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The “Researched” Child from the 1900s to the 1960s

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Alice Meirelles Reis: Discourses of Practice and Ways of Seeing

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Figure 1. Children playing with building blocks, 1929. Source: Museu da Educação e do Brinquedo (MEB), University of São Paulo.

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Introduction: Brief biography of Alice Meirelles Reis



Figure 2. Alice Meirelles Reis. Source: MEB.

In this text we present some reflections based on research with part of the archival material from teacher Alice Meirelles Reis regarding her work and ideas focused on the education of children under six years of age. Our aim is to understand how Froebelian pedagogy was present in Reis's work as she entangled it with New School movement ideas.

Alice Meirelles Reis was born in São Paulo in 1900, the daughter of Augusto Meirelles Reis, who was a minister of the São Paulo State Court of Justice and a member of the Republican Party. Her mother's name was Annalia Lara Reis.¹ We didn't find much information about her Alice Reis's life, but we know that she studied at the Caetano de Campos school from kindergarten until she graduated as a teacher from the normal

¹Ariadne Lopes Ecar and Rafaela Rabelo, "Alice Meirelles e o jardim de infância: Cenário de inovação," in *Mulheres inovadoras no ensino: São Paulo nos séculos XIX e XX*, ed. D. G. Vidal and P. P. Vicentini (Belo Horizonte: Fino Traço, 2019), 27-42; Ariadne Lopes Ecar, Fernanda Francini, and Rafaela Rabelo, Alice Meirelles Reis: 1900-1993, <https://sites.usp.br/niephe/mulher-inovadoras/alice-meirelles-reis/>.

school. She became a teacher at the same school's kindergarten and normal school.² As a teacher at Escola Normal Caetano de Campos, Reis worked with the methodology and practice of pre-primary education from 1939 to 1945.³

Reis began working at the Caetano de Campos Kindergarten in 1923, became a teacher at the height of the promotion of New School ideas in Brazil, and was supported in carrying out her work by exponents of this movement in Brazil, such as Lourenço Filho and Fernando de Azevedo.

Alice Reis was a member of the *Liga das Senhoras Católicas* (Catholic Women's League) of São Paulo, working intensely with it, but she also acted politically with the state government, providing assistance to innovative pedagogical projects. She sought not only to publicize the importance of working with children in kindergartens but also to disseminate the ideas and ideals of the New School movement.⁴ Furthermore, as pointed out by Barbosa,⁵ Reis gave several courses and lectures in the city of São Paulo. During those events she used photographic materials and records from her practice. Therefore, Alice Reis worked on several fronts as an intellectual and teacher to disseminate her ideals and pedagogical practices.

In addition to her studies, classes, lectures, and political and assistance activities, Reis also went on educational trips. According to Ecar and Rabelo,⁶ she travelled to the USA and Europe. Arriving in New York in 1933, she visited the Chicago International Exhibition and, according to Kishimoto,⁷ the Chicago Kindergarten at Columbia University. Ecar and Rabelo report that in 1937, Reis was in Europe where she visited Germany, France, and other countries.⁸ Traces of what she may have done during her travels can be found in Volume 1 of her typed books where she includes three photos of children working at the Pestalozzi-Froebelhaus in Berlin and one photo of students

² Tuziko Morchida Kishimoto and Maria dos Santos Walburga, "Alice Meirelles Reis: A Professora que mudou o Jardim de Infância," in *Caetano de Campos: Escola que mudou o Brasil*, ed. P. Golombek (EDUSP, 2016), 449-53.

³ Margarida de Sousa Barbosa, "As crianças do Jardim de Infância através do olhar e fotografias da professora Alice Meirelles Reis (1923-1935)" (master's thesis, Faculdade de Educação, Universidade de São Paulo, 2021).

⁴ Tuziko Morchida Kishimoto, "A pré-escola em São Paulo (das origens a 1940)" (Doctoral thesis, Universidade de São Paulo, 1986).

⁵ Barbosa, "As crianças do Jardim de Infância," 80-83.

⁶ Ecar and Rabelo, "Alice Meirelles e o jardim de infância," 31-2.

⁷ Tuziko Morchida Kishimoto, *Práticas Pedagógicas de Alice Meirelles Reis (1923-1935)* (São Paulo: Polo Books, 2014), 27.

⁸ Ecar and Rabelo, "Alice Meirelles e o jardim de infância," 31-2.

teachers in a childcare class.⁹ She also includes in the same book, when talking about Decroly's work,¹⁰ five photos of children in activities at the nursery school and the normal school in Brussels, which suggests to us that on her trip to Europe she also visited Belgium.

Working as a teacher at both normal school and kindergarten, Reis recorded part of her work through photographs and wrote two unpublished and undated books, which remain in their typed originals as drafts. This material was given one year after her death to researcher and professor Dr. Tizuko M. Kishimoto at the University of São Paulo (USP) with the promise that a museum would be formed to store it. The promise was fulfilled in 1999 with the creation of the Education and Toy Museum (MEB; <http://meb.fe.usp.br/>) at the University. The photos given to Professor Kishimoto were taken between 1923 and 1935 and collected in albums. This material is archived at this museum as the Alice Meirelles Reis Collection.

In this work we focus on Reis's two typed books where she wrote her ideas and reflections and tried to build a way to work and organize educational institutions for children under six year old. When we looked at all this material, we were looking for how Reis saw children and at the same time produced practical discourses, in particular how Froebelian pedagogy was present in her work. However, before delving into Reis's universe, we need to understand briefly what the kindergarten at the Caetano de Campos School and its normal school were like. These two school spaces constitute the locus of Reis's education and professional activities.

Imagining Alice Reis's education

The kindergarten where Alice Reis studied was founded in 1896 and was attached to the Escola Normal Caetano de Campos in the city of São Paulo. The kindergarten was structured based on the ideas of Friedrich Froebel, with teaching materials produced mainly in the United States. Gabriel Prestes, mentor and the main person responsible for creating the kindergarten, together with the first teachers hired, translated and adapted manuals produced in different countries centred on Froebelian pedagogy.

⁹ Alice Meirelles Reis, *Livro I* (Museu da Educação e do Brinquedo, Faculdade de Educação, Universidade de São Paulo, n.d.), 21-2.

¹⁰ Reis, *Livro I*, 46-7.

A peculiarity of this kindergarten was the production between 1896 and 1897 of two volumes of the magazine *Revista do Jardim de Infância*. These two issues of the magazine illustrate how Froebelian pedagogy was learned, adapted, and transformed to Brazil's reality at the end of the 19th century. In the first volume of the magazine, Gabriel Prestes opened the publication by announcing this adaptation of pedagogical ideas to the social and cultural environment of Brazil:

Our aim is, therefore, exclusively practical. We have purposely removed from the pages of this journal the discussion of pedagogical advantages or disadvantages of the processes we present; we do not wish to take up space with merely theoretical assessments. We will therefore only publish indications that can guide practice.

It is clear, and needless to say, that we do not want the instructions we publish to be followed to the letter; on the contrary, we want them to improve and transform, enlivened by the stamp of individuality that, hopefully, our teachers can imprint on them.

Only in this way will kindergartens be able to adapt to our environment. It is necessary to carry out not just a transplant but a true acclimatization, so that the system adapts to our customs, our nature, and temperament.

This adaptation work must necessarily be time consuming because it can only be based on experience. On the other hand, it is necessary that our teachers come to know in a clear and precise way how kindergartens operate in other countries so as not to deviate from the general system, and on the other hand, it is necessary that, knowing the general processes, they can select what is applicable to us and create the artistic elements that we need.”¹¹

The magazine, through the intense movement described above of appropriation and transmutation, brought Froebelian pedagogy to Brazil, transforming it into an indigenous foreigner in Brazilian kindergarten classrooms. As already analyzed in previous work,¹² American inspiration marked the process of translating excerpts of other texts (books, manuals, etc.) for the magazine, and the American model, according to Maitê Aird,¹³ also influenced the purchase of materials for the Caetano de Campos kindergarten. These

¹¹ *Revista do Jardim de Infância*, 1 (São Paulo, Typographia a Vapor Espindola, Siqueira and Co., 1896), 5-6. All of the English translations of Portuguese texts in this paper are provided by the author.

¹² Alessandra Arce Hai and Larry Prochner, “Aproximando-se da ‘caixa preta da escolarização’: Uma análise da Revista do Jardim de Infância (1896-1897),” in *Imprensa pedagógica Ibero-América: Local, nacional e transnacional*, ed. J. Gondra and A. C. B. Neri (São Paulo: Alameda, 2018).

¹³ Maitê Aird, “O jardim de infância público anexo à Escola Normal da Praça: Um estudo sobre gênero,” (master’s thesis, Faculdade de Educação, PUC, São Paulo, 2015).

materials were acquired from the Milton Bradley Company, which, according to Beatty,¹⁴ began publishing and producing Froebelian material inspired by contact with Elizabeth Peabody. One of the books the company produced was translated for use by Brazilian kindergarteners by Gabriel Prestes: Wiebe's 1869 *The Paradise of Childhood: A Guide to Kindergarteners*.

When carrying out the work of reading and analyzing the translations present in *Revista do Jardim de Infância*,¹⁵ we realized that the tone set at the opening of the first volume became real in its pages. The magazine presented practical content. It was the kindergarten teachers themselves who wrote and translated works.

These teachers who were protagonists in writing articles, texts, and translations, through their detailed descriptions of what to do in the classroom reveal for readers the construction of practical discourses. The practical discourses, according to Depaepe and colleagues, not only adapted theories and methodologies with the aim of directly influencing pedagogical practice: "There was a struggle to get hold of ideal techniques, so that they could be fitted into the classroom, with its structural determinants."¹⁶

Thus, the magazine presented action parameters to the public outside the kindergarten and future teachers in training at the normal school through a practical discourse. This discourse aligned not only the translations and adaptations of foreign texts but also brought reports of the day-to-day life of the kindergarten teachers, that is, authorial texts with reports of practices considered successful, already tried. At the same time, these practical discourses demonstrated and helped to build a pedagogical practice for kindergarten. Those discourses appropriated Froebel's theory from its songs, gifts, and occupations, disconnecting them from theorization about Froebel's pedagogical principles.

To understand why the magazine featured this practice-centred design and the process of free and adaptive appropriation of methodologies, we need to understand, albeit briefly, how the São Paulo Escola Normal at Caetano de Campos was training future teachers.

