

## LEISURE SPACES AND EQUIPMENT: REFLECTIONS ON SCHOOL RECREATION TIME

### ESPAÇOS E EQUIPAMENTOS DE LAZER: REFLEXÕES SOBRE O TEMPO DE RECREIO ESCOLAR

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#### RESUMO

Este estudo investigou as relações das crianças e adolescentes com os espaços e equipamentos de lazer, no horário do recreio, de uma escola particular em Florianópolis. Caracteriza-se como um estudo de campo, descritivo e exploratório, com abordagem e análise qualitativas. Participaram desta pesquisa 19 alunos, entre o 6º ano do Ensino Fundamental e o 3º ano do Ensino Médio, e três funcionários da escola. Para obtenção dos dados foram utilizadas observações e entrevistas. Os dados foram organizados com auxílio do *software* N-VIVO 12 e analisados por intermédio da técnica de análise de conteúdo. As categorias que agruparam os resultados foram: desejos e interesses dos alunos no recreio; o brincar em seus diferentes tempos e espaços; relações sociais e a interação no recreio. A partir delas foi possível afirmar que as crianças e os adolescentes devem estabelecer relações com os espaços e equipamentos de lazer presentes no ambiente escolar, tendo em vista que estes podem propiciar crescimento social, intelectual e integral dos alunos.

**Palavras-chave:** Atividades de lazer. Recreação. Jogos e brinquedos.

#### ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationships between children and adolescents with recreational spaces and leisure facilities at a private school in Florianópolis. It is characterized as a field study, descriptive and exploratory, with a qualitative approach and analysis. A total of 19 students participated in this study, between the 6<sup>th</sup> grade of elementary school and the last year of High School, as well as three school employees. To obtain the data, observations and interviews were used. The data were organized using the *software* N-VIVO 12 and analyzed through the content analysis technique. The categories that grouped the results were: students' desires and interests at recess; playing in different times and spaces; social relationships and interaction at recess. From this, it was possible to affirm that children and adolescents should establish relationships with the spaces and leisure facilities present in the school environment since these can foster social, intellectual and integral growth of students.

**Keywords:** Leisure activities. Recreation. Games and toys.

#### Introduction

From the educational process perspective, leisure can be considered a vehicle and an object of education<sup>1</sup>. When understanding it as a vehicle for education, it becomes necessary to contemplate its potential for the personal and social development of citizens. In turn, when regarding leisure as an object of education, it is necessary to disseminate its meaning, emphasizing its importance, encouraging participation, as well as transmitting information that make its development possible or contributes to improving it<sup>1</sup>.

When thinking about education in terms of leisure, it is created in different times and spaces<sup>2</sup>, such as camps, clubs, social institutions, schools, among others. In this perspective, the school, the object of this study, is understood as a space that allows this time, since children and adolescents spend most of this life cycle in this place (generally, from 4 to 17 years old). One can think of the school as a promoter of actions that envision the cultural and social growth of the student, simultaneously practicing and presenting the right to leisure<sup>2</sup>.

Games and playfulness are acknowledged in the National Common Curricular Base, a document that governs Basic Education (Early Childhood Education, Elementary School, and

High School), as voluntary activities performed within a time and space limit. They are characterized by the creation and alteration of rules, for the obedience of each participant to what was collectively agreed, and for appreciating the act of playing itself<sup>3</sup>. When reflecting on the dichotomy between the school environment and leisure, the need arises to investigate the playful manifestations existing within the school, recognizing that it cannot be considered as an exclusively schooled environment, in which the activities carried out only result from bureaucratic instances of educational systems<sup>2</sup>.

