

<https://doi.org/10.1590/198053147958>

# EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS AND QUALITY PARAMETERS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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## Abstract

The article, with a qualitative approach, deals with evaluation instruments and quality parameters for early childhood education. It is proposed to identify, describe and compare different models for assessing the quality of early childhood education, analyzing their suitability for application in the public education system of Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brazil. Among the models analyzed, two showed greater theoretical and methodological coherence to the context, because they are based on access, inputs and processes and provide for the participation of the educational community. The implementation and management of an evaluation system requires an inseparability between evaluation policy and evaluation instruments through intersectionality, fostered by public policies for children to meet the quality parameters of early childhood education.

EDUCATION ASSESSMENT • EDUCATION QUALITY • EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

## INSTRUMENTOS DE AVALIAÇÃO E PARÂMETROS DE QUALIDADE PARA A EDUCAÇÃO INFANTIL

### Resumo

O artigo, de abordagem qualitativa, trata de instrumentos de avaliação e parâmetros de qualidade para a educação infantil. Propõe-se a identificar, descrever e comparar diferentes modelos de avaliação da qualidade da educação infantil, analisando sua adequação para aplicação na rede municipal de ensino de Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brasil. Dentre os modelos analisados, dois mostraram maior coerência teórico-metodológica ao contexto, por se basearem no acesso, insumos e processos e preverem a participação da comunidade educativa. A implementação e gestão de um sistema de avaliação requer indissociabilidade entre política de avaliação e instrumentos de avaliação por meio da intersetorialidade, fomentados por políticas públicas para infância a fim de atender aos parâmetros de qualidade da educação infantil.

AVALIAÇÃO DA EDUCAÇÃO • QUALIDADE DA EDUCAÇÃO • EDUCAÇÃO INFANTIL

## INSTRUMENTOS DE EVALUACIÓN Y PARÁMETROS DE CALIDAD PARA LA EDUCACIÓN INFANTIL

### Resumen

El artículo, de enfoque cualitativo, trata sobre los instrumentos de evaluación y los parámetros de calidad de la educación infantil. Se propone identificar, describir y comparar diferentes modelos para evaluar la calidad de la educación infantil, analizando su adecuación para su aplicación en el sistema municipal de educación de Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brasil. Entre los modelos analizados, dos mostraron mayor coherencia teórico-metodológica al contexto, pues se basan en accesos, insumos y procesos y predicen la participación de la comunidad educativa. La implementación y gestión de un sistema de evaluación requiere la inseparabilidad entre la política de evaluación y los instrumentos de evaluación a través de la intersectorialidad, fomentada por políticas públicas para la niñez a fin de cumplir con los parámetros de calidad de la educación infantil.

EVALUACIÓN DE LA EDUCACIÓN • CALIDAD DE LA EDUCACIÓN •  
EDUCACIÓN DE LA PRIMERA INFANCIA

## OUTILS D'ÉVALUATION ET PARAMÈTRES DE QUALITÉ POUR L'ÉDUCATION DE LA PETITE ENFANCE

### Résumé

À travers une approche qualitative, cet article aborde des instruments d'évaluation et des paramètres de qualité pour l'éducation de la petite enfance. Il vise à identifier, décrire et comparer différents modèles d'évaluation concernant la qualité de l'éducation de la petite enfance, en analysant leur potentiel d'applicabilité dans le réseau municipal d'éducation de Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brasil. Parmi tous les modèles analysés, deux ont présenté une plus grande cohérence théorique et méthodologique avec le contexte, non seulement du point de vue de l'accès, des intrants et des processus, mais aussi parce qu'ils prévoient la participation de la communauté éducative. La mise en œuvre et la gestion d'un système d'évaluation reposent sur une indissociabilité entre politique et instruments d'évaluation par le biais de l'intersectorialité et doivent être stimulés par les politiques publiques pour l'enfance afin de se conformer aux paramètres de qualité de l'éducation de la petite enfance.

ÉVALUATION DE L'ÉDUCATION • QUALITÉ DE L'ÉDUCATION • ÉDUCATION DE LA PETITE ENFANCE

**I**N THE LAST DECADE, THE EVALUATION OF THE QUALITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECE) has been a central theme in the educational policy, presenting itself in several contexts as a strategy for the collection of data on the quality of services. Preceded by the *Parâmetros nacionais de qualidade para a educação infantil* [National quality parameters for early childhood education] (Ministério da Educação [MEC], 2006), the document *Indicadores da qualidade na educação infantil* [Quality indicators in early childhood education] (MEC, 2009) was also published by the Ministério da Educação [Ministry of Education]. The monitoring carried out by MEC (2011) established that most of the municipalities that used the instrument were small. The instrument was used with a variety of purposes, among which diagnosis of the respective networks. In the rede municipal de ensino [municipal education network] (RME) of Florianópolis, the *Indicadores da qualidade na educação infantil* (MEC, 2009) had a range of levels of adoption in the educational units, varying according to the incentive and tracking by the Diretoria de Educação Infantil [Department of Early Childhood Education] (DEI), and encouragement from the management team.

Within the scope of the actions taken at the federal level with regard to the evaluation of the quality of ECE, the publication of Portaria [Ordinance] n. 11.147 (2011) is noteworthy, which proposed the establishment of a Working Group (WG), coordinated by the Secretaria de Educação Básica [Department of Basic Education] (SEB) and consisting of specialists representing MEC, universities, union and social movements, among others. The work carried out by the WG resulted in the publication of the document *Educação infantil: Subsídios para a construção de uma sistemática de avaliação* [Early childhood education: Subsidies for the construction of an evaluation system] (MEC, 2012), establishing guidelines and subsidies without standardizing or indicating a specific evaluation instrument.

Given the clear demand for collection of data on the quality of ECE, the second edition of the Plano Nacional de Educação [National Education Plan] (PNE) establishes goals and strategies, including the one that sets the periodic evaluation period at every two years, in order to assess the quality of ECE, according to the national quality parameters, in addition to guiding public policies for this educational level (Lei n. 13.005, 2014, p. 2).

In 2019, and not in 2016 as predicted by the PNE, INEP<sup>1</sup> carried out the national evaluation of ECE as a pilot study in compliance with Portaria n. 271 (2019). This evaluation consisted in data collected in the School Census, which already took place, and in questionnaires answered by managers of educational units and educational networks and, at least, one faculty member from each ECE unit of the participating municipalities.