¹⁴ Barbara Beatty, *Preschool Education in America: The Culture of Young Children from the Colonial Era to the Present* (New York: Yale University Press, 1995).

¹⁵ Hai and Prochner, "Aproximando-se da 'caixa preta da escolarização'."

¹⁶ Marc Depaepe et al., *Order in Progress: Everyday Education Practice in Primary Schools, Belgium, 1880-1970* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000), 43.

São Paulo Normal School was founded in 1846. It operated in the same building until 1978 with the exception of two closures between 1867 and 1875 and 1878–1880. Throughout this trajectory the normal school was always seen and thought of as a place for the production of pedagogical knowledge at different levels. The school was the stage for innovative speeches and trained intellectuals who worked directly in Brazilian pedagogical practice.

In 1894 a monumental building was constructed to house São Paulo Normal School and its model school. As we have written elsewhere, “according to Monarcha, with this monumental building, republicans erected an image of the ideas they were disseminating for education. The São Paulo Normal School was at the epicenter of republican debates in São Paulo state and broadened liberal ideals in its teacher education course.”¹⁷

Innovation was always part of the educational propositions of the normal school. Thus, the intuitive method and object lessons were some of the new features introduced by the school in the training of future teachers of the day.

The entire physical structure of the normal school was designed to house the most modern resources available for teacher training. For example, its library held a set of imported works belonging to the most current educational debates in Europe and the United States. In 1911, an important manual began to shape the way teachers were trained: Emerson White’s *The Art of Teaching*. This manual consolidated the idea that teacher training should focus on the practice of observing best pedagogical practices in action and using them as models for work. As Marta Carvalho highlights, the art of teaching was conceived not only with the use of good materials, but also the ability to reproduce models of pedagogical practices considered to be excellent.¹⁸

The normal school thus constructed a practical discourse centred on the search for models of practices considered worthy of being reproduced and imitated. That’s why when we read the various articles in the *Revista do Jardim de Infância* we find lesson models or scripts to teach, which make any more in-depth philosophical or methodological discussion unnecessary. And this publication structure was not just a privilege of the Jardim magazine, but was present in other publications. This reinforced

¹⁷ Alessandra Arce Hai, Helen May, Kristen Nawrotzki, Larry Prochner, and Yordanka Valkonova, *Reimagining Teaching in Early 20th Century Experimental Schools* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 86.

¹⁸ Marta Maria Chagas de Carvalho, “School and Modernity Representations as Pedagogical Models: A Study of Their Circulation and Usages in Brazil,” *Paedagogica Historica* 41, no. 1-2 (2005): 264.

the logic already indicated by Carvalho that this published material would constitute a type of toolbox ready for the teacher to use, with a guarantee it would work, as it had been tried in excellent schools by excellent professionals.¹⁹

Alice Reis, who worked at Caetano de Campos both in the kindergarten and the normal school, came into contact with these practices as a student and afterwards as a teacher. How she incorporated them we cannot precisely measure, but we can visualize her formative path. At the same time she was educated in these practices, she also experienced the entry of New School ideas during her normal school education and was able to live directly with its main exponents in the state of São Paulo: Lourenço Filho and Fernando de Azevedo. And, in her own way, she appropriated the new and the old, transmuting them from her perspective and her pedagogical practice. Traces of this pedagogical practice are what we will present below.

Alice Reis's ways of seeing and practical discourses

Before diving into Alice Reis's work as she recorded it through her books and photographs in them, we need to understand a little how her way of seeing is conceived in this paper.

We consider Alice Reis's photographic work present in her books as subversive. According to Barthes, "Ultimately, photography is subversive not when it frightens, repels, or even stigmatizes, but when it is pensive, when it thinks."²⁰ Reis's photography, when it captured everyday scenes, reflects her thoughts about pedagogical practice in kindergarten, subverting and at the same time consolidating practical discourses. Because the validity of kindergartens was debated in Brazil during her time as an educator, her photographs are subversive because they let the observer think and see how fruitful this work was for children.

On the other hand, her photographs built generalizations for educational practice through their records. There were no conflicts; it is as if she wanted to illustrate her words by demonstrating their feasibility. And when photography gains this character of

¹⁹ Marta Maria Chagas de Carvalho, "A Caixa de Utensílios e a Biblioteca: Pedagogia e Práticas de Leitura," in *Tópicos em História da Educação*, ed. D. Vidal and M. L. Hilsdorf (São Paulo: Ed. Da USP, 2001).

²⁰ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 38.

generalization, of illustration, Barthes argues, “it completely de-realizes the human world of conflicts and desires, under the cover of illustrating it.”²¹

All the photographs and written material in Reis’s books build a way of seeing children and the work in kindergartens. Her way of seeing, as Berger noted, was affected by the knowledge she possessed and what she thought, revealing in which direction she looked.²² And given that looking is an act of choice, her way of seeing children and practices shows us her pedagogical choices.

Holding these concepts in mind, let’s start by bringing how, in her two typed books, Alice Reis presented us with kindergarten and the need of education for children younger than 6 years of age. The two books do not have a specific publication date, but we agree with Ecar and Rabelo when they state that they must have been written at the beginning of the 1940s.²³ Two pieces of evidence suggest this date: the fact that Reis mentions in the first book the demolition of the kindergarten building, which occurred in 1939, in addition to highlighting the operation of the garden in temporary rooms 46 years after its foundation. This 46th anniversary celebration took place in 1942.

To capture the structure of Alice Reis’s books, we list their contents below. Because the books were typed drafts and were not edited, we have chosen to reproduce the various titles contained in the books. The first book was subdivided as follows:

- Teaching methodology for pre-primary education
- Preschool organizations, denominations – reasons that determine the need for these organizations
- Purpose and value of pre-primary organizations
- Origin of the French Maternal School: Friedrich Oberlin and the asylum rooms
- Training of teachers for asylum rooms
- The influence of the Froebelian method in asylum rooms, through Mme. Pape Carpantier’s school
- The transformation of asylum rooms into nursery schools
- Pauline Kergomard
- Principles of Mme. Kergomard’s educational system

²¹ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 118.

²² John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (Penguin Books, 1972), 8.

²³ Ecar and Rabelo, “Alice Meirelles e o jardim de infância,” 34.

- How Mme. Kergomard took advantage of the influence of the Froebelian method in nursery schools
- Kindergartens
- The influence of the Montessori method on French nursery schools
- Aspect of French nursery schools in 1939
- Kindergartens in France
- French nursery school method and program
- Froebel
- Origin of kindergarten
- Fundamental principles of the Froebel system
- The gifts
- The occupations
- Appreciation of Froebel's work
- The Agazzi method
- Maria Montessori:
- Material for visual sense education
- Montessori material
- Material for preparation exercises for practical life
- Appreciation
- Froebel and Montessori
- "La Maison des Petits"
- "Écoles gardiennes" and kindergartens in Belgium
- The Decroly method
- Decroly school program
- Centres of interest
- Application of centres of interest in different degrees
- Kindergarten in the United States
- New York official kindergarten program
- The kindergarten in São Paulo
- Official program for São Paulo kindergartens.

There is no formal index in the book and it begins with the title “Methodology of Pre-Primary Education.” Reis begins by talking about the uniqueness of the Escola Normal de São Paulo (which, at the time she wrote, was called Escola Caetano de Campos) in proposing to train teachers specialized in pre-primary education. This fact occurred with the creation of the chair of methodology and practice of pre-primary education occupied by her, as previously mentioned. And then she introduces us to how she thinks about teacher training for pre-primary education:

The ideal for training teachers for preschool organizations would be a school where all course subjects were related to the child’s life in the preschool period.

The “kindergarten teachers,” or teachers from preschool organizations, are the guides of early childhood education. To carry out such work, love, dedication, and even sacrifice are necessary. We can say that those who work with idealism in children’s education have a true vocation. The kindergartener needs to have qualities that make her capable of loving childhood, and a set of skills and knowledge that her own mother does not always have. The individual is entrusted to her in the first years of his life. The influence of this time will result in formation of the child’s character, morals, and intelligence.²⁴

In this excerpt from Reis’s text we would like to highlight two important points. The first refers to the need for the teacher to have personal qualities and professional training to carry out her work in the kindergarten; the second point is that this training needs to be intrinsically related to the child’s life. This defence is made by Reis because love is necessary for the work to be done with competence and dedication; on the other hand, it is not possible to know the child without studying. But knowing the child from a theoretical point of view is not enough, the teacher must live with the child. So Reis consolidates her idea that the training of a kindergartener is complex:

The conscientious training of kindergartners is a complex problem. In addition to the personal training and qualities necessary for such work, their general culture must be solid, covering the following specialized knowledge:

1. Knowledge of the nature and psychology of the child. Observation of the practice.
2. Knowledge of teaching methods applied, to date, in kindergartens.
3. Knowledge of the problems of organization and administration of kindergartens and other preschool institutions.

²⁴ Reis, *Livro I*, ii.

4. Knowledge of the equipment necessary for these organizations.
5. Knowledge of how to discern, according to the environment, the type of organization that should be preferred.
6. Knowledge of subjects, such as social life, nature, gardening.
7. Knowledge of children's literature.
8. Knowledge of music and the ability to play an instrument (preferably piano).
9. Knowledge and practice of manual work and toy manufacturing.
10. Knowledge and practice of organized games for different ages.
11. Knowledge and practice of drawing.
12. Knowledge of children's hygiene.²⁵

Not by chance, after describing this professional and arguing for the need for her training, Reis then, under the title “preschool organizations, denominations – reasons that determine the need for these organizations”, discusses the two main denominations for this institution in the state of São Paulo, daycare centres and preschools, and defends the need for their existence. To do this, she draws attention to how determining the first five years of a child's life involves the biological point of view and character formation. To reinforce her argument, she recognizes that the ideal would be for the family to consciously conduct this process; however, the scenario of society at the time did not allow this to happen fully.²⁶ Reis then states that school does not replace the family; rather, both have distinct and complementary functions in the education of the child: “The school or any other institution, however perfect it may be, will never provide the child with the care provided by the mother who understands her duty. The home must provide the basis for the formation of the individual; the school alone will not educate.”²⁷ It is interesting to highlight here that Reis wrote in pencil at the end of this sentence the word *completely*.

We see here at the beginning of her book Reis defending the importance of preschool education and, at the same time, responding to the uproar present in Brazilian society against this institution that was widely thought would end up deconstructing the role of the family.

²⁵ Reis, *Livro I*, iii-iv.

²⁶ Reis, *Livro I*, v.

