


ARTICLE

Teaching of alphabetic writing and practices of reading and writing texts in childhood education: an analysis of the three versions of National Common Curricular Base*

Artur Gomes de Morais¹ 

Alexsandro da Silva¹ 

Gabryella Silva do Nascimento¹ 

ABSTRACT

In this article we analyzed the prescriptions appearing in the three versions of Brazilian National Curricular Proposal (Base Nacional Comum Curricular) (2015, 2016, 2017) concerning the teaching of alphabetic writing and about reading and writing texts in childhood education. Using documental and content analysis, the three documents were examined, considering what they presented about the teaching of alphabetic writing (invented spelling, phonological awareness, letter knowledge) and also about writing and reading texts (genders suggested, reading comprehension and writing skills to be developed). We found out, in all versions of Brazilian National Curricular Proposal, little explicitation about children's right to advance in their comprehension of alphabetic writing before primary school. In the last version, prescriptions about practices of reading texts were more evident but those about text writing were still scarce.

KEYWORDS

childhood education; reading instruction; curriculum.

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¹Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Recife, PE, Brazil.

ENSINO DA NOTAÇÃO ALFABÉTICA E PRÁTICAS DE LEITURA E ESCRITA NA EDUCAÇÃO INFANTIL: UMA ANÁLISE DAS TRÊS VERSÕES DA BASE NACIONAL COMUM CURRICULAR

RESUMO

Neste artigo analisamos o que se prescreveu nas três versões da Base Nacional Comum Curricular (2015, 2016, 2017) sobre o ensino de notação alfabética e de leitura e produção de textos na educação infantil. Recorrendo à análise documental e à análise temática de conteúdo, examinamos os três documentos categorizando tanto o que apresentavam sobre o ensino da escrita alfabética (escrita espontânea de palavras, promoção da consciência fonológica e conhecimentos de letras) como as prescrições relativas à leitura e compreensão de textos e à produção de textos escritos (gêneros textuais, modalidades e habilidades de leitura e escrita sugeridos). Constatamos que, em todas as versões, a Base Nacional Comum Curricular pouco explicitou o direito de as crianças avançarem em sua compreensão da escrita alfabética antes de ingressarem no ensino fundamental. Na última versão, as indicações de práticas de leitura de textos predominavam, mas continuaram sendo tímidas as propostas de iniciação à produção de textos escritos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

educação infantil; alfabetização; currículo.

ENSEÑANZA DE LA NOTACIÓN ALFABÉTICA Y LAS PRÁCTICAS DE LECTURA Y ESCRITURA DE TEXTOS EN LA EDUCACIÓN INFANTIL: UN ANÁLISIS DE LAS TRES VERSIONES DE BASE NACIONAL CURRICULAR DE BRASIL

RESUMEN

En este artículo analizamos qué fue prescrito en las tres versiones de la Base Nacional Curricular de Brasil (Base Nacional Comum Curricular) (2015, 2016, 2017) sobre la enseñanza de la notación alfabética y de la lectura y escritura de textos en la educación infantil. Usando análisis documental y de contenido, investigamos los tres documentos, categorizando tanto lo que presentaban sobre la enseñanza de la escritura alfabética (escritura espontánea de palabras, conciencia fonológica y conocimiento de letras) como las prescripciones volcadas a la lectura y escritura de textos escritos (géneros textuales, modalidades y habilidades de lectura y escritura de textos). Se constató, en todas las versiones, que Base Nacional Curricular de Brasil ha sido poco explícita sobre el derecho de los niños a avanzar en su comprensión de la escritura alfabética antes de entrar en la escuela primaria. En la última versión, predominaban las prescripciones sobre lectura de textos, pero poco había respecto la escritura de textos.

PALABRAS CLAVE

educación infantil; alfabetización; currículum.

INTRODUCTION

What learning rights will children under 6 years of age have to formally begin to understand alphabetic notation at school during early childhood education and to experience practices of reading, comprehension and production of written texts according to the National Common Curricular Base (*Base Nacional Comum Curricular* — BNCC)? This question, which guided the research described in this paper, starts from the assumption that we live in a society in which writing is intensely present in our daily lives, including that of children. Despite this “graphocentrism”, we see that, every year, millions of lower-class children complete the literacy cycle without being able to read and write autonomously, while middle-class children do not experience such drama.

Of a normative character, the BNCC defines a progressive set of learning considered essential, that all students should develop throughout the stages and modalities of basic education, so that they have their rights of learning and development secured, supposedly in accordance with what was foreseen in the 1988 Constitution, in the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law of 1996 (*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* — LDB) and the 2014 National Education Plan (*Plano Nacional de Educação* — PNE).

The argument we will develop will start by listing the reasons that lead us to defend the existence of curricular proposals at all levels — municipal, state, national — and the criticisms we make against authoritarianism, which, as a rule, characterizes the imposition of these curricular documents, as occurred with the recent BNCC. Next, we will criticize the choice of the documents that regulate early childhood education in Brazil in a way that does not privilege the written language and its notation at this stage, and present our position in this regard. After presenting the methodology adopted in the research we conducted, we will analyze, in each version, what they prescribe about the teaching of alphabetic notation and about the practices of reading and comprehension of texts and the production of written texts in early childhood education. Finally, we will make some considerations about the implications of BNCC in the curriculum of early childhood education, regarding the didactic axes related to the written language and its notation.

WHY DO WE ADVOCATE THE CURRICULUM PROPOSITION?

Curriculum is a polysemic term (Leite, 2013) and, therefore, it is not a simple task to define it (Lopes and Macedo, 2011). These latter authors even assume that it is not possible to conceptualize a curriculum based on something that would be intrinsic to it, but only to reach agreements, always partial and situated, about the meanings surrounding this term. However, according to these researchers, there is a common aspect in which curriculum has been called: “the idea of organizing, previously or not, learning experiences/situations carried out by teachers/education networks in order to carry out an educational process” (Lopes and Macedo, 2011, p. 19, our translation).

This “definition” has at least two main aspects that seem to constitute consensus in the field of curricular theory. The first is that the curriculum corresponds

to a selection operated within the culture of a society, always carried out from a greater set of possibilities (Forquin, 1993). These choices represent the knowledge that would be considered legitimate — not without tensions and conflicts — to constitute, in a given time and space, the school curriculum, thus reflecting the hegemonic interests of certain groups. The second aspect refers to the notion that the curriculum is not limited to the formal document proposed by the schools with the prescription of what should be taught in schools, as it also includes what is experienced in everyday school life, which some call “lived curriculum” or “curriculum in action”. Thus, “the curriculum corresponds to the global project of school education, understood as a plan and action” (Leite, 2013, p. 199, our translation).

