



Educação & Realidade

ISSN: 0100-3143

ISSN: 2175-6236

Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul - Faculdade de Educação

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Avaliação e Gestão da Educação Infantil em Municípios Brasileiros
Educação & Realidade, vol. 43, núm. 4, 2018, Outubro-Dezembro, pp. 1277-1300
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul - Faculdade de Educação

DOI: 10.1590/2175-623684865

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Evaluation and Management of Early Childhood Education in Brazilian Municipalities

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ABSTRACT – Evaluation and Management of Early Childhood Education in Brazilian Municipalities. Studies that elucidate how the themes of evaluation and management of early childhood education have been treated in national literature show that there are still few studies that analyze proposals aimed at the evaluation of this segment of basic education, neither the interface between this theme and educational management. This finding was the motivation for this study, which re-identified academic productions that used the themes of management and/or evaluation of early childhood education as research objects, whose contributions support analyses of municipal proposals directed towards the evaluation of this basic education segment, whose results are treated in the present article. In conclusion, the potential and limits of these initiatives, which provide clues to support the construction of assessments potentially capable of serving an education project that gives substance to the right to a quality education for young children.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education Evaluation. Educational Management. Municipal Evaluations.

RESUMO – Avaliação e Gestão da Educação Infantil em Municípios Brasileiros. Estudos que elucidam como os temas avaliação e gestão da educação infantil vêm sendo tratados na literatura nacional evidenciam serem ainda escassas pesquisas que analisem propostas direcionadas à avaliação deste segmento da educação básica e, tampouco, à interface entre esse tema e a gestão educacional. Essa constatação motivou o estudo que se voltou a identificar produções acadêmicas que tomaram como objetos de investigação os temas gestão e/ou avaliação da educação infantil, cujas contribuições apoiam análises de propostas de municipalidades direcionadas à avaliação deste segmento da educação básica, cujos resultados são tratados no presente artigo. Em conclusão exploram-se potencialidades e limites dessas iniciativas, as quais trazem pistas para apoiar a construção de avaliações potencialmente capazes de servir a um projeto educacional que dê materialidade ao direito à educação de qualidade às crianças pequenas. **Palavras-chave: Avaliação da Educação Infantil. Gestão Educacional. Avaliações Municipais.**

Evaluation and Management of Early Childhood Education in Brazilian Municipalities

Large-scale evaluation, starting in the late 1980s, presents itself as a strategic way for the Brazilian State to qualify basic education. Gradually, the federal state not only consolidated and expanded evaluation initiatives aimed at primary and secondary education, but also induced the sub-national reproduction of its own evaluative proposals, which proliferated in the mid-1990s.

Since then, studies that focus on analysis of these evaluation proposals have been developed and present evidence regarding how the federal government, state and municipal evaluation, their origins, motivations, assumed designs and result uses have been implemented. This evidence allows us to understand how these initiatives operate as part of educational policies and school practice and their relation to the promotion of educational quality and educational management, problematizing their potential to contribute to the realization of the right to education (Sousa; Koslinki, 2017).

In regards to early childhood education – a stage that includes basic education since the Law of National Education Guidelines and Bases (Brasil, 1996), covering nursery and preschool – contributions from studies that analyze ongoing evaluation experiences are scarce. On the hand, this finding is explained by the fact that the central State did not incorporate Early Childhood Education into the National System for the Evaluation of Basic Education (Saeb)¹, hence the lack of systemization of this process at a national level. On the other hand, this gap results in the central State's non-induction, so that municipalities – principally responsible for the provision of this educational stage – carry it out.

In recent years, however, the subject of evaluation in the field of early childhood education has acquired *social problem status*, becoming susceptible to public political policies (Rosemberg, 2013). The legal framework instituted after the promulgation of the 1988 Federal Constitution (Brazil, 1988) has led to debates on this matter, both within governments and civil society, anchored in the argument of the importance of guaranteeing access to a quality basic education for small children. Various proposals regarding the different paths to be followed in the evaluation of this stage are disseminated by governmental and non-governmental bodies, and express different conceptions of quality to guide public policy actions (Rosemberg, 2013; Sousa, 2018).

The purpose of this article is to present the results of research aimed at identifying academic productions that used Management and Evaluation of Early Childhood Education as objects of study. Elements to aid the understanding of what shape the evaluation has been assuming were sought for in the consulted literature, as well as its possible effects on the management of this educational stage. The focus was on evaluations implemented by municipalities within the state network or education system.

The motivation for exploring the thematic evaluation of Early Childhood Education and Management, in an articulated manner, results from the recognition that this approach can contribute towards filling the gaps revealed by studies that present a balance of Brazilian academic production.

Therefore, during its development, this article seeks to systematize research results that sought to inventory – with varying degrees of comprehensiveness, study contributions that clarify how the evaluation and management themes of early childhood education are being treated in national literature. Following this section, studies will be carried out that provide analyzes on current evaluations in municipal nursery schools. Finally, challenges and perspectives will be pointed out with a view to delineating a system of evaluation that serves the production of quality early childhood education.