²⁷ Reis, *Livro I*, vi.

The process of establishing the presence and importance of kindergartens in Brazil was long and tortuous, with few intellectuals to do it (e.g., Menezes Vieira, Maria Guilhermina) at the end of 19th and beginning of the 20th century. The conservatism of Brazilian society did not allow room for the modernization that this child care brought. It was necessary not only to differentiate the work in these institutions from the role of families in education, but also to differentiate the pedagogical work in kindergartens from the work carried out in primary schools. The creation of the Caetano de Campos school's own kindergarten generated controversies that were publicly debated in newspapers in the city of São Paulo. The validity of this type of care was questioned, leading to kindergarten being seen as a potential destroyer of homes and families. In this context, the North American model of Froebelian kindergartens was deconstructed and reconstructed based on a practical discourse that brought together pedagogical practices already existing in classrooms, at the same time moving them away from rigidity and praising practical results to fit the Brazilian reality. That's why Reis began her work looking to define terms, concepts, spaces, and functions.

In addition to these controversies with the family, Reis still worked in the first pages of her book on another important debate regarding the purpose and value of pre-primary organizations. Reis pointed out that those institutions were neither a luxury nor a service to free workers to work in factories. Reis highlighted that society had changed, and families had also changed, which had changed the dynamics of relationships, so pre-primary institutions were necessary both for the socialization of children and to meet possible needs and allow safe guidance for child development. Reis wrote:

Pre-primary organizations have a dual social purpose: educational and family assistance. In the first case: it educates the child and at the same time the family, guiding them in this problem. In the second case, it helps the family by taking care of the children while parents work outside the home.²⁸

It is important to highlight that when she wrote "guiding them in this problem," Reis placed a note above this sentence making it clearer: "in solving this." At this point, Reis, in seeking to define the purpose of pre-primary organizations, was also highlighting that preschool was not preparation for primary school but rather a place to begin social life and acquire good habits. Finally, looking for an objective in itself for the kindergarten,

²⁸ Reis, *Livro I*, viii.

Reis quoted Dewey (without citing references) as stating that preschool is the starting point of educational work and a fundamental part of children's education process.

Reis then concluded her argument by stating that children who attend a kindergarten have advantages over those who do not:

The former acquire in the kindergarten habits of life in society, habits of order, observation, attention, reasoning, cooperation, responsibility, discipline, and initiative, while the latter will begin to acquire these habits in primary school, often with difficulty, because by then they will have acquired other habits that are difficult to modify.²⁹

Reis emphasised that these habits do not have a preparatory purpose for primary education but result from a well-structured environment with the presence of a well-trained professional.

After highlighting the importance and usefulness of preschool organizations, their objectives and basic characteristics and the knowledge that the professional must possess, Reis went on to describe, albeit briefly, the history of this type of institution. To achieve the objective of historicising care for children younger than six years of age, Reis chose to bring together its main theorists and their educational propositions, starting with Frederic Oberlin and Mme. Pape-Carpentier.

When bringing together the various theorists in the field of young children's education, Reis always presented a short biography of the author, highlighted the principles of the methodologies they created and their main practices, and described how kindergarten was organized in the author's country of origin. It is important to highlight that after succinctly describing the works of Mme. Pape-Carpentier and Mme. Pauline Kergomard, Reis included a paragraph highlighting the influence exerted by Froebelian methodology on the work of these authors. In this way, Reis highlighted the fact that both authors adapted Froebelian methodology, seeking what might be "good" in it and inserting the spirit of the French nursery school.³⁰ There are illustrations with photos of the educators apparently cut from books or periodicals, and that act of illustrating her words can be seen throughout both books.

When explaining French nursery schools more broadly, Reis also commented on the incursion of the Montessori methodology in France. Here again, the idea of taking what was considered good about the Montessori method for French schools is reinforced.

²⁹ Reis, *Livro I*, ix.

³⁰ Reis, *Livro I*, 5.

When discussing French nursery schools, Reis included data about these schools from 1939 without specifying where they were taken from³¹; once again we have a clue that the books were written in the early 1940s. This entire section is illustrated with photo cutouts of the “Citè Jardin, Suresnes\Paris.” She also pasted small printed captions next to the photos indicating the name of the photographer. One of these photographs is reproduced in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Photograph and printed description in Reis, *Livro I*, 7.

After this quick explanation about children’s schools in France, Reis³² wrote about Friedrich Froebel and his kindergarten methodology. A short biography of Froebel is presented along with a brief history of the emergence of kindergarten illustrated by engravings clearly taken from magazines or other books with photos of Froebel’s schools. When writing about Froebelian methodology, Reis presented a stance in which she incorporated the criticisms that were being made by the New School. However, she recognised that this methodology works and, at the same time, sought to rediscover it by entangling it with New School methodological didactic propositions.

Reis presented three principles of Froebelian methodology: (1) education must encourage the child’s free activity; (2) the game must be considered educational in nature; and (3) education must have a family character.³³ Without offering further explanations, she pointed out that these principles underlie what she called “the means used by Froebel for working in classrooms: (1) gymnastic games accompanied by songs; (2) lectures, poems, songs, and stories; (3) gardening; (4) ‘gifts’; (5) manual occupations.”³⁴ Reis

³¹ Reis, *Livro I*, 6.

³² Reis, *Livro I*, 8-22.

³³ Reis, *Livro I*, 9.

³⁴ Reis, *Livro I*, 9-10.

briefly explained each of these five means for working in the classroom and added the centre of interest in Froebelian methodology.

Centre of interest in the Froebelian school: A niece of Froebel, who was his assistant, was confused by the diversity of materials in the program. She then had the idea of grouping all the exercises she had to perform around a certain subject, and this Froebel called the centre of interest. This centre of interest lasted a month, more or less.³⁵

Reis did not provide references or further details to support this statement. We see here a process of appropriation and transmutation of Froebelian methodology wherein Reis united it with methodologies that were being widely used within the scope of the Brazilian New School movement.

When talking about Froebelian gifts, Reis made a small observation about his philosophical system, stating:

Froebel's method is based on a philosophical law. His exaggerated symbolism is incomprehensible, and for this reason he came to be called, by contemporaries, a "crazy old man." It is said to be his opinion that, by presenting a series of methodically graded games to the child, she would be initiated into the metaphysical laws that govern the universe.³⁶

Offered without further comment, this criticism appears loosely in the book, as afterwards Reis synthetically described the work with the first gift. To do that she replicates a lesson published by Maria E. Varella in *Revista do Jardim de Infância* in 1896 to illustrate the work with this gift³⁷ (this lesson can be found in the magazine on pages 259-84). When presenting the second and third gifts in a similarly synthetic way, Reis did not replicate more lessons from the magazine but indicated to the reader that lessons with these gifts could be found in it ("Lessons with these 'gifts' we find in the *Revista do Jardim da Infância* published in 1897").³⁸ She illustrated her brief presentation of the gifts and occupations with her own drawings (see Figure 4).

³⁵ Reis, *Livro I*, 10.

³⁶ Reis, *Livro I*, 10-11.

³⁷ Reis, *Livro I*, 11.

³⁸ Reis, *Livro I*, 16.

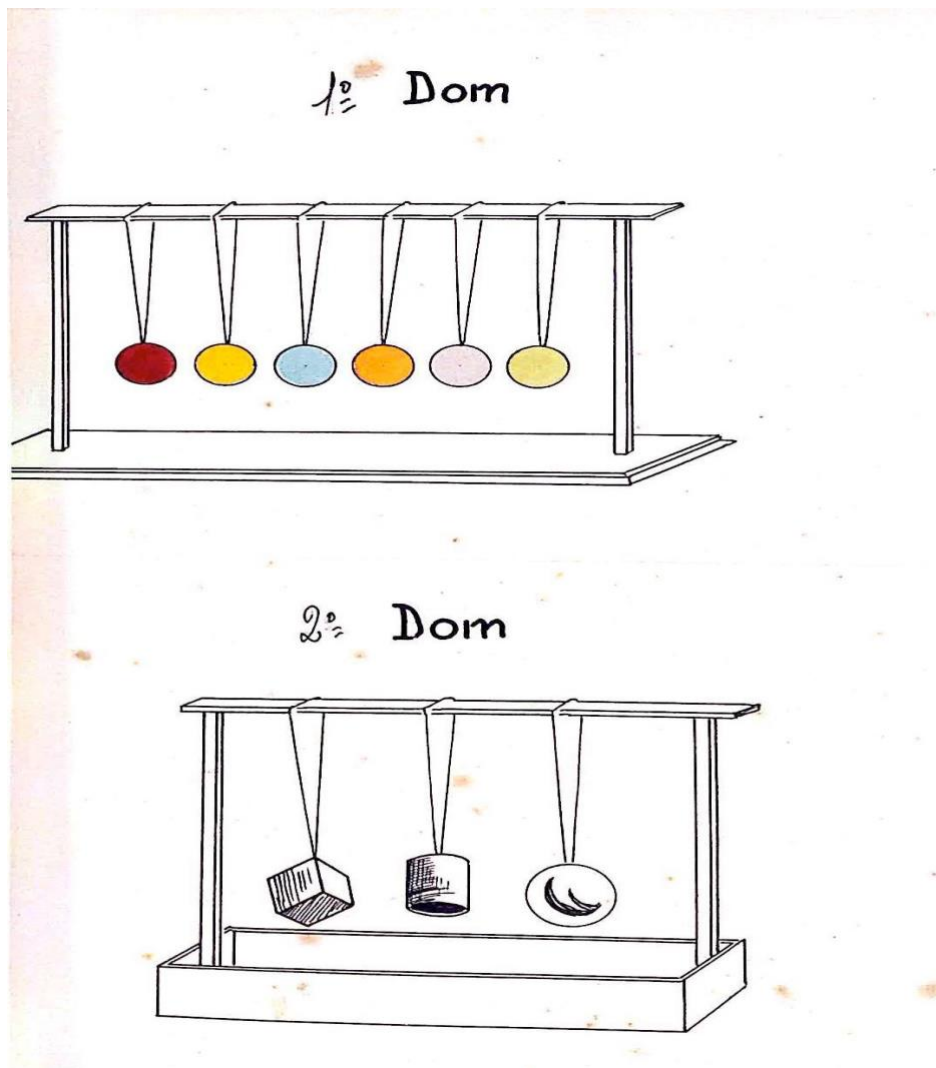


Figure 4. Illustrations. Reis, *Livro I*, 14.

