


Inventories, collections, narratives as formative devices in the teaching internship for Early Childhood Education

Inventários, coleções, narrativas como dispositivos de formação no estágio de docência para a Educação Infantil

Inventarios, colecciones, narrativas como dispositivos de formación en las prácticas de docencia para la Educación Infantil

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ABSTRACT

The contact of professionals in training with their field of activity is seen as essential for learning a profession. In the case of teaching, if universities play a decisive and irreplaceable role in the formative path of a beginner, the contribution of more experienced professionals is also undeniable. In this text, the internship is considered as one of the ways of approaching the territory of activity and the collective of professionals already engaged in the profession and, from this point, a proposal for a teaching internship for work in Early Childhood Education is discussed. In the discussion, the experience inventory is presented as a device that brings together collections and narratives of scenes observed in the daily life at daycare centers and preschools, documenting the journey. It is argued that, as a narrative-pedagogical artifact, the inventory intensifies the fabric of integrative syntheses about the experience of being in the field of action. In the intertwining of theory and practice that surrounds the theme of the internship, a set of inventories, created by student interns in the Pedagogy program at *Universidade Federal Fluminense*, is analyzed. The dialogue with textual and image narratives (collections) highlighted aspects that involve teaching practice in Early Childhood Education, such as the organization of space, interactions, and play. Learning to listen and to keep records, central to the reflection that shapes and deepens teaching knowledge and practices, was also identified. Thus, the experience inventory proved to be a fertile formative device within the scope of the teaching internship.

Keywords: Teacher education; Early Childhood Education internship; Experience inventory.

RESUMO

O contato de profissionais em formação com seu campo de atuação é apontado como imprescindível para a aprendizagem de uma profissão. No caso do magistério, se as universidades cumprem um papel decisivo e insubstituível nos percursos formativos de um iniciante, a contribuição de profissionais mais experientes é também incontestável. Neste texto, considera-se o estágio como uma das vias de aproximação ao território de atuação e ao coletivo de profissionais já engajados na profissão e, desse ponto, discorre-se sobre uma proposta de estágio de docência para a atuação na Educação Infantil. Na discussão, apresenta-se o inventário de experiência como um dispositivo que reúne coleções e narrativas de cenas observadas no dia a dia de creches e pré-escolas, documentando o percurso. Argumenta-se que, como um artefato narrativo-pedagógico, o inventário intensifica o tecido de sínteses integradoras sobre a experiência de estar no campo de atuação. No entrelaçamento de teoria e prática que circundam a temática do estágio, um conjunto de inventários, produzidos por estudantes-estagiários do curso de Pedagogia da Universidade Federal Fluminense é tomado em análise. O diálogo com as narrativas textuais e imagéticas (coleções) evidenciou aspectos que envolvem a prática docente na Educação Infantil, como a organização do espaço, as interações e a brincadeira. A aprendizagem da escuta e do registro, centrais para a reflexão que configura e adensa saberes-fazeres docentes, também foi identificada. Assim, o inventário de experiência mostrou-se um dispositivo formativo fértil, no âmbito do estágio docente.

Palavras-chave: Formação docente; Estágio de Educação Infantil; Inventário de experiência.

RESUMEN

El contacto de profesionales en formación con su campo de actuación es señalado como imprescindible para el aprendizaje de una profesión. En el caso del magisterio, si las universidades cumplen un papel decisivo e insustituible en los transcurso formativos de un iniciante, la contribución de profesionales con más experiencia es también incontestable. En este texto, se considera a las prácticas como una de las vías de aproximación al territorio de actuación y al colectivo de profesionales ya comprometidos con la profesión y, de ese punto, se discurre sobre una propuesta de prácticas de docencia para la actuación en la Educación Infantil. En la discusión, se presenta el inventario de experiencia como un dispositivo que reúne colecciones y narrativas de escenas observadas en el cotidiano de jardines infantiles y preescolares,

documentando su recorrido. Se argumenta que, como un artefacto narrativo-pedagógico, el inventario intensifica el tejido de síntesis integradoras sobre la experiencia de estar en el campo de actuación. En el entrelazamiento de teoría y práctica que circundan la temática de las prácticas, un conjunto de inventarios, producidos por estudiantes-practicantes del curso de Pedagogía de la Universidad Federal Fluminense es tomado en análisis. El diálogo con las narrativas textuales e imagéticas (colecciones) evidenció aspectos que involucran la práctica docente en la Educación Infantil, como la organización del espacio, las interacciones y los juegos. El aprendizaje de la escucha y del registro, centrales para la reflexión que configura y adensa saberes-haceres docentes, también fue identificado. Así, el inventario de experiencia se mostró como un dispositivo formativo fértil en el ámbito de las prácticas docentes.

Palabras clave: Formación docente; Prácticas docentes de Educación infantil; Inventario de experiencia.

By way of introduction: How does one learn to be a teacher?

Knowing the real and diverse children who inhabit Early Childhood Education spaces, recognizing the unique ways of knowing and doing of boys and girls, and embracing their movements of exploration, experimentation, fantasy, play, interaction, and expression through multiple languages are guiding principles of teaching in the first stage of Basic Education. Arising from both legal guidelines and studies and research in this field, these principles—like threads woven into the children’s learning journeys—demand attentive listening, a sensitive gaze, and a respectful presence from those who accompany them, in pursuit of the inseparable objectives of Early Childhood Education: caring-and-educating.

