PAPER

Management of Early Childhood Education: challenges, needs and possibilities

Gestão da Educação Infantil: desafios, necessidades e possibilidades

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to present some reflections on concepts and fields of action of education management and the implementation of policies that allow delimiting the field of educational and school management and offer possibilities for establishing parameters and indicators to monitor and evaluate early childhood education. The argumentation will go towards delimiting some concepts, distinguishing fields of action in educational management, problematizing conceptions and decisions taken within the scope of policies for early childhood education and presenting monitoring and evaluation as important tools to subsidize the educational management and management of early childhood education institutions with data that are relevant to the improvement of the quality of educational provision in kindergartens and preschools, assuming that there is no municipal policy of early childhood education that meets children in a qualified way, without educational management and the management of the educational institution being imbued with mechanisms to monitor the actions of evaluation of the process and the results obtained. From this perspective, one of the major challenges to be faced is the translation of the policies formulated into practices and actions and the development of monitoring and evaluation processes that guarantee access to and the provision of qualified early childhood education.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education. Educational Policies. Educational Management. Educational Assessment. Education Monitoring.

RESUMO

O propósito deste artigo é apresentar algumas reflexões sobre conceitos e campos de atuação da gestão da educação e da implementação de políticas que permitam delimitar o campo da gestão educacional e escolar e oferecer possibilidades para que se possa estabelecer parâmetros e indicadores para monitorar e avaliar a educação infantil. A argumentação caminhará no sentido de delimitar alguns conceitos, distinguir campos de atuação na gestão educacional, problematizar concepções e decisões tomadas no âmbito das políticas para a educação infantil e apresentar o monitoramento e a avaliação como ferramentas importantes para subsidiar a gestão educacional e a gestão das instituições de educação infantil com dados que sejam relevantes para o aprimoramento da qualidade da oferta educativa em creches e pré-escolas, partindo do pressuposto de que não há política municipal de educação infantil que atenda às crianças de forma qualificada, sem que a gestão educacional e a gestão da instituição educativa sejam imbuídas de mecanismos de acompanhamento das ações de avaliação do processo e dos resultados obtidos. Nessa perspectiva, um dos grandes desafios a ser

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enfrentado é a tradução das políticas formuladas em práticas e ações e o desenvolvimento de processos de acompanhamento e avaliação que garantam o acesso e a oferta de uma educação infantil qualificada.

Palavras-chave: Educação Infantil. Políticas Educacionais. Gestão Educacional. Avaliação Educacional. Monitoramento da Educação.

Introduction

Municipal policies for early childhood education have faced challenges not only in guaranteeing the constitutional right to children and workers, but also in offering quality education. Although there is an important body of studies that point out the weaknesses of municipal public policies for early childhood education to offer vacancies and ensure quality (Rossetti-Ferreira; Ramon; Silva, 2002; Correa, 2003; Campos *et al.*, 2012; Kramer; Toledo; Barros, 2014), one of the aspects still little discussed is the field of practices and actions, more specifically the management of education and the mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation, which are tools with great potential to offer relevant information for the implementation of policies and the management of processes and results obtained.

Therefore, the present text aims to present some reflections on concepts and fields of action of the management and implementation of policy, which allow delimiting the field of educational and school management and offering possibilities to establish parameters and indicators to monitor and evaluate early childhood education. The argument will move toward outlining some concepts, identifying fields of action in educational management, questioning conceptions and decisions made in the scope of policies for early childhood education. It will also discuss monitoring and evaluation as important tools to support educational management and the management of institutions of early childhood education with data that are relevant to the improvement of the quality of the educational offering in day-care centers and preschools.

We do not intend to go into the distinctions between management and administration as this is still a shaky ground, and a bibliographic study on the subject has already been developed (Fernandes; Campos, 2015). For this reflection, it is important to remember that, in Brasil, the term management[1] emerged as a proposal to counteract the centralizing and authoritarian administration and was adopted as a synonym for a practice that favors participatory and democratic relationships within the school and among departments, intermediate bodies, and school units.

