

"Placing oneself on the other side", or how research on teachers' disposition is constructed through pedagogical documentation.

A case study in Spain¹

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Abstract

The following paper presents the results of a case study on the educational potentiality of pedagogical documentation as a way to construct the research disposition of preschool teachers in initial education. After an introductory reflection on the relevance of provoking the reconstruction of practical knowledge, pedagogical documentation is approached as it is proposed in Reggio Emilia preschools (Italy). This contribution presents as its fundamental findings the potentiality of pedagogical documentation as a way to enter into a dialogue with the complexity of teacher education processes. It is argued that this tool can be essential to weave research into a preschool teacher's day-to-day action. Although participating students are initially uncomfortable using the tool, finally they end up mobilising each of the five constituent dimensions of teachers' practical knowledge (attitudes, values, emotions, skills and knowledge).

Keywords

Pedagogical documentation - Practical knowledge - Preschool education - Initial teacher education- Research disposition

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Introduction

Malaguzzi (1982; in Hoyuelos 2013) often said that it is much easier for a snail to leave traces of its own path than for teachers to leave traces of their work. In this simple way, the author raises one of the fundamental concerns about teacher education: the teacher's vision as a researcher in his or her own context (Stenhouse 1975). This image contrasts with initial education understood as mere 'theory transmission'. This has been a widespread practice in initial education that gathered force at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, when recent pedagogical and psychological theory – already formalised at this point – was proposed as a core aspect for improving educational practice (Korthagen 2008). Pedagogical discourse became 'general rules' about what 'should be done' with children, detached from practice, that were unable to provide concrete answers to specific situations occurring in schools (Argyris 1982). This disconnection between (in this case, initial) education and professional action becomes a political option that subordinates the complexity of teaching work to the hegemony of 'academic knowledge'. It might therefore seem that the place where theory emerges, and it is constituted is far removed from everyday preschool life. As we will see later, this makes it difficult for pre-service teachers to develop practical thinking.

Initial education should become a forum for encounters where connections are built between the following elements: daily life in the classroom, the challenges or difficulties that it poses, and the reflective activity that tries to give meaning to the lived experience. The idea of aesthetics suggests 'new qualities of life' when 'amalgamated with pedagogy and didactics' (Olsson, Dahlberg, and Theorell 2016, 721). These 'new qualities' derive from understanding teaching practice as a sensory experience that transcends the 'purely conceptual' terrain. From there, aesthetics invites us to think about those tacit connections (between people, objects, stories, etc.) that contribute to a complex vision of learning that does not establish hierarchies between what is considered 'emotional' and what is understood as 'rational' (Baldini and Vecchi 2014).

Given the way, it enters into dialogue with uncertainty, pedagogical documentation takes on meaning (Hoyuelos 2013) and promotes the narrative interpretation of the processes lived by children. This tool, which we will analyse later, assumes that teachers can accompany, describe and analyse children's spontaneous learning processes.

Within this framework, in initial preschool teacher education, it is particularly important to enter into dialogue with subversive pedagogical experiences that focus on the

relationships established between practice, the events with the children experienced by the teachers, and what we understand by 'pedagogical theory'.

To this end, the current challenges of the Early Years Initial Teacher education will be addressed throughout this article, trying to understand the role that pedagogical documentation could play for the development of teachers' practical thinking. The practical implications, ethical positioning and possible risks underlying its use will be analysed. We will therefore explore the case of an Early Childhood teachers' training module at Málaga University (Spain) that embedded pedagogical documentation as its methodological core.

What kind of reflections does pedagogical documentation trigger in this context of initial teacher education? What does it mean for the teaching role of pre-service teachers to embody pedagogical documentation? Which didactic elements could accompany the use of pedagogical documentation in teachers' initial education? These are some of the uncertainties that derive from the main objective of the study presented above, and that introduce the case study described below.

Moving from 'theoretical knowledge' to 'practical knowledge and thinking'

In line with the above, it is necessary to transcend the image of the university as an institution of abstract theoretical knowledge which, detached from action, is 'transferred' (Pozo 2014; Zeichner 1995) to students, and instead move toward a university that incorporates a rhizomatic conception of knowledge (Deleuze and Guattari 1977; Moss 2006) that unfolds in the Early Childhood teaching identity. This leads us to consider the presence (and also the relevance) of what Pérez Gómez (2012) calls subjective theories, which consist of our different gestalts or 'the personal conglomerates of needs, concerns, values, meanings, preferences, feelings, and behavioural tendencies' (Korthagen and Wubbels 2008, 42). These beliefs are also connected to our implicit theories, which detect similarities between different situations in practice, in order to generalise our responses to them until they become routine (Pozo 2014).