Such principles and objectives pose challenges to teacher education, as they involve different spheres of knowledge that must be assimilated. They include conceptual foundations that enable an interdisciplinary understanding of the field, encompassing historical and legal aspects and situating the determinations that establish Early Childhood Education as the first stage of Basic Education. They also comprise theoretical and practical foundations related to the profession, including the teaching role and its working tools—planning, documenting, and assessing.

Between knowing and doing, between foundations and experiences that shape proposals and processes in university teacher education, we recall the question posed by Nóvoa (2017, p. 1113): “How does a person learn to be, to feel, to act, to know, and to intervene as a teacher?”. As formulated, this question reveals the layers that constitute teaching professionalism: in learning to be a teacher, feelings, actions, knowledge, and interventions are also being assimilated. Specifically in Early Childhood Education, how does one learn to be a teacher who listens to children, embraces their unique ways of being-existing, interprets what is heard, and articulates meaning to implement pedagogical actions of planning, documenting, and assessing?

These questions place us within the different spheres/pathways through which one is trained in/learns the teaching profession. Nóvoa (2017), in dialogue with other authors about the specific contours of each profession and the ways in which it is appropriated, summarizes that, in the process,

[...] there is always a synthesis of three types of learning: cognitive learning, in which one learns to think like a professional; practical learning, in which one learns to act like a professional; and moral learning, in which one learns to think and act responsibly and ethically (Nóvoa, 2017, p. 1114).

In what times and spaces do such learnings take place? Certainly, not only within the limited period of initial university education. Given the complexity of the teaching profession, thinking and acting responsibly and ethically as a teacher is a process shaped by each individual’s life history, by disciplinary knowledge from various fields that underpin the theoretical journey, and by practical knowledge woven within the educational setting, with its organization, relationships, and specific demands of this professional field (Nóvoa, 1992). Thus, becoming a teacher is a lifelong endeavor, a continuous act that points to the expansion of the self—both as a person and a professional—through a spiraling movement that integrates different temporal and spatial dimensions of existence (Ostetto, 2008).

Preparing for the “professions of the human”, such as teaching, requires not only a solid foundational education—where universities play a decisive role—but also “[...] the participation of more experienced professionals” (Nóvoa, 2017, p. 1114). This

insight highlights the importance of internships as a means of accessing and becoming familiar with the pedagogical and educational context and organization, thus serving as a field for professional learning.

Internship: contact, lived experience, and companionship in the realm of the profession

The core of any professional training is contact with the profession, the acquisition of knowledge, and socialization within a specific professional universe. [...] it is not possible to train teachers without the presence of other teachers and without experiencing school institutions (Nóvoa, 2017, p. 1122).

In the realm of initial teacher education, internship emerges as a space-time for engaging with the profession, experiencing the reality of educational institutions, and being in the company of teachers. Internship provides multifaceted experience of being in the field, alongside other teachers, and glimpsing the acts and realities of a professionalism that begins to take shape on the horizon of a student-teacher in training. In the process of engaging with educational contexts, the unique and complex ways of thinking and doing that shape professional knowledge become visible and can be grasped. As students move toward the institutions that welcome them as interns, they embark on a journey of immersion in the teaching profession, navigating not only pedagogical dimensions but also human ones.

Thus, the internship unfolds as an encounter—with children, teachers, other professionals, spaces, time, and the administrative-pedagogical structure—nurturing the opportunity to expand curricular knowledge (Ostetto, 2011). Through the mediation of more experienced partners, theoretical and practical knowledge can be mobilized by essential and ongoing attitude of observation, reflection, and action. The common questions of beginners—what to do, how to do it, and why—create space to deepen the connection between practice and theory, which emerges as an essential dialectical pair to be cultivated. Given this, the perception of the internship as a time-space of *being with* is highly appropriate.

Interning is *being with*; it is inhabiting a complex formative space for a

certain period and, for that very reason, is particularly suited to enhancing the learning of teaching knowledge and fostering research on everyday educational practices—whether by identifying topics that can be explored or need further study or by building and strengthening investigative attitudes [...] (Ostetto, 2012, p. 20).

From this perspective, the internship also emerges as a time for research and pedagogical practice, as it enables encounters and dialogue—not only between experienced teachers and preservice student-teachers but also between the university and Basic Education institutions, which are increasingly recognized as co-trainers of new education professionals.

In the Pedagogy program at the *Universidade Federal Fluminense* (UFF), the mandatory curricular internship is carried out through the component called *Pesquisa e Prática Educativa – PPE* [Research and Educational Practice], which unfolds in four stages: PPE I, PPE II, PPE III, and PPE IV, each with a specific focus. Teacher education for Early Childhood Education is the emphasis of PPE II, whose general objective follows the broad definition that guides all other PPE components:

Considering teaching as the foundation of teacher education and the school as a central space of professional practice, the goal is to position oneself within the field of education and expand dialogue with Basic Education institutions, viewing pedagogical practice as a research field. This approach broadens perspectives, knowledge, and practices related to daily educational life, its relationships, and interactions (UFF, 2018, p. 42).