In this sense, in Brasil, management is understood as organizational practices aligned with a democratic and participatory perspective. In the academic field, priority was given to the democratic, ethical, and pedagogical principles that should sustain management practices in school units. More procedural or operational issues that allow educational and school management to organize the existing bureaucratic processes in the educational systems and in the schools were left in second place.

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[1] However, the term, originally from the English language, is "management", and its literal translation is "managerialism", a concept that we treat as the opposite of the term "management".

However, it is necessary to consider that educational management is not limited to pedagogical management, as it involves financial management, human resources, materials, assets, school meals, among other aspects little valued and discussed in studies on the subject. Finally, management involves not only a political dimension but also a technical one, which has been little explored in the field of educational management, and it would not be an exaggeration to admit, as stated by Sofia Lerche Vieira, that the "[...] theorists of the present have been content with (ideological) criticism of current policies or the study of democratic management in its dimensions" (Vieira, 2007, p. 55).

Moreover, in studies in the field of educational management, the decisions and results of the implementation of public educational policies are analyzed by collecting information from technicians and educational and school managers. However, little attention is paid to the management processes, the management of resources, and the relationships and agreements made between the agents who work in the management of policies and programs and the community that has access to the services offered by the public education networks. It is also noteworthy that there are studies that analyze the actions of external agents in educational management and policy, in an approach that sheds light on the complex network of relationships between these private actors and state agents.

Although we recognize the importance of the discussions on democratic management, which were very present in the Brazilian academic production in the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s, there is still an area to be explored, the more instrumental dimension. That dimension allows us to understand the mechanisms of the management processes and their effects, and to recognize the set of social actions and interactions that take place in the departments, the intermediary instances, the educational institutions, and among them and with external social agents.

The technical dimension provides management tools for the departments, intermediate management bodies, and educational units, offering support for the organization and functioning of education. In fact, the expression "*organization and functioning of education*" has also fallen into disuse, along with school administration, being replaced by "*educational policy and management*". In a strict sense, these terms express the same meaning, and the change, *intentional and political*, came to demarcate a space in defense of democracy, but also the shift of focus from technical processes of education, of a more procedural nature, to issues of a political and social nature, related to the expansion of decision-making spaces in school establishments, through the defense of autonomy and the participation of the school community in the construction of the pedagogical project of the institution. At this level, many advances were achieved in Brazilian academic production and in normative documents and government guidelines (Ferreira; Aguiar, 2001; Instituto Nacional De Estudos E Pesquisas Educaciárias Anísio Teixeira, 2000; 2002; Bittar; Oliveira, 2004; Bastos, 1999; Lima, 2004; Ferreira, 2003), but also a lot of discussion was limited to the ideological dimension of these relations and the neoliberal nature of state policies for education.

In this sense, one of the challenges is to focus on the technical and operational dimensions of management, especially of early childhood education, in order to consider how the instruments that support management, particularly monitoring and evaluation, may offer relevant and pertinent data so that education is offered in a qualified way. This does not mean that technique and policy are unrelated, as the decisions about the paths and procedures to be adopted involve the confluence of

interests, the dispute of projects, of conceptions of education, of quality and of intentions, and the search for consensus and articulation among the various agents involved in the implementation of policies and programs and the target audience of these actions.

One of the great needs of municipal policies for early childhood education is to implement them, since early childhood education is not built only on the consolidation of normative and quality principles and the definition of guidelines to guide the departments and institutions of early childhood education, but also on the regulation of these principles and guidelines and the proposal of action plans for their implementation. Likewise, it is necessary to define mechanisms for monitoring processes and results. That is, to adopt management procedures that enable the implementation of policies, the monitoring of actions and the evaluation of the process and results obtained.