National Literature and the Treatment of Management and Evaluation of Early Childhood Education Themes

This section aggregates references from the national bibliography on the topics Early Childhood Education Management at a municipal level and the evaluation of this stage, which support a brief overview of academic production.

In regard to the management theme, the Portal of Periodicals of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Capes) was searched, using the exact term “management of early childhood education”, which resulted in the identification of four articles, to be explored below. Research presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Postgraduate Study and Research in Education (ANPED) 2015 was also added to these references.

The following are the main indications of the studies analyzed, elucidating their contributions, which, at the limit, point to gaps and challenges that are presented not only for municipal education policy and management, but also for knowledge production in the education area.

Kramer and Nunes (2007), based on the manifestations of those responsible for the management of early childhood education in Municipal Education Secretariats in Rio de Janeiro State, collected via questionnaires and individual and collective interviews, deal with the management theme. The authors showed weaknesses in public policies directed at early childhood education, highlighting uncertainties regarding both the goals and guidelines for this stage of basic education and precariousness regarding its administrative and pedagogical organization. They emphasize that the reports “[...] reflect a conception of fragmented, individualized management with no policy continuity. The centralizing trend is still very strong in school culture and the educational system” (Kramer; Nunes, 2007, p. 436).

In a subsequent article published by Kramer and other authors based on testimony from preschool administrators working in 24 Rio de

Janeiro municipalities, collected between 2009 and 2011, they sought to “[...] identify and understand conceptions and management practices” of this stage (Kramer; Toledo; Barros, 2014, p. 14). They revealed that a parcel of the professionals who answered the study, although they had been indicated by municipal leaders as early childhood education managers, were in fact responsible for other stages or sectors inside the secretariat, which for the authors “[...] can express the precariousness or fragility of the institutional link that exists in some municipalities”, even though this condition, according to them, did not imply “[...] interference [...] in testimony content” (Kramer; Toledo; Barros, 2014, p. 15).

In addition, the authors noted that the discontinuity of government policies from one government to the other, privatizations, political agreements that support early childhood education manager indications “[...] without the necessary training or experience” (Kramer; Toledo; Barros, 2014, p. 18), the expansion of supply, the precarious educational formation of many professionals, the lack of competition for institution directors, the lack of wage isonomy and unsatisfactory working conditions for the professionals who work in this educational stage all have implications for the management of early childhood education, emphasizing the distance between observed reality and what is provided by legislation in terms of democratic management, access, working conditions and professional training, as well as evidence of inequalities in municipal contexts.

Correa (2015) reiterates these results in their study that evaluated the organization of early childhood education management and its relationship to quality in 12 municipalities of a micro-region in São Paulo State. The data were collected through the application of a questionnaire to municipal education directors or their direct representatives, which showed:

[...] the existence of: fragile structures, both quantitatively and qualitatively; an insufficient number of professionals to support and monitor ECE units; lack of knowledge and fundamental data for the planning and expansion of vacancies, even for preschool; relations of command and submission, with loopholes for the occurrence of clientelism; inequalities in terms of remuneration and working hours; permanence of hiring ‘other’ professionals to work directly with children; disrespect or non-compliance with educational legislation in force in the country since 1996 (Correa, 2015, p. 14).

Correa (2015, p. 14) also identified “[...] a persistence of hierarchical models in the organization of MPEs (Municipal Education Plans) and Early Childhood Education units”, particularly with regard to “control of Executive Power” in defining management positions in institutions.

Finally, the author points out the scarcity of studies aimed at the management of this stage of education, and highlights, based on ana-

lyzed productions, that management is “[...] one of the main dimensions when analyzing the quality of ECE” (Correa, 2015, p. 02).

Fernandes and Campos (2015a), in an article that analyzed the quality of early childhood education in six Brazilian capitals, presented research results on the management of early childhood education in these municipalities, focusing on pedagogical supervision and human resources. Data were collected through interviews conducted in 2011.

According to the researchers, among the results found, there was a strong relationship (in direct institutions of early childhood education) between supervision and continuing education activities aimed at professionals who work directly in schools, sometimes revealing a certain “confusion” between supervisory and training activities.

According to Fernandes and Campos (2015a, p. 291), the “organizational model” that proved most “consistent” in the municipalities studied “was one in which supervisory activity was closely linked to the institutional pedagogical project”, orienting “[...] the guidelines of supervisor visits, regarding the institutional curricular proposal, the continued formation of teachers and educative practices in the project”. According to them, such guidelines “[...] should be based on municipal documents and directives”, with procedures and actions articulated between the different “[...] administrative and pedagogical instances up to the early childhood education unit, seeking to establish, through the pedagogical supervisor action, relationship and coherence between educational policies and practices.”

Concerning the agreed institutions, supervision seemed to be restricted to administrative and financial procedures, even when municipalities had directives and guidance documents for early childhood education. For the authors,

The possible explanations for this are either lack of effort in promoting the training of professionals of the agreements and verifying the use of these documents or the fact that the agreements are not required to follow Municipal Education Department guidelines for a number of reasons: the type of agreement established with municipalities, hiring form of employees, labor costs and working hours, among others (Fernandes; Campos, 2015a, p. 291).