In the curriculum design, PPE II is positioned in the fourth semester of the program, although it can be completed in other semesters depending on each student's activity plan, as there are no prerequisites. Focusing on the specificities of Early Childhood Education, the syllabus of this component aims to understand the structure and organization of educational work in the first stage of Basic Education, within institutions that care for and educate children from birth to six years old, and to investigate dimensions of educational practice through the observation and monitoring of children's groups and their teachers.

Among the many issues related to this proposal—including valid critiques regarding structure, supervision, and workload—this discussion highlights the investigative dimension embedded in the approach. It brings into dialogue tools that

enhance the experience of accompanying groups of children in their daily lives, observing, documenting, creating memories and reflections, and outlining formative pathways.

Looking, listening, questioning the reality

Considering the dynamics of time, space, activities, and relationships that shape daily life in Early Childhood Education, attentive observation—seeing, listening, and refining perception—is essential to expanding the field of meaning of children’s “expressions”, from infancy onward, as well as understanding the contexts and the many elements that compose them.

Through attentive and careful observation and listening to children, we can truly see and understand them. In doing so, we become capable of respecting them for who they are and what they wish to express. We know that, for a keen observer, children communicate a great deal even before they develop speech (Gandini; Goldhaber, 2002, p. 152).

It is through the act of observing and documenting what has been observed that proposals can be developed to uphold the concept of curriculum established in the *Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para a Educação Infantil – DCNEI* [National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education] – Resolution no. 5, of December 17, 2009. According to Article 3 of this document:

The Early Childhood Education curriculum is conceived as a set of practices that seek to connect children’s experiences and knowledge with the cultural, artistic, environmental, scientific, and technological heritage, aiming to promote the holistic development of children from birth to five years old (Brasil, 2009, p. 18).

Precisely because of the complexity of implementing such a curriculum—which requires connecting children’s experiences and knowledge with humanity’s historically accumulated knowledge across various fields—it is essential to critically examine how teachers perceive and interpret their students. Observing children and engaging in attentive listening with all senses is a crucial step in capturing the diversity of elements that shape their existence in relation to their surroundings—the spaces they inhabit, the timeframes in which they move, and the activities shared with them. More than that,

it is a way to question the elements observed. This perspective, which challenges reality, is not innate; rather, it is the result of an intense learning process.

A renowned photographer, by describing his photographic process, reflected:

It is necessary to look, and looking is so difficult. We are used to thinking. We think all the time, more or less well, but we cannot teach people to see. It takes a long time. Learning to look takes an enormous amount of time. A gaze that carries weight, that interrogates (Cartier-Bresson, 2015, p. 57).

Just like the photographic gaze, looking at children is difficult! It requires unlearning generic, superficial, and fixed ideas about what it means to be a child at a given age. In teaching, the intentional act of observing children and their daily lives demands clearing the lenses, shifting perspectives, and opening oneself to what would ordinarily go unnoticed—seeking new viewpoints to recognize and embrace essential aspects, illuminating the unrepeatable moments when children express their curiosities, knowledge, and desires, revealing their experiences in, about, and with the world. These attitudes can be strengthened through the practice of observing, documenting, and reflecting (Gandini; Goldhaber, 2002; Ostetto, 2008; Rinaldi, 2012), as essential pathways for interpreting and connecting expressions, silences, gestures, desires, and perceived needs.

It is along these paths that teachers nurture teaching intentionality, reflected in more meaningful planning, as it takes children as the starting point—or, as stated in the National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education, places the child at the center of the pedagogical project (Brasil, 2009). From observation to reflection, documenting requires telling what was seen and heard. How can one recount the daily life of Early Childhood Education institutions—the actions, interactions, and proposals shared by children and adults through time, space, and materials—based on captured observations? How can one narrate what photographs and written notes have gathered from a dynamic daily routine, composed of different rhythms? More than just questions, these are lessons learned in the journey of becoming an early childhood educator, which also involves reflecting on observations and weaving interpretations of what is narrated.

In the role of an intern, the actions, experiences, and relationships of other

protagonists are documented, but the very act of being present—of inhabiting, even temporarily, the daily life of a daycare or preschool as a field of internship—is also subject to recording and reflection. At this point, we enter the realm of documentation and recording, engaging with the meanings of documentation as presented by Gandini and Goldhaber (2002), who describe it as a practice that breaks away from the notion of objective and impersonal data collection. In their words:

Documentation is not considered a mere data collection carried out in a distant, objective, and disengaged manner. On the contrary, it is seen as keen observation and attentive listening, recorded in various forms by educators who consciously contribute their personal perspective (Gandini; Goldhaber, 2002, p. 151).

Experiencing ways of seeing and expressing: the fixed portrait provokes dialogues on theory and practice

An exercise proposed to the group of Pedagogy students preparing for their internship journey: observe-analyze scenes captured in photographs featuring children and create narratives. The images are projected, and the interplay between how one looks and how one describes what is seen begins—observing and describing the context of the scene, perceiving what is happening, identifying who is present, and noting gestures, expressions, and actions. Since these are frozen images, they invite imagination and authorship, allowing the observed moments to be given visibility through tones, styles, and unique ways of expressing-writing.