In this paper, we will analyze the “curriculum” in its strict sense, that is, the curriculum document prescribed to schools by the official instances, but without disregarding the interfaces of this document with the curriculum practiced in school institutions. We live in a country where most public university professors and students are averse to the idea of curriculum documents that define what every child, adolescent or young person has a right to learn during basic education. Since the last century, however, Morais (1997) has been in favor of curriculum proposals and, like him, we believe today that such regulatory documents are fundamental, although they do not work miracles alone.

The absence of curricular documents contributes so that what is taught to students of the same grade in the same public network or even in the same school varies randomly. In a research on reading comprehension teaching conducted in the second grade of elementary school, Morais, Leal and Pessoa (2013) followed, for one year, the practices of twelve teachers from three municipalities in the metropolitan region of Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil. Although all participating schools had stood out for the Basic Education Development Index (*Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica* — IDEB) achieved in the previous year, they found that teaching practices varied greatly in the same school and that by the end of the second year, children, at no time throughout the observations, experienced silent reading and little practiced the reading strategies evaluated by *Provinha Brasil*.¹ Obviously, they would have difficulties in answering the reading comprehension questions that appear in that exam.

This brings us to the second reason why we are in favor of negotiating curriculum proposals: the lack of progression of learning that the absence of curriculum proposals favors. Some research (for example, Cruz and Albuquerque, 2011; Oliveira, 2010) found that what students learned in the third grade of elementary school did not differ significantly from what they were taught in the first grade and, sometimes, first grade students produced better written texts than their peers who were already in the third grade of the literacy cycle.

A third reason relates to the definition of curriculum, in Brazil, by external evaluations, as reported by Soares (2012) a few years ago. In our country, large-scale

1 Large scale exam applied to students enrolled in the 2nd grade of public elementary school. It checks the quality of the student literacy.

assessments have always been applied, nationally, without teachers being aware of what they were expected to teach their students, which has pushed the matrices of skills assessed in each exam to often become the reference of what to teach. This schizophrenia hides another fact: these matrices (from *Provinha Brasil* to *Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio — ENEM*)² have never been publicly debated and, due to inertia, continue to be maintained without reformulation since the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (*Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira — INEP*), years ago, gave some small group of academics not only the power to dictate *what* should be evaluated, but also to define *how* such evaluations should be presented.

In addition to external evaluations, educational “systems” and “teaching based on paperback textbook” (called in Brasil “*apostilado*”) have also taken the place of curriculum in our country. With the invasion and growth of private groups selling their “packages”, which have been increasingly adopted by many public schools, including early childhood education, we see another tragedy happening: in the absence of curriculum proposals of their own, public networks — and sometimes despite them — are the merchants of education who also dictate what is taught and evaluated in a standardized way, from North to South of the country. These systems and paperback textbook teaching have also been associated with external evaluation systems, offering schools and education networks services for “improving results in these evaluations”.

We used the term *negotiate* curriculum proposals above, though, since it seems absolutely unacceptable to us the authoritarian way in which such documents are often elaborated. As a rule, educators are excluded from the process and a small group is the one who writes the curriculum text to be adopted by an entire school system. This was the case with the latest version of the BNCC, imposed by the Ministry of Education in late 2017. Approved by a disfigured National Education Council (*Conselho Nacional de Educação — CNE*), following the coup that ousted president Dilma Rousseff, the imposed BNCC introduced elements that did not appear in the previous versions and which were never publicly debated.

As pointed out by Aguiar (2018), the three versions of the BNCC reflect, on the one hand, the clashes between the various actors involved in the document preparation process and, on the other hand, the repercussions of changes in the Brazilian political context in the field of education. Regarding the first aspect, the above-mentioned author draws attention to the influence of private institutes and foundations, responsible for the commercialization of the aforementioned “paperback textbooks” and “educational systems”, which participated, directly or indirectly, in the construction of the document. Regarding the second aspect, Aguiar (2018) points out that the process of elaboration of the BNCC suffered a dislocation, in its third version, due to changes in the Ministry of Education, resulting from the

2 High School National Exam: is a national exam conducted by INEP to evaluate the quality of high school in Brazil. Its result permits the student access to higher education in Brazilian public universities.

impeachment of president Dilma Rousseff. In this context, the Managing Committee of the National Common Base and High School Reform (*Comitê Gestor da Base Nacional Comum e Reforma do Ensino Médio*), which was established as the body responsible for the systematization of the third version of the BNCC, which was sent to the CNE and instituted in 2017, contrary to the previous discussion movement.

History has shown that when educators and other social actors are excluded from this type of process, the tendency is not to adhere to the imposed prescriptions and to create tactics (Certeau, 1994) of resistance to the authoritarian norm. In the current Brazilian case, selected groups are beginning to sell advisory services to “teach”, for example, how to evaluate in accordance to the BNCC and other related products. Knowing thoroughly what the Base has prescribed, in its three versions, for teaching written language and its notation in early childhood education seems, therefore, fundamental to us to take a stand on what to do in our schools at these stages of teaching.

TEACHING WRITTEN LANGUAGE AND ITS NOTATION IN THE CURRICULUM OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN BRAZIL: CRITICISMS AND POSITIONS

The special attention we will devote to what the BNCC has proposed as a curriculum for early childhood education has justifications that seem relevant to us. We consider the coexistence of the “big house and the slave quarters” education systems (Morais, 2012) in our country extremely worrying, from which we started to naturalize and not discuss the great difference of opportunities experienced by middle-class children, who attend private education networks, and their peers from the popular strata, who make up the vast majority of the population and are in public school classrooms.

For young children, this educational apartheid existed, until recently, even from a legal point of view, when the right of all children, at the age of 4 and 5, to occupy vacancies in early childhood education was not ensured and only guaranteed their access to elementary education at the age of 7. The expansion of elementary school to nine years, instituted by law no. 11.274 of February 6th, 2006, which ensured the inclusion of six-year-olds in compulsory schooling at the time, however, found resistance from those who considered it a “damage to childhood” to enroll in elementary school boys and girls who, until then, were part of early childhood education. Subsequently, with law no. 12.796/2013, the right to education extended to all 4 and 5-year-olds, which, for some of them, would represent a process of “schooling” of early childhood education, with all the negative connotations that, erroneously, many attribute to this term.