Regarding the evaluation of ECE from the perspective of monitoring, in 2009, Florianópolis and five other Brazilian capitals (Belém, Campo Grande, Fortaleza, Rio de Janeiro and Teresina) were selected to map the quality of attendance, using the North American model composed of the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scales (ITERS-R) and Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R), both in their revised versions. At the time, 147 early childhood education institutions participated in the evaluation, of which 30 educational units were part of the RME in Florianópolis. The evaluation was carried in partnership with Fundação Carlos Chagas, Ministério da Educação and Banco Interamericano de Desenvolvimento [Inter-American Development Bank] (Campos et al., 2011, p. 20). In 2015, Florianópolis applied the evaluation again using the North American model, but this time as a census with the RME's 87 educational units participating.

1 Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira.

Another evaluative experience carried out in the municipality, between 2013 and 2015, was based on the Italian scales *Indicatori e Scala della Qualità Educativa del Nido* (ISQUEN) – Indicators and Educational Quality Scale of Nurseries – and *Autovalutazione della Scuola dell’Infanzia* (AVSI) – Pre-school Self-Evaluation. This evaluation was based on a qualitative research perspective, with the objective of discussing the potential of the Italian instruments and the theoretical-methodological impacts of a reflexive and participant evaluation (Souza et al., 2017, p. 23), tied to the project *Formação em rede na educação infantil: Avaliação de contexto* [Network schooling in early childhood education: Context evaluation] (Souza et al., 2015). This study was undertaken in the Education department of Universidade Federal do Paraná (UFPR), represented by researchers Angela Coutinho, Gisele de Souza and Catarina Moro, with counselling from Italian researchers Anna Bondioli and Donatella Savio, from Università degli Studi di Pavia in Italy. The group coordinated the evaluation with supported by university researchers from four Brazilian capitals – Curitiba, Belo Horizonte, Florianópolis and Rio de Janeiro –, addressing the evaluation of a public municipal institution.

In order to comply with the Política Nacional de Avaliação da Educação Básica [National Policy for the Evaluation of Basic Education], Portaria n. 458 (2020), amended the SAEB,<sup>2</sup> on deliberating that the evaluation of early childhood education is of a census nature, with annual frequency, “aiming to gauge the mastery of competencies and skills expected throughout basic education, according to the Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC) and the corresponding national curriculum guidelines”<sup>3</sup> (Portaria n. 458, 2020). However, later, Portaria n. 10, of January 8, 2021, Art. 5, item 2, amends the previous ordinance and establishes that “the ECE will be evaluated every two years exclusively by the application of electronic questionnaires of a non-cognitive nature”<sup>4</sup> (Portaria n. 10, 2021). As for the scope, Portaria n. 250, of July 5, 2021, establishes the guidelines for the application of the SAEB in 2021 and defines that the evaluation of the ECE will be of a sample character.

Faced with a scenario of uncertainties regarding the evaluation methodology, the concern lies around the specificity of the age group from 0 to 5 years – which features principles and curricular guidelines based on play, interactions, and language – added to the diversity of Brazilian institutions. For the construction, or even adaptation, of an evaluation instrument, this research, of a qualitative and applied nature, aims to analyze and discuss the adequacy of models for evaluating the quality of early childhood education for the RME of Florianópolis, with the possibility of extending it to the context of the Brazilian ECE.

Regarding the specific objectives, the following were proposed: identify and categorize the main models for assessing the quality of ECE, both domestic and foreign; define the quality parameters that should be part of the evaluation instrument; compare the evaluation instruments, in order to identify their alignment with the ECE quality parameters; discuss the adequacy of existing instruments for the evaluation of the RME in Florianópolis, with the possibility of extending it to the context of the Brazilian ECE.

Based on the literature and legislation, the article presents some parameters and conceptions for evaluation of the quality of ECE. To this end, evaluation instruments will be listed and categorized, both national and foreign, describing them for further comparative analysis. Finally, the models that most closely approach the reality of Florianópolis are listed, considering

2 Sistema de Avaliação da Educação Básica.

3 In the original: “tendo como objetivo aferir o domínio das competências e das habilidades esperadas ao longo da educação básica, de acordo com a Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC) e as correspondentes diretrizes curriculares nacionais”.

4 In the original: “a EI será avaliada a cada dois anos exclusivamente pela aplicação de questionários eletrônicos de natureza não cognitiva”.

their methodological coherence, the principles of early childhood education, adaptation to the context, as well as the participation of the educational community.

### Quality evaluation parameters in early childhood education

This section will address parameters and concepts raised by academic research, as well as found in official documents.

These are relevant points to be considered in evaluating the quality of ECE: teacher training; the structure of the institution; the curriculum; pedagogical practices; early childhood policies; pedagogical work through the offer of times, spaces, materials, which promote the expansion of repertoires and pedagogical practices that enhance learning (MEC, 2012).

Bondioli (2014) presents a reflection on the objectives and purposes of the evaluation. The author does not recommend that the evaluation be based on levels of development or on children's proficiency tests, investigating by testing and specific tests is not advisable. "In daycare there are no fields of knowledge, no specific learning content, the continuous proposition that enhances experiences, verifying its effect on the child's capacities and development"<sup>5</sup> (Bondioli, 2014, p. 59).

Sousa and Pimenta (2018, p. 5) reaffirm this concept, pointing out that

. . . measuring through external and large-scale tests is not in line with the purposes of early childhood education or with the meaning of the evaluation of the child contained in the current legal regulations, which do not prescribe the evaluation for classification or selective purposes.<sup>6</sup>

The document *Educação infantil: Subsídios para a construção de uma sistemática de avaliação* (MEC, 2012) presents guidelines for the establishment of a systematic evaluation, considering the diversity of the context and the specificities of the institution, capable of supporting educational policies and programs. According to this document, the evaluation shall:

- be consistent with the purposes and characteristics of early childhood education;
- include actions coordinated by different levels of government;
- produce information capable of guiding initiatives of the different government agencies;
- articulate itself to institutional evaluation initiatives already carried out by public network and schools;
- be comprehensive, providing indicators for inputs, processes and results;
- consider the intra- and extra-institutional determinants that condition the quality of education;
- based on a democratic and inclusive perspective, not inducing competition to the detriment of shared relationships;
- promote a participatory process capable of enabling the formative dimension of the evaluation, stimulating different players and sectors to contribute to the definition and reception of quality parameters;
- take into account contributions of proposals and experiences disseminated at national and international level (MEC, 2012, pp. 18-19).