In other words, the pedagogical task we are constructing in Early Childhood initial education must be woven from both educational action, defined as *theories-in-use* (Argyris 1982) or *practical knowledge* (Pérez Gómez 2012, 2017), i.e. a conglomerate of implicit and automatic attitudes, emotions, values, abilities and knowledge, and also from espoused theories (Argyris 1982). This process of conscious formalisation of

educational action, which includes a pedagogical reflection and an ethical-teleological orientation², stands at the heart of what is called practical thinking (Pérez Gómez 2012, 2017). Taking this position also leads us to understand emotions as a crucial experience in a profession, such as ours, that ‘de-academises’ teacher education (Korthagen and Wubbels 2008; Pérez Gómez 2012). From this perspective, theory is not ‘spurned’ as a knowledge disconnected from practice, but rather enters into a relationship that constructs or deconstructs us.

Understanding the experience of the educational profession from this perspective therefore leads us to think about the relevance of practice in initial Early Childhood teacher education. Hence, the uncertainty and confusion that characterise the DNA of practice bring the appearance of doubts and questions (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al. 2014) that help us observe professional action as a reflective action in itself. This takes on special meaning in preschool education, as we could possibly stop seeing ‘children’ in abstract terms and instead live with them (Malaguzzi 1993). In fact, this turn would mean questioning the hierarchical order ‘where academic knowledge (being predominantly theoretical and masculine) is valued higher than (feminine) preschool practices’ (Lenz Taguchi 2010, 23).

However, this mobilisation of practical knowledge does not occur solely through practice (Pérez Gómez 2017). Contreras and Pérez De Lara (2010) argue, in this sense, that the way to overcome the repeated theory versus practice dichotomy is for the latter to constitute itself as experience through the process of practical thinking. Pérez Gómez (2017, 17) defines this process, as indicated previously, as the ‘conscious, reflective, contrasted, reposeful reconstruction of this system of understanding and action’. This is therefore the process that can help ensure this ‘remote control’ (Zeichner 1995) becomes less ‘remote’ by putting words to that which is normally silenced. This ethical resistance movement could also be an exercise that connects directly with the values of our teaching identity. We affirm this because, from this perspective, spending time thinking about childhood culture is understood as a political practice in itself. Reflection therefore becomes the way to theorise practice and, in consequence, to transform practical knowledge into practical thinking (Kinsella and Pitman 2012; Pérez Gómez 2017).

Given these premises, what can characterise the experiences we design as Early Childhood teachers’ educators to stimulate the development of practical thinking?

² In other words, it is aimed at the well-being and happiness of those involved, analyzing whether the educational processes that are put in place are related to the autonomous, critical and creative development of the learners.

Pérez Gómez (2012) proposes research and action as core aspects that would characterise a reflective practicum (Schön 1998). With regards to the idea of ‘research’, there are several trends that, each from their own particular epistemological position, offer different meanings. Indeed, in preschool education, we speak of ‘de-territorialising’ the habitual ways of doing research (Hodgins 2019) in order to cause convulsions in the paradigms of knowledge that we know (Denzin and Lincoln 2012). Research in everyday school life thus contributes to the incorporation of what Giudici, Krechevsky, and Rinaldi (2016) call a ‘research attitude’. This attitude can be materialised in a disposition of ‘estrangement’ (Hoyuelos 2013) that seeks novelty in what our practical knowledge would like to live as ‘familiar’.

In this regard, the work we have developed so far leads us to understand pedagogical documentation as a way of carrying out research directly related to children in preschool education. This conception of pedagogical documentation arises from the Reggio experience that, as Rinaldi (2006) explains, prompts universities to go from being ‘sites for the transmission of scientific knowledge’ to ‘places of ethical practices’. From there, this trend has been transferred to other contexts assuming that pedagogical documentation invites teachers to generate ‘minor politics’ (Moss 2006), distancing themselves from being mere technicians (Robertson, Fleet, and Patterson 2017).

Living with pedagogical documentation in initial education, why not?