When viewing the school as space, it is transformed from the meanings attributed to it<sup>4</sup>. Thus, school is thought of as a fertile space for the expression of playfulness, and consequently, leisure, since both can be intertwined. It is also noteworthy that the idea of leisure mentioned above is understood in this article, according to the author Gomes<sup>5</sup>, who argues that leisure is constituted in relation to the characteristics of the context in which it is developed and implies the cultivation of culture. In the sense of transformations in cultural practices that people playfully experience, it is considered as a human need, as well as a cultural dimension that consists of the connection between three elements: playfulness, cultural manifestations, and social time/space

In addition to these factors, whether a public or private school, it is interesting that there are leisure facilities with a teaching staff trained to motivate children and adolescents to use them. They can provide cultural and intellectual knowledge for children and adolescents, besides awareness of a constitutional right, which is access to leisure. Highlighting the importance of the interdisciplinarity of teachers as they can better explore these elements, this facilitates the integral development of students.

It is understood that leisure equipment can be combined and structured areas for leisure practices and services<sup>6</sup>. They should have spaces for people to feel comfortable before and after the experience and during the activity practiced<sup>6</sup>. Thus, in this research, leisure equipment is characterized by ping pong, foosball, boardgames, hopscotch, jump rope, among other equipment provided by the school. In this sense, the leisure experienced in school times and spaces is planned and organized from the perspective of the social actors who are part of the school community (students, teachers, employees)<sup>7</sup>, since these spaces only come to life through appropriation and meanings given to them.

Playfulness, in turn, is being understood as an intrinsic element to being; preceding the culture itself, which presupposes the existence of human society<sup>8</sup>. As an example, there is the behavior of animals that played long before any human being taught them. Huizinga<sup>8</sup> defends that playfulness is the “spirit” (soul) that moves people in the context of a game, in a disinterested way, and moved by the satisfaction existing in the accomplishment of what is done. Playfulness can manifest itself in different cultural forms, such as games, dance, music, sports, folkloric shows, among other privileged times and spaces, which provide spontaneity, creation, imagination, and relaxation.

The essence of playfulness, according to the author, is the fun, fascination, distraction, excitement, tension, joy, and excitement that a game inspires, as a form of playful manifestation. It is believed that one of the fundamental aspects to characterize playing refers to the fact that it is a liberating activity, considered by many to be an escape from everyday life<sup>8</sup>. The game can also be described as uncertain, unproductive and fictitious<sup>9</sup>.

When considering a game and playing at school, it is inevitable to think about the time and space of school recess. According to Fantoni and Sanfelice<sup>10</sup>, recess relates to the time allowed for children to play between classes, being directly related to the term recreate, fun and entertainment. Besides, on days when there are no Physical Education classes, recess becomes one of the few moments that children have to move around in school<sup>10</sup>. These authors also affirm that the educational and free character, intrinsic in the essence of school recess, is a facilitator for the child to be constituted through playing, justifying the relevance of their

investigation. Although recess is a privileged space for playing games, it also needs to be consistent with the school's pedagogical proposal<sup>10</sup>.

In this article, the meaning of school recess is being adopted as the interval between classes, characterized by a short period (15 to 20 minutes) that is part of the school's educational schedule<sup>11</sup>. However, concerning the investigated context, this period is intended for both food and enjoyment (use of spaces and leisure equipment made available by the investigated school during recess) and socialization, resulting in a short interval for all activities. Pereira et al.<sup>12</sup> state that it is during this period that the children can manifest freely and select activities (such as games and toys) that bring them pleasure<sup>12</sup>. However, for the children to choose, it is important that it is a favorable environment with possible tools for the development of their "playful creativity".

In this context, the questions that prompted this research were: how do students experience leisure moments during school recess? What spaces and leisure equipment have been used in the school environment? In what way? What is the appropriation of students, with these spaces and equipment made available during the break between classes at a private school in Florianópolis? Do students like to play games? Why? How can we observe playfulness in this context? Based on these considerations, this study aimed to investigate the relationships of children and adolescents with leisure spaces and equipment, during recess, at a private school in Florianópolis.