The document also presupposes a set of aspects that are the subject of the evaluation:

- 1) the *access*: refers to the provision of early childhood education in institutional spaces;

5 In the original: "Na creche não há campos do saber, nem conteúdos específicos de aprendizagem, a contínua proposição potencializadora de experiências, verificando seu efeito sobre as capacidades e o desenvolvimento infantil".

6 In the original: ". . . mensurar por meio de provas externas e em larga escala não se coaduna com as finalidades da educação infantil e nem com o significado da avaliação da criança que constam nas normativas legais vigentes, as quais não prescrevem a avaliação com fins classificatórios ou seletivos".

2) the *inputs*: relative to the offer conditions of established in legislation covering the financing, structure, guarantee of subjects and support services;

3) the *processes*: concerns management, curriculum management and relationships interactions present in the institution (MEC, 2012, p. 23).

The evaluation of early childhood education needs to provide for participation, dialog, negotiation for collective decision-making. Bondioli and Sávio (2013, p. 23) stress the importance of participation as a necessary criterion for quality, “all parties that are in any way involved and that work to consensually explain and define values, objectives, priorities, ideas on what the institution is like and how it should or could be”.<sup>7</sup>

In short, the importance of socializing, debating and making decisions about the evaluation instrument with teachers and managers who work directly in delivering the services stands out. For Bondioli (2014, pp. 51-52), the “assessment methodology should be formative and participatory, starting with data collection”.<sup>8</sup>

Festa (2019) corroborates by emphasizing the importance of promoting an assessment of ECE that actually respects the child’s right, the specificities of the educational stage, participation, improvement of the quality and delivery of public policies.

A *context evaluation*, according to Bondioli (2014, p. 65), “in order not to contradict the principle of negotiation – even when dealing with pre-made instrument – requires a choice consistent with a given reality, based on the critical reading of this reality and of the value systems”.<sup>9</sup>

However, when dealing with an *external evaluation* instrument in early childhood education, the data are collected and interpreted by the external evaluator. The context and subjects are observed and do not interfere in decisions about the results and subsequent referrals. In order to be trustworthy, the instrument needs to be validated conceptually and by statistical testing.

## Description and comparison of early childhood education evaluation models

The research, as previously pointed out, is qualitative in nature and is characterized as bibliographic and documental. It is also configured as exploratory, through searches in websites and literature, not restricted to authors or education systems, given that the instruments for assessing the quality of ECE have different characteristics, and may or not be linked to educational networks, be recent or under study, drafting or review and are even being tested in the contexts.

In 2018, Sousa and Pimenta undertook a bibliography survey of production dealing with the theme of the ECE quality assessment. The researchers point out the lack of consensus among the authors regarding approach, as well as linearity in type and purpose. The evaluation models are diverse and present different conceptions and may be in connection with the evaluation of children, institutions, faculty and programs, for instance.

Pimenta (2017) presents a detailed review of the main models for assessing the quality of ECE. In addition to the author, the works of Becchi et al. (2014), Bondioli (2009), Harms et al. (2006), Harms (2013), Marcuccio and Zanelli (2013), Moro (2018), Moro and Souza (2016), Motiejunaite et al. (2014), Myers (2011), Martínez Preciado (2010), Souza et al. (2017) and Tayler (2014) were found in the literature.

7 In the original: “a todos que com ela estão envolvidos de algum modo e que trabalham para explicitar e definir de maneira consensual valores, objetivos, prioridades, ideias sobre como é a instituição e sobre como deveria ou poderia ser”.

8 In the original: “metodologia da avaliação deve ter caráter formativo e participativo, desde a coleta de dados”.

9 In the original: “para não contradizer o princípio da negociação – mesmo quando se trata de um instrumento pré-confeccionado – necessita de uma escolha coerente com determinada realidade, a partir da leitura crítica desta e dos sistemas de valores”.

Pimenta (2017) classifies the evaluation instruments into two categories of analysis: focusing on the development of the children and focusing on environments, inputs and processes.

In models focused on the children's development, the evaluation assigns the concept of quality from the level of learning achieved by the children. Among the instruments that follow this conception, the following can be mentioned: Early Years Foundation Stage; COR – Child Observation Record;<sup>10</sup> ASQ – Ages & Stages Questionnaires; iPIPS – Performance Indicators in Primary Schools: Baseline Assessment; and PISA Baby – Program for International Student Assessment.

The second category of analysis, which features quality evaluation in early childhood education with a focus on environments, inputs and processes, evaluating the service delivery conditions. The following are aligned with this concept: ITERS-R and ECERS-R; ISQUEN and AVSI; ECCP (*Escala de evaluación de la calidad educativa en centros pré-escolares*); NQS (*National Quality Standard*); IDEA (*Evaluation proposal by the Instituto de Evaluación y Asesoramiento Educativo*); *Qualità Lúdica (Strumento per l'analisi della Qualità Lúdica del Nido)*; ERVIS (*Elementi Per Rilevare and Valutare L'integrazione Scolastica*); SPRING (*Strumenti per lo Sviluppo di Processi Riflessive e Indagini valutative Nei Nidi de parte dei Gruppi di Lavoro Educativi*); and *Indicadores da qualidade na educação infantil*.

The *Indicadores da qualidade na educação infantil* served as a reference in building evaluation instruments adapted to different networks and education systems, such as: the *Indicadores de qualidade da educação infantil paulistana* [Quality indicators of early childhood education in São Paulo], which cover two additional dimensions in relation to the base document (Secretaria Municipal de Educação [Municipal Secretary of Education], 2016); the *Indicadores da qualidade na educação infantil da rede municipal de ensino de Salvador (Indique)* [Early childhood education quality indicators of the municipal school network of Salvador], which assign responsibilities for managing the evaluation result beyond the institution (Secretaria Municipal de Educação [Municipal Secretary of Education], 2016); and the *Indicadores de qualidade da educação infantil do Distrito Federal* [Early childhood education quality indicators of Distrito Federal], in line with the Base Nacional Comum Curricular [National Common Curriculum Base] (BNCC) (Secretaria de Estado de Educação [State Department of Education], 2019).

Another evaluative model identified in the literature is the MELQO – Measuring Early Learning Quality and Outcomes (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [Unesco], 2017), with a hybrid methodology, focusing on both, the children's development and in the learning environments.

Next, the models based on *environments, inputs and processes* will be described in a detailed and structured way, with a view to supporting the comparison between them and the subsequent verification of their suitability to the reality of the RME of Florianópolis. Models involving assessing the child's development will not be addressed in the next section, since these tend to disregard the existence of different childhood realities and the non-linearity of child development pace, as described in the second section.