Pedagogical documentation consists of the systematic collection and exhibition (Hoyuelos 2013) of photographs, recordings, materials, videos, conversations, etc., that produce ‘glimpses into the complexity of learning and learners’ (Krechevsky et al. 2013, 58).

As argued by Giudici, Krechevsky, and Rinaldi (2016, 145) in Reggio Emilia preschools the use of pedagogical documentation is understood as a means ‘to overcome the arrogant idea of constantly separating theory from practice and culture from practical fields’. Therefore, this ‘arrogance’ can be overcome by using pedagogical documentation as a way of supporting teachers in re-positioning their role, from a someone who predominantly ‘speaks’ to someone who makes of listening a fundamental pillar (Rinaldi,2006).

However, the idea of pedagogical documentation also seems to have many meanings, in accordance with the paradigm it has been constituted from. This forces us to take up an ethical position, as in preschool education there has always been a robust current that uses observation as a way to behaviourally record children’s places on development

scales (Emilsson and Pramling Samuelsson 2014; Sparrman and Lindgren 2010). Although pedagogical documentation in Reggio Emilia preschools originated as an alternative to this current (Hoyuelos 2013; Lenz Taguchi 2010), the work of Lindgren (2012) shows us that there are movements that use this tool to reinforce the neoliberal view that a child is as an adult 'waiting to be built'. Indeed, there are also trends that uncritically adopt the discourse of this preschool network in order to 'demonstrate' the quality of their 'Reggio-inspired' practices (Johnson 2000). This is the reason why a deep understanding of the action of documenting requires analysis of our own image of childhood and, at the same time, a conscious effort to 'rescue' this image from possible reductionist rhetoric.

In our work of inquiry, we try to detach ourselves from such positions by assuming that there is a certain risk of 'epistemological violence' caused by trying to 'speak for them' when interpreting childhood stories (Olsson, Dahlberg, and Theorell 2016). This is why we believe that the research proposed by the origin of pedagogical documentation is that which, in this case, places preschool education students in disposition to carry out qualitative research 'with, not about children' (Kind and Argent 2017, 86). In fact, the work of Biffi and Montà (2020) shows how pedagogical decisions become shared between teachers and children through this dialogue with their voices. Voices that, moreover, can 'self-emancipate' by becoming 'authors of their own life stories' (180).

In this sense, Merewether (2018) returns to a metaphor of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) by asking us to 'imagine the difference between standing by a river and observing it flow by, or jumping into the river and allowing ourselves to go with its flow'. This nomadic condition is not carried out in an assertive or universal way, but rather the interaction between *techné* and *episteme* (or practice and theory) becomes organic (Pérez Gómez 2017), because the elaboration of theories is provisional and contingent on the learning situations. This elaboration is the one that Biffi (2019) coined, from hermeneutic phenomenology, with the term 'anecdote'.

The desire to further analyse the relationship between teachers and their teaching practice through pedagogical documentation has an extensive, differentiated historical background in Europe. We can find relevant works in Norway (Alvestad and Sheridan 2015) which point to the importance of pedagogical documentation in the national curriculum. This is also the case in Sweden (Pettersson 2015), although here it is not explicit how teachers can document and highlight the difficulties they have in analysing their observations (Emilsson and Samuelsson 2014). Something similar occurs in Finland

(Rintakorpi 2016), where, although teachers recognise the connection between pedagogical documentation and their own professional development, they also emphasise the risk that it may become simply a bureaucratic registration task, without any interpretative role or any possibility of pedagogical transformation. In contrast, in Germany, Knauf (2015) points to the fact that pedagogical documentation, as conceived in Reggio Emilia preschools, has not been established as common practice. However, we might find similar practice in the use of the portfolio in preschool education.

Bearing in mind the debate established in these experiences, the work presented forms part of research that attempts to determine to what extent introducing pedagogical documentation as a methodological core for teaching and learning in the Preschool Education Degree agitates the practical knowledge of trainee teachers. Specifically, we focus on how research disposition (here 'disposition' refers to the socio-affective components of our practical knowledge in relation to research) is constructed in preschool teachers' initial education.