Along these lines, this study can contribute to alleviating the existing gaps about the leisure spaces and equipment present in the school and its appropriations, as well as encourage the investigation of other studies on the subject. As can be seen in the literature<sup>4,7</sup>, which, despite addressing the leisure spaces and equipment present in the school environment, do not relate it to the perception of students, but people outside the school community. More broadly, this investigation may provide reflections on interventions to promote spaces for students, in a general perspective of the school, as diversified games, aiming at a greater interaction between students in playful moments.

## **Methods**

It is characterized as field research, descriptive and exploratory, with a qualitative approach, since it cannot be quantified, that is, this type of investigation is related to the universe of meanings, motives, attitudes, and values<sup>13</sup>.

### *Participants*

19 students participated voluntarily in this study, between the 6th grade of elementary school and the last year of high school, who simultaneously used the leisure spaces and equipment made available by the school during recess. These students were contacted individually by the researcher during school recess, an opportunity when the presentation and invitation to participate in the research were conducted. Three school employees also participated in this study, who were directly involved with leisure spaces and equipment during recess.

### *Procedures*

This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the State University of Santa Catarina (nº 2,950,528), following the ethical precepts of Resolution 510/16 of the National Health Council on research with human beings.

Those who agreed to participate in the study signed a Free and Informed Consent Form and a Consent Form for Photographs, Videos, and Recordings. For students under 18, the same documents were administered to obtain the signature of their parents, and the interviews were

subsequently conducted. The children and adolescents also signed the Term of Assent, at which time, the objectives of the investigation and the procedures to be carried out were explained, including that they had the right to not answer the questions, or even to withdraw from the study without any kind of embarrassment.

To achieve the data, participant observation was applied, a method by which the researcher observes a social situation to carry out a scientific investigation, and thus, allowing the understanding of reality<sup>11</sup>. Semi-structured interviews<sup>11</sup> were also performed, with different scripts for students and staff, to understand the relationship of the school community with the school's leisure spaces and equipment. They were composed of open questions, in which the participants were able to talk about the questions without being attached to them.

At the end of the interviews, students were also given a form of keywords, which sought to investigate their feelings when using the leisure spaces and equipment that the school provided. It was a document to fill in three words/expressions, chosen by the participants themselves, that represented what they felt while at recess.

The interviews took place according to the dates made available by the school, being held in the courtyards and during school recess. An audio recorder was used to record them, as well as a machine for photographic records. The transcripts of the interviews lasted about 12 hours, in which the identity of the participants was preserved, considering that they were identified during the study by a fictitious name and their faces did not appear in the photographs.

### *Data analysis*

The data were organized with the aid of the NVivo software, version 12, and analyzed using elements of Bardin's content analysis technique<sup>14</sup>. This type of analysis is subdivided into three chronological phases: pre-analysis; exploration of the material; treatment, inference, and data interpretation<sup>14</sup>.

The pre-analysis phase involves the organization of material, systematizing the initial ideas<sup>14</sup>, through floating reading, to select and understand the documents, make notes and obtain impressions<sup>14,15</sup>. The material exploration phase is mainly composed of codifications and enumerations<sup>14</sup>. According to Benites et al.<sup>15</sup>, this phase consists of nomenclatures of content analysis: the units of record, the units of context, and enumeration.

The last step is considered the secret of qualitative research since it covers the categories of analysis. These categories combine the information obtained through the collection instruments, which, in this case, include the observation, interview, and field diary<sup>15</sup>.

The categories are related to the questions that establish the research, the objectives, as well as the researcher's expectations<sup>15</sup>. These are confronted with the literature, and give the researcher the right to make inferences for the discussion<sup>14</sup>, facilitating a reflexive analysis. Based on this systematization, the categories of analysis that aim to achieve the objectives of this study are: students' desires and interests during recess; playing in different times and spaces; social relationships and interaction at recess.