In addition, let us remember that, with the CNE resolution no. 1, of January 14th, 2010, only children who turn 6 years old before April 1st can enter that year in Elementary School, a rule that was recently maintained by decision of the Supreme Federal Court, which unified the age cut for all education systems in the country.

It is important to remember that in countries such as France and Spain, children begin elementary school and formal learning of reading and writing at the age of six. This was the experience of students in the “big house” system of education in Brazil, as most middle-class children started elementary school in the year they turned 6, whether they were born on April 1st or later!

However, it is not only necessary to ensure early access for children to school and to extend their time in that institution. It is also necessary to ensure the quality of the school experience lived by girls and boys, given that, for some decades, different studies carried out in various countries have attested that access to early childhood education contributes to the reduction of school failure and that the quality of that school experience is a prerequisite for reducing children’s literacy failure, especially in the case of the poorest children. Campos *et al.* (2011), in a study that aimed to evaluate the quality of early childhood education in six Brazilian state capitals and to examine the impact of this quality on the learning outcomes presented by students in the second grade of elementary school, found that the attendance to good quality early childhood education schools contributed positively to students’ performance in *Provinha Brasil*, in the second grade of elementary school.

The observation and comparison of the knowledge revealed by children from different socio-cultural groups, at the end of early childhood education, alerts us to the urgent need to fight against the negative consequences of pedagogical proposals that, in the name of respect for childhood, strongly argue that in early childhood education, verbs such as “teach” and “learn” are outlawed and it is also prohibited to define “contents” of teaching and learning, on the grounds that this would deprive children of interactions and games. In our view, in practice, such proposals exist for maintaining an apartheid between poor boys and girls and their middle-class peers.

The position we advocate in this paper, however, is not to anticipate the systematic teaching of alphabetic writing for early childhood education. This perspective, which Brandão and Leal (2010) referred to as the “literacy obligation”, initially contemplates a “preparatory period” in which children are trained in former “literacy readiness skills” (motor coordination and visual and auditory discrimination), considered as supposed prerequisites for learning to read and write. Later, when they are considered “ready” to be literate, they are subjected to an exhaustive and repetitive teaching of letters and “syllabic families” or grapheme-phoneme relations.

On the other hand, we found an equally radical position that the authors have termed as “literacy without letters”. In this case, other languages (body, music, graphics, plastic art, etc.) are privileged over the written one. In the Brazilian scenario, we currently observe a variation of this position, in which situations linked to literacy, such as listening to stories and the production of collective texts, are accepted and defended, while those that refer to the exploration of words and their sound and graphic similarities are prohibited. Brandão and Silva (2017) also detected a variation in this perspective, which they called “drifting...”: children’s curiosity about writing is welcomed, but activities aimed at exploring words are not proposed.

The perspective we defend in this paper is not linked to any of the previous ones, once that it considers, as also proposed by Soares (2009) and Brandão and Leal (2010), that, since early childhood education, children have the right to broaden their knowledge about written language and its uses and functions, listening to the reading of stories and other textual genres and also producing texts of different genres, although they cannot spell them, while playing with words and reflecting on them. It is important to emphasize that, with this, it is not intended to minimize the space of play and the exploration of multiple languages and, even less, to compel children to be literate before the age of six.

The national curriculum documents prior to the BNCC that, somehow, regulated early childhood education tended not to consider written language and its notation as a privileged subject in this phase of basic education. The National Curriculum Framework for Early Childhood Education (*Referencial Curricular Nacional para a Educação Infantil* — RCNEI) (Brasil, 1998), which addressed the education of children up to 6 years of age, defined, for the age group of 4 to 6, objectives related almost exclusively to literacy, contemplating only the familiarization with writing, through the handling of books, magazines and other textual materials and the experience of their usage; listening to texts read by the teacher; interest in writing words and texts, albeit unconventionally; recognition of one's own name; and choosing books for reading and appreciation.

The National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education (*Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para a Educação Infantil* — DCNEI) (Brasil, 2009), promulgated more than ten years later, assumed this same perspective, revealing a complete “dilution” of writing among other languages, demonstrating, as well as observed by Brandão and Leal (2013), an explicit intention not to guide a pedagogical work aimed at reflecting on written language notation. Instead, the document restricted itself to prescribing, in a very general way, that the curricular proposals of this phase should have as guiding axes the interactions and the games, guaranteeing experiences that, among other things, “[...] enable children to experience narratives, appreciation and interaction with oral and written language, and living with different supports and oral and written textual genres” (Brasil, 2009, p. 4, our translation).

Given these considerations, we propose to analyze the treatment given by the three versions of the BNCC (Brasil, 2015, 2016, 2017) to the teaching of alphabetic writing and the practices of reading, comprehension and production of written texts in early childhood education. Many years after the publication of the RCNEI and the National Curriculum Guidelines (*Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais* — DCN), respectively, we ask ourselves: What can and should we expect from a national curriculum base for children under 6 in our country regarding the written language and its notation?

METHODOLOGY

The study was developed from documentary analysis, considering the document as a result of the choices and intentions of the society that produced it, in a certain historical context (Le Goff, 1990). As usual, our document analysis involved the description or transcription, sorting, and selection of the information contained

therein (Laville and Dionne, 1999), thus implying the transformation of a primary (draft) document into a secondary one (Bardin, 1979).

The analysis of the data generated from the documentary research was developed through thematic content analysis, contemplating the steps indicated by Bardin (1979): pre-analysis, material analysis (coding and categorization of information), treatment of results, inference, and interpretation. In this process, in which not only the explicit contents but also the implicit contents were considered, the categories were constructed using the mixed model (Laville and Dionne, 1999): some were previously defined, while others were constructed and reconstructed along the way of the data processing.

The analysis (documentary and content) involved the three versions of BNCC released by the Ministry of Education in August 2015, May 2016 and, after the coup, in December 2017. In September 2017, the Ministry of Education submitted a final BNCC proposal, not yet approved by the CNE. In December of the same year, the document was approved, with some reformulations not publicly debated. In this research, we consider, as a data source, the final version imposed by the CNE at the end of that year.