As for the professional career plans of those who work in early childhood education, the researchers identified differences between teachers and nursery school auxiliaries, implying different levels of required training and lower salaries for the second category of workers. In relation to the appointment of directors, it is not unusual to have a public tender for this purpose, with the most common strategies being nomination and election.

In another publication, the authors published a literature review on the subject of early childhood education management, both in terms of municipal administration and educational establishments. Like Cor-

rea (2015), they recorded the shortage of academic production and, in addition, observed that “[...] reflections on management processes are based on research carried out in Elementary Education institutions and theoretical studies on administration and management, which are not related to Early Childhood Education” (Fernandes; Campos, 2015b, p. 141).

If, on the one hand, the field of investigation of educational management has focused on the other stages of basic education, then on the other hand it is possible to observe the presence, in early childhood education, of management concepts – theoretical and practical – forged in the context of the reform of the Brazilian State and of the educational reform of the 1990s, which, among other aspects, promoted adjustments to contain public expenditures, with the purpose of imputing greater efficiency to the State. According to Fernandes and Campos (2015b, p. 151),

[...] some of the characteristics that are identified in neoliberal policies adopted since the end of the twentieth century for educational system management are already well-known in the field of education of young children: outsourcing of services and establishment of commercial agreements; funding from the community served; intersections between the public and private in the design of programs offered; use of ‘vouchers’ for free choice of families (for example: day care); appeal for the contribution of private companies to provide care to this age group; use of voluntary work; employment of lay teachers; policy focusing, among other characteristics.

Apart from this, the authors point out that, even in the 1990s, “the implementation of a decentralization agenda [...], particularly in the social policy area,” was recorded, “[...] which transferred much of the policy management functions to states and municipalities” (Fernandes; Campos, 2015b, p. 143). For them,

The tense scenario, generated by different expectations regarding the role of the State in the implementation of public policies and constitutional guarantees, was reflected in the drafting of the Law of Guidelines and Bases, which took eight years to be approved, after several disputes around different bills. Likewise, this was reflected in the way the reorganization of Brazilian education was conducted and translated into different understandings regarding the process of decentralization of education, including conceptions about educational and school management (Fernandes; Campos, 2015b, p. 144).

In regards to the studies analyzed by Fernandes and Campos (2015b) in this bibliographic review, in addition to the observation in the short paper on the theme of early childhood education management and that, when they exist, they are usually guided by what happens in the later stages, the authors point out that research papers are

[...] based, in most cases, on case studies, reflections on localized experiences with little scope; maintaining limited dialogue with the more general discussions that have been accompanying the introduction of educational reforms that have occurred in the last two decades, which have a direct impact on the management of educational systems and units (Fernandes; Campos, 2015b, p. 152).

The articles on early childhood education management presented here, although they do not exhaust the discussions on this theme, suggest the opportunity of developing studies with this focus that elucidate the interfaces between this dimension and evaluation. In the four papers analyzed, no discussions on this interface were found, even though the importance of evaluation as a contributory instrument for the formulation and implementation of educational policies is a consensus within the scope of public management.

Regarding the subject of Early Childhood Education evaluation, the following are some of the papers that permit us to understand their treatment in national literature, given that they are characterized as bibliographic studies, with special emphasis on scientific paper inventories. The objective was to identify, in national scientific papers, studies of a bibliographical nature that contributed to a panorama of what has been produced on the evaluation of Early Childhood Education. Papers that provided research references on the subject were searched for, through consultation of the SciELO electronic library and the Catalog of Theses and Dissertations of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Capes).

Of the papers located, three of them carry an inventory that contemplates studies that deal with Early Childhood Education evaluation (Gláp, 2013; Gláp; Brandalise; Rosso, 2014; Moro; Souza, 2014), which makes an approximation to the stage of national research possible.

In her master's dissertation, Gláp (2013) cataloged scientific papers related to early childhood education evaluation, published between 2000 and 2012, and identified 47 studies that were analyzed through two aspects: evaluation in early childhood education, covering papers geared to evaluation in the micro-school context and evaluation of early childhood education, including studies of the meso- and macro-school contexts, referring to policy the evaluation of policies, programs and institutions. In the article in which she divulged the results of the co-authored dissertation, it is informed that:

Selected scientific papers [...] were grouped into four groups or categories of analysis, the first with 18 papers on Evaluation of Learning in Early Childhood Education, the second with 16 papers on Evaluation in Early Childhood Education, the third composed of 6 papers focused on the evaluation of institutional and/or policy/programs of Early Childhood Education, and the fourth with 7 papers on evaluation of Early Childhood Education day care centers, with a predominance of articles and disserta-

tions on the subject studied in comparison to the number of theses (Glap; Brandalise; Rosso, 2014, p. 60).

The authors point out that, based on the approach of the analyzed papers, the privileged focus on papers “[...] is aimed at assessing the follow-up of children’s development, that is, for evaluating learning, its procedures and its instruments” (Glap; Brandalise; Rosso, 2014, p. 62), indicating that there are few studies that deal with other aspects of educational evaluation, such as curriculum, teacher, institutional and of policy and program evaluation.

