

Learning to listen and give voice to children

CRISTINA MESQUITA-PIRES (1) AND JÚLIA FORMOSINHO (2), (1) Polytechnic Institute of Bragança, Portugal; (2) Universidade do Minho, Portugal

The focus of the study lies in the development of a praxis that claims that the child as an individual with competence and rights to participate. It focuses on the following questions: What training strategies support educational transformation for the construction of children participation and voice? How to build, on a daily basis, a pedagogical "grammar" which encourages the participation of children in their own learning and growth? It relates to EEL Project (Pascal & Bertram, 1999) and to DQP (Oliveira-Formosinho, 2002, 2009), which supports the present study, by enhancing the development of children, practitioners and institutions. This study focuses on a professional development theory that links the action to the context, sustaining an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1987). The study locates itself in the qualitative paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) and is conducted through a constructivistic case study (Oliveira-Formosinho & Kishimoto, 2002). Data is collected before and after the change processes and impact is evaluated through some of the EEL techniques (Pascal & Bertram, 1999) along with Childhood Association techniques (Formosinho & Oliveira-Formosinho, 2008). This process operates in a democratic and collaborative approach, with informed consent by teachers and parents. The study shows that staff are more inclined to suggest and discuss ideas, formally and informally. This has had a positive impact on our provision and on the children's learning. We still needed to continue to develop, and that working in an open and self-critical context provides the right conditions for long-term development.

Keywords: child participation, action research, ecological change, supervision, long-term development