Research as a path: study methodology

We approached this qualitative research (Becker 1996; Flick 2018) through a case study (Stake 1995) that tries to analyse pedagogical experience as an interaction between systems. We decided to select this research modality because it allows us to discover the complexity and nuances of a pedagogical experience by juxtaposing multiple informants, strategies, sources and moments. This would be an 'intrinsic case study' (Simons 2009) because it was based on interest in researching the potentialities of a specific methodological design that has pedagogical documentation at its core. With regard to our case study, it is important to know that preschool education in Spain can be accessed in two ways: as a Higher Technician in Pre-Primary Education (vocational training module lasting approximately 2 years), who works with ages between 0 and 3 years, or as a Preschool Education Teacher, who works with children up to the age of 6 (a 4-year university degree), which forms the framework of the focus of the study presented here.

If we analyse the school practice credits found in Preschool Education Degrees in different universities around Spain (the core of our theoretical framework), we find that they vary, although in no case do they exceed 20% of the total length. Focusing on Andalusia, the region where the research is carried out, all universities have 44 practice credits in their study programme (representing just over 18% of total credits). In the case

of Málaga University, these 44 practice credits are divided into three periods of increasing duration in years 2, 3 and 4 of the degree course.

This case study focuses its analysis on the second period of placement in year three (8 ECTS credits – duration 4 weeks), involving a group of 5 students (four females and one male), whose academic tutor proposes to them to pedagogically document their teaching practice. This is precisely the reason why we selected this group as the protagonists of the study through theoretical sampling: the uniqueness of the experience in the context of university practical training in Málaga and Andalusia.

Access to this sample was a straightforward task since, having shared the ethical principles (Hancock and Algozzine 2006) that would guide the research, they showed openness and willingness to participate. Furthermore, by approaching the research as a case study, we do not intend this experience to be representative of how training modules of this nature are implemented in Spain. Instead, we seek to understand the complexity of what is at stake in this particular case.

Within the training module investigated, three on-campus seminars were held in order to support students in the process of using pedagogical documentation during their placement.

In the first meeting, the tutor presented the pedagogical documentation with a narrative that contained a theoretical explanation and examples. A debate was opened on the ability to communicate through the resources that preschool teachers have, as well as the research and evaluation potential of the strategy. In addition, the task to be developed was presented.

The second meeting included the start of an ‘external“ contrast” phase,’ in which the evidence gathered by students was shared and discussed in terms of its pedagogical potential.

In the final meeting, special emphasis was placed on thinking about which type of documented scenes could reflect crucial discoveries students made while on placement. Furthermore, each member of the group prepared a portfolio on an online platform. This portfolio consisted of a reflective learning diary with feedback from the teacher, a final written reflection, and a poster with a documented history, the complexity of which the students had to write ‘in dialogue’ with the discourse of authors from the field of preschool pedagogy (with an openness to other fields of knowledge). Apart from this individual portfolio, the tutor also used the platform where students shared their

documented records so the rest of the group could discuss the messages they wanted to represent.

The case study was developed 'a posteriori' (one year later), as this would enable members of the group to reflect at a distance while having recourse to all the material they had built up, therefore allowing them to analyse the relevance of their learning. Although this methodological decision has the potentiality mentioned above, it could entail the risk that students' contributions were influenced by pedagogical experiences subsequent to the one in our study. This is the reason why we have triangulated information collected with this time difference and a multitude of sources gathered during the implementation of the training module, as illustrated below.

Documentary analysis (Atkinson 1992) of all the written and visual productions generated by the group (diaries, online discussions, final reflections and pedagogical documentation posters) was carried out. This information was used to develop individual semi-structured interviews (Kvale 2011, 34) with a total duration of more than six hours, involving 'a unique method of sensitivity and power to capture experiences and lived meanings of the everyday world' of the five students and their academic tutor. A questioning route to be explored with all participant students was developed after drafting the theoretical framework of the study and the documentary analysis of the materials described above. In this regard, we also used remnants of their own productions, making it easier to connect semantic (i.e. related to specific situations, anecdotes and circumstances) and episodic knowledge (i.e. related to the assumptions and connections that are abstracted from lived experiences) (Flick 2018; Rubin and Rubin 2005). In addition to the common scheme of themes, an annex of themes could be designed for each of the participants, taking into account the particular situations experienced by each student throughout the training module. 'Documentation sheets' (Flick 1996) were prepared with the information obtained from each of the interviews. These served as an analysis guide to delve into the written material reviewed in the documentary analysis. This 'double cycle analysis' allowed us to gain a deeper insight into emerging nuances, as can be seen in the discussion of results.