After concluding her succinct presentation of Froebel's methodology, Reis included a small item entitled "Appreciation of Froebel's work." In this item, the author highlighted the misunderstanding regarding Froebel's theory, which, according to her, was a result of his exaggerated mysticism and complex language. However, she acknowledged Froebel's influence in discovering the importance of play and his understanding that children need to act to develop, that they need to move, and that imitation is a tendency in child development. Reis also noted that Froebel realized the need to adequately train teachers. When talking about Froebelian material, she pointed out that although there were criticisms of it, she considered his material valid:

I think, however, that these solids give children the opportunity to develop their creative imagination. It is very common to see children leave behind beautiful dolls and horses and use pieces of cloth and sticks to create dolls and horses in their own way. These toys, created by children themselves, are more real to them

because they are as children imagine, as they see. If we examine some of the modern educational games employed in today's schools and based on psychological principles, we will see that they are also geometric, like Froebel's material.³⁹

A major defect in Froebel's pedagogy, Reis argued, was the teacher's intense participation and leading role, which left little room for children's initiative. Here, she blamed Froebel's followers for the emphasis on mathematics teaching and exercises, which would have led to a restriction on hours working with occupations, for example. This is yet another factor that demonstrates, according to her, an example of the teacher's leading and controlling role. Reis then concluded her assessment of Froebel's pedagogy by pointing out that only Froebel's materials were used in kindergarten classrooms around the world, not his pedagogical system as a whole.

After working with Froebel, Reis dedicated a few pages to talking about the Agazzi method in Italy and then presented Maria Montessori. She presented the Agazzi method as a methodology created against Froebelian pedagogy. According to Reis, Agazzi abolished the work with geometric forms that were present in Froebel's work.⁴⁰ Reis pointed out that even with this criticism, Agazzi's methodology was still a continuation of Froebelian pedagogy. For Reis, this was Agazzi's great value: she incorporated, transmuted, and renovated Froebel's methodology in her classrooms in Italy.

When presenting Montessori, Reis followed the same sequence as with Froebel: after a short biography, she provided a history of Montessori's first schools, and then presented her methodology through the materials Montessori created.

When expressing her appreciation of the Montessori methodology, Reis first highlighted Montessori's appreciation and respect for the child's personality. But from then on she made severe criticisms of the method, including the absence of work in a more collective nature; artificialization of the material, especially that of practical life; the fact that the teacher talked very little with the children ("their words must be counted"⁴¹); the lack of freedom in working with Montessori's materials, which allowed only imitation and not creation; and finally, the absence of working with stories. Reis attributed all of this to Montessori's lack of belief in the creative power of children.⁴²

³⁹ Reis, *Livro I*, 21.

⁴⁰ Reis, *Livro I*, 23.

⁴¹ Reis, *Livro I*, 36.

⁴² Reis, *Livro I*, 37.

At the end of the criticism, Reis as a kindergarten teacher appears for the first time in the work. Reis comments: “Using the [Montessori] material in a class of 5-year-olds, in ‘garden’ I noticed that, after satisfying my curiosity about the material, that is, performing the same exercise, sometimes the children started inventing toys, building with the pieces.”⁴³ This episode led Reis to organize visual perception games based on Montessori’s flat wooden fittings to compose engravings. And with this same material she created engravings of things familiar to children. To illustrate, she included one of the exercises she produced for her classroom: an engraving of a house and the Brazilian flag through the layering of flat shapes (Figure 5).

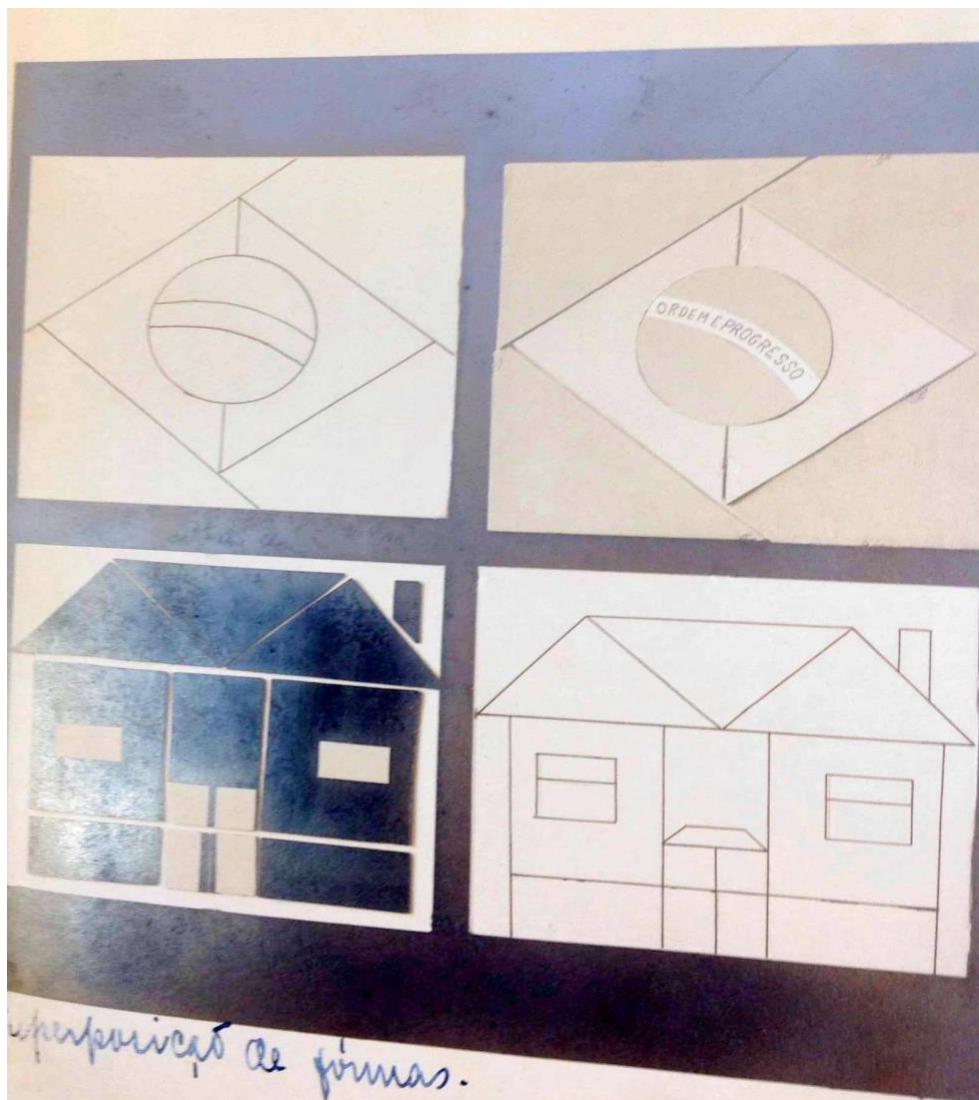


Figure 5. Layering of shapes. Reis, *Livro I*, 37.

⁴³ Reis, *Livro I*, 36.

After explaining the Montessori methodology and making her comments, Reis includes a section entitled “Froebel and Montessori.” In this one-page piece, she opens her argument with Claparède’s critique of the Montessori methodology and builds her own critique of both methodologies based on the role of the teacher in the classroom:

At this point we find a contrast between the two systems. In one, the teacher is in exaggerated prominence and in the other, she disappears. We would not opt for one of the two in this matter, but rather for the teacher who is balanced and knowledgeable about the child, who knows when to and when you shouldn’t intervene.⁴⁴

After expressing her personal criticism, Reis then returns to Froebel’s and Montessori’s common points, such as the presence of the principle of freedom in both of their approaches. She also presents what she calls the most attacked defects in these methodologies:

The most attacked defect in the Froebelian school is the “concern with teaching.” In the Montessori school, the child should not receive instruction but improve their normal development. However, in this there is a concern with teaching how to read, write and count, which does not happen in Froebelian schools, even the oldest ones.⁴⁵

Reis concludes by recognizing the value of the work of Montessori and Froebel, stating, “Neither one nor the other provides the opportunity for social development that we desire.”

Having finished her brief analysis of Froebelian and Montessorian methodologies, Reis goes on to describe the work at Maison des Petits at the Jean J. Rousseau Institute, including its organization and the materials used. In this section of the book, she does not use the same structure she did for Froebel and Montessori. Sequentially, she briefly presents kindergartens in Belgium to introduce the Decroly method.

When working on this methodology, we see a return to the previous structuring of the text: a short biography of the author, fundamentals, the program of the Decroly school, and a brief discussion of the centres of interest. Reis does not assess Decroly’s methodology as she did for Froebel and Montessori. She simply presents the interest centres and the games Decroly created without critiquing the methodology, and at the end she informs the reader that she had adapted some of Decroly’s games for use in her

⁴⁴ Reis, *Livro I*, 38.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

classroom: “To be able to use these games in my class, with results, I organized a series, but self-corrective. The child will be able to perform them when the pieces are placed in the right places.”⁴⁶ On the following pages she then presents the game she created. We reproduce part of the material in Figure 6.

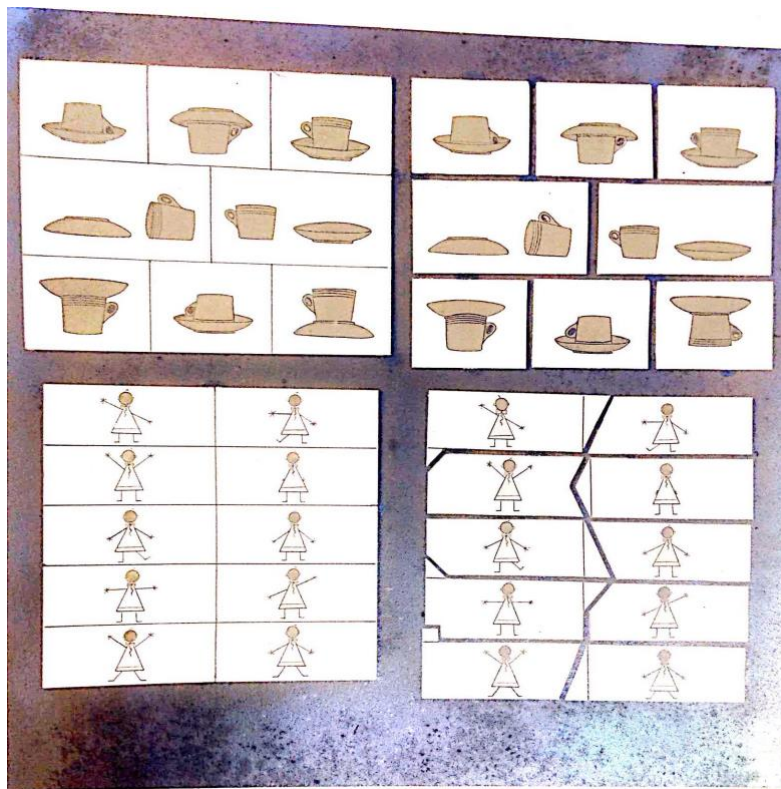


Figure 6. Game created by Reis, *Livro I*, 50.