The study published by Moro and Souza (2014), which presents a bibliographic survey of academic papers that deal with evaluation in early childhood education related to the period from 1997 to 2012, covers articles, theses, and dissertations arising from *postgraduate programs* and from *research organizations*. A total of 66 papers were appraised, whose analysis revealed a diversity in the nature of the work (empirical studies, essays, bibliographies, documentaries). However, privileged focuses tended to concentrate on assessing “[...] the interactions between children and between children and adults and assessment of educational practices within classes in educational institutions” (Moro; Souza, 2014, p. 112).

The authors concluded that the analyzed academic research is directed in greater number to the evaluation of context, which focuses on institutional evaluation and teacher conceptions regarding quality. They found

[...] a lesser incidence of studies that take the idea of context overlapped in other aspects, such as institution management, continuing education, relationship between the institution and families, articulation of educational practices with other levels of management and municipal or even national policies (Moro; Souza, 2014, p. 121).

They caution that the focus on the evaluation of children seems to be the most present in the daily life of Brazilian early childhood education institutions, as well as in the scope of municipal management, being themed “[...] as a priority for the analysis of current evaluative practices in the daily life of institutions, unveiling criticisms of certain classification forms of evaluation and highlighting the portfolio as a reference to an ‘ideal’ evaluation process in early childhood education” (Moro; Souza, 2014, p. 120).

In national academic literature other bibliographic review papers have been identified, however, these announce the listing and analysis of researches that approach the evaluation of learning and/or development of small children as a focus of study, not intending to cover other aspects of educational evaluation in the study, in particular not addressing the issue in articulation with the management of municipal policies. To exemplify this research focus, the article Ciasca and Mendes (2009) is cited, which addresses the evaluation of the development of children from 0 to 5 years. In the essay, contributions are made

from foreign and national authors who focus on the evaluation of students, in particular evaluation procedures and instruments.

Mappings completed in the early 2000s that turned to the analysis of production relative to the evaluation of basic education do not record the presence of contributions on early childhood education evaluation, which returned to the discussion of questions related to learning evaluation. For example, the Master's thesis of Paz (2005), which analyzed Brazilian academic research on early childhood education evaluation, is present in papers presented at ANPED's annual meetings between 1993 and 2003. At that moment, the author identified a small number of papers on the subject. It was also observed that the majority were focused on the evaluation of children, not mentioning other aspects of evaluation of this educational stage.

This lack had already been verified by Barretto et al (2001) in the state of the art on the subject of basic education evaluation in Brazil in the 1990s, having used articles published in ten of the main journals of the area in that decade as sources, when that focus on evaluation in relation to early childhood education are reported to be rare.

The elements carried with the incursion into academic literature evidenced the demand for research that privileges the production of knowledge about the evaluation of early childhood education and brings contributions to the implementation of proposals within the scope of educational policies directed to this stage of basic education.

According to Rosemberg (2013), based on bibliographical references of the area of education that used the descriptor *evaluation for early childhood education*, the incidence of this theme in the research of the area is very low. The author's hypothesis is that this small amount of research does not mean that this theme "[...] has not mobilized managers, researchers and education activists, but rather that this concern does not yet demarcate a 'social problem' to integrate the agenda of evaluation policy in/of early childhood education" (Rosemberg, 2013, p. 46). In Brazil, according to her, we are still initiating the construction of this agenda.

However, although there is little research in the academic literature dealing with the early childhood education evaluation, in the context of policies and educational management of networks and education systems, there is already evidence presented by some studies that have chosen this research perspective and that provide clues about Brazilian municipal initiatives to evaluate this stage of basic education, which is discussed in the next section of this article.

Municipalities are principally responsible for the provision, management and evaluation of early childhood education, hence the relevance of knowing that quality parameters are guiding the design of municipal evaluation proposals, taking into account the specifics of the stage. With this intent, it is pertinent to clarify the design assumed in the ongoing proposals, which has been the object of evaluation and trends of uses of results by municipal managers. According to Sousa (2018, p. 71):

The expectation that evaluation will have consequences, induce actions, and support the redirection of trajectories is legitimate. However, it is important to put in question what is taken as a quality reference, what conditions the information produced by evaluation, its interpretation and the choices that arise from it.

For Rosemberg (2013, p. 70) it is necessary to discuss evaluation in/of early childhood education “[...] without phobia, hate or prejudice, but with care”, which means that it is necessary to evaluate the stage to reshape actions within educational policies and establishments, to promote quality improvement, and to ensure that all children have their rights met.

Municipal Teaching Network Initiatives: Study Evidence

The mapping of national studies that attempt to characterize municipal initiatives for the evaluation of early childhood education resulted from consultation of different sources.

Dissertations and theses were searched in the Catalog of theses and dissertations of the Coordination of Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Capes). For the location of articles, the Capes Periodicals Portal and the SciELO electronic library were consulted, the latter covering a selected collection of Brazilian scientific journals. It was chosen to perform the advanced search for keywords in the *subject* field. Besides this, it was decided to delimit the keywords *exactly*, with the intention of restricting the search to articles that deal with the object analyzed in the present study, since without this delimitation the tool searches for any word in the keyword, and in the case of articles published in journals, fetching articles that mostly do not relate to the subject being studied.

