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The organization of pedagogical work in the literacy cycle: students' knowledge in action

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ABSTRACT

The Residência pedagógica Program (PRP) has as one of its main objectives the appreciation of the school as a privileged space for the production of specific knowledge and the inseparability between theory and practice in teacher training. In this article, we aim to analyze the contribution of that Program to the training of future literacy teachers, focusing on the knowledge construction process and literacy teaching practices experienced by residents of the Pedagogy course at UFPE, through the articulation between the initial preparation and continuous training of preceptor teachers. The results revealed that the PRP, as a teacher training program, provided opportunities for reflection and construction of teaching and learning practices in the classroom, which involved knowledge about the Alphabetic Writing System in an innovative and transformative way. The identification of literacy students' knowledge about writing stands out, the organization of pedagogical work based on the development of activities in daily school life and attention to the diversity of students' knowledge about writing, which contributes to reflection on the process of knowledge about the teaching practice of residents and preceptors and, also, for the construction of the professional identity of the literacy teacher.

Keywords: Residência Pedagógica Program; literacy practices; initial and continuing training.

RESUMO

O Programa Residência Pedagógica (PRP) tem como um de seus principais objetivos a valorização da escola como espaço privilegiado de produção de conhecimentos específicos e a indissociabilidade entre teoria e prática na formação docente. Neste artigo objetiva-se analisar as contribuições desse programa para a formação de futuros professores alfabetizadores, com foco na construção de conhecimentos e nas práticas de ensino da alfabetização vivenciadas pelos residentes do curso de Pedagogia da Universidade Federal de Pernambuco (UFPE), por meio da articulação entre a formação inicial e a continuada dos professores preceptores. Os resultados revelam que o PRP, como programa de formação docente, oportunizou reflexões e construções de práticas de ensino e aprendizagem em sala de aula, as quais envolveram o conhecimento acerca do Sistema Alfabético de Escrita de forma inovadora e transformadora. Destaca-se a identificação dos conhecimentos dos alfabetizandos sobre a escrita, a organização do trabalho pedagógico a partir do desenvolvimento das atividades no cotidiano escolar e da atenção para a diversidade de conhecimento dos estudantes sobre a escrita, o que contribui para a reflexão sobre o conhecimento acerca do fazer docente dos(das) residentes e preceptoras e, ainda, para a construção da identidade profissional do(a) professor(a) alfabetizador.

Palavras-chave: Programa Residência Pedagógica; práticas alfabetizadoras; formação inicial e continuada.

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The organization of pedagogical work in the literacy cycle: students' knowledge in action ¹

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INTRODUCTION

For the past few decades, academia has shown greater interest in studies that seek to reflect on pedagogical action, using the teacher as a reference in the research conducted. This is the most effective way to legitimize and value the work of researchers who operate in this field (Nóvoa, 1999).

Since the 2000s, Brazil has witnessed reforms and changes in the academic sphere regarding the ways that formative practices "offered" to teachers by universities are thought and proposed. Such changes, according to Ferreira and Cruz (2010, p. 38-39), have been marked, above all, by the perception that, from then on, one began to have of this professional: "the teacher is seen as a subject who has a history and whose life experience is, in one way or another, linked to their profession, thus characterizing professionalization, in this perspective, as an individual and collective construction through which the subject goes in order to constitute themselves as a professional."

Aiming to understand the practices of continuing education from the perspective of the teachers involved, as well as to identify the aspects valued in these meetings and the criteria they used to evaluate the actions developed in them, Ferreira and Leal (2010) analyzed excerpts from interviews conducted after the completion of continuing education projects offered by the Center for Studies in Educação e Linguagem - CEEL) of the Education Center at the Federal University of Pernambuco (Centro de Educação, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco - CE/UFPE). One of these projects was Pró-Letramento², which tended to teachers from the states of Pernambuco and Rio Grande do Norte, among others, from 2006 to 2009. Regarding the experienced they had in these meetings for training and pedagogical practice, the teachers highlighted the following positive aspects: (1) experiencing, in their classrooms, what had been discussed in the training, along with the opportunity to have these meetings in their own workplace; (2) the opportunity, on the other hand, to "theorize" the knowledge they already put into practice in their classrooms daily, understanding that although theory alone is not enough to support teaching work, it is extremely important to understand certain practices that take place (or not) in everyday school life; (3) the sharing of real experiences from their daily realities, as well as the interaction among peers, which came to be a great ally to their learning process during training, especially for those who had only recently started their teaching career; (4) the quality of the reading material and the videos presented to exemplify the topics discussed, which were not "overloaded" with excessive exploration of theoretical approaches underlying the suggested guidelines; (5) reflecting upon the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of their actions in the classroom

¹ Translated by: Flávia Alessandra Lopes Adolfo.