The photographs presented are the same for the entire class, with the instruction: Imagine you are there, on a day of your internship, and you captured this scene. How would you describe it? What narrative would you create? When the narratives are shared, different perceptions and descriptions emerge, both in form and content. This is inevitable, as each observer views from their own perspective and carries or projects their own understanding of the reality observed. To deepen the comprehension of this exercise, we present, in Figure 1, a scene shown for student observation and recording, followed by two narratives produced by students Ângela and Mônica¹.

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Figure 1 – What is seen? How can it be narrated?



Source: Series of photographs extracted from Facebook and edited by the author.

Building Together. During an activity with the children of *Early Childhood 2*, I captured a scene featuring Carlos and his teacher. Using a paintbrush, the teacher paints one of the boy's hands and guides it onto a white sheet of paper, leaving the imprint of his hand. It is evident that the teacher directs the entire construction process, while Carlos attentively follows the activity, carefully observing each step. Through this activity, I perceive a mutual construction taking place, along with the exploration of colors, shapes, and sensory experiences (touch and vision). (Narrative by student Ângela).

Handprint. Today, the teacher I accompany carried out a hand-stamping activity with the children, calling them one by one. In this record, we see her painting, holding, and stamping a boy's hand with green paint. Handprints are a common part of Early Childhood Education. Activities like this are essential to this stage of development. I believe they can be fun and visually appealing. Sometimes, when a more standardized and neat result is required by the school, this kind of guidance is necessary and valid. However, I question its relevance in terms of the child's personal development. The child does not create, does not produce, does not have freedom—they are merely the object of manipulation. Therefore, while this activity has its place, I believe children

at this stage should be encouraged to create and develop their manual skills independently (Narrative by student Mônica).

We leave the interpretative dialogue of the two students' narratives to the reader, as our aim is merely to highlight the unique ways in which the elements of the scene were observed and given meaning—the gestures, the proposal, the materials, the teacher's actions, and the child—reflecting different understandings of the teacher's role and pedagogical approaches in Early Childhood Education.

This exercise fosters meaningful dialogues and critical reflections on theory and practice in teacher education and everyday pedagogy. The written productions, combining observation, documentation, and reflection, highlight themes for study and debate. Additionally, the language used in these records brings to light certain specifics of Early Childhood Education that need to be discussed, reconsidered, and redefined: terms like students, classroom, and lesson often appear in initial narratives. The words used to describe an observed scene—whether in a photograph or in daily experiences—carry conceptions, revealing ways of seeing and understanding teaching and the Early Childhood Education setting, without a doubt!

In experiences with different groups, it is very common to hear references to: student (instead of child), classroom (instead of reference room), and class or activity time (instead of pathway and/or proposals). As participants articulate their observations and expand their theoretical frameworks, the terms used in their narratives begin to be questioned. Over time, in subsequent observations/narratives, these initial terms are gradually replaced with greater intentionality and precision, making way for children, reference rooms, and proposals in both records and discussions.

We witnessed that the authorship of student-educators in training is projected in the narratives: throughout the process, they gain descriptive and analytical density, becoming inhabited with their own ways of expressing themselves. Creation, invention, and imagination, as an aesthetic dimension constitutive of learning (Rinaldi, 2012), take shape in a discourse, in a way of thinking-doing which, over time, in encounters with children and concrete spaces—during the internship and in teaching practice—

may be activated. It is also interesting to note that, at the beginning of the process of observing photographs/scenes, the short narratives appear loosely structured, without concern for form or narrative aesthetics, without titles, for example. In sharing their records, the group comes into contact with different textual styles, captures nuances of the author, and is encouraged to review their own narratives, refining form and content, giving them better structure, and even assigning them a title.

In the field: ways of saying amplified in collections

The narrative exercise, experienced in the classroom at the university, unfolds as guidance for observation and recording in the internship field. At this stage, an observation guide is provided, proposing: Exercising a sensitive gaze toward children (what they do, how they do it, with whom, where), learning to see beyond the apparent, to recognize the multiple ways of being a child and their unique ways of knowing and expressing the world; Producing written and photographic records as a learning exercise in pedagogical documentation, one of the tools of teaching practice.

Throughout the internship period, in direct interaction with institutions and groups of children, several focal points will emerge: 1) space; 2) organization of routine times; 3) pedagogical proposal—activities conducted with children, materials used, themes/projects under study, etc. From the records made, students are encouraged to create “collections” portraying the daily life of their internship. These include collections of photographic images and collections of written narratives, in the form of short stories or brief chronicles, in which the exercise of looking, through the lens of memory, translates into a way of expressing.

Some propositions: “Collection of images of spaces”, “Collection of images of walls/decoration”, “Collection of images of murals”, “Collection of objects in the classroom”, “Collection of images of materials and toys used by children in play”, “Collection of images of children’s gestures: during meals, in outdoor spaces, etc.”, “Collection of portraits of time: written narratives about the routine”, “Collection of written narratives about moments lived in the reference room”, “Collection of written narratives about moments related to meals and hygiene”, “Collection of written

narratives about moments of play”. Based on these suggestions and the material gathered in their records, student-interns select and organize the data into collections, expanding the possibility for meaning regarding the fact/gesture/act/time/space/protagonist in focus.