Reis then goes on to describe a little about kindergartens in the United States. She briefly historicizes the institution, mentioning the educators Elizabeth Peabody, Mathilde Kriege, and Susan Blow. When talking about the latter, she highlights that Blow created one of the first kindergarten programs in the country. According to Reis, the program would have been referred to as a uniform program because it was considered a standard within Froebelian experiments.⁴⁷ But it is Patty Smith Hill’s work that she focuses on, highlighting Hill’s pioneering role in building progressive education for kindergartens. Reis also highlights the collaboration of Francis Parker, John Dewey, Stanley Hall, and Edward Thorndike to build a progressive kindergarten on North American soil. She then argues that the dissemination of these new ideas took place amid much criticism and many

⁴⁶ Reis, *Livro I*, 50.

⁴⁷ Reis, *Livro I*, 51.

successes and errors, but the efforts of these educators brought new objectives and new means to work in kindergartens.

Reis explains that the project method, inspired by the theories of Dewey and Thorndike, would have been one of the first experiments to break the barrier of kindergartens and reach primary schools. After this brief explanation, she presents other experiences in a synthetic way. There is no specific assessment of the methodologies in this section as done for Froebel and Montessori.

Coming to the end of this first volume, Reis dedicates a few pages to writing about kindergarten in São Paulo. She succinctly outlines the history of kindergarten in São Paulo, highlighting the pioneering spirit of the Jardim de Infância da Escola Caetano de Campos as the first public kindergarten created by the Brazilian government. She describes how, after its creation, other kindergartens were created, but over time they were extinguished due to the lack of regulation for these institutions. Reis highlights the role of Lourenço Filho in trying to establish the importance of this educational level and of Fernando de Azevedo who, in 1933 in the Education Code of the State of São Paulo, officially outlined aims and objectives for this institution. This section ends with a sad observation about Caetano de Campos's kindergarten and kindergartens in São Paulo:

São Paulo's "kindergarten" currently operates in adapted rooms at the Escola Normal, as its own building was demolished by the city hall. São Paulo, having founded the first public kindergarten in Brazil, in its own building, 46 years later has only two kindergarten officials, operating in adapted rooms.⁴⁸

Having concluded the book with this sad affirmation, Reis reproduces as an appendix the article referring to kindergarten in the 1933 Education Code of the State of São Paulo. In this reproduction we see the purposes and organization of kindergartens: the centres of interest, projects, and globalized teaching appear as organizers of educational programs for kindergarten. We reproduce the article of this law below:

Art. 214: The kindergarten course lasts three years, called degrees, and the educational processes must be guided according to the following fundamental principles:

- a) The child's interest must be the guiding centre of the school program;
- b) The program of the various degrees must be organized by centres of interest, projects, and other forms of globalized teaching;

⁴⁸ Reis, *Livro I*, 60.

c) All learning must be done in a real situation, which promotes the development of a sense of solidarity and social cooperation.⁴⁹

These principles are also present in volume II of Reis's book. After historicizing how care for children under 6 years old took place in various parts of the world and mentioning her main theorists and methodologies, Reis in her second volume adopts another approach where she seeks to describe how institutions aimed at educating young children should work. To achieve this aim, she includes everything from the kindergarten's physical organization (toys, architecture, furniture), to a quick presentation of the development of children aged 2 to 6, and finally to the programs to be adopted. When presenting the programs, Reis describes their contents, suggests timetables, and also provides model lessons based on her own practice as a kindergartner. All this work, although in the form of a draft, is illustrated with photos of Reis's classroom, as well as work by her children. However, the book was never finished, because the final section, "A Day in Kindergarten," is listed in Reis's table of contents but not included in the book.

To better understand how the second volume was constituted, we once again list its main titles. Like the first, this second volume did not have an index. Reis began with the following title: "'Kindergartens' and 'Nursery Schools.'" The titles of the main sections follow:

- Nursery school
- Nursery section (2 to 4 years old)
- Section from 4 to 7 years old (kindergarten)
- Didactic organization
- Characteristics of 2-year-olds
- Nursery school program
- Suggestions for dividing time at nursery school
- Kindergarten section
- Fundamental principles for working in the kindergarten
- Characteristics of 4- to 6-year-olds
- Kindergarten activity program
- Intellectual education: Conditions for intellectual development
- Calculation in kindergarten

⁴⁹ Ibid.

- Manual work
- Recreational and artistic activities
- Moral education
- Social education
- Civic education
- Parental collaboration
- Practice in kindergarten: Daily work in the kindergarten
- A day at kindergarten.

This volume is very rich and offers many paths for analysis and reading. Therefore, for this work we focus our presentation on elements that help us capture the immanent Froebelian presence and the construction of the practical discourses in Reis's ways of seeing.

In this second volume, Reis seeks to present to the reader how a nursery school and a kindergarten should be organized. She suggests the ideal location and how the institution should be installed in this chosen location, and describes a little of its physical structure.⁵⁰ Next she presents the developmental characteristics of 2-year-old children. This item was intended to cover the ages of 2 to 4 years, but Reis crossed out this title leaving only 2-year-olds and did not include the development of children aged 3 and 4 years. There are no references to these characteristics apart from what can be done in the nursery school to favour and stimulate the development of children of this age. In other words, Reis constantly justified the need for an adequate environment for children to flourish in their development. For example, when discussing the curiosity of a 2-year-old child, she made the following argument:

We must always remember that all the things they see provoke their curiosity. To take advantage of this natural curiosity and make it educational, we organize a suitable environment, in which we place, within their reach, games and materials that favour useful exercises for their intellectual development. In this case, any object that attracts their curiosity and is handled by them will be educational.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Alice Meirelles Reis, *Livro II* (Museu da Educação e do Brinquedo, Faculdade de Educação, Universidade de São Paulo, n.d.), 61-3.

⁵¹ Reis, *Livro II*, 66.

Reis then presents the most suitable materials for children aged 2 to 4, among which the following stand out: blocks, boxes, spools, sand, simple pictures, water, and dolls.⁵² She also includes drawings she made of materials that should be part of the nursery school. Her nursery school program highlights four principles: (1) improve physical health and motor skills; (2) form good intellectual, moral, and social habits; (3) promote knowledge of the environment in which the child lives; (4) promote language development.⁵³ This last item appears crossed out in pencil as if the author wanted to eliminate it later. We would like to highlight the division of time that Reis outlined as a suggestion for working with children aged 2 to 4:

7:30 a.m. – Entrance

Milk

Free period and bath

Outdoor activity.

10 a.m. – Passage through the bathrooms and washbasins.

10:30 a.m. – Lunch

Rest

Bathrooms and washbasins.

1:30 p.m. – Snack

Free period – exercises of free choice – a collective activity, for example:
singing, story, games, etc.

4:30 p.m. – Preparing for dinner.

5 p.m. – Check out.⁵⁴

When presenting her ideas on kindergarten, Reis used the same sequence. However, the section on necessary materials is longer and more detailed than that of the nursery school. She even presented models of enrollment forms to be used at school. In the item “Fundamental principles for working in kindergarten,” Reis outlined five points that she considered to be fundamental for working with children aged 5 to 7:

1. The child’s natural activity must be used in their own education

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Reis, *Livro II*, 69.

2. The game must be used as an educational means
3. The program must be based on children's interests
4. The environment must be prepared in such a way that it provokes valuable reactions in the child
5. Kindergarten activities must be centered on the interests of children.⁵⁵

Reis then briefly explained these principles, arguing that they must always be applied in an educational manner. She emphasized that it was necessary to take advantage of children's natural activity and use it as a means, and not as an end in itself, to achieve the educational objective.⁵⁶ At this point she defined very clearly what she understood to be the child's freedom within these principles: "The child has the freedom to act while respecting authorities, not disturbing the lives of his fellow human beings and not acting in a way that is harmful to their own formation."⁵⁷ This point is crucial in Reis's explanation of the principles: that the kindergarten is the appropriate, planned, and safe place to carry out educational activities that have as their starting point the child, their development and interests, not a place where they can do whatever they want. In other words, Reis demarcated the educational role of kindergarten as a promoter of the development of children's potential. That is why she also argued at length about the educational role of a game beyond simply playing.

Upon concluding her argument on this point, Reis then went on to present how the development of a 4-year-old child occurs, elaborating the following points: physical and motor development; intellectual development; moral, social and emotional development; and language. She followed the same sequence to introduce the 5-year-old and 6-year-old.⁵⁸ This section features photos of children in collective situations or in pairs carrying out different activities, without captions or further explanation. Figure 7 demonstrates one of these pages, with three photos.

⁵⁵ Reis, *Livro II*, 75.

⁵⁶ Reis, *Livro II*, 75.

⁵⁷ Reis, *Livro II*, 76.

⁵⁸ Reis, *Livro II*, 79-87.



Figure 7. Photos of children. Reis, *Livro II*, 80.

Reis then presented the program of activities for the kindergarten, which, according to her, should contain physical education and hygiene; intellectual education; recreational and artistic education; moral, social, civic, and religious education.⁵⁹ The activities that would make up these educational fields were as follows:

Physical education: (1) recreational gymnastics; (2) organized games; (3) free games; (4) rhythmic exercises; and (5) gardening.

Hygiene and safety education: (1) daily games and activities; (2) personal cleaning; and (3) snacks.

Intellectual education: (1) sensory exercises; (2) language; (3) drawing; (4) library, short stories; (5) study of nature and social life; (6) calculation; and (7) manual work.

Recreational and artistic education: (1) song; and (2) dramatizations.

Moral education: (1) practical life, formation of good habits; (2) discipline; (3) social education; (4) civic education; and (5) religious education.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Reis, *Livro II*, 88.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Reis went on to describe what the work would be like in each of these educational activities. When doing this for physical, hygiene, and safety education activities there is no theorization but examples of how it could be done and some tips for teachers to be aware and take the necessary precautions for the activity to be successful. This section is also illustrated with photos of children carrying out these activities.