In data processing, we investigated the following categories and subcategories:

- teaching of alphabetic writing (stimulating spontaneous writing, promoting phonological awareness, knowledge of letters);
- teaching of reading (suggested textual genres, reading modalities practiced, reading comprehension skills);
- teaching the production of written texts (suggested textual genres; types of writing practiced — with the adult as the person who writes or spontaneous writing of texts by the child; text production skills).

The categorization was done by two independent judges and, in case of discordance, a third judge was called. The percentage of concordance exceeded 90% in all three documents analyzed. In each version of the BNCC, all statements referring to the adopted categories were selected and transcribed.

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

Since the first version of the BNCC, early childhood education has adopted, instead of content or disciplinary areas, “fields of experience” characterized as “[...] a curriculum arrangement that welcomes the concrete situations and experiences of the daily life of children, and their knowledge, intertwining them with the knowledge that is part of the cultural heritage” (Brasil, 2017, p. 38, our translation). Like Morais (2015), we understand that this type of curriculum organization, also present in curriculum documents from other countries, may have contributed, in all versions of the BNCC, to the indefiniteness of learning rights in relation to knowledge that is the responsibility of the school to teach.

The experience fields defined in the first version of the document were five: “Me, the other and us”; “Body, gestures and movements”; “Listening, speaking, thinking and imagination”; “Traces, sounds, colors and images”; “Spaces, times,

quantities, relations and transformations”. We emphasize that, in this first version of the BNCC, there was no age delimitation, except for the general indication that the specificities of children up to 6 years old should be preserved.

The first version of the document affirms the construction of a supposed new conception in early childhood education, aiming to break away from the “welfare” and “schooling” modes, since the former would disregard the educational particularity of children in the age group from 0 to 5 years old, while the second would be misguided by elementary school practices (Brasil, 2015). Like Morais (2015), we consider that the second perspective reveals prejudice against elementary school and attests to a paradisiacal view of early childhood education, treated as the realm of free expression and playfulness, as opposed to the terrorism that would characterize learning in elementary school. As observed by Moss (2011), this perspective reveals a complete distance between these two stages of schooling, becoming a source of suspicion and tension.

The second version of the BNCC was an extension of the first and invested more in explaining the relationship of the BNCC and the curricular guidelines for early childhood education, addressing five aspects: “Early Childhood Principles” (ethical, political, and aesthetic); “Caring and educating”; “Interactions and play”; “Selection of practices, knowledge and expertise”; and “Centrality of children” (Brasil, 2016). According to this version of the BNCC, the curriculum could be organized from the content of children’s experiences, highlighting interactions through games as fundamental in the construction of human beings. As we shall see, such a letter of good intent keeps a number of shortcomings in thinking about the right of children to live with the written language and appropriate it before elementary school.

In this second version, the document maintained the proposal of “fields of experiences” as organizers of the early childhood education curriculum. They were: “Me, the other and us”; “Body, gestures and movements”; “Traces, sounds, colors and images”; “Listening, speaking, language and imagination”; “Spaces, times, quantities, relations and transformations”. In this version, learning and development objectives were organized into three age subgroups: infants (0–1 year and 6 months old), very young children (1 year and 7 months to 3 years and 11 months old) and small children (4 years to 6 years and 2 months old). In this sense, greater care was taken with the progression of learning or forms of development to be achieved.

The latest version, imposed in 2017, gives a brief introduction on the trajectory of early childhood education, its recognition and its implementation in the BNCC. According to this version, early childhood education would be the beginning and the foundation of the educational process. Kindergartens and preschools would aim to broaden the universe of children’s experiences, knowledge and skills, diversifying and consolidating new learning. Thus, the practice of dialogue and the sharing of responsibilities between the early childhood education and the family would be essential in the development of children (Brasil, 2017).

In this last version, the curricular organization by “fields of experiences” was maintained, and the defined fields were as follows: “Me, the other and us”; “Body, gestures and movements”; “Traces, sounds, colors and shapes”; “Listening, speaking, thinking and imagination”; “Spaces, times, quantities, relations and transformations”. In this version, the learning and development objectives are organized around the same

three age subgroups as in the second version, differing only in terms of the age range of the “young children”, which has now grown from 4 years to 5 years and 11 months old.

In the following sections, we will analyze what the three versions of BNCC (Brasil, 2015, 2016, 2017) selected by us propose for the teaching of alphabetic notation and reading and writing practices in the early childhood education.

ALPHABETICAL NOTATION LEARNING AND READING/ WRITING PRACTICES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE THREE VERSIONS OF BNCC

The field of experience “Listening, Speaking, Thinking, and Imagination”, which interests us most directly in this paper, was named as such in the first and third versions. In the second version, the name was changed to “Listening, speaking, language and imagination”. For the sake of clarity, it is important to note that in one of the BNCC versions that even circulated at the public hearings, the field of experience on screen had its nomenclature changed to “Orality and writing”, which caused great resistance from those who seem to want to erase the written language in the early childhood education curriculum.

Thus, in the three versions, there is a clear interest in making the written language in the title of this field of knowledge invisible, favoring oral language (listening and speaking) or language, in general, without delimitation, disregarding, on the one hand, the relevance and centrality of written culture in our society and, on the other hand, the interest, curiosity and hypotheses that children reveal, from an early age, about writing as a cultural object. As Kramer (2010, p. 121-122) observed, almost a decade ago, “[...] the work with reading and writing continues to be a taboo in Brazil among Early Childhood Education researchers”. This scenario of reality seems to have had a visible impact on the BNCC, where reading and writing at this stage of schooling are often treated as almost forbidden topics, as will be discussed below.