Management: conceptual aspects

Management is responsible for conducting the processes that will give shape or concreteness to policies and programs. It is in management that decisions are made about the forms of implementation, aiming to achieve the desired effects, and defined by the intentions of the policy or program. This is a classic perspective of public policy, which organizes the different phases or stages of a policy into a cycle and provides a conceptual framework that is still interesting for the development of research, monitoring, and evaluation[2] of policies.

According to Vieira (2007), public management has three dimensions: public value, implementation conditions and political conditions. The intentionality of policies is revealed by their public value. In this regard:

> When the Constitution affirms education as a "right of all and a duty of the State and the family" (Art. 205), it is professing a public value that, in order to become concrete, needs to be translated into policies. These, once conceived, are operationalized through actions that concretize management (Vieira, 2007, p. 58).

Much of the production on education management has dealt with public value, which allows us to understand why so much has been produced about the conceptual perspectives around democratic and participatory management. One of the explanations for the resistance to the technical dimension may be due to the fact that, in the 1990s, a new public management standard was set (Abrucio, 2006; Cabral Neto, 2009; Costa, 2010), guided by managerialist principles and concerned with the rationalization and productivity of the system. Among some proposals for the configuration of educational management were productivity, efficiency and performance as principles that would guide the organization of educational work and the control of learning outcomes. And it was in this

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[2] Palumbo considers that "[…] this vision of the process of developing a policy, involving several stages, is useful for distinguishing important components of a complicated set of behaviors […]" (Palumbo, 1994, p. 51), however, he warns of the need to visualize elements that may compose this system, such as, for example, the issue of results, which can be "[…] generated during the implementation process […]" (Palumbo, 1994, p. 51). The author also warns that this vision of the process "[…] is too organized, too logical and too sequential […]" (Palumbo, 1994, p. 51), which means that "[…] in the real world, the various stages overlap and merge. They sometimes occur at the same time, or out of sequence" (Palumbo, 1994, p. 51).

perspective that evaluation and monitoring were introduced as tools to control and hold schools accountable for their results.

However, in the same way that the managerialist conception of management was opposed, by defending democracy and participation in school management processes, it is important that evaluation and monitoring be re-signified, given their potential to guarantee the quality of the educational offering.

While the importance of conceptual approaches that valued the political dimension of educational and school management cannot be ruled out, the technical aspect also cannot be neglected. This neglect, during the 1990s and 2000s, culminated in a contempt for techniques and the almost rejection of the manager's *technical training* (Oliveira, 2008; Fernandes; Campos, 2015).

Addressing *the implementation* and *political conditions* for implementing management processes is to enter a territory of practice, and they are the ones that:

> [...] ensure the sustainability of values and their translation into policies. No management will be successful if it neglects these two dimensions. However good and noble the intentions of any manager, their ideas need to be viable (implementation conditions) and acceptable (political conditions) (Vieira, 2007, p. 59).

Feasibility, as defined by Vieira (2007), as a condition of implementation is evaluated from the practice of planning and building of action plans that guide the implementation process. Feasibility, therefore, has a political and a technical dimension that go together, in a strategic way, as there are no conditions for implementation without evaluating the political conditions so that the proposed objectives can be carried out. To translate intentions is to be able to read the context and to surround oneself with a framework of techniques to study the feasibility and possible ways to achieve a given goal. Thus, education management has a technical-administrative dimension related to the control and management of human, financial and material resources, as well as a political-relational dimension (Bichir, 2020) which concerns the interactions between agencies, government sectors, public servants, school community and private agents that interfere with the conduct of educational policies.

It is important that we address these issues related to viability and *political conditions*, so that we can understand the dynamics of relations in management instances, the political interference in the design of early childhood education and in the ways that managers act in the processes of implementing educational policies and programs.