### **Results and discussions**

As for the characteristics of the participating students, six participants were boys and 13 were girls, between the ages of 12 and 18 years old. The time studying at this school ranged from one to 14 years. The participating employees were two women and one man, between the ages of 47 and 61 years old, who can be characterized as former employees since the minimum time of services rendered to this school is 22 years and the maximum is 32 years. Table 1 shows the characteristics of the participating students and Table 2 shows the characteristics of the participating employees.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of participating students

	<b>Fictitious name</b>	<b>Grade level</b>	<b>Age (years)</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Time at school (years)</b>
1.	Alisson	Grade 10 (HS)	16	Male	2
2.	Miranda	Grade 9	14	Female	9
3.	Cláudio	Grade 7	12	Male	3
4.	Hamilton	Grade 12 (HS)	18	Male	3
5.	Maria Lua	Grade 12 (HS)	18	Female	2,5
6.	Brazinha	Grade 7	12	Female	7
7.	George	Grade 12 (HS)	18	Male	6
8.	Érick	Grade 7	12	Male	7
9.	Stefany	Grade 6	12	Female	6
10.	Geovana	Grade 7	12	Female	2
11.	Gabriela	Grade 7	12	Female	7
12.	Pelé	Grade 12 (HS)	17	Male	14
13.	Ana Cristina	Grade 7	12	Female	1
14.	Helena	Grade 12 (HS)	17	Female	11
15.	Esmeralda	Grade 7	13	Female	1
16.	Pérola	Grade 9	14	Female	9
17.	Safira	Grade 9	14	Female	8
18.	Vitória	Grade 7	12	Female	7
19.	Alice	Grade 7	13	Female	1

**Source:** The authors.

**Table 2.** Characteristics of participating employees

	<b>Fictitious name</b>	<b>School title</b>	<b>Age (years)</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Time at school (years)</b>
1.	Mara Rúbia	Administrator	61	Female	32
2.	Guarda Belo	Monitor	57	Male	22
3.	Juliana	Pedagogical advisor	47	Female	29

**Source:** The authors.

School recess is a moment present in the life of every student, from early childhood education to high school<sup>11</sup>. It can be thought of as a locus of the construction of childhood from playing at recess. Despite its “free” character, it is an institutionalized space/time of the school, thus, it is not exempt from planning and mediating this space<sup>10</sup>. When thinking about the school planning and mediating recess, it was evidenced, in the responses of the employees, that the investigated school seeks to provide an interactive recess through its leisure spaces and equipment. This can be observed in the following statements: “to do the interactive recess, we have, for example, a toboggan in the courtyard, ping pong and foosball tables, a playroom space (with electronic game tables: boardgames), educational toys, blocks, puzzles, inflatable slides, and a ball pit. We have several ways for the student to have recreation” (Guarda Belo, 57); “[...] we seek to create an interactive recess so that everyone can see other possibilities of playing because today we, unfortunately, struggle with technology” (Juliana, 47).

The employees' speech corroborates what could be noticed during the participant observation: the provision of some leisure spaces and equipment that the children have access to, mainly during recess, are: a giant chess board and checker games, giant dominoes, foosball, ping pong, inflatable slide, “hit the target” with a beach ball, hopscotch painted on the floor, slide that takes students from the classroom floor to the patio, as well as a playroom, where countless toys and games are made available.

There are two areas, in the center of the three-story building, that make up the school: internal courtyard (covered) and external courtyard (uncovered). In the external courtyard, there is a small tree, flower beds, and a stage, with giant boardgames (such as checkers, chess, and

dominoes), two hopscotch games drawn on the floor, and jump ropes. In the inner courtyard, there is a canteen, some benches, a toy library, as well as the aforementioned equipment (table tennis, foosball, inflatable slide, etc.).