LEARNING OF ALPHABETIC NOTATION

In the first version of the BNCC, in the field of experiences “Listening, speaking, thinking and imagination”, mentions to aspects perhaps related to the learning of alphabetic writing appeared very briefly in two learning objectives: the exploration of rhymes in textual genres such as *parlendas*,³ poetry, songs, and the elaboration of unconventional or conventional first writings. However, besides bringing an unclear wording and diluting these aspects among others, the document made no mention of promoting phonological awareness or knowledge of letters:

Explore gestures, body expressions, language sounds, *rhymes*, besides word meanings and senses, in speech, *parlendas*, poetry, songs, storybooks, and other

3 Traditional literary form, rhymed with childish character, easy and fast paced used for popular plays.

textual genres, gradually increasing the understanding of verbal language (*EIE-FPOA003*). (Brasil, 2015, p. 24, emphasis added)

Actively participate in conversation circles, experience reports, storytelling, *elaborating* narratives and *their first unconventional or conventional writings*, developing their thinking, imagination and ways of expressing them (*EIEF-POA004*). (Brasil, 2015, p. 24, emphasis added)

In the second version of the BNCC, which, as was already said, sets learning objectives organized into age subgroups, were mentioned, in addition to the creation of rhymes — oddly and exclusively for “very young” children (from 1 year and 7 months to 3 years old and 11 months) — and from the recording or production of conventional or unconventional writing —, the understanding that writing is a representation of speech — both skills only for “young” children (ages 4 to 5 years and 11 months), as indicated in Chart 1. In this sense, there seems to be, at least, the recognition that, at the end of early childhood education, the child should discover that writing registers the sound of words and not the object or being to which it refers, as suggested by Soares (2011). Nevertheless, this second version of the document also did not mention the development of phonological awareness, nor the knowledge of letters. It is also surprising that rhyming — in the context of games — is intended only for very young children, that is, those under 4 years old.

Chart 1 – Learning objectives proposed in the second version of the National Common Curricular Base that have some relationship with the axis of alphabetic notation appropriation, by experience field and age subgroup.

Field of experience	Very young children (1 year and 7 months to 3 years and 11 months)	Young children (4 years to 6 years and 11 months)
Listening, speaking, language, and imagination.	Creating sounds, <i>rhymes</i> and gestures in wheel games and other games (<i>EIBPEF02</i>).	Registering personal experiences or activities performed at school, through photographs, videos, drawings, and <i>writing (conventional or not)</i> (<i>EICPEF01</i>). <i>Producing their own writings, conventional or not</i> , in situations with significant social function (<i>EICPEF04</i>). Hypothesizing about written texts, about the characteristics of writing, sentences, words, gaps, punctuation marks and other marks, <i>understanding that writing is a representation of speech</i> (<i>EICPEF05</i>).
Spaces, times, quantities, relations, and transformations.		<i>Registering</i> what was observed or measured, making an elaborated use of language, drawing, mathematics, writing, <i>even unconventionally</i> , or using technological resources (<i>EICPET03</i>).

Source: Brasil (2016, p. 75, 81, emphasis added).

Finally, in the third version imposed by the Ministry of Education, we see that, in the analysis of the field of experiences “Listening, speaking, thinking and imagination”, it was also possible to identify something related to the learning of alphabetic writing in the same two age groups as the previous version, as presented in Chart 2.

Chart 2 – Learning objectives proposed in the third version of the National Common Curricular Base that have some relation to the didactic axis Appropriation of alphabetic notation, by field of experience and age subgroup.

Field of experience	Very young children (1 year and 7 months to 3 years and 11 months)	Young children (4 years to 5 years and 11 months)
Listening, speaking, language, and imagination.	Identifying and creating different sounds and <i>recognizing rhymes and alliterations</i> in nursery rhymes and poetic texts (EI02EF02). Demonstrating interest and attention by listening to the reading of stories and other texts, <i>differentiating writing from illustrations</i> , and <i>following</i> , with adult-reader’s guidance, <i>the direction of reading</i> (top to bottom, left to right) (EI02EF03). Handling different writing instruments and supporting to drawing, <i>drawing letters</i> , and other graphic signs (EI02EF09).	Expressing ideas, desires and feelings about their experiences through oral and written language (<i>spontaneous writing</i>), photos, drawings and other forms of expression (EI03EF01). Inventing singing games, poems and songs, <i>creating rhymes, alliterations, and rhythms</i> (EI03EF02). Picking and browsing books, looking for themes and illustrations, and trying to <i>identify familiar words</i> . Producing their own oral and written stories (<i>spontaneous writing</i>) in situations with significant social function. (EI03EF06). Raising hypotheses regarding written language, <i>making records of words and texts</i> , through <i>spontaneous writing</i> (EI03EF09).
Spaces, times, quantities, relations, and transformations.		<i>Registering</i> observations, manipulations and measurements, using multiple languages (drawing, registration through numbers or <i>spontaneous writing</i> , on different supports (EICPET03).

Source: Brasil (2017, p. 47-49, emphasis added).

In this third version, we find, in the case of young children, the indication of rhyme and alliteration recognition in nursery rhymes and poetic texts, the differentiation of illustration writing and the accompaniment of writing direction, in situations of listening to story reading and other texts, in addition to tracing letters and other graphic signs through the handling of different writing instruments and media. In the case of young children, in addition to spontaneous writing (an expression that replaces “conventional and unconventional writing” used in previous

versions), the creation of rhymes and alliterations and the attempt to identify known words in book handling situations are mentioned. Thus, an increase in the mention of aspects related to the learning of alphabetic notation is noticed, as well as some progress in the exploration of rhymes and alliterations, considering that, in the third version, the recognition of rhymes and alliterations for very young children is indicated, and the creation of rhymes and alliterations for young children, while in the second version only the creation of rhymes for the first ones was proposed. On the other hand, interestingly, letter tracing is not mentioned in the case of 4-year-old children or older.

There is also another aspect that draws attention when comparing the second and third versions: it is the erasure of the mention concerning the understanding that writing is a representation of speech, in the case of young children. Thus, there is a setback in relation to the previous definition, and this setback has worrying implications, especially when we consider poor children who are less acquainted with writing and tend to conclude early childhood education with less knowledge of written language and its notation than children from economically favored groups. As Soares (2011) observes, although early childhood education is not meant to literate the child, it must at least ensure that the child discovers the alphabetic principle, that is, understands that writing represents the sounds of words and not the object or being that it refers to.

In conclusion, it is evident that, in none of the BNCC versions it was assumed as a task of the early childhood education to promote, more explicitly, a reflection on alphabetic notation. We did not find any proposals for the systematic promotion of phonological awareness skills — not to be confused with phonemic training — which are fundamental for understanding of the alphabetical system, nor for the exploration of letters. Nor is there any mention of writing and analyzing of stable words, such as children's first names, which are widespread in the classroom of young children, following the dissemination of the theory of psychogenesis of writing (Ferreiro and Teberosky, 1979).