When explaining intellectual education, Reis outlined three conditions that she considered fundamental for the activities to succeed: the child's freedom of action; the necessary materials, such as books, pictures, toys, etc.; and the role of the teacher. Here she highlighted that a teacher who has knowledge of the child knows whether she should intervene or should let the child act on their own.⁶¹

In this section Reis presented some lesson models/scripts from her own practice as a kindergartener. Below, we reproduce one of her lessons described in the book.

Purpose of the exercise: visual-motor exercise.

Intensity – 1degree: compare and classify 2 colours.

Motivation: individual material and exercise in the form of a game.

Means to repeat the exercise: visual memory game.

Exercise development (class with 20 children).

Each child received an envelope containing two red and two yellow fish. They all opened the envelopes immediately and said, "Little fish..."

Are they all the same?

No, these here are the same (showing the red ones) and these are the same (showing the yellow ones).

Put the fish that are the same together (not all of them were able to separate them). This one is red. They show all the same ones as mine. All these fish are red.

These are also red, said some children, separating them.

This one is yellow now, said the teacher, showing a fish of that colour too.

I also have yellow fish, said a little one. I also said something else... They all separated to show, the yellow fish.

Have you ever seen yellow and red fish?

⁶¹ Reis, *Livro II*, 94.

I've seen red, but not yellow...

I've seen it in the Square...

What colour are the fish in the lake?

They're red like these.

Have you ever fished?

I've already fished in Santos, with a rod, inside the boat.

But was it with a stick?

No, I fished with a hook.

That's right. At the end of the rod there is a line, and at the end of the line a hook. There's a hook here for every child. (the children are excited about the material) While the teacher distributes the hooks, they start talking. To fish you need a lot of patience and a lot of silence, otherwise the fish will run away... Try fishing for red fish...

I fished... I fished...

Dona A., José is catching the fish to put it on the hook! He's crazy! Imagine, putting your hand in the water to fish!

No, he's not crazy. He has never fished and doesn't know how he should do it. We fish with a hook, because if we put our hand in the water the fish can grab it. (enthusiasm is great, everyone fished) What fish did you catch?

Red.

When we take the fish out of the water, what happens?

He dies.

Then put them in the water quickly so they don't die. Catch another one.

I caught a yellow one... Me too... I caught a red one, I caught a yellow one...

Look for something in the class that matches the colour of the fish you each caught.

The boy's tie has a red stripe.

That girl's lipstick is just like the fish I caught.

That girl's ribbon is the same as mine, which is yellow.

Children play freely with the materials, which are then collected and saved.

A game to repeat the exercise: The teacher draws a red and a yellow fish on the board. “Close your eyes. I’m going to catch one of these fish, and when I give you a signal, you’ll look and say which one I caught.”

Continue the exercises, introducing other colours and varying the materials whenever possible. By varying the materials, the child finds new interest in the same exercise.⁶²

In between the lessons, Reis included a model for the fish and the hook, as you can see in Figure 8 below:



Figure 8. Model for fish and hook. Reis, *Livro II*, 96.

Reis continued presenting model lessons along with illustrations of the materials to be used. In several activities she included a short story as a motivator. Next Reis added a section to deal with materials that can stimulate sensory exercises and reasoning, listing several possibilities, such as cardboard boxes, everyday objects of different volumes and sizes, sandpaper and smooth paper, sand bags of different weights, etc. We see a free appropriation of different materials here, as in the Montessori approach. At the end Reis stated that all the materials listed were made for students at Caetano de Campos and were suggested for kindergarteners given the scarcity of resources for working with young children.⁶³

⁶² Reis, *Livro II*, 96-7.

⁶³ Reis, *Livro II*, 109-112.

Continuing with her presentation of the kindergarten program, Reis went on to describe the work and value for child development, such as drawing and language, highlighting the presence of the library and the role of stories. When writing about the role of stories, she highlighted their importance for children's development. She recommended stories and books, encouraged the institution of story time in the classroom, and commented on how stories can be told to young children. When talking about didactics and methodology for telling stories, she emphasized that the study of children's literature and practices for training storytellers must be present in normal schools.⁶⁴ In this section too, she included photos of her classroom to illustrate her writing (see Figure 9).

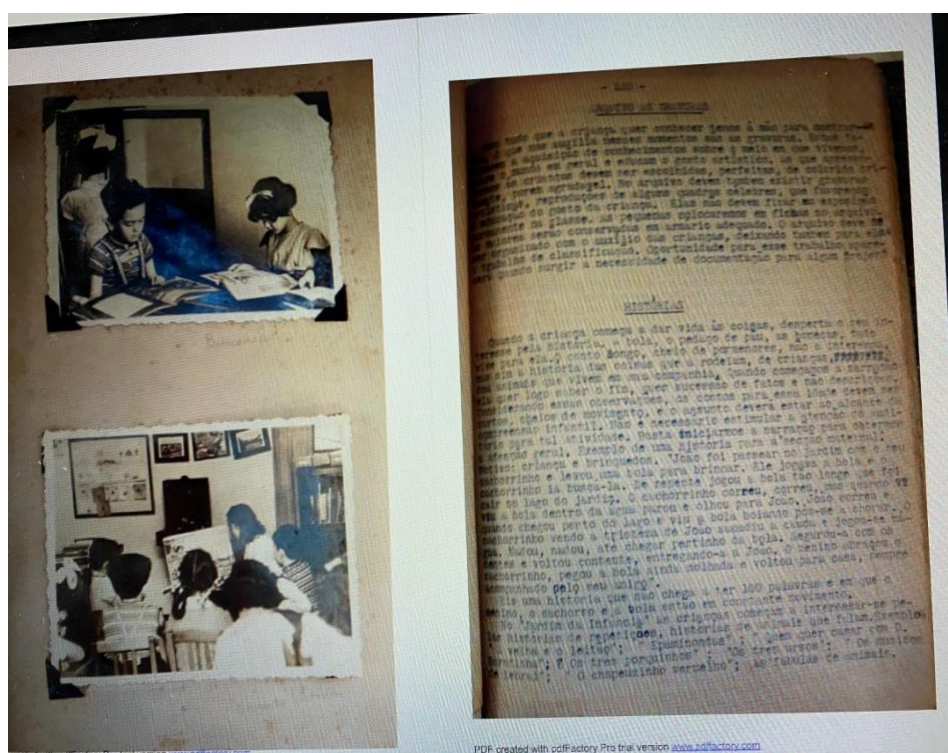


Figure 9. Photos of children reading in Reis's classroom. Reis, *Livro II*, 120.

Next Reis discussed how work with the study of nature and social life should occur. When talking about the study of nature,⁶⁵ she focused on observing nature, its phenomena and animals as a way of cultivating children's love and interest. To this end, she encouraged people to bring and have animals in the kindergarten, as well as space for growing plants; if this was not possible, the kindergartener should use pictures and books (see Figure 10).

⁶⁴ Reis, *Livro II*, 120-122.

⁶⁵ Reis, *Livro II*, 123-124.

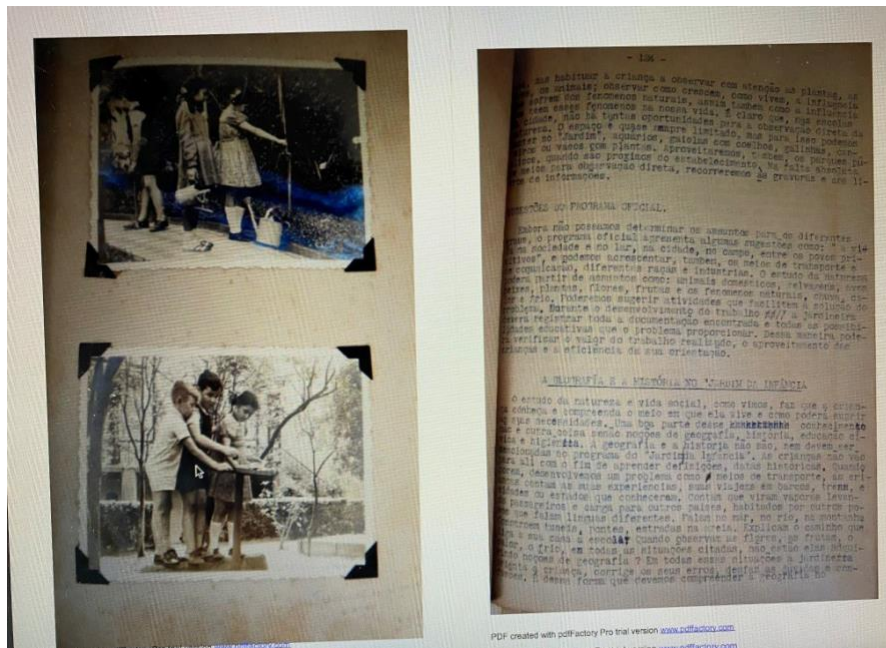


Figure 10. Photos of children taking care of plants and putting food out for birds. Reis, *Livro II*, 123.

It is interesting to note that Reis included a section entitled “Geography and History in Kindergarten,” reinforcing that the study of nature and social life would be nothing more than studying geography, history, civics, and hygiene, but she included a caveat:

Geography and history are not, and should not be, mentioned in the kindergarten program. Children do not go there to learn definitions or historical dates. However, when we encounter a problem with transportation, the children tell their stories, their experiences, their journeys on boats or trains, and cities or states they have visited. They may say they saw steamboats taking passengers and cargo to other countries, inhabited by other people who speak different languages. They speak at sea, on the river, in the mountains; they build tunnels, bridges, roads in the sand. They describe the path that connects their home to school. When they observe flowers, fruits, heat, cold, in all the situations mentioned, aren't they acquiring notions of geography? In all these situations, the kindergartener guides the child, corrects his mistakes, dispels doubts and confusion. This is how we should understand geography in kindergarten.⁶⁶

Reis brings this same educational principle to work that involves dramatization and drawing. Then, in writing about calculation, she states that the kindergartener must take advantage of everyday situations to carry it out, and she includes work with sensory exercises as a source for this. There is an emphasis on counting work and simple association between numbers and counting. To this end, she illustrates this section with

⁶⁶ Reis, *Livro II*, 124.

repetition exercises to be done after the children have explored concrete materials.⁶⁷ “What matters in kindergarten,” she writes, “is not that children know numbers up to 50 or 100, but that they learn to reason, to solve small problems.”⁶⁸

Note here Reis’s effort to differentiate the work in kindergarten from that done in primary school. There are the same areas of knowledge in both, but for kindergarten, Reis emphasizes sensory work, observation, questioning, and constant dialogue as the main points for the pedagogical work. In other words, she seeks to build, based on her own practice, a methodology for working with children under 7 years old.