Educational management and school management

We can affirm that management in education has two main levels of activity: one is the macro level, within the educational system, and the other is the micro level, within the school establishment. The first refers to educational management, and the second to school management. The attributions assigned to each level are defined by law (Brasil, 1996), with educational management being closer to the center of decisions on public educational policy, and school management to the responsibilities of the establishments in order to ensure the educational offering. The main

objective to be carried out by school management is the school's pedagogical proposal, but there are other important attributions, even though they are little discussed in the academic field and in the training of education professionals, related to the management of human, materials, and financial resources. This does not mean that politics is not in the school sphere: managers, teachers, and other members of the school community interfere in the political agenda and in the results obtained in the educational process, living together in a space of permanent negotiation among themselves and with the higher instances of educational policy and management.

Despite the importance of school management, the academic field has focused on management at the macro level and, not infrequently, the area of management converged and merged with the area of educational policy. As a consequence, it is difficult to define what is really the object of management: "[...] given the permeability of the field and its poly-epistemic origin, many objects end up making up the focus of research in educational management" (Souza, 2008, p. 59).

> This trend has effects, such as the lack of further reflection on the management of educational institutions, on the initial and continuing training of managers and the articulation between the production of knowledge in the area and the practices of people who work in educational management (Fernandes; Campos, 2015, p. 150).

It is understood that the emphasis on principles and political issues that permeate the management of policies and institutions is one of the aspects that reinforces the permeability of the field and discourages the necessary development of investigations into educational and school management processes and procedures.

Management of early childhood education

Most of the studies developed on educational and school management have elementary schools as their scope, and this is also due to the decentralization and municipalization process of this stage of education in the 1990s (Oliveira, 1997; 2001; 2008; Bordignon; Gracindo, 2000; Bruno, 2008; França; Bezerra, 2009; Krawczyk, 2008, Lück, 2000, 2010; Maia, 2008; Medeiros; Luce, 2006). The inductive policy promoted by the Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Elementary Education and the Valorization of Magisterium (FUNDEF) encouraged a process of reorganization of Brazilian education to meet the principle of sharing responsibilities among federative entities, explained in the Law of Directives and Bases. This is probably one of the reasons why early childhood education still lacks specific studies on the management of early childhood education and on the management of early childhood education institutions and, because of this, the area has resorted to studies related to other levels of education.

However, it is questioned whether the academic production on school management provides support to reflect on a stage of basic education with such unique characteristics in relation to the others. Are the principles of school management sufficient for thinking about the management of early childhood education, considering the operating conditions of daycare centers and preschools, the variety of existing institutional formats, the precariousness of some forms of care, and the

clientelistic relations in the designation of management positions? Does the existing academic production support the establishment of democratic relations within the units for the construction of a participatory and appropriate pedagogical project for the different age groups and for the offering of an educational and care service that is supported by values of equality and equity? Does what is known about the management of basic education inspire a pedagogical project that stimulates children's autonomy and leadership?

Theoretical studies on educational management and administration do not deal with early childhood education.

> It is not difficult to find reasons that can help explain these characteristics of the bibliography available in the country: Early Childhood Education, especially day care, is a newcomer to the educational system. As a relatively new field, it has received less attention from school network management, and even a certain amount of estrangement and resistance within the technical spheres responsible for more complex educational systems. Moreover, as a newcomer, it ends up being a stage that needs to adjust to management models designed for other educational levels, models that already have a history and a legitimacy that reinforce their imposition on institutions for the education of young children. Thus, it is the daycare and preschool that need to adapt to the already established structures and mechanisms of organization and management of the systems, and not the other way around. Peter Moss (2011) uses an interesting expression to refer to this type of process: the "colonization" of Early Childhood Education by the later stages of education (Fernandes; Campos, 2015, p. 152).

Another important aspect is a mismatch that occurs when more critical approaches to educational reforms, from the 1990s, are used to analyze early childhood education. The neoliberal contours imprinted in the management of basic education, for example, need to be contextualized to think about early childhood education, because some forms of organization and management of early childhood education heralded as managerialist and neoliberal.