Brandão and Leal (2013), in a study in which they analyzed nine official curricular proposals from the capitals of the country, realized, when investigating the orientations related to learning how to read and write and literacy axes for working with children under 6 years of age, the predominance of the perspective of teaching how to read and write through literacy among the analyzed documents (five out of nine). However, they stressed the almost total absence of references to the need for children to reflect on the sound segments of the words. On the other hand, unlike the BNCC, all documents investigated by them, except one, proposed reading and writing children's names, and four of these documents indicated the formation of a repertoire of other stable words and the identification/recognition of letters as the object of teaching.

In other countries, such as France and Portugal, understanding the alphabetic principle is assumed as a national goal in early childhood education curricula (France-Men, 2015; Portugal, 2016). In these two regulatory documents, we find a major investment in prescribing, before elementary school, the teaching of phonological awareness skills as well as the exploration of written words, without

confusing such initiation with a systematic teaching of grapheme-phoneme and phoneme-grapheme relations.

READING AND TEXT COMPREHENSION PRACTICES

In the first version of the BNCC, in the field of “Body, gestures and movement” experiences, one of the learning objectives was somewhat ambiguously worded, perhaps involving the teaching of a reading skill, since it is not clear whether or not the stories the child would retell would have been read by an adult:

Play, creatively using body practices to play games and to create and represent characters in make-believe, *storytelling*, dance and role play (EICGMOA002). (Brasil, 2015, p. 23, emphasis added)

In the field of the “Listening, speaking, thinking and imagination” experiences of this first version, there was no record of listening to reading stories and other genres of text. Instead, the EIEFPOA004 learning objective focused on participations in situations such as conversation circles, experience reports, and storytelling — not reading. In this version, there was only one learning objective (EIEFPOA003), which might involve teaching a reading skill, which is to explore the meanings and senses of words in *parlendas*, poetry, songs, storybooks, and other textual genres. It can thus be said that there was no explicit proposition in this first version concerning reading by the adult and listening by the child, nor concerning the conversation about texts read.

In the second version of the BNCC, the document stated, among the “learning rights” of the field “Listening, speaking, thinking and imagination”, “Participating in conversation circles, experience reports, storytelling and poetry reading [...]” (Brasil, 2016, p. 74). However, in the delimitation of the “learning objectives”, it was not made clear, in most cases, if the stories heard or related should be read or only told (expressions such as “listening to short stories”, “stories that you hear”, and “listening and retelling stories” are used), as can be seen in Chart 3. In fact, story reading is clearly mentioned only in objective EIBEEF03, which refers only to the imitation of intonation variations and gestures performed by adults, as reading stories and singing. In the objective EIBPEF03, reading listening is implied, because it is proposed that the child expressively tells stories of *books*, among other things.

In the last version of the document analyzed here, in the field of “Listening, speaking, language and imagination” experiences, we initially see an expansion of learning and development objectives that mention aspects related to the reading and comprehension axis, as can be observed in Chart 4. In addition, the almost complete omission of references to adult reading and child listening to the reading of these texts, observed in previous versions, was not maintained in this last version, given that we now find expressions such as “listening to the reading of poems”, “listening to read stories”, “listening to the reading of stories and other texts”, “reading stories” and “adult reading and/or for one’s own reading”.

Chart 3 – Learning objectives proposed in the second version of the National Common Curricular Base bearing some relation with the reading and comprehension practice axis, by field of experience and age subgroup.

Field of experience	Babies (0–1 year and 6 months)	Very young children (1 year and 7 months to 3 years and 11 months)	Young children (4 years to 6 years and 2 months)
Listening, speaking, thinking, and imagination.	Enjoying <i>listening to short stories</i> (EIBEEF02). Imitating intonation variations and gestures performed by adults while <i>reading stories</i> and singing (EIBEEF03).	Reporting in a significant way, experiences and events, <i>stories from books, films, or games</i> (EIBPEF03). Creating new elements for the <i>stories they listen to</i> (EIBPEF04).	<i>Inventing plots</i> for games, <i>stories</i> , poems, songs, video scripts, and scenarios defining contexts, and characters (EICPEF02).
Body, gestures, and movements.			Demonstrating control and appropriate use of the body to participate in moments of care, play and games, <i>listening and retelling of stories</i> , artistic activities, among other possibilities (EICPCG03).
Traces, sounds, shapes, and images.		<i>Recreating</i> dances, theater scenes, <i>stories</i> , songs (EIBPTS05).	

Source: Brasil (2016, p. 72, 75, 78, emphasis added).

Still regarding the last version, it is also noticed, in the case of the age group of children from 4 years to 5 years and 11 months, the inclusion of two other aspects: the raising of hypotheses about textual genres based on reading strategies and the selection of books and known texts for reading by children themselves. For the age group of 1 year and 7 months to 3 years and 11 months, there is a mention of the formulation and answer of questions about facts of a narrated story, although it is not explicit whether the story should be read or told.

Although some of the objectives listed in Chart 4 do not directly relate to reading comprehension skills (EI01EF07, EI01EF09, EI02EF07, EI02EF08), they are included here because they refer to sociocultural appropriation devices of written genres with which the child lives, relating, therefore, to the sociocultural facet of the written language (uses, functions and values attributed to writing in different contexts), which composes, along with the interactive facet (interaction between people and expression and understanding of messages through writing), the literacy (Soares, 2016).

As for the genres and textual materials with which children should live in early childhood education, Chart 5 below summarizes these data, distributing the genre and materials by version of the BNCC and age range of children.

Chart 4 – Learning and development objectives proposed in the third version of the National Common Curricular Base that have some relationship with the axis of alphabetic notation appropriation, by field of experience and age subgroup.