### Description of evaluation models

This section describes the quality evaluation models for early childhood education, based on environments, inputs and processes, addressing the following aspects:

10 The HighScope Educational Research Fund (HighScope, 2005) developed two assessment tools: the Child Observation Record (COR), focusing on the development of the child; and the Program Quality Assessment (PQA), focusing on processes covering various areas (learning environment; daily routine; adult-child interaction; curriculum planning and evaluation; Involvement of parents; qualification and personnel development; program management). This program was one of the researched for drafting the *Indicadores da qualidade na educação infantil* (MEC, 2009). However, it will not be addressed in the article due to being an encompassing quality assessment program as well as due to the lack of access to its full content.

- type of evaluation: classified as self-evaluation, meta-evaluation, hetero-evaluation, external evaluation. The instrument feature one or combine two or more of these types;<sup>11</sup>
- methodology: the process, data collection strategies, the presence of evaluators.
- time: period allotted for observation and data collection;
- indicators: operational variables that verify the level of quality, valuation;
- participation: promotes the reflection of different segments (professionals and families) on pedagogical experiences and their educational values;
- results: related to the objective, covering the parameters desired;
- post-results: post-result referrals, action and improvements plan;
- viability: presents contextual relevance, achievable indicators, aligned with the guidelines and specificity of ECE, financial viability, qualifies evaluators;
- validity and reliability: has internal consistency, capacity to represent and give value to the reality evaluated with comprehensiveness and articulation to quality parameters;
- maturity: refers to the level of efficiency of the instrument in driving improvements and its capability to adapt in different contexts and moments.

Based on the information of the bibliographic reference, Chart 1 describes the instruments for the purpose of knowing each model's particularities.

### CHART 1

#### Description of early childhood education evaluation models

ITERS-R and ECERS-R - United States					
Type	External evaluation				
Methodology	An external evaluator observes the spaces and environments, identifies, and assigns quality to indicators.				
Indicators	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>ITERS-R</th> <th>ECERS-R</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Evaluates the space and furniture; personal care routines; speak and understand; activities; interaction; structure of the program, parents, and staff, with 39 items detailed in 455 indicators.</td> <td>Evaluates the space and furniture; personal care, language, and reasoning routines; activities; interaction, program structure; parents and staff, with 43 items and 470 indicators.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	ITERS-R	ECERS-R	Evaluates the space and furniture; personal care routines; speak and understand; activities; interaction; structure of the program, parents, and staff, with 39 items detailed in 455 indicators.	Evaluates the space and furniture; personal care, language, and reasoning routines; activities; interaction, program structure; parents and staff, with 43 items and 470 indicators.
ITERS-R	ECERS-R				
Evaluates the space and furniture; personal care routines; speak and understand; activities; interaction; structure of the program, parents, and staff, with 39 items detailed in 455 indicators.	Evaluates the space and furniture; personal care, language, and reasoning routines; activities; interaction, program structure; parents and staff, with 43 items and 470 indicators.				
Time	One day, 3.5-hour observation period.				
Participation	Do not feature participatory characteristic, only queries parents and team when the external evaluator cannot identify the indicators in the environment.				
Results	Data and information are collected and measured, and a value is attributed by the evaluator who does not discuss the results of the evaluation.				
Post-results	The external evaluator provides indications on points for improvement and action strategies.				
Viability	Viable for ease of access and little time in the preparation of external evaluators.				
Validity and reliability	Valid and reliable for being comprehensive with common parameters of early childhood education, facilitating quality mapping in diverse social and educational realities.				
Maturity	Degree of maturity established by having been applied in different historical times and in different contexts of the United States and later in countries of the five continents.				
Source: Harms et al. (2006), Harms (2013) and Pimenta (2017).					
ISQUEN and AVSI - Italy					
Type	Meta-evaluation and self-assessment				
Methodology	Comprising an external evaluator, internal evaluators (among them, an articulator) and other segments of the institution (families and professionals). Present pre-defined indicators and promote debate among participants in a procedural and formative manner.				

(to be continued)

11 Self-evaluation: the institution makes an internal evaluation based on the indicators of an evaluation instrument. Meta-evaluation: the objective is to assess the evaluation. Hetero-evaluation: evaluation undertaken by one or more people or entities that are not being evaluated at the moment (Gariboldi & Maselli, 2018).

(continuation)

<i>Indicators</i>	ISQUEN Subjects, contexts and practices, the knowledge of doing, guarantees.	AVSI Educational experience, professional activities, adults, and their relations, guarantees, structure.
<i>Time</i>	Varies between institutions. It does not prescribe the application time or frequency.	
<i>Participation</i>	Of a negotiated and dialog-based nature, provide for the participation of all segments.	
<i>Results</i>	Items in disagreement are socialized in order to reflect and find consensus from conception, values of that reality and the principles of early childhood education.	
<i>Post-results</i>	Drafting a collective action plan, involving everyone in improvements.	
<i>Viability</i>	Due to being procedural and given the interaction of the external evaluator, as articulator of the instrument, require higher qualification and more time.	
<i>Validity and reliability</i>	Valid and reliable. Feature internal consistency, the evaluation was constructed from the adaptation of ITERS and ECERS, foresee adaptation to contextual reality.	
<i>Maturity</i>	Degree of maturity established, also applied in other countries. However, due to evaluating the context, require adaptation to the reality observed.	
Source: Becchi et al. (2014), Pimenta (2017) and Souza et al. (2017).		
<b>ECCP – Mexico</b>		
<i>Type</i>	External evaluation	
<i>Methodology</i>	Evaluation of programs carried out by external evaluators. The instrument combines observation of spaces and interviews with principals and faculty with respect to the institution and classrooms.	
<i>Indicators</i>	Establishment, resources, educational process, educational management, family and community relations, classroom, resources.	
<i>Time</i>	External evaluators: visits at the beginning and end of the school year. Two days with interviews, families, and children. Three visits: one to discuss the results, verifying their validity and two to develop improvement actions with teachers and principals. And, finally, three visits to check the deployment of said actions.	
<i>Participation</i>	The instrument combines observation and interviews, but the quality opinion is issued by external evaluators.	
<i>Results</i>	Improvements were noted in the quality of infrastructure, materials, management, health, institutional identity, daycare-family relationship.	
<i>Post-results</i>	Evaluation feedback is the basis for the continuity of curricula and reorienting teacher training and supervision.	
<i>Viability</i>	Instrument constructed by the Mexican educational system between 2003 and 2007, sought to adapt to the guidelines (general principles of early childhood education), viable for that context.	
<i>Validity and Reliability</i>	Not described. Instrument in test period for a standard evaluation for a diverse and multicultural context, which coincided with the expansion of the offer of openings.	
<i>Maturity</i>	Maturity level not defined. Has been reformulated five times, including new dimensions: health, climate, children with disabilities.	
Source: Myers (2011) and Martínez Preciado (2010).		
<b>NQS – Australia</b>		
<i>Type</i>	External evaluation	
<i>Methodology</i>	External evaluator evaluates the quality of services. Visits of authorized agent to observe the spaces, question, analyze documents, check the application of the plan.	
<i>Indicators</i>	Educational and practical program; children's health and safety; physical environment; personnel arrangements; relationships with children; collaborative partnerships with families and communities; leadership and management of services.	
<i>Time</i>	Application time in not described.	
<i>Participation</i>	Participation limited to professionals and families. External evaluators have major influence on the decision on the outcome.	
<i>Results</i>	Legislation provides for the dissemination of results (regulatory assessment). Quality levels must be achieved for accreditation of institutions.	
<i>Post-results</i>	Penalties are provided by law for institutions not meeting quality levels established in the improvement plan. Subject to accountability of professionals, institutions, and suspensions of services.	