In the section entitled “Manual Work,” the Froebelian occupations appear. Reis begins by highlighting the educational value of these activities: “1—they stimulate thinking; 2—they encourage muscular exercise; 3—they encourage the formation of hygiene and safety habits; and 4—they encourage moral and social education.”⁶⁹ After briefly explaining each of the items listed above, Reis then defines what she understands as manual work in kindergarten.

Manual work in the kindergarten consists of any and all activities that provide service to the hands, and not just needlework or paper work, carried out under the guidance of the teacher, without any relation to other activities. We can consider manual work: construction with blocks, sand building, modelling, carpentry, arranging a doll’s house. In addition to these activities, the industrial arts offer countless opportunities for manual work: folding, cutting, gluing, basting, weaving, working with a saw, etc. For first grade children we suggest: stringing beads, building with blocks, building with sand, modelling, cutting without guidance, folding. For second grade: we will include in this same list carpentry, basting, cutting, and gluing. In the 6-year-old class, in addition to the exercises already mentioned, we teach weaving, painting, sawing, cardboard cutting, felting, and any other work that the kindergartner deems sufficient for the child’s development. Manual work will only be beneficial if it has a purpose, if the child is interested in carrying it out. When this activity is not linked to a “problem” of interest to the child, the kindergartner will look for a goal to carry it out.⁷⁰

After defining manual work and establishing which crafts would be the most appropriate for each stage of kindergarten, Reis goes on to write succinctly about each of the manual activities.⁷¹ She always seeks to anchor her justification for the manual work described in issues of child development, and on several occasions she quotes small

⁶⁷ Reis, *Livro II*, 127- 128.

⁶⁸ Reis, *Livro II*, 128.

⁶⁹ Reis, *Livro II*, 129.

⁷⁰ Reis, *Livro II*, 130.

⁷¹ Reis, *Livro II*, 129-135.

passages taken from what she calls her diary. These passages reveal to us that Reis had the habit of recording daily activities in her kindergarten. We reproduce one of these excerpts in the item in which Reis is writing about construction with blocks:

From my diary—Maria complained that they built a building and that Danilo had knocked it down with the blocks. He explained: “I built a plane, and when it started to fly it dropped some bombs on her city.” In fact, he had made the plane, and lifting it high, went around the class rumbling and dropping small blocks of wood wherever he went. I said: “Try to throw your bombs where there are no buildings,” and he replied: “It wasn’t me, it was the bomb.”⁷²

With each manual activity she presented, Reis included photographs from her classroom or work carried out by the children. Once again we see the illustrative nature of the images; they are affirmative and in a certain way prove that the work can be done. Reis’s proposal is real, as she herself has already implemented it. The small excerpts from her diary also bring this tone to her writing.

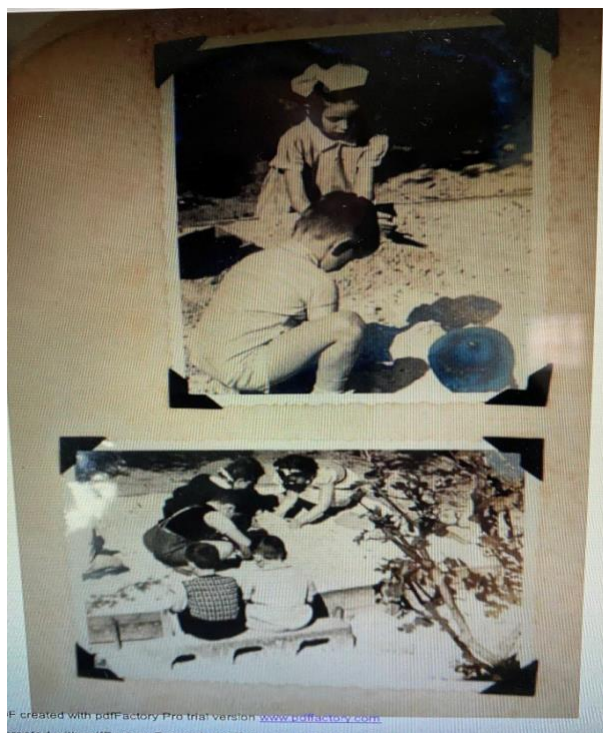


Figure 11. Photographs of children doing manual activities. Reis, *Livro II*, 131.

⁷² Reis, *Livro II*, 131.

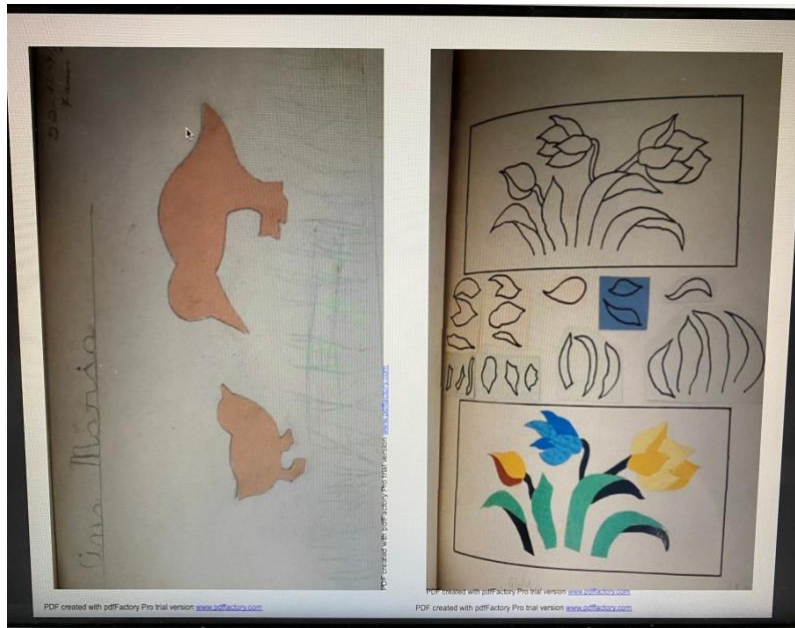


Figure 12. Models for manual activities. Reis, *Livro II*, 134.

In the section “Recreational and Artistic Activities,” Reis begins by explaining the importance of musical education in kindergarten. When talking about singing and music for the nursery school, she highlights: “In the nursery section we started this activity by giving them opportunities to listen to songs and records, piano and singing. The kindergartner sings, like a mother at home, to her little children, and the child learns to sing by imitating her.”⁷³ Then she talks about the importance of the kindergartner learning about music and preferably knowing how to play the piano, thus knowing how to perform the melody of the songs and sing them. Here, she attaches some sheet music.

Next Reis presents dramatization and its importance, highlighting what she calls spontaneous dramatizations of activities in the child’s social and family life.⁷⁴ To illustrate this, Reis reproduces what she calls “a spontaneous dramatization developed during five days in kindergarten” taken from her diary. The dramatization, which took place in 1933, was about sick children who went to a doctor’s office with their parents for consultations.⁷⁵

To conclude this part of the book, Reis dealt with moral education. As she was a practicing Catholic, she brought the Christian principles of Catholicism to the classroom. She even set up a small altar for prayers in the classroom, and the catechism was based on daily events with the children. In this section she included “some talks with 5-year-old

⁷³ Reis, *Livro II*, 136.

⁷⁴ Reis, *Livro II*, 137.

⁷⁵ Reis, *Livro II*, 137-140.

children.” These talks are transcriptions of dialogues she had with children on different topics: thank you very much, the cross, God sees everything, Sunday rest, daily prayer, examination of conscience, love for others. The talks appear as model lessons like those we mentioned previously in the text.

In addition to these talks with children, Reis also presented the example of the kindergartner as a way of developing morality.⁷⁶ The kindergartner must try to form herself properly and work on her defects, know how to control herself and act like a true Christian. Reis also presented, sequentially, the repetition of practical life exercises as a way of working on morality as the exercises develop habits of order, obedience, truthfulness, respect for authorities, responsibility, cooperation, courtesy, and justice. Here again, Reis commented on each of these items and included excerpts from conversations with the children in her class to illustrate attitudes and problems that may arise. Here too she included excerpts from her diary, such as this one on the habit of truthfulness:

From my diary—F. is a girl full of bad habits. She gave me a lot of trouble for three months. It got to the point that, breaking a beanstalk from the class plantation, I accidentally accused a companion, out of fear of punishment. Today, when she came in from recess she said: “Dona Alice, I did something bad, but it wasn’t because I wanted to. I went to get up and knocked over a glass of water and it spilled. But it wasn’t because I wanted to.” “You wiped it the table?” “I wiped it.” “Once again you are more careful when there is a glass of water on the table. What progress!”⁷⁷

Reis included photos from her classroom to illustrate each of the items, such as the photo in Figure 13 below, used to illustrate an act of cooperation.

⁷⁶ Reis, *Livro II*, 150.

⁷⁷ Reis, *Livro II*, 153.

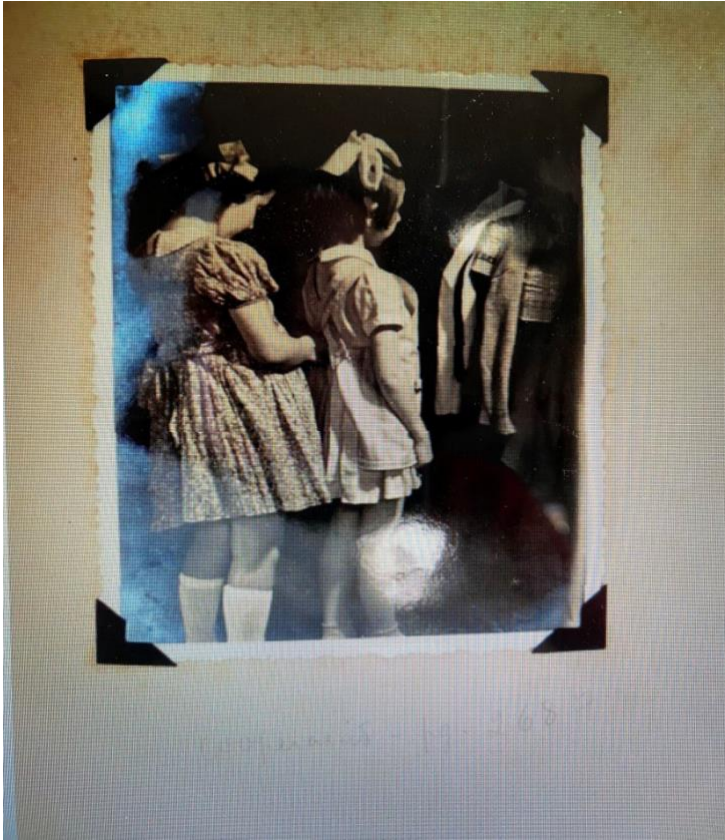


Figure 13. Photo of children used to demonstrate cooperation. Reis, *Livro II*, 155.