The students' perception about the recognition of these spaces and equipment corroborates with the affirmation of the employees and the observations made. That is, even without using the terms "equipment" and "space" when asked about "what is possible to do during recess?"; the students referred to the existing leisure spaces and equipment. This facilitated communication between researchers and students, helping to understand their perceptions, desires, and interests during recess. Even so, it is important to highlight that it is a school with a privileged reality concerning leisure spaces and equipment, mainly because it is private. However, this does not exclude the possibility of thinking about similar strategies for schools that have different economic conditions; given the benefits that these elements provide, for example, greater interaction/socialization at recess.

### *Students' desires and interests during recess*

Among the existing spaces in the school, the patios (internal and external) stand out as the spaces where students most like to stay during recess, appearing 59 times in the units of record, proposed through content analysis<sup>14</sup>. However, the units of context point out that the patios positively appear 18 times. On the other hand, the outdoor patio emerges as the space that one of the students least likes to stay during recess, as can be seen in her speech: "I don't like staying on the outdoor patio, because that's where the children are playing, and usually, they are running ..." (Safira, 14). It is believed that the justification of this student is given by the fact that she does not like noisy places, since she answered in the previous question that she prefers to stay in the inner courtyard "because it is quieter". It is speculated that another justification is the fact that the student is in the last year of middle school in the afternoon period and her recess, unlike the morning period, happens at the same time as elementary school, considering that these younger students are noisier.

The library is among the spaces where students least like to stay during recess, which was mentioned seven times, and the classroom, eight times. The students' statements regarding these spaces are illustrative: "in the library, you have to be silent and I can't stay there" (Alisson, 16); "I find it boring to stay in the library because I have to be quiet and I don't like it" (Miranda, 14); "It is terrifying to stay in the classroom all the time" (Maria Lua, 18). It can be seen that it is not only the young ones who like to make "noise", but the older ones do too, just in a different way, since they do not like to be silent. That is, they want to talk, socialize and strengthen friendships.

When considering the school as space, in which students spend a significant time of their lives<sup>4</sup> and reflecting on the aforementioned speeches, it is believed that the lack of interest in these spaces during recess occurs because students spend a lot of time in these places. Thus, recess is the only moment that they are effectively "free" in school. This idea can also be seen in the following statement: "I think I don't like being in the classroom. It's not that I don't like to learn, but we stay there a lot and it gets tiring" (Esmeralda, 13). It is possible to realize the importance of the space for school recess since rest and fun are necessary aspects of the life of human beings. In addition to this factor, it is emphasized that recreational time, away from classrooms, can provide students with freedom of choice and the possibility of socializing in an environment with less adult intervention, becoming one of the only parts of the day they can freely express themselves<sup>12</sup>.

As a counterpoint, spaces for learning need to be defined in the school curriculum, whether real or virtual. Among the first, the classroom and other school premises are considered<sup>16</sup>, such as libraries. These do not seem to evolve proportionally for the interest of schools, perpetuating that they are not very interactive and attractive to students. This is a

thought-provoking situation, since today's education requires the implementation of innovative teaching spaces, whether in a library or in a courtyard, capable of stimulating students' creativity and interest in countless ways. Hence, it is possible to affirm that a pleasant space directly influences how students appropriate it, making it necessary for libraries and classrooms to be included in innovative teaching proposals that provide a more informal and interactive education; especially because different pedagogical opportunities may arise from new cultural instruments<sup>16</sup>.

During school recess, it is possible to experience games and playfulness, making it necessary to create conditions and occasions for imaginative students to explore the different spaces and equipment<sup>12</sup>. In this perspective, through the participant observations and the image analysis, it can be identified that immediately after the bell rang and the classes moved to the patio, a euphoria and a dispute to see who arrived first at the foosball and ping pong tables (the two biggest equipment that was always available). When asked what they usually do during recess, this preference is evidenced in some statements: "I prefer foosball! Since I got here, I only play foosball, sometimes they call me to play ping pong, but I prefer foosball" (George, 18).