Field of experience	Babies (0–1 year and 6 months)	Very young children (1 year and 7 months to 3 years and 11 months)	Young children (4 years to 5 years and 11 months)
Listening, speaking, language, and imagination.	<p>Showing interest in <i>listening to poem reading</i> and song presentation (EI01EF02). Expressing interest in <i>listening to stories read</i> or told by observing illustrations and <i>reading movements of the adult reader</i> (way of holding the material and turning the pages) (EI01EF03). Recognizing elements of story illustrations, pointing them out by request of the <i>adult reader</i> (EI01EF04). Imitating adult intonation variations and gestures when <i>reading stories</i> and singing (EI01EF05). Knowing and manipulating <i>printed</i> and audiovisual <i>materials</i> in different sources (book, magazine, comic, newspaper, poster, CD, tablet, etc.) (EI01EF07). Participating in situations of <i>listening to texts</i> in different textual genres (poems, fables, short stories, recipes, comics, ads, etc.) (EI01EF08). Knowing and manipulating different <i>instruments and writing media</i> (EI01EF09).</p>	<p>Showing interest and attention when <i>listening to the reading of stories and other texts</i>, differentiating writing from illustrations, and following, with the guidance of the adult reader, the direction of reading (top to bottom, left to right) (EI02EF03). <i>Formulating and answering questions about storytelling facts</i>, identifying scenarios, characters, and key events (EI02EF04). Reporting on experiences and events, <i>hearing stories</i>, films or watching plays (EI02EF05). Handling different <i>textual materials</i> demonstrating recognition of their social uses (EI02EF07). <i>Manipulating texts and participating in listening situations</i> to broaden the contact with different textual genres (<i>parlendas</i>, adventure stories, comic strips, posters, menus, news, etc.) (EI02EF08).</p>	<p><i>Raising hypotheses about textual genres</i> in known materials, using graphic observation and/or <i>reading strategies</i> (EI03EF07). Selecting books and texts from known genres <i>for reading by an adult and/or own reading</i> (from their repertoire on these texts, such as memory retrieval, reading illustrations, etc.) (EI03EF08).</p>

Thus, it was possible to identify, in the first version of the BNCC, only some genres of the oral tradition, when mentioning the exploration of *parlendas*, poetry, songs, and storybooks. In the second version, in addition to stories — the only genre mentioned in the goals for babies and very young children —, there were poems, songs, video scripts, and role-plays cited in the goals for young children. In this second version of the BNCC, the following genres were also mentioned in the “rights of learning”, without delimitation of age subgroup: *parlendas*, tongue twisters, riddles, stories, poetry, and songs.

Chart 5 – Genres and textual materials proposed in the three versions of the National Common Curricular Base by age subgroup.

Version	Age range	Textual materials	Textual genre
1 st	0–6 months	Story books	<i>Parlendas</i> , poetry, songs, and other textual genre
2 nd	Infants (0 to 1 year and 6 months)		Stories
	Very young children (1 year and 7 months to 3 years and 11 months)		Stories
	Young children (4 years to 6 years and 2 months)		Stories, poems, songs, video scripts, and role-plays
3 rd	Infants (0 to 1 year and 6 months)	Book, magazine, comic book, newspaper, poster, CD, tablet	Poems, stories, fables, tales, recipes, comics, ads
	Very young children (1 year and 7 months to 3 years and 11 months)	Classroom posters	Nursery rhymes and poetic texts, stories, <i>parlendas</i> , adventure stories, comic strips, menus, news
	Young children (4 years to 5 years and 11 months)	Book	Poems, songs, and stories

Sources: Brasil (2015, 2016, 2017).

Between the first and second versions there was no great disparity regarding the genres to be worked on. In the third version of the BNCC, the textual genres prescribed for the three age groups included more diversity: poems, stories, fables, tales, recipes, comics, advertisements, *parlendas*, comic strips, menus, among others, which also occurred in the case of text sources: books, magazines, comics, newspapers, posters, CDs, and tablets. A first piece of evidence to comment on is the non-progression of the universe of sources and textual genres to be explored, especially when looking at what has been prescribed for very young children. It is noteworthy, especially in the third version, the reduction of sources and textual genres indicated over the three age subgroups, especially when comparing those prescribed for young children (4 years to 6 years and 2 months) with those intended for infants (0 to 1 year and 6 months) and very young children (1 year and 7 months to 3 years and 11 months).

Despite the expansion compared to the 2015 version, in 2017, there is no mention of the textual genres written in the fields of experience: “Me, the other and us”; “Body, gestures and movements”; “Traces, dreams and shapes”; “Spaces,

times, quantities, relations and transformations”. They only appear in the “Listening, Speaking, Thinking and Imagination” field of experiences, which may imply that when exploring themes linked, for example, to the natural world or to society, children should not listen to the reading of written texts or handle text sources (printed or digital) dealing with those topics.

TEXT WRITING PRACTICES

In the first version of the BNCC, there was no mention of the teacher’s role as the one who writes in the production of written texts, and vaguely mentioned the elaboration of unconventional or conventional narratives and writings, as transcribed below. However, there was no clear explanation that such narratives would be registered in writing or just oralized.

Actively participate in conversation circles, experience reports, storytelling, *elaborating narratives and their first unconventional or conventional writings*, developing their thinking, imagination and ways of expressing them (*EIEF-POA004*). (Brasil, 2015, p. 25, emphasis added)

In the second version, objectives that mention the writing of texts clearly or, at least, subtly appeared in the field “Listening, speaking, thinking and imagination”, as can be observed in Chart 6: registering personal experiences or activities performed at school using writing (conventional or not); dictating oral texts to the teacher; producing writing, conventional or not, in situations with significant social function. As observed, there was a radical change from the first version, in which text-writing experiences were not explicitly focused.

Finally, in the third version, it is possible to notice the presence of the production of textual genres written much more explicitly, as also indicated in Chart 6: expressing ideas, desires, and feelings through written language (spontaneous writing); retelling stories heard for the teacher’s written registration; producing written stories (spontaneous writing); registering texts using spontaneous writing.

Thus, a significant change can be seen in the third version, by more clearly evidencing situations of written production of texts by the children themselves, through spontaneous writing, and of production of written texts (only of stories), with the teacher as the one who writes. However, such objectives are indicated in both the second and third versions only for children aged from 4 to 5 years and 7 months old — before that, there is no indication as to the written production of texts, although we know that, from an early age, children are capable of producing written texts, even though they are unable to write them in a conventional way, as evidenced, for example, in the classic studies conducted by Rego (1988) and Mayrink-Sabinson (1998).

It also seems to us that the lightened tone with which such goals are formulated (for example, “word and text registrations”) reveals how a more careful treatment of the rights to learn writing of genres in early childhood education are not found, including attempting to the diversity of genre linguistic properties that

Chart 6 – Learning objectives proposed in the second and third versions of the National Common Curricular Base that have some relation with the axis of written texts production, by field of experience and age subgroup.

