not have the same responsibilities as adults, but they are not excluded from the activities. On the contrary, they express joy and a desire to help with the cassava processes, they observe the actions alongside their mothers and grandmothers, they deliver snacks and water, they scrape the cassava, always in a playful manner, never as an obligation, with the freedom to handle the equipment they want, including knives. Furthermore, *Mandiocada* is also characterized as an event, in which an expressive dance that moves hips and feet was done since ancient times.

The dynamics shows a movement of perpetual knowledge in the group, and construction of new knowledge, using orality as a form of transmission, the productive practice in its stages, interaction, music. That is why *Mandiocada* consists of a practice, in addition to being productive, pedagogical, which opposes the colonizing model of education (Araújo, 2019, p. 84).

Thus, knowledge of this cultural practice enables us to listen more accurately and attentively to this child’s explanation and teaches us a mode of pedagogical practice specific to this tradition, which is not in tune with the colonizing model of education, which does not recognize the knowledge and local practices as essential dimensions of the curriculum.

Through the analysis of the experiences lived in the approaches in both cities, there were eight elements listed, which consists of a proposal that involves the relationship between children, city and heritage within the scope of early childhood education. They are: the role of institutions and potential actors involved; the children’s relationship with the city’s architecture and cultural spaces; the participation and consequent visibility of children in public spaces; the strength of popular culture and the appreciation of local culture; and vast discoveries and possibilities that wandering-walking in and through cities provide children, as a dialogue with their peers and adult partners within the scope of early childhood education. The results indicate that inhabiting the city through rich experiences of participation and fitting in add to the meaning and/or re-signification of cultural heritage by children and, consequently, expand their cultural identity and local belonging.

Final remarks

The research and actions carried out throughout this program provide clues as to how children, early childhood education and its curriculum can dialogue with cultural heritage, recognizing it, valuing it and enhancing children’s experiences within their territories.

An initial contribution is its complexity and organicity, marked by the necessary extent beyond the educational scope and articulation with the various elements that inform and sustain change, including municipal policies and local communities.

Another contribution of the projects and research it incorporated consists of reiterating the need to permeate the curriculum with the practices, knowledge and activities of communities. Thus, children must be “heard” and observed as they play, because from the moment they are born they come to know, integrate, experience, participate and learn in “other ways” the knowledge and cultural practices of their families and communities.

Therefore, they are the ones who – together with parents and grandparents, neighbors and residents of the neighborhood, town and city where their school is located – must bring these identity practices to school first hand. Teachers cannot waste this knowledge, leaving it outside the door, as it is also part of the curriculum, as it is the result of children’s experiences, which in their diversity give meaning to the vast knowledge that is established.

The example of cassava referred to in the text also challenges the ways of learning considered in childhood pedagogy, which oscillates between schooling practices of decontextualized, fragmented and culturally sterile learning and pedagogical practices that put the child at the center of educational action (Vasconcelos, 2015; Folque, 2017). Rogoff (2005) states that these ways of learning are present in communities in which children have been segregated from community practices, damaging their education and the process of developing identities and belonging. These two extremes of the pendulum do not contemplate a vision of learning in an intergenerational community, in which children learn by participating, seeing and listening, doing and taking on progressively more complex roles, preserving and recreating culture. There are also multiple challenges to train the professionals emerging from this article. The insufficient cultural and artistic experience of many teachers/students compromises their familiarity, knowledge and desire to explore the territories of artistic and cultural expression in a fruitful and integrated manner. The insecurity that is often felt produces a refusal to question oneself and determines a relative alienation and lack of commitment related to this element of human practice and knowledge production.

This problem has been felt in several cities where citizens are disconnected from a daily, organic lifestyle that is not sacralized with the city and its heritage. Thus, from a practical perspective of mediation/training that covered the project, opening up to cultural practices of different and indirect logic (doing/exploring/experimenting) guarantees citizens a relationship with the cultural, heritage and artistic production of cities involved in the project.

The appreciation by the ECE teachers who participated in the pedagogical and cultural residency allowing the opportunity of a prolonged experimental experience, which allowed an intense two-week participation, in a set of pedagogical and cultural contexts, highlighted the need for training that goes beyond an encounter with theory, promoting an experience with cultural and pedagogical activities.

Nowadays, teachers also learn on the other side of the door, following the celebrations, rites and sociability that occur outside the school space, wanting to know/experience what they do not yet know, with the curiosity and respect that local cultures deserve, affecting each other and making themselves available for rich exchanges, which records greater presence and friendliness.

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LENIRA HADDAD

PhD in Education, Universidade de São Paulo (USP), São Paulo, SP, Brasil; Full Professor at the Universidade Federal de Alagoas, Maceió, Alagoas, Brasil

MARIA ASSUNÇÃO FOLQUE

PhD in Education, University of London, London, England; Associate Professor at the University of Évora (UE), Évora, Portugal.

ISABEL BEZELGA

PhD in Theatre, University of Évora (UE), Évora, Portugal; Associate Professor at the University of Évora (UE), Évora, Portugal.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1 – conception and design of the research; construction and processing of data; analysis and interpretation of data; preparation of the final text.

Author 2 – conception and design of the research; construction and processing of data; analysis and interpretation of data; preparation of the final text.

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