> [...] are already well known in the field of education of young children: outsourcing services and establishing agreements; fundraising left to the community itself; intersections between the public and the private in the design of the programs offered; use of vouchers for free choice of families (for example, the daycare voucher); call for the contribution of companies to provide care to this age group; use of volunteer work; employment of lay teachers; policy focus, among other characteristics (Fernandes; Campos, 2015, p. 152).

Attention is drawn to this because the educational field in the 1990s and the first 15 to 16 years of the 21st century treated these so-called "neoliberal", "managerialist" and "privatist" strategies as something recent in the history of education. If early childhood education were observed more carefully, one would understand that these solutions are not exclusive, from a neoliberal economic orientation, but are an exclusionary capitalist practice that clearly shows, in the history of education and early childhood education, that the poor have always been assigned cheaper solutions under the argument that they are the "[. ...] the only alternatives to meet the urgent demands of the population characterized as needy or at risk by a State that said it did not have enough public resources to do so" (Fernandes; Campos, 2015, p. 151). This lack of dialogue between the production on politics and the management of basic education and early childhood education is yet another argument for

understanding that the management of early childhood education cannot be thought of based only on the existing production on educational management.

Recently, more robust investigations on the management of early childhood education have been developed and can contribute to the proposal of procedures and indicators to implement and monitor policies and programs for this stage.

Investigations involving the management of early childhood education address issues that affect the quality of the educational offering, seeking to confront decisions and actions of the municipalities with the constitutional responsibilities they have in relation to education. These are studies that reveal different forms of organization of early childhood education and bring contributions to research in the area of management, since they present data and indicators relevant to understanding the quality of care, as well as to the evaluation and monitoring of the offering (Kramer, 2001; Kramer; Nunes, 2007; Kramer; Toledo; Barros, 2014; Ferreira; Coco, 2012; Coco, 2009b; Campos, 2012; Corrêa, 2018). There are also studies that opened the investigation on the principles of democratic management in early childhood education, discussing the conceptual issues that involve participation in the management process of educational institutions (Coco, 2009a).

Public policy management and research in early childhood education management

Research on early childhood education management has pointed out difficulties faced by the federative institutions in defining a public policy for early childhood education that complies with the legal precepts for serving children from 0 to 3 years old and from 4 to 5 years old within quality parameters that respect their social, affective, cognitive, and biological needs. The great contribution of these studies is to bring a set of aspects related to quality, that allows the construction of a system of indicators to evaluate and monitor the quality of the offering of early childhood education.

Kramer (2001) and Kramer and Nunes (2007) point out aspects of educational management that affect daycare centers and preschools, indicating the need for planning the offering to ensure that the demands and educational rights are met, for the preparation of guiding documents to ensure a qualified offering of early childhood education, for investment in the continued training of teachers and in career plans, for the establishment of guidelines to guide the organization of administrative and pedagogical work in institutions that allow the integration of units with the Education Departments, and the participation of professionals in decisions on policies and even in the organization of units.

Regarding the management of the educational unit, Valdete Côco (2009a) indicates that the management of early childhood education institutions in Espírito Santo reflects standards of elementary education management such as the filling of the position of director, the forms of investiture in the position and the presence of school boards. At the same time, the integration of early childhood education institutions into the teaching systems opened a space for them to express their particularities in the roll of processes, procedures and management tools originating from the other stages of education (Côco, 2009a). It is possible that this same phenomenon has been a trend in other states, and that the institutions of early childhood education have appropriated the

concepts and values of democratic management, present in elementary school. Since then, they have experienced the challenges to the effectiveness of this management style such as, for example, stimulating and ensuring the participation of the school community in decisions, implementing an executive unit, organizing and improving the performance of collegiate bodies, and establishing the election of principals.

There are also important documents that are a reference in the conceptualization of quality dimensions and indicators that support the management of early childhood education.