Reis also addressed what she called social education, highlighting the role of celebrations (such as civic and religious holidays), the value of going on excursions with children, and the issue of civic education as a facet of moral education.⁷⁸ Finally she discussed parental collaboration. Here, she highlighted that quality care entailed requiring parents to collaborate with the work carried out in the kindergarten.⁷⁹ To make this happen, Reis outlined some strategies. She talked briefly about enrollment and meetings as opportunities to include parents in the important work done in the kindergarten.

The third part of the book, “Practice in Kindergarten,” is unfinished. In it, Reis revisited the importance of the work done in kindergarten and highlighted that this institution helps parents to educate their children.⁸⁰ Reis emphasized the need for kindergartners to plan their activities and be aware of what they are doing. She highlighted that kindergarten forms different habits in children in addition to promoting their intellectual, moral, and physical development. She listed four types of activities that must be provided daily for kindergarten children:

⁷⁸ Reis, *Livro II*, 159-61.

⁷⁹ Reis, *Livro II*, 161.

⁸⁰ Reis, *Livro II*, 162-8.

1. Outdoor activities; snacks and rest; using the bathroom. These activities promote a healthy life and the formation of good health habits.
2. Free choice activity. If there is a period of freedom to choose the exercise, the child will be able to form habits of attention, develop the ability to reason, and acquire new work techniques.
3. Recreational and artistic activities: singing, drawing, dramatizations, literature.
4. Collective activities that allow the formation of good habits for the child's adjustment to the social group: lectures, discussions, organized games, dramatizations, etc.”⁸¹

Having outlined these principles, Reis discussed the distribution of activity schedules and then suggested a temporal organization for them:

8:20 a.m. Entrance; order; free activities.

9:00 a.m. for older children; 9:15 for the little ones. Choose from lectures, stories, verses, songs, rhythmic exercises, recreational gymnastics.

9:45 a.m. Prepare for snack; snack; rest.

10:30 a.m. Crafts or sensory exercises. Choose from modelling, folding, basting, weaving, cutting, and gluing.

10:50 a.m. Free recess, supervised by the kindergartener.

11:15 a.m. Choose from drawing, role play, sand play, gardening, etc.

11:45 a.m. Prepare to leave.⁸²

Reis emphasized that these suggestions were quite elastic and could and should be adapted by the kindergartner according to the needs of their children. In the next item, she briefly presented how the kindergartner could select what she called problems to work on with children. According to Reis, one of the main objectives of kindergarten is to meet children's interests; however, not everything the child is interested in has educational potential. Thus she wrote: “When no problems arise that can be taken advantage of, the kindergartner should suggest them, and in such a way that they become the children's problems.”⁸³ Finally, she ends the section by bringing up the need for the kindergartner to exercise the ability to observe. Here she quotes Barnes (without providing references): “The teacher who does not know how to observe is incapable of making the educational

⁸¹ Reis, *Livro II*, 162.

⁸² Reis, *Livro II*, 163.

⁸³ Reis, *Livro II*, 164.

process a lively, timely work, adapted to the demands of the childish spirit.”⁸⁴ Reis added that observation would help the kindergartner to make decisions more rationally, but this needed to be anchored by knowledge of child psychology and it was necessary to know the child’s background.

At the end of the book, Reis presented a table summarizing her principles and the necessary activities in kindergarten, placing projects as central to triggering them, linked to problem solving. Problem solving focused on applying the ideas and knowledge learned in reality through comparison with previous experiences and fostering new experiences. Here she used photos to illustrate the teacher helping children with group work and a child playing in the sand pit.

The book ends with the heading “A Day in Kindergarten,” but the section is missing.

Conclusion: Alice Meirelles Reis’s ways of seeing and practical discourses

Alice Meirelles Reis in her two typed books brings us a wealth of research paths. For this work we chose to look at her construction of the ways of seeing and practical discourses. Along this path, we have highlighted the presence of Froebelian pedagogy in her writings. It is important to note that, according to Kishimoto, Reis’s experience with kindergarten was influenced by the reality of Brazil at the time.⁸⁵ Reis had the support of Fernando de Azevedo, who sometimes cancelled classes during the opposite period in the kindergarten so that Reis could keep the children’s block constructions and unfinished activities assembled until the next day. Furthermore, Lourenço Filho helped her in her methodological search, just as her colleague from the normal school, professor of educational psychology Noemy Silveira, discussed with Reis and read her writings. The two books presented here included several notes with suggestions for corrections made by Silveira.

As we have already written, Reis was also able to travel around the world, observe, and have contact with the innovations that were being made by the New School movement in kindergartens.

⁸⁴ Barnes cited in Reis, *Livro II*, 164.

⁸⁵ Kishimoto, *Práticas Pedagógicas de Alice Meirelles Reis*, 20.

When we read her books, the presence of Froebelian pedagogy is present in different ways, as Jane Read has pointed out.⁸⁶ The Froebelian legacy is perennial, although his pedagogy was revised over the years. Reis participated in this movement, embracing what Brehony calls the revision of Froebelian pedagogy in the blessing of the twentieth century.⁸⁷ Read presents Patty Smith Hill as one of the protagonists of this movement in the United States⁸⁸ and, not surprisingly, it was precisely Hill's work that drew Reis's attention when talking about the reform of work in kindergarten in the US.⁸⁹

Hill studied the work of Stanley Hall, John Dewey, and others, but it was Dewey's progressive educational principles that were of particular influence, and she rejected the practice of purists who were intent on following Froebel's prescriptions to the letter. Instead Hill took forward Froebel's conception of block play at the Horace Mann Kindergarten, Teachers College, New York, where she introduced the "Hill Kindergarten Floor Blocks" in 1905 (Prochner, 2011). What was unique about these blocks was their size: 16 times larger than Froebel's blocks and designed for floor use.⁹⁰

This kind of building block is repeatedly seen in Reis's photographs, including the one highlighted at the beginning of this paper. Having had contact with the work of these revisionists of Froebelian pedagogy, Reis incorporated these ideas into her daily school life and in her writing, where she criticized Froebel at the time but did not fail to recognize his importance in constituting the work of the kindergarten. As Nawrotzki shows us, when historicizing publications and discussions from the Froebel Society and the National Froebel Foundation and their influence on English kindergarten, the path to revising Froebelian pedagogy was long and tortuous: "In England in the 1900s (as in the United States at the same time) orthodox Froebelianism was on the decline, replaced by a new, revisionist concept for kindergarten and early education."⁹¹

Reis was immersed in this revisionist transnational atmosphere of Froebelian pedagogy in her kindergarten, seeking at the same time to adapt and transmute practices

⁸⁶ Jane Read, "Tracing Froebel's Legacy: The Spread of the Kindergarten Movement across Europe and Beyond and His Influence on Educators," in *The Routledge International Handbook of Froebel and Early Childhood Practice*, ed. Tina Bruce et al. (New York: Routledge, 2019).

⁸⁷ Kevin J. Brehony, "The Kindergarten in England, 1851-1918," in *Kindergarten and Cultures: The Global Diffusion of an Idea*, ed. Roberta Wollons (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

⁸⁸ Read, "Tracing Froebel's Legacy," 17.

⁸⁹ Reis, *Livro I*, 52.

⁹⁰ Read, "Tracing Froebel's Legacy," 17.

⁹¹ Kristen Nawrotzki, "Froebel is Dead; Long Live Froebel!: The National Froebel Foundation and English Education," in *The Routledge International Handbook of Froebel and Early Childhood Practice*, ed. Tina Bruce et al. (New York: Routledge, 2019), 58.

so that they fit into her Brazilian daily life. In doing so in her two books, she produced practical discourses centered on defending kindergarten work that was not characterized as preparatory for primary school, but at the same time incorporated the new features that the New School movement brought. In this quest, Reis, in her practical discourses, sought to alleviate the existing resistance to this type of education, presenting it as complementary and necessary to the work of families and building the idea of an institution that would have an objective in itself.

To this end, Reis, through reporting on experiences lived in her classroom, showed that this was possible and left model lessons for the kindergartners in addition to the way in which the training of future teachers was being carried out at the normal school. By building her practical discourses, Reis endorsed and transformed routines and ways of being didactically and methodologically in kindergarten classrooms. Her way of seeing pedagogical work and children is embedded in her writings and recorded in the photographs and drawings that illustrate her books.

Berger argues that the photographer is always choosing not what to photograph but rather the moment in which the photo should be taken. The photograph does not have a language in itself, but like a cardiogram or an ultrasound, it needs to be read: “The language in which photography deals is the language of events. All its references are external to itself. Hence the continuum.”⁹²

In this sense, the truths a photograph brings depend intrinsically on whoever sees it, invoking what it does not allow us to see. Berger writes: “Every photograph is in fact a means of testing, confirming, and constructing a total view of reality. Hence the crucial role of photography in ideological struggle. Hence the necessity of our understanding a weapon which we can use and which can be used against us.”⁹³

Reis’s photographs in her books as illustrations, as proof of the truthfulness of her written words, are weapons she used repeatedly. In doing so, she generalized, and although she tried to show very few contradictions in her written words, the chaotic aspect—what didn’t work—was dormant. Her photos show us the child who builds, plays, is organized, experiments, and is happy in kindergarten. Always acting, always in action—these are the moments Reis chose for her photographic records. For the reader of her books, it is as if the words came to life with her photographs.

⁹² John Berger, *Understanding a Photograph* (New York: Aperture, 2013), 16.

⁹³ Berger, *Understanding a Photograph*, 17.

Alice Meirelles Reis's ways of seeing translated her practical discourses with a powerful weapon, which showed that her writing had already come to life. She was not just another theorist writing about kindergarten.

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