The variety of strategies used and sources retrieved for the study also ensured the triangulation (Denzin and Lincoln 2012, 53) of the information and instruments, thus facilitating 'an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question'. While we collected the data, we were also carrying out category analysis (Gibbs 2007), which, although based on some categories established in previous theoretical research, was

reformulated in the light of the qualitative position that opens up to the ‘emergence’ of the case (Charmaz 2006).

Discussion of results: from depersonalised observation to research as vibrant practice

Interest in this pedagogical experience was born, as explained by the academic tutor, from a need to give meaning and depth to the formative process experienced by the students; *‘they kept diaries in their portfolios [...] and sometimes they would tell you about a reality that they didn’t even look at [...]. They were showing a kind of situation that they interpreted from a very simple point of view’* (Interview | Tutor | 03:20–04:12). This need was in tune with Riera’s (2015) analysis of watching as a core pedagogical aspect, with the tutor encouraging observation per se as a formative experience.

Initial ‘tensions’ in the process of ‘getting to’ document pedagogically

Although ‘starting to watch’ would seem to be a simple movement, it was one which some students nevertheless find uncomfortable:

The difficulty of watching: The group of students agreed that watching ‘was something else’: an action that required a more complex disposition. Francisco, for example, explained the following: *‘I believe you learn to watch with each group of children [...]. Because you have to learn to watch them from individualities, to know each one of them’* (Interview | Francisco | 11:42–12:15).

Watching versus entering in a relationship: Three students did not feel comfortable and saw watching and being as two different situations in relation to children, *‘I would not be able to do this if I were alone in the classroom, because you cannot attend to all the children’* (Reflection | Nora | p.) 2). This shows that pedagogical documentation can reinforce the asymmetric position that places teachers as omniscient spectators (Sparrman and Lindgren 2010) who look on instead of entering into relationships. Part of the group therefore begins to live the documentary role as ‘tourism’ in their class-rooms, after placing the focus of importance on collecting learning stories: *“I think it is important not to go crazy because there are times when you think: ‘you have to document everything; every moment is important’”* (Interview | Laura | 48:38–49:38). Conceived in this way, the process of documenting within a ‘tourist’ position is perceived by students as being an obstacle to the ‘humanisation’ of their educational practice (as some students refer to the emotional disposition): *‘For me, there will always be something else before documenting, no matter how much I like documenting. Because being is what makes education human’* (Interview | Francisco |

58:51–59:01). We believe that this binary opposition between the two ways of acting in the classroom may come about due to the fact that pedagogical action did not yet form part of teachers' repertoire of practical knowledge. In fact, as authors such as Schroeder-Yu (2008) explain, direct instruction is the teaching role that is found mostly in preschool classrooms. For this reason, a transition process is necessary: from considering documenting and being in a relationship with children as opposite actions, to considering both actions as part of the same role.

Documentation as an academic task: One of the students highlighted a feeling of being overwhelmed when it came to documenting, as '[. . .] it was something you had to do without fail, and for which there was never enough time [. . .]. In a way we were [. . .] demanding that something happen' (Interview | Laura | 50:09–51:40). We could think that pedagogical documentation takes shape as this 'pre-eminence of seeing' (Grosso 2017) of western research culture. However, if we continue to work with their contributions, this discomfort revolves around the fact that the task had to be completed (as explained above) in just one month.

Transitioning from 'rigidity' to a physical disposition

While these discomforts appeared in the first encounters with pedagogical documentation, the group gradually left them behind as the pedagogical experience advanced. This point marked the start of a preschool education research experience that transgressed this image of initial education as 'purely conceptual', as seen at the start of the text, to become a bodily experience lived with the five senses. This connects us directly with the subjective dispositions of practical knowledge:

In other words, apart from listening, looking and so on, in the end it is also a corporal state, because, as the children's stories evolve, move and become dynamic, your body has to be there to follow those stories (Interview | Maria | 12:26-13:07).

Experiencing another way of thinking with the body (an 'awareness') became an opportunity to 'live' another pedagogical culture both internally and externally (Pozo 2014). Coming down (physically) to children's height therefore supposed a radical transformation for the whole group. This took on a leading role in our research as, beyond a simple bodily gesture, it implied a political transformation.

Placing myself at their level whenever possible . . . I've changed [. . .] maybe even my personality. [. . .] To be at their level and do the things they do . . . I mean, they are not going to talk to you with their arms folded, so why would you? (Interview | Teresa | 27:54-29:01).