(to be continued)

(continuation)

<i>Viability</i>	Viable. Because it is established, articulated, and guaranteed by law, resources for execution are provided for.
<i>Validity and reliability</i>	Recognizes the existence of multicultural contexts, presents coherence with national guidelines, making the instrument reliable and valid, but sets precedents for ranking of institutions.
<i>Maturity</i>	It has consistent maturity level. It is systemic, comprehensive, nationally standardized.
Source: Tayler (2014) and Pimenta (2017).	
<b>IDEA – Spain</b>	
<i>Type</i>	Self-assessment
<i>Methodology</i>	Voluntary participation by institution. Comprised of steps: a) information collection: interviews, review of documents, observation, application of questionnaires; b) valuing: drafting of reports and highlighting strengths and weaknesses; c) decision-making: proposals for improvement.
<i>Indicators</i>	Faculty qualification, number of children per classroom, physical structure in relation to health and safety (in buildings, facilities, indoor and outdoor equipment), the curriculum and learning and educational practice.
<i>Time</i>	Instrument deployment time is not described.
<i>Participation</i>	Participation conditional on the evaluation questionnaire applied to families and faculty. External evaluators define the level of quality.
<i>Results</i>	Highlights institution's weaknesses and strengths.
<i>Post-results</i>	Improvements are proposed, but no description on how to do it.
<i>Viability</i>	Does not describe difficulty or success in the application.
<i>Validity and reliability</i>	Since it is a self-assessment by volunteer institution adoption, the information is insufficient regarding efficiency, validity and reliability.
<i>Maturity</i>	It does not describe the level of maturity.
Source: Motiejunaite et al. (2014) and Pimenta (2017).	
<b>QUALITÀ LÚDICA – Italy</b>	
<i>Type</i>	Self-evaluation
<i>Methodology</i>	Systematic observation of the spaces and data collection by evaluators on the expansion of the repertoire of games and the playful behaviors and competencies of the children.
<i>Indicators</i>	Educational project; space (in the room, in the internal and external common areas); materials (in the room, in the internal and external common areas); time; group composition; adult and game.
<i>Time</i>	Application time is not described.
<i>Participation</i>	Promotes participation from the perspective of context assessment.
<i>Results</i>	The data collected are discussed with the external evaluator and the segments of the educational community to reach a consensus.
<i>Post-results</i>	Not described.
<i>Viability</i>	Not described, requires knowledge about child development and game-based activities, requiring greater qualification and mediation of the external evaluator.
<i>Validity and reliability</i>	Subjective evaluation depends on the interpretation of the evaluators. The instrument does not present sufficient information on the degree of reliability.
<i>Maturity</i>	Level of maturity is not described. Still a pilot/research project.
Source: Moro and Souza (2016).	
<b>ERVIS</b>	
<i>Type</i>	Self-evaluation – inclusive education
<i>Methodology</i>	Comprised of five areas evaluated, subdivided into 41 items, observation of spaces performed by professionals preferably trained in inclusive education, but improvements target all children.

(to be continued)

(continuation)

<i>Indicators</i>	Structure; qualification; professional activities; relationship among adults; integration process.
<i>Time</i>	Application time is not described.
<i>Participation</i>	Participatory, dialog- based with the professionals of the institution.
<i>Results</i>	Data targets identifying the presence or absence of significant factors for the education of children with disabilities.
<i>Post-results</i>	With the results, a specific project is drafted, with participation by faculty in proposing, implementing, evaluating, and modifying personalized paths designed to teach children with "disabilities".
<i>Viability</i>	Contextual, requires specific training in special education.
<i>Validity and reliability</i>	Insufficient information is provided on the degree of reliability, since it depends on the interpretation of the evaluators, as well as the mastery of inclusive processes.
<i>Maturity</i>	The level of maturity could not be identified.
Source: Bondioli (2009) and Pimenta (2017).	
<b>SPRING - Italy</b>	
<i>Type</i>	Self-evaluation and hetero-evaluation
<i>Methodology</i>	External evaluator makes the initial contact, meetings, interviews and observations of spaces and practices, preparation of the final report on the data collected, debated, and analyzed for the return to the institution. With dimensions that relate to each other, they serve both for self-assessment and hetero-assessment. Quantifiable data is not used, being totally descriptive, requires time for subjectivity, including to consult the results.
<i>Indicators</i>	Organization of the educational context; functioning of the working group; the institution's relations with families and the community; evaluation processes.
<i>Time</i>	On average six months. Reapplication depends on the progress achieved in the improvement plan.
<i>Participation</i>	Provides for the participation of the different segments of the institution, formative, dialog-based, debate and confrontation, including pedagogical concepts for the quality negotiated.
<i>Results</i>	Drafting of improvement plan.
<i>Post-results</i>	To put improvement plan into practice with the changes and continuities indicated.
<i>Viability</i>	Viable, in a systemic perspective, with qualified human structure, of specific knowledge about the instrument and pedagogical conception to support the institution.
<i>Validity and reliability</i>	Offers internal consistency, by presenting analysis of the context from the standpoint of different segments, providing validity and reliability.
<i>Maturity</i>	Not described. Recently created instrument.
Source: Marcuccio and Zanelli (2013) and Moro (2018).	
<b>EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION QUALITY INDICATORS - Brazil</b>	
<i>Type</i>	Self-evaluation
<i>Methodology</i>	Participants are divided into seven teams, one for each dimension, with coordinator and reporter. The quality level is based on the colors of the semaphore. At the conclusion of this stage, the subgroups return to plenary and each dimension is summarized, in order to negotiate and reach a consensus on the outcome and prepare an improvement plan.
<i>Indicators</i>	Institutional planning; multiplicity of experiences and languages; interactions; health promotion; spaces, materials, and furniture; faculty and other professionals qualifications and working conditions; cooperation and exchange with families and participation in social protection networks.
<i>Time</i>	One day.
<i>Participation</i>	Participation and positioning of the different segments of the institution is essential.
<i>Results</i>	To identify the institution's strengths and weaknesses for the purpose of drafting an action plan consisting of: dimension, indicator, problems, actions, responsible and deadlines.