The selected keywords were: *evaluation in early childhood education; municipal evaluation of early childhood education; early childhood education evaluation; early childhood education and evaluation; education evaluation AND early childhood education and evaluation in early childhood education*. Considering that it was only since the end of the first decade of the 21st century that the debates regarding evaluation of early childhood education in Brazil intensified (Rosemberg, 2013; Sousa, 2014), the search for the period from 2010 to 2018 was delimited, assuming that this movement has induced scientific research related to educational policy assessment.

With regard to the articles, these consultations resulted in the identification of ten publications that deal with the topic. However, they do not focus on proposals implemented by Brazilian municipalities, even though they discuss evaluation initiatives in/of early childhood education, either nationally or in other countries (Clifford, 2013; Sousa; Pimenta, 2016; Moro, 2017); analyze problematic evaluation policies in/of the stage (Rosemberg, 2013); analyze aspects related to quality in/of early childhood education (Kagan, 2011; Campos et al., 2011a; Campos

et al., 2011b; Campos, 2013; Ghiggi, 2015) or the financing of the stage (Bassi, 2011).

Focusing on the characterization and analysis of municipal initiatives in the progress in the country, two dissertations and two theses were identified: Costa Filho (2014); Cançado (2017); Barros (2017) and Pimenta (2017).

The survey was completed with other references known to the authors, namely: i) results of Monitoring and Evaluation of the use of Quality Indicators in Early Childhood Education (Brazil, 2011); ii) information contained in a Research Report that sought to characterize initiatives to evaluate municipalities in the country (Bauer et al., 2016); iii) contributions of Ribeiro (2018) on municipal evaluation initiatives, discussed in an article that composes a dossier on evaluation and curriculum in early childhood education.

The national studies identified in the bibliographical survey provide clues that permit an approximation with characteristics of municipal initiatives for early childhood education evaluation. The evidence presented by these studies – which together contribute towards the construction of a comprehensive review of ongoing municipal practices as indicated below – is highlighted here.

In 2011, monitoring and evaluation of the dissemination and use of the material *Quality Indicators in Early Childhood Education* were carried out under the coordination of the Ministry of Education (MEC). The *Indicators* constitute a proposal for self-assessment of educational establishments, which suggests criteria for the analysis of work carried out in kindergartens and preschools, contemplating the quality dimensions of early childhood education to be evaluated: institutional planning, multiplicity of experiences and languages; interactions; health promotion; spaces, materials and furniture; training and working conditions of teachers and other professionals; cooperation and exchange with families and participation in the social protection network (Brasil, 2009).

The initiative to monitor and evaluate the use of the *Indicators* was due to the fact that MEC distributed them to all Brazilian Municipalities in 2009, covering all educational units, Municipal and State Education Secretariats and Municipal Education Councils, and of its expectation of finding out how the adoption of the proposal by different audiences was taking place, in the sense of its potential

[...] to subsidize the evaluation process of the functioning of the establishment and of the execution of pedagogical proposals for early childhood education, as well as how to contribute to leading teams of Education Secretariats to mark out their actions, with this being able to constitute an initial step for the definition of a systematic municipal evaluation of Early Childhood Education (Brazil, 2011, p. 10).

These objectives show that, although the Indicators constitute a proposal for self-assessment of educational establishments as one of the subsidies for the planning of early childhood education institutions, it was intended through monitoring to grasp its potential to induce policy evaluation using the institutional assessment.

Demonstrations by Municipal Education Secretaries that responded to the consultation on the use of Indicators revealed that these were being used not only for the self-assessment of educational establishments, but also for the training of network professionals for monitoring and external evaluation of establishments.

This observation that was made at the time was interpreted as an indication that there was, on the part of educational secretaries, demand for guidelines and suggestions regarding more comprehensive proposals for early childhood education evaluation that extrapolated the focus to the school and encompassed the spheres of formulation and implementation of educational policies. One of the recommendations set out in the monitoring report was that MEC would support municipalities in assessing management of this educational stage, as follows:

[...] in order to contemplate the context and adequate conditions for guaranteeing a high quality education more broadly, we recommend the elaboration of a set of educational management indicators for Education Departments that will be used in an articulated way with the already existing material (Brazil, 2011, p. 66).

The indications brought about by the monitoring of Indicators, which municipalities had been conducting in the different manner and actions aimed at early childhood education evaluation, were reiterated in research coordinated by the Carlos Chagas Foundation (FCC) and the National Institute of Studies and Educational Research Anísio Teixeira (Inep) in 2014, titled *Evaluation and Educational Management in Brazilian municipalities: mapping and characterization of ongoing initiatives*.

One of the purposes of this research was to identify how many and which municipalities had been implementing their own initiatives for the evaluation of early childhood education. Of the 5,568² municipalities in the country, 4,309 responded to the aforementioned research. Of these, 618 indicated that they had municipal evaluation initiatives at this educational stage, of which 564 (91.3%) reported what is evaluated, registering one or more aspects. The table of the report (Bauer et al., 2016) follows below

Table 1 – Evaluated Aspects in Early Childhood Education, Registered by Brazilian Municipalities

Categories	Number of Indications	
	N	%
Child development	457	68.8
Administrative and pedagogical management processes	51	7.7
Infrastructure, inputs, environment	23	3.5
Not relevant / not understandable	78	11.7
No response	54	8.1
Total indications	664	100

Source: FCC; INEP, 2014 – *survey* database.