The collections, especially with the use of photography, inspired by the work of photographer and architect Ricardo Luis Silva (2022), invite us to focus our gaze on children and their contexts, to seek to see beyond the ordinary, capturing elements of daily life that sometimes repeat and at other times are reinvented. In the collections, there is both a provocation and an invitation to reflect on photographic language and the intentionality behind photographing: capturing this or that gesture, this or that angle of the space is a choice.

And later, the way these photographic records are displayed also invites creation, mobilizing the aesthetic dimension in various ways of showcasing what was captured. Here, too, there is a learning movement in how to see and share, making the documented story/scene visible (Rinaldi, 2012), which now becomes part of a “collection” (Figures 2, 3, and 4).

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Figure 2 – Collection of gestures: everyday life



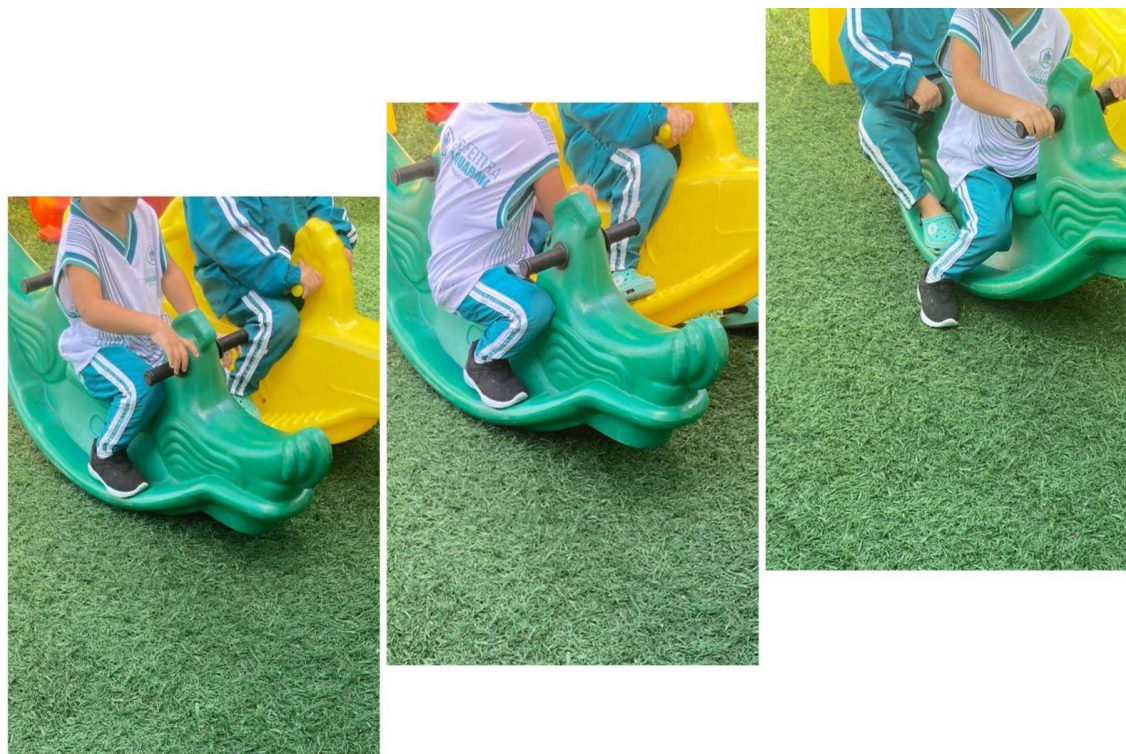
Source: Experiences inventory from/in the internship (Gabriel, Pedagogy intern, 2023).

Figure 3 – Collection of gestures: hands in clay



Source: Experiences inventory from/in the internship (Luise, Pedagogy intern, 2023).

Figure 4 – Collection of gestures: play and interaction



Source: Experiences inventory from/in the internship (Pedro, Pedagogy intern, 2023).

Experiences inventory from/in the internship

Recording is a constitutive part of teaching practice; encouraging interns to write, supporting the exercise of narrating lived experiences to then reflect on them, and, completing the cycle, communicating them are crucial actions in teacher education. These actions enhance the understanding of pedagogical documentation as a teaching tool while also creating space for the affirmation of authorship. This approach aligns with the necessary “pedagogical isomorphism”, a reference from the *Movimento da Escola Moderna de Portugal* [Modern School Movement of Portugal], understood as

[...] a methodological strategy that consists of experiencing, throughout the entire education process, the engagement and attitudes; the methods and procedures; the technical resources and organizational modes that are intended to be applied in the actual professional practices of teachers (Niza, 2009, p. 352).