(to be continued)

<i>Post-results</i>	Monitoring of the action plan by all segments is not proposed, nor does it propose attributions to the Secretaria Municipal de Educação [Municipal Department of Education] and/or public policies.
<i>Viability</i>	Accessible and easy to apply.
<i>Validity and reliability</i>	Not being formative interferes with validity and reliability. Depends on the design and recognition of the educational community to identify the quality of services.
<i>Maturity</i>	Maturity level is not described but can be applied at different times and contexts.
Source: MEC (2009).	

Source: Authors' elaboration.

## Comparative analysis of quality evaluation models in early childhood education

Starting from the survey of the characteristics of the foreign and national evaluation models, this section intends to compare them on criteria that attempt to reflect the parameters to be addressed in an evaluative model to align it with the principles of early childhood education. These comparison criteria were defined based on the study of quality parameters presented in the second section.

Chart 2 shows the results of the comparative analysis between the evaluation models of early childhood education for the criteria established.

### CHART 2

#### Comparative analysis between early childhood education evaluation models

Criteria	ITERS-R/ ECERS-R – USA	ISQUEN/AVSI – Italy	ECCP – Mexico	NQS – Australia	IDEA – Spain	Qualità Lúdica – Italy	ERVIS – Italy	SPRING – Italy	Indicadores da qualidade – Brazil
1. In line with the Brazilian curricular guidelines of early childhood education (ECE)	@	@	@	@	@	@	@	@	S
2. Indicates the quality standard, according to the principles and parameters of the Brazilian ECE	@	@	@	@	@	!	!	@	S
3. Considers values and purposes of the context as quality parameters	*	S	@	@	!	S	S	S	S
4. Promotes the participation of all segments of the educational community	*	S	*	N	*	S	S	S	S
5. The methodology provides for external evaluator and internal evaluator	N	S	N	N	N	S	S	S	N
6. Promotes evaluation as a formative process	N	S	N	N	N	S	S	S	*
7. Because of being dialog-based, there is consensus on the result for the validation of the construct	N	S	N	N	N	S	S	S	S
8. Provides for the collective drafting of the improvement plan and action management	N	S	N	N	N	S	S	S	S
9. Enables monitoring of the improvement plan by the educational community	N	S	@	@	@	!	!	S	S
10. Provides for inter-sectorality through an external support network for the institution	N	*	N	N	!	!	N	N	*
11. Presents validity, reliability, and consolidated maturity levels	S	S	*	S	!	!	!	!	*
Legend: [S]: Yes; [N]: No; [*] Provides, but does not guarantee; [@]: Needs adaptation; [!]: Insufficient information.									

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Of the models analyzed, only the *Indicadores da qualidade na educação infantil* can be perceived to be fully aligned with the Brazilian ECE curricular guidelines, as well as being the only one that indicates a quality standard in accordance with the national ECE principles and parameters. It was defined as:

. . . joins the discussion around the concept of quality, flexible, negotiable in view of the different perspectives adopted: socially constructed; context-dependent; based on rights, needs, demands, knowledge and possibilities. The following are liable to assessment: policies for early childhood education, their implementation and monitoring; the pedagogical proposals of early childhood education institutions; the relationship established with the families of the children; regular and ongoing training of teachers and other professionals; the infrastructure necessary for the functioning of these institutions. Regarding the evaluation of children, it reiterates that this should not imply the retention of children in early childhood education.<sup>12</sup> (MEC, 2015, pp. 16-17).

Together with the *Indicadores da qualidade na educação infantil*, the Italian evaluation instruments ISQUEN/AVSI, *Qualità Lúdica*, ERVIS and SPRING, due to their capability of adapting to the context, are the ones that most address items that promote the criteria established.

As for the criteria related to promotion, participation of the different segments of the institution, consideration of contextual diversity in the evaluation, promotion of training during the evaluation process and provision of external evaluator and internal evaluator to ensure consensus on the outcome of the evaluation, the Italian models ISQUEN/AVSI, *Qualità Lúdica*, ERVIS and SPRING are the ones capable of meeting them. The other instruments do not satisfactorily meet the criteria. Some of them provide for participation and contextualization, but do not implement them when the evaluation is put into practice. Only Italian instruments promote formative evaluation. The *Indicadores da qualidade na educação infantil* presuppose participation and consensual dialog around the outcomes in validating the evaluation, and promote the drafting of an improvement plan as well as monitoring in managing the actions.

Furthermore, the Italian models ISQUEN/AVSI, *Qualità Lúdica*, ERVIS and SPRING and the *Indicadores da qualidade na educação infantil* are the instruments that present the greatest possibility of adaptation or are already in line with the quality parameters in terms of the values and purposes of the context. ECCP and NQS need structural adaptations, at the risk of changing their conceptual framework and essence, because, in their context, they recognize the importance of addressing the diversity of contexts and populations.

Some models, such as ITERS-R/ECERS-R, ECCP, IDEA and NQS, do not feature a characteristic of a formative and participatory context evaluation, as discussed earlier. Therefore, they are not recommended for the Brazilian and Florianópolis context without changes to their methodological structure, purpose, and objectives of the evaluation.

There are models in which the evaluation is hierarchical (ITERS-R/ECERS-R, ECCP, NQS and IDEA), centered on the figure of the external evaluators, who attribute the quality concept according to their perceptions, based on the outcomes observed for the indicator under analysis for defining quality improvement actions.

