

● **child studies** ○

N. 5, 2024

**EDITORIAL - CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF THE
CARNATION REVOLUTION: CHILDHOOD, FREEDOM
AND DEMOCRACY**

**EDITORIAL - CELEBRAR 50 ANOS DA REVOLUÇÃO DOS
CRAVOS: INFÂNCIA, LIBERDADE E DEMOCRACIA**

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The 2024 has been a special year marking 50 years of democracy in Portugal following the end of the Salazar dictatorship. While also commemorating the first half century of our own institution, the University of Minho, we wish to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Carnation Revolution with a special issue of the Child Studies journal, focusing in particular on the topics of childhood, freedom and democracy. These three words are highly significant to our research centre whose mission is to understand children's worlds and to contribute to their development, learning and wellbeing.

The academic study of children and childhood is a relatively new multidisciplinary field, yet one of the most active in the academic world today. Childhood Studies are international in scope, transcending geographical, historical and cultural boundaries and scrutinising the notion of childhood as a social category and children as social actors and subjects of rights, both locally and globally. This field has grown considerably in the last three decades, causing a paradigm shift in how children are perceived in research and giving rise to new ways of understanding and theorising about them (Prout & James, 1997). During the 1980s and 1990s many researchers made great contributions to the expansion of childhood studies, including the work of Jenks (1982, 1996), James and Prout (1997), Prout and James

(1997), Allison and Prout (1997), Allison, Jenks and Prout (1998), Hutchby and Moran-Ellis, (1998), and Morrow (1999). In Portugal, Pinto and Sarmiento (1997, 1999) were among those important works published internationally during this period, with many others following, from different perspectives, right up to the present day. In this context, other factors that have contributed to the social, political and scientific recognition of the field cannot be ignored, such as the role of publications in disseminating new knowledge, such as *Childhood*, a journal of global child research established in 1993 and, most notably, the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989.

Childhood Studies is characterised by its insistence on the need to investigate the multiple contexts inhabited by children and their lived realities, starting from their own perspectives and recognising their competence and their right to be listened to. This effort has contributed significantly to the production of new knowledge on issues such as children's rights and cultures, children's social worlds, what adults think about children and how this impacts the way they treat them, the meanings and ways in which children try to change their lives and the lives of the adults around them, children's social and political participation, and the ethics of research involving children.

Scientific research, especially in the social and human sciences, is deeply influenced by the social contexts in which it takes place. As Sarmiento, Fernandes & Tomás (2017, p. 41) argue, there is a "double influence of reality on the production of knowledge and of knowledge on the rationalisation of social behaviour and actions". Given this dual relationship, it is not surprising that child studies developed later in Portugal than in other countries. For a start, scientific research was severely restricted before 1974. Moreover, the socially and historically constructed concept of childhood (Ferreira et al., 2024) could only develop from the conditions of valuing childhood and children that emerged with the establishment of democracy after 25th April and its subsequent consolidation.

In Portugal, research on childhood only began to develop in a more significant way at the turn of the 21st century (Fernandes & Felgueiras, 2002; Sarmiento, Fernandes & Tomás, 2017). The delayed development of social policy in Portugal is also well documented in the literature. It was only after the revolution of 25th April 1974 that the country moved from a 'supplementary' or regulatory state to a 'provider' state (Ferreira, 2008, p. 562). Public, political and academic attention to childhood and children could only develop with the post-revolutionary recognition of civil, social and political rights and the establishment of welfare state structures. Poverty, lack of rights, repression and minimal public investment in education and science during the dictatorship hindered progress in various areas, including those that were already declining in other parts of the world in the 1970s.

The infant mortality rate in Portugal - measured as the number of deaths of children under one year of age per 1,000 live births - was 37.9% in 1974 (National Statistics Institute - INE, 2024). This rate did not fall below 10% until 1992. Factors

such as improved access to health care, better housing and nutrition, increased family incomes, expanded sanitation infrastructure and improved hygiene practices - all spurred by the 25th April Revolution - played a crucial role in such a reduction. Equally important were improvements in maternal and child health. The first framework for perinatal care was developed between 1974 and 1975, followed by the establishment of the Commission for the Restructuring of the Maternal and Child Health Sector in 1976. It is worth noting that, in 1970, only 37.5% of births took place in hospitals (Barreto & Correia, 2014). The maternal and child health reforms since the revolution have been transformative, positioning Portugal as one of the most successful countries in reducing infant mortality, which stood at just 2.5% in 2023.

In 1974, the minimum working age remained unchanged at 14 years (Decree 49408 of 24 November). It was not raised to 16 until 1991 (Decree 396/91 of 16 October). During the 1980s and 1990s, Portugal was criticised internationally for its child labour practices. In response, specific policies were introduced, starting with the first national survey on child labour in 1988, supported by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (Monteiro & Pereira, 2003). An inter-ministerial working group was set up in 1996 to address the issue, with representatives from the Ministries of Labour, Education, Social Security and Justice (DDC144/96 of 2nd April). Portugal ratified International Labour Organisation Convention 138, in 1998, setting the minimum age for employment at 15. The 1977 revision of the Portuguese Civil Code removed references to parents' 'duty of correction' and discouraged corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure (Madeira, 2014). In addition, Article 69 of the Portuguese Constitution of 1976 enshrined children's rights to protection from discrimination, oppression and abuse of authority within the family and institutions.