² "Pró-Letramento – Mobilização pela Qualidade da Educação – is a continuous teacher training program aimed at improving the quality of reading/writing and mathematics in the early years/grades of elementary education. The program is carried out by the Ministry of Education (MEC), in partnership with universities that are members of the National Network of Continuing Education (Rede Nacional de Formação Continuada), and with the participation of states and municipalities. It serves all teachers who are currently teaching the early years of elementary education in public schools" (Brasil, 2018).

toward their students' learning, as well as the valorization of the knowledge built from their personal, academic, and professional journeys.

The researchers prioritize the dialogue and the exchange of experiences related to explanatory academic theories. They consider, above all, what teachers think and suggest, as well as their diverse knowledge and the socio-cultural conditions in which their pedagogical practices take place. In this regard, we realize that continuing training conceived and developed in academic settings seems to be more appealing to those working in the classroom. Not only does it allow their teaching practices to be more effectively improved, but it also contributes to the construction of these professionals' identities.

In this sense, Chartier (2007) proposes what she calls "reverse path." According to this author, teacher training should be conceived from the practices developed by teachers in the classroom toward the construction of theories. The effectiveness of this endeavor would result from reflecting on their own actions, since these would be theorized in order to elucidate what they already know and do in their daily classroom practices.

Research on teacher training in Brazilian educational literature, conducted by scholars such as Caldeira (1995), Borges (2001), and Duran (1999), has also helped identify an investigative path related to the knowledge and training of teachers developed with characteristics of their own. They are aligned with an international trend in studies about teaching and teachers (Chartier, 2007; Goigoux, 2007; Schön, 2000; Tardif, 2008; Tardif; Lessard; Gauthier, 2001). According to Nunes (2003), the analysis undertaken by these studies has shown that the conception of teacher training that once aimed to equip these professionals by telling them how to carry out certain practices in their classrooms has been gradually replaced by an approach that suggests the opposite proposition, that is, the starting point should be the analysis of the practices that teachers develop in their classrooms. This emphasizes the need to discuss the knowledge teachers have and to consider their experiences.

Adding to this discussion, Goigoux (2009) states that academia, while acknowledging the uniqueness of each teaching practice, can (and should) play an important role in providing cues that help teachers reflect on their actions and, consequently, improve them. This approach moves away from viewing teachers as mere executors of pre-established models to seeing them as "mediators" in the teaching and learning of historically and socially constructed knowledge. The author emphasizes that it is necessary to consider that changes are brought about when teacher trainers themselves engage in discussions about theories developed in academic contexts, choosing topics based on what they deem relevant to debate with the teaching staff, taking into account the practical contributions that these theories can provide for reflecting on pedagogical practices.

The Pedagogical Residency Program (Programa de Residência Pedagógica - PRP) emerges as a vitally important policy for both prospective teachers in their initial training and for practicing teachers. For future teachers, the program provides an opportunity, through the preceptor, to understand the functioning of the school environment, reflect on the knowledge and practices of the teachers they are mentored by, and on the construction of teaching practice as a whole. As for the preceptors, the exchange of experiences with the trainees allows them to think about their own teaching practice and to articulate their knowledge, which often takes shape as knowledge in action.

The PRP has its origins in the integration of actions from the National Policy for Teacher Training, which aims to improve supervised curricular internships in undergraduate teaching programs by promoting the immersion of the trainee (resident) in the school environment. Meetings for studying, analyzing, and reflecting on teaching practices "assisted" by the residents are vital moments for contemplating the relationship between theory and practice. Considering teacher training within academic settings, that is, initial training, enables universities to face the challenge of focusing on the development of professionals who are aware of the reality around them. Their teaching practice takes into consideration a comprehensive education, so as to enable students to have critical, active, and effective participation in society. In this context, it is essential to consider a

training model that integrates human, technical, and socio-political dimensions cohesively in the educational process, with research as an inherent activity in teaching and learning (Candau, 2012; Libâneo; Alves, 2012), aiming at the formation of a "reflective teacher" (Schön, 2000).