Employees confirm the above-mentioned students' preferences: "boys have a huge dispute over foosball" (Mara Rúbia, 61); "number one I would say is either ping pong or foosball [...]. At recess, they even fight over foosball and ping pong" (Guarda Belo, 57). From this triangulation of data (participant observation, students' and employees' speech), it can be seen that the equipment most used by students, in the investigated school, are ping pong and foosball. The preference for this equipment is mainly by the boys, leading to the belief that this preference is linked to the fact that they are closely connected with the competitive games, requiring specific skills. Other studies<sup>11,17</sup> also point out a preference, and a greater appropriation of boys when it comes to spaces and/or equipment that involve the dispute.

During participant observations, some girls reported that they prefer giant boardgames and skipping rope because the boys occupy the foosball and do not let them play. They still report that they feel embarrassed and uncomfortable with the boys wanting to control the game, preferring not to play: "[...] as there are only boys, I prefer not to play! Not even playing ping-pong, nothing! I don't like being there!" (Brazinha, 12). This statement, coupled with the observations, confirms that if any girl wanted to use this equipment, she would have difficulty finding enough girls to accompany her, causing her to give up playing. This aspect can also be perceived in other studies, in which girls had difficulties finding others to participate in games that were dominated by boys at recess, resulting in the difficulty of being accepted by them<sup>17</sup>, or even boys discriminating against girls' participation or disrespect their right to play<sup>11</sup>.

However, during the interviews, a student showed that the boys may be willing to share this space and equipment with the girls: "when I started to play soccer, the boys helped me and started teaching me; for me, it was cool!" (Stefany, 12). During the participant observations, it was also possible to witness a girl, who looked younger than the boys who were present, playing and beating all the boys who challenged her. These two girls were the exception among the number of boys that surrounded this equipment and "commanded" these spaces. This scenario, therefore, proved to be of tension, contradiction, and a certain conflict between boys and girls.

From these considerations, the gender issue present during the use of leisure spaces and equipment made available by the investigated school is evidenced. Consensually, the word "gender" refers to the social construct, that is, as an analytical category, it shows that males and females are social and historical constructs<sup>18</sup>. It is important to highlight that this analytical tool has unleashed new perspectives in the scope of Physical Education, redimensioning its pedagogical potential and giving visibility to the perception that, in the surroundings of corporal and sports practices, there are inequalities of access between boys and girls<sup>18</sup>, as it was possible to verify in this study as well. The importance of discussing gender relations within the school

environment is also emphasized, using playful moments, provided by leisure spaces and equipment during recess hours, since they are favorable for minimizing these inequalities.

Some students also showed interest in other spaces and equipment: “I also like to jump rope and wrestle” (Cláudio, 12); “Play checkers and jump rope!” (Brazinha, 12); “I play chess, checkers and dominoes or I jump rope and play hide-and-seek” (Geovana, 12). These statements demonstrate the importance of schools providing a wide repertoire of possibilities for students to choose, according to their different profiles, interests, and desires. The relevance of time and space for school recess is also noteworthy since it has the potential to provide interaction between peers, the manifestation of games and playfulness.

### *Playing in its different times and spaces*

Playfulness is directly linked to spontaneity, joy, and nonchalance<sup>8,12</sup>. In this perspective, it was possible to witness the appropriation of spaces by different students, and in different ways. Some students played tag, hide-and-seek, handstands, cartwheels, and cards. In the recess spaces, there never lacked the creation of games that proposed a moment of relaxation and pleasure, especially in the case of students who are in elementary school, as some reports demonstrate: “[...] the boys use the bottle caps to play with the goal ”(Brazinha, 12); “Three friends and I invented another game with our hands [...]” (Vitória, 12); “We play 'fight', pretending that we are in a horror movie” (Érick, 12); “We are always inventing games” (Alice, 13). Thus, it can be considered, taking Huizinga's ideas<sup>8</sup>, that recess is a playful space par excellence, since spontaneity, creation, imagination, and relaxation were present, as well as seriousness and tension.