In 2009, the Ministry of Education prepared the document *Indicators of quality in early childhood education*, which

> [...] articulates the issue of quality with an evaluative proposition, more specifically so that each institution can engage in a self-evaluation process. In addition to this principle, the document implies deliberate adherence by the extended educational team and community (management, technicians, teachers, assistants, families, and other interested people from the community) of each unit. The process to be undertaken requires democratic participation, willingness to change the institutional culture, to reflect and exercise self-criticism in relation to the educational practices carried out in the daily life of the institution (Coutinho; Moro, 2017, p. 351).

In 2012, a Working Group was established by Ordinance No. 1.147/2011 of the Ministry of Education (BrasiL, 2012), to think about an evaluation policy for early childhood education integrated with the National Basic Education Policy. As a result, the document entitled *Subsidies for the evaluation of early childhood education* was produced, which brings important references about which aspects in early childhood education could be evaluated and which dimensions would guide the construction of evaluation instruments and the production of quality indicators of early childhood education. This document is the result of an effort to synthesize productions in the assessment area, focusing on the specificities of early childhood education. It offers an important benchmark to support public educational management in monitoring the implementation of its educational policies, in order to offer a service consistent with the national and local quality parameters.

The current National Education Plan (PNE), approved by Law No. 13.005 of June 2014 (Brasil, 2014), establishes that early childhood education be evaluated every two years by Brazilian municipalities, based on national quality parameters. The following dimensions are mentioned for the construction of the instruments: physical infrastructure, staff, management conditions, pedagogical resources, accessibility situation, among other relevant indicators.

In 2015, a draft ordinance is proposed for the creation of the National Assessment of Early Childhood Education (ANEI), which focuses on monitoring the offering at this stage.

> In line with what is established in the current PNE, the ANEI was included in the scope of the National System for Evaluation of Basic Education (SINAEB), in order to evaluate and improve public education policies. [...] However, the political and institutional crisis that has befallen the country has also resulted in the dissolution of SINAEB, even during the ongoing impeachment of the elected president Dilma Roussef. Among the possible consequences of this last decision is the weakening of the current PNE and the goals set therein to confront the current conditions in the area (Coutinho; Moro, 2017, p. 352).

The productions that followed outlined possibilities for thinking about the external evaluation of early childhood education in Brazil. The Center for Studies and Research in Childhood and Early Childhood Education (NEPIE), of the Federal University of Paraná, in partnership with other universities (Federal University of Minas Gerais, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, State University of Santa Catarina and *Università degli Studi di Pavia*) and General Coordination of Early Childhood Education (COEDI), of the Ministry of Education, played an important role in deepening the theme of evaluation of early childhood education. The project, entitled *Training of the network in early childhood education: context assessment*, developed under this partnership, as stated by Coutinho and Moro (2017, p. 353), aimed to "[...] discuss and contribute to the development of a national assessment policy in Early Childhood Education (Brasil, 2015) in line with democratic and participatory principles focusing on a formative and contextual methodological approach (Bondioli; Savio, 2013)".

The study's evaluation approach took the educational context as its object of study and, therefore, the material, human and symbolic conditions (Bondioli; Savio, 2015) present in early childhood education institutions, but which are also offered to their education systems by the public authorities. The implication of this approach is the development of evaluation instruments that have the broad participation of early childhood education institutions and that reflect on the educational processes in order to achieve a certain quality parameter that meets the rights and needs of children through the improvement of public policies for early childhood education and meeting the demands of educational institutions (Brasil, 2015).

This approach reinforces the perspective defended by the area of early childhood education in Brazil, that external evaluation be organized by evaluating the offering of conditions of the stage, and not by evaluating the children. And, on this issue, some observations are in order, since it is understood that the evaluation of children as a reference for the quality of early childhood education may be a methodological and political mistake.