1 POST-PANDEMIC LITERACY AND THE ORGANIZATION OF PEDAGOGICAL WORK WITH A FOCUS ON THE HETEROGENEITY OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE CLASS

Despite living in the 21st century, our country still grapples with serious issues when it comes to the literacy of children from less favored backgrounds attending public schools across different municipal education networks. The results of the latest National Literacy Assessment (Avaliação Nacional da Alfabetização - ANA), administered at the end of 2016 to Year 3 students in public schools nationwide, indicate that most of them present insufficient reading skills (54.73%), as they are unable to read and understand longer texts autonomously. Regarding writing, 31.62% of students achieved a low performance, either failing to produce the text proposed in the assessment or doing so in a rudimentary or inadequate manner (Brasil, 2017). Therefore, the results suggest that many students in public schools complete the third year of elementary education without being able to read and produce different texts. This situation has been significantly exacerbated in recent years due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for remote learning from 2020 to 2022.

Thus, the school emerges as an institution that reproduces the culture of social elites, perpetuating inequality of classes and reinforcing the failure of the economically disadvantaged (Chartier, 2007). Regarding failure in literacy, Soares (2016, p. 23-24) states that today this phenomenon presents itself differently, given that

[...] in the previous period, failure was mainly revealed through internal school assessments concentrated in the initial grades of elementary education, often referred to as "literacy class," while failure in the early years of the 21st century is exposed by external school assessments – state, national, and even international assessments. It no longer focuses solely on the initial grades of schooling but spreads throughout the entire elementary education, extending even to secondary education, showing high rates of poor or no mastery of written language. This highlights the significant number of students who are illiterate or semi-literate after four, six, or eight years of schooling.

Research conducted in the last decade (Cruz, 2012; Silva, 2019) points to the existence of children in the second and third grades of elementary school who have limited mastery of reading and writing. These studies reveal the difficulties teachers face in developing literacy practices focusing on the heterogeneity of the group's knowledge, which involves both the appropriation of alphabetic writing and the consolidation of graphophonemic correspondences, as well as reading and writing activities in different genres. On the other hand, they highlight the importance of collective work within the school for children's literacy, involving not only teachers but also coordination, management, and other members of the school community. The organization of pedagogical work involves many aspects of education and is related to "the meaning we attribute to the school and its social function; to the ways we understand the child; to the meanings we give to childhood and adolescence, and to the teaching-learning processes" (Goulart, 2007, p. 86).

When it comes to the literacy cycle, such organization involves several elements considered crucial to pedagogical practice, including school time, routine, the organization of the school's physical space, materials and teaching resources, as well as the "diversification" of activities to meet students' different levels of knowledge in reading and writing. When planning classroom activities, teachers need to not only have clarity about the most relevant path to achieve their goals, but also select resources and teaching materials that are suitable to what they intend to teach.

Recent continuing training programs at the federal level, such as the Pedagogical Residency Program (PRP) and the Teaching Initiation Program (Programa de Iniciação à Docência - PIBID),

have shown that there is a concern in terms of encouraging resident students and PIBID participants, as well as their teacher trainers, to reflect on the need to organize pedagogical work in the classroom in a way to make sure all students learn. In this article, we aim to discuss the contributions of the PRP to the training of future literacy teachers, focusing on the construction of knowledge and literacy practices experienced by residents in the Pedagogy course at the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE), through the integration between the initial training of residents and the continuous training of teacher preceptors.

2 METHODOLOGY

In October 2022, in a post-pandemic context, we initiated a Pedagogical Residency project in the field of literacy at UFPE. Among other objectives, our goals were: (1) to promote innovative teaching experiences within the initial training of the Pedagogy undergraduate program at UFPE; (2) to encourage the integration of students from the Pedagogy undergraduate program at UFPE to literacy and literacy practices in the early years of elementary education; (3) to contribute to the improvement of the quality of initial teacher training in undergraduate programs at UFPE through integrated actions between the university and municipal education schools in Recife, Pernambuco (PE); (4) to encourage the leadership of preceptors (school teachers) and the autonomy of undergraduate students (Pedagogy), as well as collective work in training processes; (5) to highlight the necessary theory-practice articulation for the training of Pedagogy course teachers regarding literacy, literacy teaching, and Portuguese language instruction.

This project involves the participation of two professors from UFPE, six preceptor teachers working in schools run by the Department of Education in the city of Recife and 30 undergraduate students (residents) studying Pedagogy at UFPE. For this paper, we will present data produced in three classes (first, second and third years) from two different schools in the municipal education network in the city of Recife/PE, UFPE's partners in the PRP, which we will refer to as School A and School B.