In this perspective, the speech of an employee stands out: “you realize that we have many spaces built so that the children can look and understand that they are for playing. But the children like to create. Any space that they know is for playing, serves as space or equipment [...]. You will be able to observe many spaces where they will play with games that already exist, while other children create their own” (Juliana, 47).

It is believed that this space is one of freedom and autonomy for students, where they can create and play, enabling the child's motor, cognitive, and social development<sup>12</sup>, in addition to assisting in the integral construction of being, since games can be considered a fertile field of cultural, social or cognitive learning. The school promotes the formation of values (whether intentionally or not) as teamwork, respect, tolerance, and responsibility, nonetheless, in the same way, it can instigate violence, disrespect, and intolerance<sup>16</sup>. It is at the moment of playing that these values can gain more visibility. Therefore, it is necessary for the school to include curricular components aimed at humane training<sup>16</sup>.

The employees reported how they perceive the appropriation of spaces by children. An employee stated that the students take advantage of the spaces and equipment, because they motivate them, envisioning the discovery of games, which leads to a greater interest so that they can play together. Another employee, in turn, believes that they do not take advantage of these spaces and equipment: “many do not, because they just want to run after each other [...] what they do most is chase each other, play tag, hide-and-seek, but few students take advantage of the space to play”.

But isn't running a way to take advantage of space? Wouldn't it also be a time to release the energy that is bottled up during classes? For what reason is playing tag and hide-and-seek not seen as an exploitation of spaces? Some adults still fail to recognize the relevance of playing in the lives of children and adolescents. They do not understand that playing is a serious thing and that it does not necessarily need equipment to give legitimacy to its action. In this perspective, the playfulness of those investigated is directly associated with the aforementioned characteristics of playing. This issue can be widely seen in the documentary “Tarja Branca: the



missing revolution”, in which director Cacau Rhoden seeks to deconstruct the devaluation and depreciation of playing<sup>19</sup>.

During the observations, another space of the school, which was not built specifically for leisure, but notoriously became one from the meanings attributed to it, is the small space between the court and the schoolyard. It is narrow and dark, however, it piques the interest of many students, since there was always a group there. Their report is interesting: “[...] I really like to stay there because it is dark and I can stay with my friends who are in the 9th grade” (Brazinha, 12); “[...] because there I can play a game with four other friends that we like” (Érick, 12); “It is a very cool place because there are led lights and we like to stay there with the girls” (Stefany, 12); “I am in the corner near the court, talking to my friends” (Gabriela, 12). Unlike the spaces that had the largest leisure equipment, this circumscribed space was mainly occupied by the girls, where they could talk, for the most part, without the boys' interference. In view of the aforementioned gender conditions, it is possible to perceive a separation, even if involuntarily, of the school spaces. However, the outdoor patio, where the jump rope and giant boardgames are located, and part of the indoor patio tables were commonly used by mixed groups (boys and girls), with greater interaction between peers.

One student highlighted the dichotomy between leisure and education: “[...] it is because I feel that up there is the place for us to study. I don't feel well there at recess, because there we learn things and down here we can have fun at will” (Vitória, 12). This makes us reflect: why do we have the idea from an early age that leisure cannot be present in moments considered “serious”, such as in learning and at work? Why is it not possible to learn while having fun or have fun learning?

These questions perpetuate in the discussions about the relationship between education and leisure, drawing us closer to the ideas of Pouzas<sup>2</sup>, who discusses the school as an exclusively schooled environment, where the activities performed are only the result of bureaucratic instances of educational systems; to the point that it should be a promoter of actions aiming at the cultural and social gains of students, concomitantly with exercise and the right to leisure. In this sense, the need for schools to enhance existing spaces and equipment is emphasized, allowing them to experience leisure, to enable an appropriation capable of providing differentiated cultural and intellectual knowledge for children and adolescents.