12 In the original: “. . . adentra a discussão do conceito de qualidade, flexível, negociável em face das diferentes perspectivas que se adotam: socialmente construído; dependente do contexto; baseado em direitos, necessidades, demandas, conhecimentos e possibilidades. Indicam-se como passíveis de avaliação: as políticas para a Educação Infantil, sua implementação e acompanhamento; as propostas pedagógicas das instituições de Educação Infantil; a relação estabelecida com as famílias das crianças; a formação regular e continuada dos professores e demais profissionais; a infraestrutura necessária ao funcionamento dessas instituições. Em relação à avaliação das crianças, reitera que ela não deve implicar a retenção das crianças na Educação Infantil”.

One of the quality criteria discussed in this study deals with participation as an important requirement for a democratic and dialog-based evaluation process. Thus, the previously mentioned models have as characteristic not taking into account the participation of the educational community, making them only objects and not subjects of evaluation. Given this, the instrument becomes vulnerable with regards to the specificities of early childhood education due to not promoting the participation of the different players (professionals, managers, families) who perform the work, with participation being intrinsic to quality.

Regarding the preparation of an improvement and monitoring plan, the Italian models ISQUEN/AVSI and SPRING also meet this criterion. Despite using another nomenclature, there is consensus as to the need to plan, manage and monitor the continuity of the evaluation. In this sense, the context evaluation does not present a time-based linearity in (re)applying the evaluation in institutions, given their singular identities and different timelines in implementing the improvements planned.

The inter-sectoral nature is a critical aspect of all evaluation models. Some even foresee it, such as the ISQUEN/AVSI context evaluation, SPRING and *Indicadores da qualidade na educação infantil*. However, they are not able to have a network of external support for the institution from sectors such as healthcare and social assistance, that would enable the debate on quality and overcoming social issues that affect the lives of children and, consequently, early childhood education. This joint action could provide the guarantee of the child's right in its entirety. That said, the indissociable relation between the evaluation policy, capable of ensuring that the evaluative instrument features intersectorality-related indicators in its methodology, and the effective guarantee of this condition is mandatory.

In closing this section, it is noteworthy that the level of maturity is established when technical knowledge and the possibility of putting in operation validate the continuity of the evaluation process, enabling its deployment in other contexts. In this stream, validation and reliability are associated with the instrument's degree of maturity, already consolidated in ITERS-R/ECERS-R, ISQUEN/AVSI and NQS. On the other hand, the *Indicadores da qualidade na educação infantil*, ECCP, SPRING foresee, but do not guarantee, reliability due to discontinuity and change of evaluation methodology that interfere in the instrument's level of maturity.

## Discussion of results

As observed in the comparative analysis of the evaluation models, the *Indicadores da qualidade na educação infantil* (MEC, 2009) are aligned with the parameters of the educational legislation and meet most of the desirable aspects in an instrument for evaluating the quality of early childhood education, therefore, this evaluation model is the one in the higher alignment with the RME of Florianópolis; although it needs to be anchored by an evaluation policy capable of ensuring formative evaluation and provide for an intersectoral policy.

Since the 1990s, in the construction of guidance and guidelines, the RME of Florianópolis has been in line with the legislation and concepts announced in national documents and, in particular, with the Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para a Educação Infantil [National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education] (MEC, 2010).

The *Indicadores da qualidade na educação infantil* dialog with the curricular documents<sup>13</sup> of the RME of Florianópolis by promoting participation and debate, considering the specificities,

13 *Diretrizes Educacionais Pedagógicas para a Educação Infantil* [Pedagogical Educational Guidelines for Early Childhood Education] (2010), *Orientações Curriculares para a Educação Infantil da RME de Florianópolis* [Curricular Guidelines for Early Childhood Education of the RME of Florianópolis] (2012), *Currículo da Educação Infantil da RME de Florianópolis* [Curriculum

identity and culture of the historical, social and economic contexts. They provide for dialog around the delivery of services based on structural, pedagogical and relational conditions, as promoters of the expansion of scientific knowledge through access to material and pedagogical conditions, contributing to the children's learning and development. This instrument is capable of promoting a viable, valid and reliable evaluation for mapping and management of outcomes.

The evaluations developed and adapted in the different countries show the need for constancy in quality mapping. Italy presents an evaluative trajectory, which began in the adaptation of North American instruments, up to the construction of its own evaluation format. The Italian education system does not establish a single national model, but its common criterion is to address the elements of local reality as well as participation, taking into account the contextual diversity of institutions.

The Italian evaluation models are also close to the pedagogical proposal of the RME of Florianópolis, given the influence of Italian pedagogy on its curriculum base and guiding documents, in the training of professionals and, additionally, their relation to the values and purposes of the context. This finding raises the second evaluative possibility for the reality of Florianópolis: the *context evaluation*. Among the Italian models studied, SPRING is one of the best suited for the application in the context of Florianópolis. Nonetheless, it requires some adaptations, in particular in the analysis of results that, because of being descriptive, impair optimizing access and evaluation management.

Similar to Italy, there is a need for managers and faculty to know the different evaluation tools, in an action-research process, to then make choices, adapt these to the context and develop specific evaluation instruments based on the ECE principles and guidelines. However, the Florianópolis RME, even without an instituted evaluation policy, is in the process of constructing its own evaluation instrument, *context evaluation*.

The initiative is linked to the processes of continuing education on its curricular basis, which is a space for formative and democratic debate around its own outcomes. Thus, this attitude is not only configured as a field of study proposed by the evaluative experiences of the quality of ECE, but there is also the possibility of constructing the instrument itself, from the comparison of curriculum documents.

The WG for the compilation of the evaluation instrument was established in 2018 by early childhood education professionals, representing the five regions that geographically make up the municipality, with contributions from eight advisors from the Núcleo de Formação, Pesquisa e Assessoramento da Educação Infantil [Center for Training, Research and Counselling for Early Childhood Education] (NUFPAEI), with the advisory participation of Catarina Moro and Angela Scalabrin Coutinho, from UFPR. Some actions were carried out in this route. Initially, the WG participated in meetings in relation to: theoretical and conceptual studies<sup>14</sup> on the evaluation of early childhood education; quality and participation; context evaluation; quality indicators; dimensions and analyses of the curricular documents of early childhood education of the RME of Florianópolis and some national and international evaluation instruments. In September 2018, organized by the NUFPAEI, the first seminar for Avaliação da e na Educação

of Early Childhood Education of the RME of Florianópolis] (2015), *Diretrizes Curriculares para a Educação Básica da Rede Municipal de Ensino de Florianópolis* [Curricular Guidelines for Basic Education of the Municipal Teaching Network of Florianópolis] (2015), *Matriz Curricular para Educação das Relações Étnico-Raciais na Educação Básica* [Curricular Matrix for Education of Ethnic-Racial Relations in Basic Education] (2016), *A Educação Física na Educação Infantil da Rede Municipal de Ensino de Florianópolis* [Physical Education in Early Childhood Education of the Municipal Education Network of Florianópolis] (2016). <http://www.pmf.sc.gov.br/entidades/educa/index.php?cms=legislacao++leis+e+orientacoes+++dei>

14 Information carried out by NUFPAEI on to the *Contextualização da avaliação da educação infantil na rede municipal de ensino de Florianópolis* [Contextualization of the evaluation of early childhood education in the municipal education network of Florianópolis].