This bodily experience, which is also related to the values that constitute our practical knowledge, was reflected in the bewilderment and astonishment felt by the group of students when they stated that *'it's another way of seeing teaching, of putting yourself on the other side, isn't it? To be more at the children's level, to see things from another perspective'* (Interview | Nora | 01:46–02:13). Describing coming down to children's height as 'placing oneself on the other side' also shows us an uncertain place, one which is in dialogue with complexity (the aesthetics of practice discussed at the beginning). We believe it is important to point this out for two reasons: firstly because 'vision' is transferred as a 'sensory capacity of the body' (Rotas 2019), and secondly because, according to Schön (1998), places that lack a logical explanation become the ideal scenario for rethinking the relationship between research and everyday practice.

Therefore, going a little further, the whole group understood and manifested the need and desire to turn research into a democratic and aesthetic debate, where we have to refine our language (photographic, in this case) and assume inquiry almost as an artistic process (Giudici, Krechevsky, and Rinaldi 2016). For one of the students, *'Initially found it difficult for the photo to transmit what I was observing. [...] It's as if the camera didn't capture what my eyes saw'* (Interview | Teresa | 09:19–09:50). This excerpt leads us to think that photography as a research tool becomes a new professional competence (Hoyuelos 2013) to be acquired by the students during the training module.

Rediscovering childhood to rediscover oneself

Hence, although we have seen the initial discomforts of this 'risk' caused by the academic tutor's provocation, the use of pedagogical documentation as proposed within the training module analysed here was also an invitation to, symbiotically, live a research experience different from the one students were used to. An experience where a researcher who 'does not look at things, but rather at each other . . . never touches things, but rather caresses them . . . does not discover, instead discovering one other' (Vilanova Buendía 2015, 5). This new condition also opened the door to a relationship experience with children that left its mark on the emotional dimension: *'Every time I discover things with the children, or that make me think of something . . . I feel . . . euphoric! Yes, euphoric!'* (Interview | Laura | 1:26:59–1:27:09).

This sense of wonder at a new discovery of childhood, and what it is capable of generating, was a state shared by the whole group. What if it were wonderment that evinces what emotionally impacts our beliefs, therefore triggering the development of practical thinking? As the results seem to indicate, this emotional connection helps the

group to stop talking *about* childhood stories and start living *with* them: ‘*It is true that you get a bit impregnated with all the stories that happen and relate it to your experiences*’ (Interview | Francisco | 31:27–32:03). This idea also connects with two theoretical debates that have appeared previously in this article. On the one hand, this transition to horizontal positioning with childhood stories could drive the ‘shared decision-making’ that Biffi and Montà (2020) spoke about. Furthermore, there is a risk that ‘epistemological violence’, as mentioned by Olsson, Dahlberg, and Theorell (2016), dissipates when conceiving narrative as an experience that ‘permeates you’ and therefore assumes its own subjectivity.

‘It seems decisive to stress that the construction of critical, conscious knowledge requires a long, slow evolutionary path of learning and unlearning’ (Pérez Gómez 2017, 58). Placing ourselves reflectively in the ‘construction of practical knowledge’ offers us an opportunity to understand pedagogical documentation as a formative opportunity, a process, a slow and unhurried narrative that awakens the different dimensions that constitute the nature of practical knowledge in a complex way (values, attitudes, emotions, skills and knowledge).

This rhythm was common in most of the group when they looked back to narrate their experiences: ‘*For instance I started documenting ... the most typical things: children who play at building, children who relate by playing ... and little by little [. . .] I have moved into the sensory dimension of what is happening there*’ (Interview | Maria | 05:00–05:42). Focusing the way we watch also responds to Cabanellas’ (2005) concept of research that distances itself from the ‘euphoria’ of what happens, in order to try and understand the singularity that characterises each of the stories. This ‘refinement’ of research allows knowledge to emerge directly from the deepening understanding of the histories of childhood among the teachers involved.

Most of the group placed special emphasis on the transformation of their teaching action (skills and attitudes) through pedagogical documentation. This metamorphosis (Pérez Gómez 2012) therefore became so tangible that it even led students to review their repertoire of unconscious actions, assuming them as obstacles for the development of learning processes in children:

It was a totally radical change. I mean, I started working on being so interventionist without even realising ... I left them a lot of space. [...] I have learned to accompany them a little more, and that accompanying them is very difficult (Interview | Francisco | 32:27–32:53).