In the Teaching Policy document for the municipal network of Recife (Souza; Barros; Silva, 2021, p. 260), special attention is given to the Literacy Cycle, "a moment when students have systematic access to the literate world, and the text is the object of teaching, from which students will reflect on the principles of the Alphabetic Writing System in a dialogic way". According to the National Common Curriculum Base (Base Nacional Curricular Comum - BNCC), the literacy cycle should involve the first and second years of elementary school. However, the Recife Education Network "chooses to maintain the cycle of three school years, ensuring the rights and objectives of learning at the same level of competencies listed by BNCC, but deeming it significant to maintain one more school year in order to effectively complete the literacy process" (Souza; Barros; Silva, 2021, p. 208). Based on this document, we chose to carry out the Pedagogical Residency project in the first three years of elementary school.

Although Schools A and B are located in different political-administrative regions, they share some common characteristics: adequate teaching materials and technological resources, furniture and physical structure suitable for the age groups. Both schools also have a library with a large collection of books.

The first and third year teachers (T1 and T3 respectively) teach at School A, while the second year teacher (T2) works at School B. All three teachers have extensive experience with literacy classes. They are all educators; two of them have a specialization degree and the third year teacher has a PhD in Education. The group of residents of the three teachers is made up of 15 Pedagogy students, enrolled from the fifth term onwards. They have been observing and intervening in these groups since November 2022. We stress that the data presented in this article are the results of the experiences of the resident students in the preceptors' classrooms from February to September 2023.

3 BETWEEN "KNOWING AND DOING": THE RESIDENTS' KNOWLEDGE IN THE ORGANIZATION OF LITERACY PEDAGOGICAL WORK IN ACTION

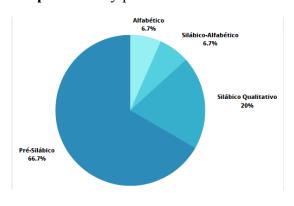
The Pedagogical Residency training involves regular meetings with university professors, preceptors, and Pedagogy students, thus creating a network for training individuals. According to Ferreira (2005), when the formative process is constructed by a diversity of actors who think and act on a daily basis, it shapes a network of relationships that is not only defined by its own culture, but is also full of meanings.

In the early stages, training meetings were held in large groups, with all the people involved in the process, and the aim of reflecting on what was taught at university and what was done in early years' classes regarding the teaching of reading and writing. During these sessions, the discussions proved to be very rich, as it was necessary to distinguish the individual and collective discourses constructed by people from the schools and academia from those elaborated about the school institution, based on technical, political and scientific rationality (academia/ministries and departments/union organizations).

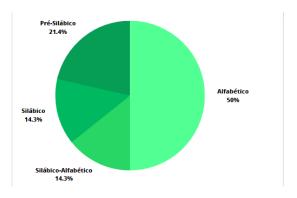
In other meetings, the training sessions involved the university teachers and the resident students in order to identify what they were experiencing in their daily classrooms and what had stood out in the teaching and learning of reading and writing. Thus, the information provided by the residents was discussed and studied by the professors and, at other times, by the preceptors in order to build collective actions that would contribute to better learning for elementary students. It was during these training sessions, at the beginning of the year, that the importance of assessing the students' knowledge of the Alphabetic Writing System was discussed so that, based on this data, activities could be planned that would enable all the students to advance in their learning.

Together with the preceptors of the three classes, the residents applied diagnostic activities to the students involving writing words, and built up a profile of each class. Graphs 1, 2 and 3 show the students' writing levels according to the psychogenesis of written language (Ferreiro; Teberosky, 1985) for the three classes covered in this article.

Graph 1 – Entry profile for Year 1 students



Graph 2 – Entry profile for Year 2 students



Source: Research archive **Source**: Research archive

Pré-Silábico
26.1%

Ortográfico
52.2%

Silábico Quantitativo
13%

Alfabético
8.7%

Graph 3 – Entry profile for Year 3 students

Source: Research archive

The graphs created by the residents and preceptors of each class were shared at a training session. The students noticed the heterogeneity present in the three classes, but in different ways. In class 1, Year 1, most of the students (66.7%) were at a more initial level of writing (pre-syllabic), but there were already syllabic-alphabetic and alphabetic children. In the Year 2 class, half of the students were alphabetic, and there were pre-syllabic children, while in the Year 3 class, a little more than 50 percent had alphabetic or orthographic writing, but some students were still at an early level of writing appropriation.