Field of experience	Young children (4 years to 6 years and 2 months)	
	2 nd version	3 rd version
Listening, speaking, language, and thinking (2nd version). Listening, speaking, thinking, and imagination (3rd version).	<p><i>Registering personal experiences or activities performed at school in photographs, videos, drawings, and writing (conventional or not) (EICPEF01).</i></p> <p><i>Inventing plots for plays, stories, poems, songs, video scripts, and role-plays, defining contexts and characters (EICPEF02).</i></p> <p><i>Dictating oral texts to the teacher individually or in group (EICPEF03).</i></p> <p><i>Producing their own writings, conventional or not, in situations with significant social function (EICPEF04).</i></p>	<p><i>Retelling stories heard for production of written retelling, with the teacher as the one who writes (EI03EF05).</i></p> <p><i>Producing their own oral and written stories (spontaneous writing) in situations with significant social function (EI03EF06).</i></p> <p><i>Raising hypotheses regarding written language, registering words and texts through spontaneous writing (EI03EF09).</i></p>

Sources: Brasil (2015, p. 75; 2016, p. 47- 48, emphasis added).

young children would live with at school as well as out of it. After all, early on, such children can understand and learn that the language of a note is different from that of a recipe or story (Rego, 1988).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Examination of the three versions of the BNCC reveals fluctuations in what is prescribed and omitted in the teaching of alphabetic notation and reading, and production practices and written texts. In addition to some randomness, there is sometimes a lack of clarity and progression in defining the objectives to be achieved when it comes to the appropriation of written language and alphabetic notation. Thus, the taboo still in force and denounced by Kramer (2010), for some time now, is confirmed, when the possibility of written language being part of the learning rights of children attending early childhood education is being considered.

Considering the three versions of the document analyzed, we can undoubtedly conclude how far we still are from securing our children — especially those from popular strata — with the right, in early childhood education, to be helped to understand how our alphabetical system works. This becomes even more serious if we consider that the 2017 version of the BNCC, approved by the National Education Council, reduced formal literacy education to just two years at the beginning of Elementary School, and that, in the curriculum for this stage, there are also oscillations and inconsistencies between the assumed socio-interactionist discourse of language teaching and the view of written notation as a mere transcription code

of sounds (Garcia-Reis and Godoy, 2018). In this case, the final version of the BNCC seems to reduce the appropriation of the alphabetic system to a learning of associations between phonemes and graphemes and seeks to differentiate it from “spelling”, as if in the first two years of Elementary School the children were not, as well, incorporating rules of the orthographic norm of our language.

Yes, we understand that the choice of not to literate in early childhood education need not and should not be confused with a circumvention of the right of children under six to live with and reflect on written words. We interpret that our BNCC’s omission in this regard is a perpetuating factor of social inequalities, helping to maintain the educational apartheid that characterizes our country (Morais, 2012). Different researches attest to the extent to which most children who enter our first grade of Elementary School classrooms in public schools still have pre-syllabic writing hypotheses. That is, they begin formal literacy without further understanding, yet, that writing notates the sound segments of words, in stark disadvantage compared to their middle class peers.

In the second and third versions of the Base, we found a clearer prescription regarding the text reading practices to be experienced with the early childhood education students and some objectives — especially in the last version — related to the production of written texts. We believe, however, that a national curriculum needs to be much more explicit regarding the repertoire of textual genres with which children should progressively become familiar, both in daycare and preschool.

In the same direction, we understand that it would be much more productive if such a document made crystal clear the reading comprehension skills to be taught before formal literacy, since we have known, for a long time, how early the development of such skills, from listening to texts read by the adult, reduces the failure in reading comprehension (Fontes and Cardoso-Martins, 2004). The same can be said about text writing: for at least three decades we have had evidence that children can appropriate genre characteristics such as stories, news, and recipes before they can read and write conventionally and by themselves (Rego, 1988). What gain would there be in our national curriculum for not assuming such knowledge as a learning right for all children, regardless of their socio-cultural background?

The taboo regarding teaching and learning of written language in early childhood education would have made our BNCC, in its second and third versions, assume a perspective of defending some *literacy* for our young children, but little or no assured right to advance in understanding the alphabetic system, especially when we consider the suppression, in the third version of the document, of the goal that mentioned the understanding that writing is a representation of the sound of words. This same type of bias was observed by Brandão and Leal (2013), when examining the curriculum proposals of nine capitals of different regions of our country.

Against such prejudices, we found, fortunately, municipal curricular proposals such as the one of Lagoa Santa, in Minas Gerais, which include a careful work that articulates the social practices of reading and writing texts and the appropriation of alphabetic writing since early childhood education (Morais, 2018; Soares, 2014). Morais (2018), when analyzing different versions of that document — between 2008 and 2017 — points out how much each edition reveals of a collective negotiation effort guided

by a republican spirit and with a degree of clarity — of goals, skills, textual genres, etc. — incomparably more coherent and superior to that proposed by the BNCC. Despite the short-term existence of the proposal, which since 2007 has been built collectively by the educators of Lagoa Santa, under the coordination of Magda Soares, the results became evident: the percentage of 3rd grade students of that municipal network with recommended proficiency level increased from 33.9% in 2006 to 84.9% in 2012, according to data from the Minas Gerais State Literacy Assessment Program (*Programa de Avaliação da Alfabetização — Proalfa*) (Soares, 2014, p. 171-172).

Thus, it would be a step backwards to “adapt” that municipal proposal (Lagoa Santa, 2017) to what the BNCC approved by the CNE without any public debate. National, state and municipal curriculum bases? Yes, we want them. But they must be the result of a democratic and serious debate and contemplate the right of children, since early childhood education, to progressively expand their knowledge of the written language and its notation.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

ARTUR GOMES DE MORAIS has a doctorate in psychology from the Universidad de Barcelona (Spain). He is a professor at the Universidade Federal de Pernambuco (UFPE).

E-mail: agmorais59@gmail.com

ALEXSANDRO DA SILVA has a doctorate in education from the Universidade Federal de Pernambuco (UFPE). He is a professor at the same institution.

E-mail: alexs-silva@uol.com.br

GABRYELLA SILVA DO NASCIMENTO is graduated in pedagogy from the Universidade Federal de Pernambuco (UFPE).

E-mail: gabryellasilva.2010@gmail.com

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