Here we can speak of research as an accompaniment, as a pedagogical disposition capable of perceiving the aesthetic echo (Tomkins 1999) of children's actions. Indeed, accompanying implies observation that occupies a different place of analysis to the one we are accustomed to, something that the group evinced with force: '*I can say that my way of observing children's play is no longer the same. It is necessary to educate the way we look, to train it, in order [...] not to miss any details, because they are unique, ephemeral moments*' (Poster | Nora). Saying that 'it is no longer the same' showed an analysis of what used to be an intuitive method (Pérez Gómez 2017) that was at that moment reconstructed through practice, the fruit of a pedagogical documentation experience. This was the final sensation produced by a proposal that initially caused some discomfort by conceiving early learning as an exotic event (Sparrman and Lindgren 2010). As we have seen, the group progressively distanced themselves from this initial disposition, to adopt a formative image that invited them to listen to themselves and examine their own professional development (Giudici, Krechevsky, and Rinaldi 2016).

Some final conclusions (but without bringing the topic to an end)

In summary, the narration of experiences shows how, when faced with this 'new' research function, part of the group of students experienced an initial phase of being distant observers of whatever is happening, preventing them from becoming emotionally attached to it (Vilanova Buendía 2015). This initial discomfort (despite the short duration of the practical training) was gradually transformed into an attitude of respect and astonishment for what children do.

Throughout the analysis of students' narratives, we have come across moments in which we could detect the impact that the training module had on each of the five constituent dimensions of practical teaching knowledge (Pérez Gómez 2012, 2017): attitudes, values, emotions, skills and knowledge. As we stated at the beginning, we have to put all these dimensions into action if we want to provoke the development of practical thinking. Thus, from the analysis of the results, the following has emerged:

An *attitude* of respect that ended up becoming the 'research attitude' (Giudici, Krechevsky, and Rinaldi 2016) we explained at the beginning of this article, and which resonates with the 'epistemic relationship' (Pozo 2014) maintained with the professional task. This attitude was incorporated in a descending movement in order to live the educational reality (or at least make an attempt to) from the place of childhood.

'Coming down to their level' is an incarnate *value* that conceives that 'the

coming together of children and adults [. . .] offers many possibilities – cultural and social, but also economic, political, ethical, aesthetic, physical’ (Dahlberg and Moss 2010, 28).

For this reason, living practice from this ethical base led them to become *emotionally* involved in the educational processes, causing surprise whenever something that disconcerted them occurred. As Rinaldi (2006, 65) explains, ‘listening is emotion; it is generated by emotions and stimulates emotions’.

This initial surprise led some members of the group to move from this place of astonishment as the ‘initial sign of creation’ (Droit 2018, 135) to a deepening of the *knowledge* that emerged from children’s actions. This transit brings us back precisely to the image of knowledge as a ‘rhizome’ (Moss 2006) that is partial and provisional and that, at the same time, requires interdisciplinary work.

This deepening made pedagogical documentation a combined action, a return journey from conceptual tools to practice (Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence 2002). A transit which, as we have seen, also required the development of *skills* which, in addition to listening, in this case involved finding in photography the ‘technical strategy’ (Krechevsky et al. 2013) necessary to experience research as a ‘social opportunity’ to rediscover everyday school life (Turner and Gray Wilson 2009).

With regard to the process of reconstructing practical knowledge through the desired transit through practical thinking, we have found evidence of how most members of the group looked back (Pérez Gómez 2017) to themselves to analyse how their way of watching evolves. For one of the students, pedagogical documentation even became the opportunity to deconstruct the ‘automatic pilot’ (Pérez Gómez 2017) that governed his practice.

Is pedagogical documentation a way to build preschool pre-service teachers’ dispositions toward research? As a case study, we could say that the methodological tools used in the training module explored here have generated a scenario of provocation, action

and reflection. In this way, initial teacher education becomes a ‘third space’ where university and preschool meet through pedagogical documentation to promote students’ professional development (Damjanovic et al. 2017).

This is why, finally, we reconnect with Rinaldi (2006) in our wish for a teacher education culture where the preschool is this ‘other side’ referred to by one of the

participating students, not only spatially but also metaphorically:

I think the only way of developing a new behaviour can be with documentation. I would like to see the university students spending much more time studying and reflecting in the schools with the children [. . .]. So, I see more and more the school really as a forum, a place of encounter and dialogue where the culture is challenged (Rinaldi 2006, 194).

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