In summary, the research report registers:

[...] although they appear among the evaluated aspects, administrative and pedagogical management processes and early childhood education establishment infrastructures are a concern for less than 10% of municipalities. In regard to administrative and pedagogical management, references were made to the evaluation of teachers and employees, teaching practices/methodologies/didactics and community participation. Regarding infrastructure (when it was specified), aspects such as educational environment, inputs, working conditions for school professionals and the physical school environment were highlighted. Concerns in regard to these aspects reaches 3.5% of municipalities. Most indicators refer to the concern of evaluating aspects related to child development (Bauer et al., 2016, p. 68).

Regarding child development evaluation, the researchers classified the aspects considered according to the respondents' records. Results by classification showed that cognitive aspects related to areas of knowledge (movement, music, visual arts, oral and written language, nature and society, mathematics) received 389 indicators, while aspects concerning affective, emotional and psychological development obtained 234 indicators. There were also five indications for the assiduity aspect which, it seems, is considered a criterion in the evaluation of children (Bauer et al., 2016, p. 69).

Costa Filho (2014) examined, in his master's thesis, how the process of early childhood and elementary education evaluation in the municipalities was developed by the State of Paraíba Audit Office, comparing what is practiced with what is provided in education legislation. It records that only two aspects have been monitored and evaluated, such as: percentage of tax revenues, plus transfers invested in the maintenance and development of education and the percentage of resources of the Fund for Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and Appreciation of Education Professionals (Fundeb) invested in the remuneration of teachers.

In conclusion, the author points out the need for the Office to extend the scope of evaluation, adopting other performance indicators that include – in addition to financial aspects – “infrastructure, teachers, income, school quality and enrollment/access to education” (Costa Filho, 2014, p. 124), information which would help to manage education systems and promote quality.

Pimenta (2017) analyzed proposals of early childhood education evaluation in 42 municipalities in the state of São Paulo, seeking to highlight the extent to which these initiatives have the potential to contribute to guaranteeing small children's right to education.

According to the author, the results obtained indicate the efforts of municipalities to comply with legislation, which establishes the evaluation of this educational stage as fundamental to assist in guaranteeing the quality of early childhood education. However, the predominance of evaluative designs with a focus on child development/learning was identified, despite some municipalities also using proposals related to physical infrastructure, human and material resources, among others.

The author identified that a considerable part of referrals and actions triggered by evaluation results directed towards early childhood education occur within educational institutions, especially those related to child development/learning and to pedagogical work. The secretariats in turn, in the majority of cases, promote actions to assist education professionals in effecting these uses, mainly through training processes. But there are municipalities that use the results to define class assignment, determine career progression, or even to subsidize early childhood education professionals, in the same way that already occurs in other stages of basic education.

The actions of the municipal education department were evaluated in only one municipality analyzed by Pimenta. Nevertheless, the initiative was restricted to information collection, together with teachers, “[...] about continuing education courses offered by SME and about socialization meetings between early childhood education units” (Pimenta, 2017, p. 622). In another location, the participatory self-evaluation of educational establishments imposes demands on the central body and on the sponsors of commercial institutions. According to the author, municipal initiatives for early childhood education evaluation do not contemplate central and intermediate organs of educational policy. For her,

These bodies play a key role in the promotion of quality and guaranteeing children's right to education, since they are responsible for the formulation and operation of educational policies. Evaluation directed only at educational establishments, although relevant, seems to put the responsibility for educational quality offered on them, rather than, once again, what has been occurring with evaluations directed at other stages of basic education in Brazil, thereby compromising *accountability* processes (Pimenta, 2017, p. 622).

Finally, the author identified the absence of the Municipal Education Council in the discussion, elaboration and implementation of proposals for the early childhood education evaluation, stating, “[...] on the one hand, the lack of relevance of this body in the definition of educational policies and, on the other, that the evaluations are disregarding the role that should be exercised by the councils”, which also seems to implicate the processes of early childhood education management.

In their master’s thesis, Cançado (2017) records research results carried out with the objective of studying how the assessment of pre-schools was configured in the city of São Paulo, which implements a proposal called the Municipal Assessment System (Sima). Based on testimonials from network professionals and documentary analysis, the author notes:

Although the municipality reported that it was an evaluation of Early Childhood Education quality, in analyzing the data, we concluded that it is a child evaluation carried out by means of developmental tests and fichas, whose objective is to only evaluate issues related to the cognitive dimension, and this approach is restricted to only one aspect of this dimension, since it is limited to assessing the learning and development of reading and writing skills (Cançado, 2017, p. 7).

It is an external evaluation that, according to the author, has been exerting “[...] pressure on pedagogical work, defining the curriculum and objectives for Early Childhood Education” (Cançado, 2017, 112), referring to this, in the interpretation of the author, that reveals a movement to adjust early childhood education to management models outlined for the other stages of basic education.