In this direction, at the end of the process, the production of an inventory is proposed, carrying the idea of recording and documentation: description, cataloging, listing of facts, photos, and narratives. To inventory is to (re)collect the “findings” of the course to expose the stories of what was lived, in words and images that reveal processes: the paths taken—leaving the university, entering an Early Childhood Education Institution, encountering children, professionals, spaces, materials, daily routines, and the pedagogical proposal. Creating an inventory of the curricular internship carried out in PPE II—Early Childhood Education means gathering elements of the lived experience (the collections of various observed aspects, according to the guidelines proposed throughout the semester), organizing records (collections of written and photographic records). It also involves reflecting on everything that was inventoried: What are the meanings of everything collected from the experience of “being in an internship”? What has been learned? What were the limitations and possibilities?

Based on a guide, as a general proposal and an idea of the “contents” that should be included in the inventory, there is an invitation to imagine, invent, create, and “shape” the collected elements from the collections, briefly presented in conversations during university meetings throughout the semester. Three topics are suggested for the “Experiences inventory in/from the Early Childhood Education Internship: Narrating and Reflecting on Processes and Learning”: 1) *Collections of images and narratives that depict daily life*: Portrait collections of space [photographs]; Portrait collections of time [textual narratives]—Narratives/scenes of time spent in the reference room, Narratives/scenes related to hygiene, Narratives/scenes related to mealtime, Narratives/scenes of playtime experiences; Portrait collections of the pedagogical approach—List of proposed activities, materials used throughout the days, and reflections on implementation methods, Photographs of children’s creations. 2) *Practice and theory in dialogue: building knowledge*. 3) *Final considerations: reflections on processes and learning*.

Here, we engage in dialogue with eight “experience inventories” created by student interns who attended the PPE II course in 2023. It is important to note that the

students authorized the use of their work for analysis and publication purposes, as well as the use of their first names to identify the narratives.

On this occasion, among the elements constituting the inventory previously described, we highlight the third topic, which provides a reflective overview of the processes and learning experiences of the interns. To present them, recalling Benjamin (1987) and his memoir-like writings—particularly the collection *Childhood in Berlin Around 1900*, which weaves together brief stories and short chronicles that reveal, in both form and content, the spirit of the time, intertwining individual and collective dimensions—we highlight excerpts from the inventories produced by the student interns. These excerpts have undergone minor edits to enhance the formative experience they convey in their narratives. Each story is preceded by a title, mostly already present in the inventory, introducing the reader to the focus of the content developed in the presented story.

Enchantments and challenges of my first internship experience. At the end of the internship, I understand that learning is not limited to positive experiences but also includes what we can learn from challenges and situations that do not align with the theories and principles we have studied. Being with the children provided an opportunity to reflect on pedagogical practices we should avoid and reinforced the need to promote an education that values the uniqueness of each child, respecting their characteristics and interests. The internship, by fostering a more sensitive and conscious perspective on pedagogical practice, taught me both what to do and what to avoid, strengthening my commitment to working as an educator. Through our studies, I realized the importance of observations and records as a form of pedagogical documentation, which led me to exercise a sensitive gaze with a creative, respectful, careful, and affectionate approach. It is essential to clear our vision and learn to see again! (Pedro, Pedagogy intern, PPE II, 2023).

Bringing sensitivity to the gaze. I had previously done a paid internship in an Early Childhood Education class a few years ago. So, I already had an idea of what to expect—the routines, songs, proposals, in short, everything that shapes the teachers' pedagogical actions. But the big difference in this new internship experience was that it took place in a public institution, whereas my previous one was in a private school. And that difference probably unsettled me because, although there were similarities, the flow of time in Early Childhood Education at the UMEI [Municipal Early Childhood Education Unit] was different from that of the private school where I interned. I was used to erasing letters written by five-year-olds because the teacher thought they weren't well-formed, or to removing children from the toy shelves to seat them in chairs because the teacher said it was time for them to sit. Coming into contact with a place that was similar (children, chairs, toys, tables, activities, play...) yet entirely different shook me at first. As the days passed, I started to

see myself as part of that space, embracing a new way of doing things. Unlike my previous experience, I was able to sit and play with the children. These experiences touched a part of me I hadn't accessed in a while... They made me reflect: How can one coexist, learn, and build relationships with children without valuing play? Without finding joy in playing? So, through the combination of the thought-provoking ideas and references brought by the PPE II teacher and the lived experience of UMEI time, I was able to develop a gaze that can admire the everyday routine, that notices the threads weaving interactions, that perceives what often goes unnoticed. More than just contributing to my professional training, these experiences profoundly impacted my personal growth. And there were so many meaningful moments, shaped by the proposals introduced by the PPE II teacher. At first, I must admit, I didn't fully understand the purpose [...]: Why describe so many scenes? Why try to interpret photographs? But I followed along, pretending I understood and fully engaging with the proposals. Then, when I started the internship and the teacher sent us the observation guides (filled with important notes for fieldwork, suggestions, a fantastic guide to inspire us!), one of the tasks was to observe and write about everyday moments. That's when I got it! The teacher had given us the chance to rehearse in class what we would need to do in the internship and, eventually, as teachers: Documentation! That assignment was designed to help us practice what we had learned about recording moments—the different forms of documentation, the possibilities in the process, the purpose of documenting, what to record, how to observe, listen, and see—not in a mechanical or rigid way, but in ways that would cultivate greater sensitivity in our gaze (Luise, Pedagogy intern, PPE II, 2023).