From a methodological point of view, considering that early childhood education is the sum of different practices involving care and education, and that child development is complete when environmental conditions are favorable, the results that such an evaluation provides are restricted, and offer little for the improvement of early childhood educational policy. Children learn in interaction with their peers and in environments that stimulate and, at the same time, offer safety and well-being, and child development adds different aspects, affective, cognitive, physical, social, with play and social interactions being the ways par excellence for it to be achieved. Therefore, an assessment of the child fails to grasp the practices into which the child is immersed and the possibilities that exist in the institution for the maximum expression of child development.

> Thus, by adopting a single tool for measuring skills at this stage, in addition to the misconception already pointed out even by economists who work with large-scale evaluations, demonstrating that tests do not cover all aspects involved in the educational process, the government disrespects the history of rights so far achieved (Corrêa; Andrade, 2011, p. 282).

From a political point of view, and it is understood that this dimension is the most critical, evaluations of this type can result in standard instruments that disregard the context evaluation

and the specificities of early childhood education and child development. In 2011, early childhood education faced a threat by the Federal Government's Department of Strategic Affairs to introduce a standardized test of child development, the Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ-3), to assess all children in early childhood education, based on the economic argument that investment in early childhood education would ensure high social rates of return. Since then, experiences of this kind have appeared in municipalities and are contested by the field of early childhood education.

It is understood that the child-centered assessment is reductionist, insofar as the care in early childhood education is offered from several types of institution, with the most varied institutional formats. Moreover, this type of approach is not sustained by the profound social inequalities and vulnerability to which many children are subjected, and its results can offer distorted images and values about institutions and education professionals.

Focusing on the child's performance can lead to misguided decisions regarding the improvement of the educational stage, with the creation of competitive mechanisms among institutions, control processes of the teaching work, and interferences in the organization of the educational work that disregard broader issues of the context in which the children are immersed.

Another critical point is the attempt to standardize and direct the educational work towards the early schooling of children, by valuing inadequate literacy practices for pre-school children.

Evaluation and monitoring of early childhood education

The first issue to address is the definition of what is meant by quality in early childhood education. The literature on this concept is vast (Corrêa, 2003; Füllgraf, 2002; Coutinho; Moro, 2017; Campos *et al*., 2012), and the dimensions that define it have a historical, social, and political component, reflecting the principles and goals of early childhood education, the social and economic context, and the findings of the education sciences that constantly problematize and qualify pedagogical practices.

In 2015, one of the products of the study developed by the Federal University of Paraná with other partners was the publication "*Contributions to the national policy: evaluation in early childhood education from the evaluation of context* (Brasil, 2015)", which presents an important discussion about quality, explaining the whole trajectory of the debate about it in Brazil.

It is understood that quality is related to compliance with the educational right to enrollment in day care centers and preschools and to the conditions of care offered by early childhood education institutions. The educational management is responsible for defining strategies and offering the necessary resources to ensure quality care, and the management of the institutions is responsible for resource administration, organizing the educational work, and offering adequate conditions for the educational and care process to be carried out according to democratic, participatory principles that respect children's rights and specificities.

Therefore, the management must be provided with relevant information to evaluate and monitor the efficiency of the use of resources, the effectiveness of achieving the goals, and of meeting the demands and needs of children from 0 to 5 years of age. From the point of view of

educational management, for example, information has the role of predicting the demand and supply of openings; supporting decision-making on maintenance and expansion of infrastructure, distribution of financial resources, materials, and food; the definition of curriculum documents, the proposal of training courses for education professionals; the provision of human resources, and the fulfillment of career plans.

It should also be considered that educational management has a close relationship with political circumstances, which, in turn, interfere with financial availability and the provision of human resources. In educational management, negotiation and conflict go far beyond issues related to the principles and goals of education and its operating conditions, often involving political and partisan interests that discontinue, replace, or endanger ongoing policies and programs. Educational management is the action space of governments, and information is crucial for educational managers, especially public servants who hold technical positions in education departments and decentralized teaching bodies, to prevent changes in the agenda from hurting the interests and demands of the entire school community.