Barros’s thesis (2017) investigated evaluation policies implemented in Child Education Reference Centers – CREI in the city of João Pessoa/PB, with special emphasis on the CREI Note 10 Award, in force since 2012 and regulated in 2015 for the early childhood education stage. Based on statements from city managers and directors and teachers from five of the 73 CREIs, in addition to documentary analysis, the author examines the design and implementation of local policies, in light of principles that have guided the formulation and implementation of educational policies in the country, in particular systematic assessments.

Citing normative documents from the Note 10 School Program, the author informs that,

[...] in its official discourse, it aims to contribute to raising the level of student learning, as well as annually awarding workers and professionals in education, thereby proposing to value pedagogical and functional performance (Barros, 2017, p. 170).

Barros (2017) informs that “the evaluation criteria of the CREI Note 10 Award listed in Decree 8.503/2015, “ and cites Article 8, reproduced here:

Article 8 – The Mark 10 Prize will be awarded to Education workers, considering the base salary of each category, proportional to the percentage of the Award by EMEIs and CREIs and the time the server has worked in the respective Early Childhood Education Institution.

§ 1 – The EMEIs and CREIs Mark 10 Prize will result from the sum of the following percentages, accumulated according to the fulfillment of each indicator achieved by Early Childhood Education Institutions:

I– Report indicator of at least 02 (two) interdisciplinary projects developed by EMEIs and CREIs, involving multiplicities of experiences and languages, with records of actions developed – Up to

2.5% (two and a half percent) of the bonus;

II– Report indicator of pedagogical actions proposed in the Political Pedagogical Plan, considering actions to promote health and social protection networks of children attended by EMEIs and CREIs – up to 2.5% (two and a half percent) of the bonus;

III– Schedule indicator of fortnightly meetings of pedagogical activity planning with presentation of the respective minutes – Up to 5.0% (five percent) of the bonus;

IV– Frequency Indicator of Child Education Workers in Continuing Education – Up to 40% (forty percent) of the bonus;

V– Child Development Monitoring Indicator – Up to 40% (forty percent) of the bonus;

VI– Child coordination indicator, describing quality of care in all its qualitative and quantitative aspects – Up to 10% (ten percent) of the bonus.

§ 2 ° The remuneration of the EMEIs and CREIs Mark 10 Prize will be calculated according to the total percentage of indicators, according to the norms established in this decree (JOÃO PESSOA, 2015) (Barros, 2017, p. 173).

Regarding the implementation of the Program, it is worth mentioning that:

In relation to the field of research of CREIs in João Pessoa, the tests for the students are the evaluations carried out with the children during the SEDEC/JP visit, in order to ascertain if what is registered in the class diary is being 'assimilated for the children'. The public disclosure of school performance, in this case of CREIs, takes place in annual meetings where the grades and the percentage of the awards are disclosed, as a result of the sum of the indicators provided for in the Grade 10 Award Program. This evaluation reverts to the possibility of recognition, through the reward of salary or punishment and penalties that are translated into remuneration calculated based on the grade reached by the CREI (Barros, 2017, p. 188).

Characterized as an audit process, according to the author, as presented in early childhood education, external and large-scale evaluation “[...] instrumentalizes the control of management actions,

the teacher and children, as it appears in the research analysis” (Barros, 2017, 207) and ends up establishing “[...] competitive, meritocratic and performative processes to which professionals and children have been subjected” (Barros, 2017, p. 208). According to evidence obtained through research, Barros records that the Program is well-accepted among network professionals.

In an article published in 2018, Ribeiro presents study results that mapped and analyzed municipal initiatives of evaluation of children enrolled in early childhood education and in the first year of primary education from 125 Brazilian municipalities, distributed in 22 states, with clues that demonstrate to what extent these “[...] initiatives are moving towards the construction perspective of an evaluation that is aligned with the identity and curriculum of early childhood education” (Ribeiro, 2018, p. 223). The analyses presented by the author are based on information provided by counselors, managers and technicians of municipal secretariats and the appraisal of instruments used by different municipalities to follow child learning in early childhood education.

The appraisal of 23 instruments used by municipalities to evaluate children in early childhood education supported the author’s conclusion that such instruments

[...] disregard the individuality of each child, their individual and group learning path and the constraints of this process, thus showing itself as insufficient not only as an instrument for documentation and assessment of the course, but also as a procedure that seeks to favor learning (Ribeiro, 2018, p. 241).

On exploring whether municipalities performed evaluation of children when they entered the first year of elementary school, therefore, fresh out of early childhood education; 29% of the responses were positive. By recording and commenting on this assessment, Ribeiro (2018, p. 241) observes:

[...] that children who are graduates of early childhood education are being evaluated in reference to a narrow conception of curriculum and learning, restricting them to the mere acquisition of skills and abilities, especially Portuguese and Mathematics. Further studies are required to investigate the possible negative impacts of these evaluations on the early childhood education curriculum, which may be based on the contents of the evaluation carried out in the first year of elementary school.

This alert made by the author gains relevance in relation to the inclusion of preschool in the National Pact for Literacy at the Right Age (PNAIC), which predicts “[...] the realization of assessments focusing on literacy, by the National Institute of Studies and Educational Research Anísio Teixeira – INEP” (Brasil, MEC, Ordinance nº 826/17, Paragraph 1, Inc. II).