In addition, the first basic law for the education system was passed in 1986, extending compulsory education from six to nine years. This was further extended until the age of 18, in 2012. Over the years, the construction and development of the welfare state, with the enshrinement and guarantee of a series of rights, has led to a qualitative leap in the living conditions of the population, especially for women and thus also for children.

Despite some of the indicators and legal milestones already mentioned, children seem to have been an indirect subject in the Portuguese path of democracy building. The paradigm shift in child studies seen in other countries - from seeing children as mere objects of education, protection and care to understanding them as active participants in different spheres of life - is still taking place in Portugal. The recognition of children as autonomous individuals and not as "pre-social beings" (Sarmiento, Fernandes & Tomás, 2017, p. 45) largely depends on their social value and autonomy. In Portugal, the late realisation of economic, social and cultural rights, along with freedoms and guarantees, especially for women, has caused a certain delay in this transition.

Perhaps the same reasons can justify the scarcity of scientific research linking children's studies to the 25th April Revolution. A general search in RCCAP - Portugal's Open Access Scientific Repository on the Revolution of 25th April 1974 and its links to changes in childhood - leads mainly to research on children's literature on the Revolution (Ramos, 2014; Silva, 2007) and socio-historical works on different topics that deal with childhood education in Portugal over time. This search does reveal research which deals in some way with aspects linking childhood with the 25th April Revolution, including studies on children's theatre (Caldas, 2010; Bastos, 2002), literature and textbooks (Cruz, 2006), the context of early childhood education (Tomás et al., 2015), outdoor spaces in early childhood education over time (Bento & Costa, 2022) and on the local history of early childhood education (Castanheira, 2014).

A third type of work, which can be broadly grouped based on the relationship between early childhood education and democracy or children's democratic practices (Luís, 2017; Moniz, 2021; Tadeu, 2018; Gomes & Pires, 2023; Silva, 2022), has only emerged in the last decade and a half and is not particularly linked to the Carnation Revolution. This reinforces the argument that more needs to be done with regard to child studies in the Portuguese context.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise the very positive development that has taken place in Portugal over the last five decades in all sectors of activity, particularly in education. While it is important to emphasise key milestones, there is room for improvement in many aspects, especially at a time when we are facing threats and challenges of various different kinds (see also Flores, 2024). The collection of articles in this special issue addresses in one way or another aspects that merit reflection and which may form the basis for further developments. Collectively, the authors examine the last five decades from a diversity of conceptual and methodological perspectives, ranging from position papers to reviews and analysis of specific topics. The main goal of this issue is to celebrate the 50 years of the Carnation Revolution and to provide readers with a set of diverse articles that both contribute to and reflect the current state of the field. On the 50th anniversary of the 25th April, these writings also consider how the path since the revolution has reached a certain crossroads, with some of its achievements now under threat and its promises unfulfilled.

Eliane Santos Alves, Andreza Mara da Fonseca and Vanessa Marques D'Albuquerque, from the State University Paulista (UNESP) and University of São Paulo (USP), Brazil, in their article entitled "A discussion on the experiences of three Brazilian women in Portugal and the ideals of freedom and democracy", take an inquiry-based approach that draws on an experiential account of the time they spent in Portugal as part of a six-month advanced scientific doctoral internship. In their paper, they situate democracy and democratic practice in lived experiences and scenes from their everyday life in Braga within a socio-historical framework that discusses their subjectivities as women and as foreign women. Their approach links public safety and gender equality, cultural provision, public spaces and community

dynamics with the democratic legacy of Portugal's 25th of April Revolution. They suggest that this legacy is also experienced by children as they appropriate and experience what the city makes available to them. The authors provide a lively and hopeful description of how democracy is materialised in everyday experience, where citizen associativism plays a central role and democracy is practiced rather than given.

The second paper, "Freedom! Freedom? Children's dreams and the right to housing and life", by Marcia Aparecida Gobbi, from the University of São Paulo (USP), Brazil, examines the interplay between democracy, freedom and childhood, focusing on the struggles for housing and children's rights. Drawing on fieldwork conducted during the occupation of Rome's Metropoliz (2022-2023), the author explores children's experiences of precarious housing, highlighting their dreams as an expression of hope and social critique. Gobbi argues that democracy is an ongoing process that requires collective effort and that children should play a role in reinventing society.

The following two contributions "Songs in the shape of April: the 25th of April and music with words for adults and for children", by José António Gomes, School of Education - Polytechnic Institute of Porto, Portugal, and "Memory(s) of April in children's literature", by Sara Reis da Silva, University of Minho, Portugal, explore the potential of the arts to shape future generations by embedding democratic values in education and culture.