Educational units need data to manage and plan routines, such as the organization of classrooms and classes; the organization of spaces for collective use; the organization of the work of teachers and other professionals working in the institution; the planning of meetings, and the implementation of the pedagogical project.

Studies indicate the importance of evaluations in education to support educational and school management (Bauer, 2014), which opens a fruitful field of studies on early childhood education, given the recent incorporation of this stage into the National Basic Education Policy. The approach to evaluation that has been advocated in the area of early childhood education is context evaluation, whose development takes place through reflective practice and negotiation, in a participatory and democratic environment.

Monitoring is also an important mechanism for following up on the development of a public policy, bringing information to improve ongoing programs and projects. As a tool to subsidize the performance of evaluations, monitoring in early childhood education can offer indicators that allow the measurement of openings and the evaluation of service conditions (Fernandes, 2014).

The monitoring indicators synthesize information about the pace and form of implementation of a program or public policy, and the evaluation indicators provide data on the results and effects of the actions developed under this program or policy (Jannuzzi, 2004).

In early childhood education, the first aspect to be considered in the construction of indicators is access to early childhood education, which requires, for example, monitoring attendance rates and demand for existing vacancies, birth rates, and socioeconomic conditions of the territories that have daycare centers and preschools. These data also allow us to evaluate the possibilities and capacities of municipal educational systems to serve children from 0 to 5 years old and to locate the territories with the most needs for vacancies. In relation to the conditions of service, the indicators should support educational and school managers on aspects related to the organization of the educational work, to the infrastructure and material and human resources that are available, and to the development of the pedagogical project. This information, together with a quality parameter

defined and established in a democratic and participatory way, are basic inputs to support evaluations of and in early childhood education.

An important aspect that could not be overlooked is the reduction of inequalities. In a country marked by great social inequalities, the perspective of quality of service needs to be broadened in order to contribute to the mitigation of this phenomenon, which produces differentiated trajectories of children and adolescents in their educational and school path. It is understood that conceptions of justice and the reduction of inequalities should be the basis for the criteria to define quality indicators, so that they can point out the issues and challenges that must be faced by the government in the formulation and implementation of education policy and other policies that can offer better living conditions for the poorest and most vulnerable population. Educational and school managers face daily clashes with poverty. This represents a challenge for the implementation of public educational policies, as it is necessary to expand access, but at the same time ensure that the enrollment criteria are not barriers of exclusion. It is necessary to care for and offer all possible resources for the child to fully develop in a healthy way and, among other aspects, to address the lack of resources and opportunities for families that directly interfere in the organization and development of educational work.

Final considerations

The reflections developed here are based on the assumption that there is no municipal policy for early childhood education that serves children in a qualified way without the educational management and the management of the educational institution being imbued with mechanisms to monitor the actions and evaluate the process and the results obtained.

One of the major challenges is the translation of formulated policies into practices and actions. Once it is translated, a second challenge follows, which is to ensure that the goals for early childhood education are met, and one of the dimensions that assist management in meeting them are the monitoring and evaluation tools. For this, it is necessary to qualify monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that support education management.

In addition, it is necessary for management to develop a way to look at the implementation of policies, in order to understand the articulations between the political and technical spheres in the achievement of objectives. As stated at the beginning of the present paper, management is a technical and political process, and its implementation takes place within the framework of social relations, in contexts and spaces with marked socioeconomic differences, with manifestations of the most varied interests, and disputes over projects and various levels and forms of understanding about how to develop a program of early childhood education.

Finally, Brazilian educational data are robust, and it is not necessary to start from zero to produce information about early childhood education. The challenge is to access these data and translate them into information that is relevant to the management of early childhood education and that reflects the desired quality and the evaluation perspectives that are presented in the different federative entities.

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Author 1 – conception and design of the research; construction and processing of data; analysis and interpretation of data; preparation of the final text.

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