Teaching internship in Early Childhood Education: attentive listening, active observation. The teaching internship in Early Childhood Education, through both my observations and active participation, taught me concepts; it made me understand that being a teacher is not about working for love, but with love. Creativity, which many believe teachers are simply born with, is actually developed over time. Patience is an incredible virtue, one that will always be tested. Attentive listening must be constantly exercised. Observation, which is more active than we often think, is also a valuable ally for any teacher. Therefore, I learned that in Early Childhood Education, the smallest details matter. And documentation is essential! I realized that children's imagination moves at a pace much faster than their little legs could ever carry them. [...]. Speaking about the internship, Ostetto and Maia (2019, p. 2) highlight that the biggest challenge is "[...] to see the whole without neglecting the particular". That is indeed difficult! I experienced this challenge firsthand, particularly in the teachers' behavior. Observing and listening to their experiences became invaluable opportunities for my learning. They taught me to respect, to listen, to give space to children, and to appreciate small achievements. I remember the care and patience they showed in correcting me when I did or said something that wasn't the best approach. I was included in the group; they invited me to discuss the reasons behind their actions, allowing me to be an active participant and fully experience each moment with the children (Stéphanie, Pedagogy intern, PPE II, 2023).

Theory and practice: the thin line between anesthesia and aesthesia in work conducted at a Daycare Center. This internship was undoubtedly one of the most challenging experiences in my Pedagogy training so far. Despite studying so many theorists and academics at university, reality is something else—harsh and unforgiving. Witnessing firsthand the small acts of negligence

toward these children made me feel powerless. Every day during the internship, I wondered: What if I were in that position? How would I plan a routine that truly highlighted what is most special here—children’s protagonism? I learned that teaching in Early Childhood Education goes far beyond caregiving and organizing “activities”. It means truly listening to children, fostering meaningful exchanges, nurturing curiosity, and giving purpose to each proposal. This experience was a turning point in my training and reinforced my commitment to fighting against rigid, insensitive teaching practices, sharpening my critical perspective on daily life and routines in the daycare center (Juliana, Pedagogy intern, PPE II, 2023).

Inventory: the dialogue between my experiences and the studied theory. Teaching in Early Childhood Education is not solely focused on teaching and learning. Beyond that, being a teacher in the first stage of Basic Education means committing to being with and for the children—in relationships, interactions, play, and playful experiences, which are the guiding principles of practice. Just as a “didactics of wonder” is necessary—one based on careful observation and sensitive listening to children, fostering a healthy environment where they can express their individual and collective interests and personalities—I also learned that children have a hundred languages that must not be silenced. As a school team—teachers, administrators, kitchen staff, cleaning staff, security guards, and others—we need to build relationships of trust with them and encourage respect and confidence among them. In Early Childhood Education, we must be teachers who both educate and care, as established by the *Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para a Educação Infantil – DCNEI* [National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education]. That is why there is no separation between professionals for caregiving and those for educating. [...]. Through this PPE II [Research and Educational Practice II] course, I learned various ways to document experiences—descriptive and analytical narratives, photographs, mini-stories—all of which help in observing each child’s development both individually and collectively. These forms of documentation also support the creation of individual reports to be shared with parents and guardians during the school year. Moreover, during my direct interactions in the internship field, I realized that we must observe children beyond what is said about them. We need to truly see them—as people who have a hundred languages, a hundred thoughts, a hundred ways of thinking, playing, speaking, dreaming, and imagining (Mayara, Pedagogy intern, PPE II, 2023).

Overcoming fear, seeing up close the hundred languages of the child in action. This was the experience I feared the most. I even postponed enrolling in this course for a semester because I didn’t feel mature enough to be in a room with 15 children. On my first day at UMEI, I arrived feeling desperate and tense, afraid of how many times I would be corrected for making mistakes. I thought it was just my own insecurity, but Freire himself would argue otherwise in the fifth letter of *Professora, sim; Tia, não* [Teacher, yes; Aunt, no]. And I really struggled! How many times did I fail to understand what the children were trying to tell me, fail to get one of them to sleep, or fail to make them follow my instructions? How many times did I want to comfort a child but was stopped by the teachers because she was “not looking good today”? Reading this, it might sound like a terrible experience, but I would say the opposite: this internship left me completely fascinated! I got to witness the hundred languages of the child up close—in the laughter, tears, glances, and even tantrums. I saw how their play evolved, how they created their own rules, how

relationships formed, and how group bonds strengthened. Every day, I learned more. Despite the challenges, being in the *Grupo de Referência de Educação Infantil – GREI 2A* [Early Childhood Education Reference Group] gave me energy and put a smile on my face (Sophia, Pedagogy intern, PPE II, 2023).