Infantil [Evaluation of and in Early Childhood Education] took place. This was the beginning of sharing with representatives of the educational units in the process of establishing the quality assessment instrument.

Based on the methodological choices and concepts mapped and developed by the WG in building the context evaluation document, a proposal was drafted for the dimensions comprising the instrument: educational-pedagogical relations; pedagogical action strategies; relationships; management and fundamental contributions. In 2019, study groups – of a participatory formative and representative nature – were held in the regions of the municipality to share the path of drafting the instrument. In turn, the representatives of each educational unit had the task of socializing in the collective, at their workplace, the information presented in the regional ones. The WG also had the task of socializing, in the formative meetings, the debate and the demands presented in the regional ones.

The second seminar – Avaliação de Contexto na Educação Infantil [Context Evaluation in Early Childhood Education] – took place in November 2019, with the objective of going more in-depth into the theoretical perspective and learning and dialoguing about the methodology of the context evaluation in ECE, developed in the Romagna region of Italy, coordinated by Antônio Gariboldi. This seminar disclosed the methodological choice of the instrument and the main dimensions comprising it.

In 2020 and 2021, the process of drafting the evaluative instrument was given continuity and has been establishing itself as the WG outlines the methodological principles, writing and strategies of its operationalization are outlined.<sup>15</sup> Currently, the first dimension is in the finalization processes. Thus, the estimated date for its conclusion depends on numerous variables, among which the feasibility of applying the instrument in educational units, given the current pandemic scenario and the health protocols that focus on the organization of care in early childhood education in the municipality.

The discussions presented throughout this article enabled verifying that the implementation of a quality assessment system in early childhood education requires inseparability between evaluation policy and evaluation instrument.

The evaluation policy is comprehensive because it is a broader planning focused on public policies, which guarantee actions through educational legislation, as well as it includes provision for funding for the quality of offering, efficiency in the management of systems and, also, faculty training. For an evaluative policy to be efficient, an intersectoral support network is needed, which refers to the guarantees provided for in public policies, in the social commitment to education and the need for articulation and planning of the different institutions.

The purpose of the evaluation instrument, of a context-driven approach, is to collect, analyze, and define the quality of the offer, considering the evaluation methodology. In addition, this instrument proposes that the focus of the evaluation be based on inputs, environments, and process, with a view to addressing institutional specificities, in addition to this it also provides for system-level coverage. Moreover, it marks out the importance of considering the physical and curricular environments with quality parameters related to infrastructure, materials, service management, pedagogical practices and the guarantee of the child's right as the main purpose of the educational unit; connected to this are the relational and social environments with parameters that provide for the participation of the educational community, anchored in the social purpose, which the institution establishes in the community in which it delivers the services.

15 The route of elaboration an instrument for evaluating the RME of Florianópolis, as well as part of the references consulted in its construction, is available at: <https://sites.google.com/sme.pmf.sc.gov.br/portaleducacionaledinfantil/avalia%C3%A7%C3%A3o-de-contexto>

Moro (2017) highlights the importance of a system for evaluating the quality of early childhood education that considers the physical, relational and social environments, in which the instrument emphasizes pedagogical practices and the relationships with the educational community.

Further, the instrument should include the management of the evaluation, which involves the establishment of an improvement plan, with goals, deadlines, persons responsible and periodic self-evaluation for monitoring outcomes management.

The elements described above characterize the evaluation of early childhood education as a process and not only as an end determining the level of quality. Each element has its important role in mapping and promoting the quality of care.

### Final considerations

This study identified, described, and compared quality evaluation models in early childhood education of national and foreign origin. The analysis showed how appropriate evaluative instruments based on access, inputs, and processes are, as well as the models that present methodological coherence, are adaptable to the context under evaluation and foresee participation. The evaluation instruments that most closely approached the reality of Florianópolis were *Indicadores da qualidade na educação infantil* and the Italian instruments of context evaluation.

Regarding the *Indicadores da qualidade na educação infantil*, the municipalities of São Paulo, Salvador and Distrito Federal have already shown the adequacy of the instrument, adapting it to their pedagogical proposals. This evaluation instrument is part of a national standard, representing a common core, but can also be adapted to addressing elements relevant to the context and specificities of specific educational units. This instrument has the potential to promote the evaluation of the quality of early childhood education in a systemic and comprehensive way, considering the need to have a support network for managing outcomes.

Concerning the *context evaluation*, research undertaken in Brazil, such as Bondioli (2014), Souza et al. (2017) and Castro and Martins (2018), confirm the pertinence and potentiality of this evaluative concept in promoting the improvement of the quality of Brazilian early childhood education. This evaluative strategy promotes participation and reflection around the services offered to children (Souza et al., 2017). The challenge of a context assessment is quite broad, as it covers relational, pedagogical, and structural dimensions.

A quality evaluation system in early childhood education should provide guarantees, such as State public policies, targeted at training faculty and education managers, qualifying them for the mastery of processes and the evaluation instrument, as well as assigning responsibilities to indirect managers. The possibility for each municipality to think and build its own evaluation instrument based on the guidelines that guide its pedagogical proposal – having an evaluation policy with financial support and mutual collaboration between the union and the federal entities (states and municipalities) – with the technical and pedagogical advice of the MEC for a systemic and integrated evaluation among Brazilian municipalities of the instrument to its context must be considered.

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### Note on authorship

Dirce Guerres-Zucco – original manuscript writing, proofreading and editing; Andreia Zanella – writing review and editing, supervision; Angela Scalabrin Coutinho – writing review and editing.

### Data availability statement

The data underlying the research text are reported in the article.

### How to cite this article

Guerres-Zucco, D., Zanella, A., & Coutinho, A. S. (2022). Evaluation instruments and quality parameters for early childhood education. *Cadernos de Pesquisa*, 52, Article e07958. <https://doi.org/10.1590/198053147958>

Received on: NOVEMBER 15, 2020 | Approved for publication on: OCTOBER 20, 2021



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