With this data, and under the guidance of the preceptors and teachers at the university, the residents devised intervention activities involving literary reading, working with literacy games and devising teaching sequences focusing on the diversity of students' knowledge and to enhance reading and writing skills. In this article, we will present data related to literary reading activities and literacy games carried out in the three classes mentioned above.

3.1 Reading literature in the literacy cycle

In recent decades, children's literature has become one of the main teaching resources employed by teachers to work with written language in the classroom, especially in nursery classes and the early years of elementary school. In general, the aim of literary texts is to move the reader; in order to do so, they use connotative or poetic language, in which the emotive and poetic functions predominate.

As a democratic environment, schools should promote the practice of simultaneous community reading whose aim is to collaborate to the construction of students' reading identities. In this respect, Paulino and Cosson (2009, p. 67) emphasize that for literary literacy to happen, the school needs to be involved, as it requires a specific educational process defined as "the appropriation of literature as a literary construction of meanings."

In the three classes, the group of residents developed reading activities for children's literature books with different objectives. In the first grade class, the teacher carried out literary reading every day as a permanent activity. The residents were sometimes responsible for conducting this activity. There was a reading corner with a variety of books, and the teacher encouraged students to borrow them and take them home as a way to develop themselves as readers and to help with their literacy process. Figure 1 shows a photo of one of the moments when books were lent out for reading at home.

Figure 1 – Borrowing books to read at home



Source: Authors' personal archive (2023).

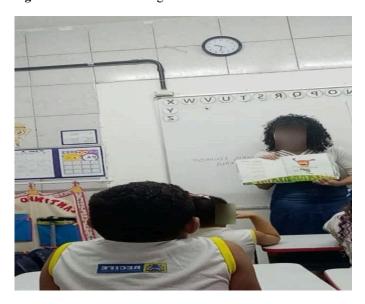
The Year 2 teacher, on the other hand, did not use to promote literary reading systematically, and the residents noticed the lack of a reading corner in the classroom. With the help of the teacher and the school coordinator, they built this corner using a book rack made out of fabric that the school manager was willing to purchase, as the classroom was very small. Figures 2 and 3 show, respectively, the reading corner (mural) and a resident reading a book at story time. With the help of the pedagogical coordinator, they selected books from the school library, which had a good collection of literary works, and, in making their choice, they took into account the heterogeneous knowledge of the group. With the corner (a wall of literary books) in the classroom, literary reading began to be carried out daily as a permanent activity by the teacher or one of the residents, and the children also became interested in reading the books in the classroom, especially those that had been read at reading time.

Figure 2 – Reading corner, Year 2, School B



Source: Authors' personal archive (2023).

Figure 3 – Resident reading to Year 2 students in School B



Source: Authors' personal archive (2023).

In the Year 3 teacher's class at School A, the practice of literary reading was a part of the daily routine. It either happened at the beginning of the day, with a storytelling moment led by the teacher, or when developing didactic sequences, or even by the initiative of the children, who chose a book in the reading corner at different times of the day. Figures 4 and 5 show photos of the reading corner in the third grade classroom, with the children reading.

Figure 4 – Students in the reading corner



Figure 5 – Students in the reading corner



Source: Authors' personal archive (2023).

Source: Authors' personal archive (2023).

In this class, the students play a leading role in literacy, reading and telling other classes the stories of the literary books they have chosen. The teacher mediates and collaborates by bringing in activities that allow them to explore the books. One of these activities involved reading a literary book (Figure 6) that the children received as a gift from the illustrator, who is a friend of the teacher's.

Figure 6 – Book used for didactic sequence "Poetizing"



Source: Authors' personal archive (2023).

With the collaboration of the residents, the teacher prepared a didactic sequence entitled "Poetizing", which included, in addition to reading and understanding the book, exploring the knowledge about various poems and different Brazilian poets mentioned in the work. By using various strategies, her aim was to address the role of the illustrator in literary works, enabling students to get to know the work of an illustrator based on the communication that took place between the students and the illustrator of the work. This sequence culminated in the construction of a book by the students, with poetry and illustrations created by them.