Distancing from indifference, learning from children: what I learned in the internship. During my internship, I realized that theory does not always apply directly to practice, but it serves as a guiding tool in managing our approaches and handling different situations. Mastering theoretical content alone is not enough to ensure the success of a pedagogical proposal or even conflict resolution. In the theory-practice relationship, the teacher must preserve a sensitive perspective, avoiding indifference, and remain aware of the impact of his/her teaching methods. In Early Childhood Education, the way we care for children carries implicit meanings shaped by the relationship between society and school. Teaching conveys a worldview that can either reinforce or challenge existing perspectives. A teacher must continuously seek sociopolitical awareness to foster an education that is both critical and sensitive—especially when working with young children, who require greater care, attention, and empathy. It is essential to put ourselves in the child's place, to truly listen and communicate with them. This is the only healthy path for both the child and the educator in pursuing an education that nurtures and embraces. This internship was enriching and emotional. Feeling integrated into the daily life of the institution and welcomed by the children, teachers, and staff made the experience not just fulfilling but genuinely meaningful and joyful. It led me to reflect on how we relate to emotions beyond childhood and how we engage with children themselves. Observing, with care and attention, how children interact, express their emotions, and live their affections in unique ways is a skill that must be refined and practiced. Indifferent, accustomed eyes can easily overlook the opportunity to learn from children—to recognize that there is so much more to be seen and understood through our interactions with them (Gabriel, Pedagogy intern, PPE II, 2023).

The necessary education of the gaze and the learning of documentation. The gaze of the curricular internship, initially panoramic and general, cannot remain only on the surface, on the apparent. It needs to go beyond, which happens through experience, proximity, and increasing interaction in everyday pedagogical life. Knowing this, when I started the internship, it became a challenge for me, as I kept questioning what, whom, and where to look at, since many different situations were happening simultaneously. Moreover, as I learned from theoretical studies, an attentive gaze alone is not enough; it must be accompanied by documentation. And, once again, questions arose, because my choice of focus would be reflected in my written records in the field diary. This often led me, in my eagerness to document as many elements and details as possible, to miss out on fully engaging in activities with the children. To better experience the context, I decided to put my notebook aside for a while and started participating more in the children's activities and play, seeking to immerse myself in their different movements. Only after the internship day ended did I organize my notes in the diary, recalling relevant points from memory and developing brief reflections. This became essential for me to get to know the children better—how their relationships unfolded, how they organized themselves in space, and to observe their individualities. Thus, documentation was connected to researching the everyday life, where the lived experiences could be revisited

through the lens of theory. This exercise intrigued me, as an observer intern, and led to reflections that were later developed (Letícia, Pedagogy intern, PPE II, 2023).

From the perspective of narrative research (Josso, 2004), we recognize the authorship of the student-interns and the importance of giving visibility to processes, perceptions, and ways of expressing experience. In this sense, we do not intend to analyze what they shared in the materiality of the inventories produced, from which we present only a small portrait. Renouncing analysis does not mean refusing to acknowledge the significance of the words of those who lived and narrated the experience. The life stories gathered here reveal, through their testimonial flow, the rights and reverses, the stitches and knots that weave and sustain the formative process, as the attentive reader must have noticed. It would be enough to revisit the titles of each narrative to identify the themes that shaped the students' experiences with/in/through the internship. We highlight:

Enchantments and challenges of my first internship experience.
 Bringing sensitivity to the gaze.
 Teaching internship in Early Childhood Education: attentive listening, active observation.
 Theory and practice: the thin line between anesthesia and aesthesia in work conducted at a Daycare Center.
 Inventory: the dialogue between my experiences and the studied theory.
 Overcoming fear, seeing up close the hundred languages of the child in action.
 Distancing from indifference, learning from children: what I learned in the internship.
 The necessary education of the gaze and the learning of documentation.

A weaving of inventoried meanings: final considerations

Starting with the titles highlighted at the end of the previous section, numerous threads wove the experiences and shaped the narratives in the inventories, making visible the search for meaning in the internship.

One of these threads weaves the dilemmas that permeate the relationship between theory and practice in the training process, bringing a myriad of feelings experienced by the intern-teacher-in-training: difficulty, fear, questioning, critical perspective, awareness of negligence, enchantment, and joy.

The materiality of the experience inventory, as a narrative-pedagogical artifact, offers additional threads to deepen the fabric of integrative syntheses about being in the field of practice. One thread highlights relational learning—attentive listening, active observation, a sensitive gaze, recognition of children’s potential, and witnessing their multiple languages. Another identifies professional knowledge—integrating care and education, observing, recording, and respecting children’s timing, which implies adjusting routines to embrace individuality. These professional understandings are also realized through commitment and affection, cultivating aesthetic sensitivity (against anesthesia) and paving a promising path toward weaving a “didactics of wonder” (Nigris, 2014).

The dialogue with the collected textual and visual narratives highlighted that reflective learning about teaching practices in Early Childhood Education can be enriched through the recording of knowledge and practices nurtured during the internship. In this sense, observing, recording, and documenting were recognized as meaningful experiences by the group of interns. As both support and an invitation to gather material from daily experiences, observation and recording—fundamental processes and tools of teaching—lead to reflection and contribute to the construction of professional identity, in the perspective of “[...] *learning to feel as a teacher*” (Nóvoa, 2017, p. 1124).

The inventoried experience narratives confirm that the internship, as a time-space within the teacher education process, is a path shaped by each individual’s uniqueness while being inscribed within a collective perspective. They reinforce the essential role of the internship as “[...] a formative environment with the presence of the university, schools, and teachers, creating bonds and intersections without which no one will become a teacher” (Nóvoa, 2017, p. 1124).

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Note

¹ The names of the two referenced students are fictitious.