From a historical perspective, José António Gomes discusses how the Portuguese movement of politically committed song, known in Portuguese as *Canto de Intervenção* (protest songs), helped to raise social consciousness and promote resistance to the dictatorship before the revolution, and was an instrument of popular participation in the construction of democracy after 1974. The author explores the links between this musical movement and its relationship with poetry and literature, in particular its connection with children's music and its role in promoting democratic ideals after the revolution.

Sara Reis da Silva offers a perceptive exploration of 18 works of children's literature that re-imagine the Carnation Revolution in different ways. These texts often interweave narratives that refer to the historical antecedents of the revolution, highlight the transformative events of 25th April 1974, and provide contrasting portrayals of life during the dictatorship and the subsequent period of democracy, showing the evolution of social values and freedoms.

The following three articles deal with issues related to the construction of the Portuguese education system.

In the paper "Children's right to access to early childhood education: in search of democracy and freedom", by Teresa Sarmiento, from the University of Minho, Portugal, early childhood education is presented as a foundation for democratic values, fostering children's critical thinking, agency and participation. The author provides a socio-historical overview of the Portuguese early childhood education

system, tracing its path from the first steps taken in the 19th century and the advances made during the First Republic (1910-1926), through the setbacks during the dictatorship and on to the expansion after the revolution. Despite major progress in guaranteeing the right to early childhood education, there are still significant inequalities in access to kindergartens for children under three, with provision dominated by private and charitable institutions, while socio-economic inequalities continue to limit families' ability to access quality childcare. The paper underlines the importance of ensuring high quality early education by developing well-trained educators, creating safe and welcoming environments and promoting participatory practices, while also highlighting the critical need for professional recognition and equal status for educators across systems to reduce inequalities and build a more inclusive society.

The paper "50 years of inservice education and training of teachers (INSET) in Portugal: between autonomy of intentions and heteronomy of actions", by Eusébio André Machado, from Portucalense University, Portugal, reviews the last half century of continuous inservice education and training (INSET) of teachers in Portugal, tracing its evolution following the Carnation Revolution. The author describes the evolution of the country's INSET system from a foundational rationale based on four axes – "the school as the central unit of the education system"; "active modalities centred on professional contexts"; "the centrality of reflection on experience in professional development" and "the instituent nature of pedagogical innovation" – to a training logic based on instrumentalist and managerialist principles. The author proposes key tensions in the current reading of teacher education: 'localisation vs. deterritorialisation', 'collaboration vs. individualisation', and 'humanisation vs. dehumanisation'. Through his critical analysis, the author urges us to look to the transformative ideals of the 25th April Revolution for collaborative, contextualised and human-centred responses to today's teacher education needs.

Finally, in the paper "Itinerant Curriculum Theory: Fulfilling the Ethos of the Carnation Revolution', João Paraskeva, from University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK, reaffirms the importance of the Portuguese Revolution in initiating significant educational reforms, including universal access to primary and secondary education, the reduction of illiteracy rates and the strengthening of democratic governance in schools. However, systemic failures in education are highlighted as reflecting wider societal challenges such as economic inequality, immigration pressures, climate change and political polarisation. Describing how Portugal's education system struggles with material shortages, teacher shortages and curriculum reforms that often prioritise structure over content, Paraskeva highlights how education and curriculum development remain deeply rooted in Eurocentric epistemological frameworks, perpetuating 'epistemicides' by marginalising non-Western knowledge systems. Recognising the need to address contemporary global challenges and honour the revolutionary ideals of democracy and freedom inspired by the Carnation Revolution, the author argues that revitalising education requires abandoning

Eurocentric epistemological boundaries and adopting an Itinerant Curriculum Theory within a flexible and inclusive decolonial approach.

These papers highlight some of the major achievements over the last five decades, but they also identify aspects that deserve further consideration. There are several challenges facing the study of children and childhoods today, many of which are related to the promise of freedom and democracy generated by the Carnation Revolution whose 50th anniversary we have been celebrating. According to Wall (2011), democracy has been conceived as an essentially adult domain, with the result that children rarely enjoy significant democratic rights to influence policies, shape laws or elect representatives. Modern democracies have developed around the world over about two centuries and the actual exercise of power has gradually been extended from wealthy male landowners to include the poor, ethnic and racial minorities, women and other previously marginalised groups, albeit imperfectly and incompletely. However, he argues that this growing democratic inclusion has not generally extended to children, despite the fact that children under the age of 18 make up a third of all humanity. The deepening of democracy and the possibility and freedom for children to experience and exercise it fully, in its representative and participatory forms, is now a major challenge for the Research Centre on Child Studies, University of Minho, and we hope that this special issue will be a small step in that direction.

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Funding

This work was financially supported by Portuguese national funds through the FCT (Foundation for Science and Technology) and conducted within the framework of the CIEC (Research Centre on Child Studies of the University of Minho) with the references UIDB/00317/2020 and UIDP/00317/2020.