3.2 Using games in literacy classes

Literacy games are an important resource for helping children in the process of learning to read and write and enable them to advance in their hypotheses about how written language works without being forced to do dull, meaningless drills. When playing, children mobilize knowledge about the logic of how writing works, consolidating what they have already learned or gaining new knowledge in this area. By simply playing, they can understand the principles of how the alphabetic system works and exchange their knowledge with their peers. Working with games in literacy, among other aspects, may also include phonological analysis activities and help children reflect on the principles of the written language system, leading them to think about and systematize graphophonic correspondences. In 2013, as part of the National Pact for Literacy at the Right Age (Pacto Nacional pela Alfabetização da Idade Certa - PNAIC), the Ministry of Education (MEC) distributed a box of literacy games produced by CEEL/UFPE to all the classes in the literacy cycle (from the first to the third year of elementary school).

In our Pedagogical Residency project, the groups of residents from the schools involved developed activities with games, all of which were planned together with the preceptor teachers and the residents. In the Year 1 class, a few times a week, the residents worked on literacy games from the CEEL box with groups of students organized according to their knowledge of the written language system. Figures 7 and 8 show children with different writing levels (syllabic and syllabic-alphabetic) playing the game "Sound dice", which aims to develop phonological awareness by exploring the initial sounds of words (alliteration). Players have to find words that start with the same syllable. Figure 8 shows children playing the game "Word within words."

Figure 7 – Children playing "Sound dice"



Figure 8 – Children playing "Word within words"



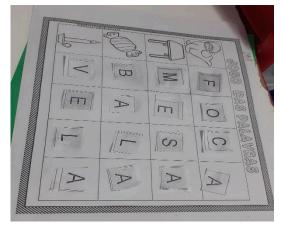
Source: Authors' personal archive (2023).

Source: Authors' personal archive (2023).

In the Year 2 class, activities involving literacy games were introduced by the residents and began to be developed more systematically. As the class was small (14 children) due to the size of

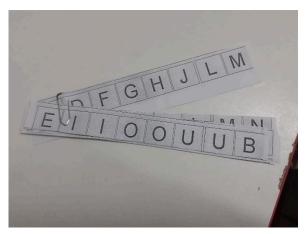
the room, the activities with games were mostly carried out collectively at the beginning of the lesson. This was the case with the "Word Game", which requires the children to form words corresponding to pictures using letters from the movable alphabet. The teacher, with the help of the resident, organized the class into pairs and gave each of them a card with four drawings (Figure 9) and cards with letters to assemble a movable alphabet (Figure 10). The pairs cut out the letters and, at the teacher's command, formed the words. The children were significantly involved in this game activity.

Figure 9 – Word game



Source: Authors' personal archive (2023)

Figure 10 – Movable alphabet



Source: Authors' personal archive (2023).

In the Year 3 class, the games were used by the teacher and the residents in the Recomposition Project, aimed at working with children who had initial writing hypotheses. The aim was to get the children to think about the sounds of words through the game, so that they could advance in the process of acquiring alphabetic writing. Once a week, the teacher organized the class into groups according to the students' writing hypotheses and worked with the games in the CEEL Box. The residents accompanied some groups and the teacher observed others. Figure 11 shows a group of students with an initial writing hypothesis playing the game "Bingo of initial sounds" with the mediation of the resident, while Figure 12 shows a group of students with an alphabetic orthographic writing hypothesis playing the game "I'm the one who writes."

Figure 11 – Students playing "Bingo of initial sounds"



Figure 12 – Students playing "I'm the one who writes"



Source: Authors' personal archive (2023)

Source: Authors' personal archive (2023)

Thus, in all the classes participating in our Pedagogical Residency project, the heterogeneous knowledge of the students was addressed, among other ways, through literacy games. These allowed the children to learn by playing and having fun.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Given the data presented in this article, it is clear to see how important it is to discuss teaching work right from the initial training stage, so that teachers can reflect on the most appropriate ways to achieve the objectives they set for their group of students. It is vital to understand that, in this training process, the experiences presented in this article show us that having contact with everyday practices in a participatory, constructive and purposeful way encourages the resident students to learn about the teacher's pedagogical practice from a real classroom made up of literacy students with different knowledge of the written language system. In this process, the role of the literacy teachers is to help these students progress in their learning based on their singularities.

From this perspective, the PRP is an important proposal for teacher training. This is because it gives undergraduates the opportunity to reflect on the school environment and everything that happens in it, more precisely on how pedagogical practices are built under the guidance of different teachers (coordinators, preceptors, new and experienced teachers), on the school "floor", combining theory and practice in a harmonious way.

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