Throughout the entire collection, students were uneasy when the bell rang for the end of recess since most of the students were reluctant to leave the spaces and equipment. They only abandoned them after the monitor approached and insisted that they return to their classrooms. It is believed that, as in the research by Pereira et al.<sup>12</sup>, the fact that they can play games at recess is one of the reasons why students would like to stay longer. In addition to this factor, it is considered that the interaction in these spaces is also one of the significant factors for the permanence of students after the bell since they can interact with other schoolmates.

### *Social relationships and interaction at recess*

Fewer and fewer children attend public places to play and interact with other children. Thus, school recess can be considered as a favorable space for the study of social relationships, since it is at school that interactions take place and that children meet and get to know friends, with the opportunity to interact and play with their peers<sup>12</sup>. It is at school recess that it is possible to observe how girls and boys play, in pairs, with classmates, in small groups or not<sup>17</sup>.

The study by Pereira et al.<sup>12</sup> corroborates these statements, presenting interactions with their peers, as the main reasons why students like recess. In other words, because it is the place where they live and play with their friends. This aspect became evident in this study, given its consistency in the speech of the interviewed students: “at recess, we can have interaction with the other classes, it is cool.” (Pelé, 17); “Many people come to jump rope, many students from

the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades.” (Gabriela, 12); “We always join the classes, there is always someone from another class in the circle games.” (Alice, 13).

On the other hand, it is probable to affirm that, at recess, socio-emotional conflicts also occur, as a space of tension and contradiction. For example, the aforementioned gender relations and the lack of skill of some students were observed, evident when they answered that they did not like to play because they could not score or they played badly and knew they would lose. These aspects reflected in disinterest on the part of these students, in the leisure spaces and equipment available, and consequently, they had more difficulties interacting in moments of playfulness.

Even so, characteristics of an inclusive space were the most evident by those investigated: “foosball is where I have the most fun, it is where I am most accepted! [...] because I went through a phase where I was excluded from the group, when I was not as accepted as I am today” (Stefany, 12). In this scenario, the game can be recognized as an element of inclusion, which can (and should) be used as a tool that minimizes the difficulties encountered, in addition to achieving other objectives, as well as school content in a playful way. Thus, the learning of content through playing can be instigating when this intentionality is verified and the interaction between peers can condition the students' view concerning learning<sup>12</sup>.

Playing in a group, working on a team, acting with respect for others in games are elements present in daily school life. Therefore, knowing how to coexist in a group implies confronting conflicts, and therefore, resolving these situations. For this, it is necessary to develop tolerance behaviors and learn to listen, since these are essential elements in the process of social interaction<sup>16</sup>. Based on this premise, it is possible to verify that recess also consists of a social learning space, in which the rules about different elements of the students' culture are understood through interaction<sup>17</sup>.

Children learn through interactions, in social relationships, or while playing<sup>12</sup>, an element that can contribute in different ways of learning (specific content or life). The learning, acquired through games, is significant, considering that it is closely related to the social context of school and the friendships established.

## Final considerations

It is of utmost importance that children and adolescents create relationships with leisure spaces and equipment because they provide greater social, intellectual, and integral growth for students. For this reason, schools must provide a wide variety of opportunities for students to choose, according to their individualities. It is also necessary to reframe these elements by teachers, whose focus is interdisciplinary.

It was possible to perceive the relevance of time and space for school recess since it has the potential to provide interaction between peers and the expression of games and playfulness. Besides, it is important to highlight that students can benefit from enjoying leisure time creatively, as well as through socializing with their colleagues. This study contributes to alleviating the existing gaps of the leisure spaces and equipment present in the private school and their appropriations, as well as encouraging the investigation of other studies on the subject. This analysis can provoke reflections on interventions, whether in private or public schools, for the promotion of spaces and equipment for students, with diversified games, aiming at a greater interaction between the students, in moments of leisure.

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