It is opportune to mention two articles that refer to the existence of evaluations in municipalities in the state of São Paulo, by Adrião et al (2009) and Nascimento (2012). Although the authors do not dedicate themselves to exploring how these evaluations are carried out, they elucidate that these practices have been one of the consequences of the adoption of apostille systems by municipal networks.

When studying the establishment of partnerships between the public and private sectors, Adrião et al. (2009, p. 804) pointed out that a “[...] preliminary survey of all the municipalities of São Paulo indicated that of the 645 municipalities from 1994 to 2006, 161 reported adopting or having already acquired an ‘apostille system’ for early childhood and elementary education in this period”. According to the authors, among other “products”, the “package” consisted of “external and internal evaluation processes” (Adrião et al., 2009, p. 806).

Corroborating the data from the aforementioned study, Nascimento (2012) points out that when conducting research on the use of apostilled systems in early childhood education between September 2008 and January 2009, 29 of the 147 municipalities in São Paulo that answered the questions reported using them. The municipalities asserted that apostilled material is based on national curricular references for early childhood education and that it compensates for deficiencies in teacher training, organizing pedagogical activity. According to the author, these systems provide tools for evaluating child development.

The studies referred to here provide evidence that allows for the affirmation that initiatives have been materialized in the evaluation of early childhood education within Brazilian municipalities and allow for the outline of predominant characteristics in their designs.

On the one hand, the relevance of these federated entities is recognized to implement evaluation, since “[...] the evaluation of children’s education is a State duty, due to the child’s legal right to education from zero to five years old” (Sousa, 2014, p. 71), constituting a means capable of “[...] support future referrals, based on a commitment to continuous improvement of this educational stage, respecting its purposes, as well as the peculiarities of the education of children in the age group up to five years” (Sousa, 2014, p. 71). On the other hand, given the privileged focus, there are indications that support questions about the potential of the ongoing proposals to promote quality of education for all children. It seems that what has been dominant in ongoing initiatives is the evaluation of children’s learning, in particular reading and writing skills. There are authors who associate the outlines of these initiatives with those of large-scale assessments aimed at elementary and middle/high school education, in which the application of tests that measure students’ proficiency in certain areas of knowledge has a central role, interpreting this movement as assimilation, in early childhood education, of management models that are preponderant in other stages of basic education.

While stressing the emphasis on evaluating student performance in current proposals, the authors point to the need to broaden the focus

of early childhood education evaluation by considering other dimensions, such as: attendance, physical infrastructure, and financial, human and material resources, among others, whose contributions would help in the management and promotion of quality in educational systems. Initiatives of this type, although identified in some municipalities, are still scarce.

Evaluation directed predominantly at students, and eventually to educational establishments, do not account for the diversity of factors that influence in the quality of early childhood education, as well as supporting accountability initiatives that do not include different instances of the educational system, distorting *accountability* processes.

In addition, attention should be given to the association of incentives to evaluation results, as observed in Barros (2017) and Pimenta (2017), given the risks inherent to propositions of this nature (Sousa, 2009, Sousa, Koslinski, 2017).

Modifications for the Construction of Early Childhood Education Evaluation Proposals

The mapping of academic productions that took the early childhood education evaluation as an object of study showed that the initiatives implemented by municipalities are still incipient, insofar as they tend to restrict child learning, choosing this indicator as an expression of the quality of early childhood education – although there are some municipalities that include other aspects in their proposals, such as physical infrastructure, and human and material resources, among others.

In line with the emphasis placed on learning evaluation, it has been shown that the results of evaluations have been mainly aimed at subsidizing actions to improve the training of education professionals and to support children with learning difficulties. In general, the actions taken happen in school, not taking into account factors inherent to other instances of the network or educational system that affect quality of education.

In addition, two municipalities were identified that associate the results of these evaluations with incentives, indicating convergence with practices already existing in other stages of basic education, suggesting adherence to a meritocratic management logic.

The evidence presented by studies on the management of early childhood education at the municipal level, as discussed in this article, illustrates the weaknesses of proposals and practices that exist in educational networks. In this context, evaluation can become a promising means of guiding and supporting initiatives to improve education, fulfilling diagnostic and formative functions, supporting the formulation of action plans, their implementation and monitoring, both at the macro level and at the school level, covering different instances of the educational system.

Evaluation fulfills a role that induces policies and practices, however, this is not done without consequences. Hence the importance of affirming that, in addition to the need to implement an early childhood education evaluation, it is essential to pay attention to its purposes.

The articulation between evaluation and educational management is expected. What is at issue, at the limit, are the guiding principles of the performance of public power in the sense of confronting educational inequalities, which imposes challenges to the construction of evaluation initiatives that bring, in their outline, the potential to serve an education project that gives substance to the right to a quality education for young children. In this perspective, evaluation constitutes in support of the management of various instances of the network or education system, responsible for the production of supply and a quality service for all.

This confrontation can occur when the elaboration and implantation of early childhood education evaluation, an initiative foreseen in the National Education Plan (Brasil, 2014), is proposed and reproduced in Municipal Plans in São Paulo State, as identified by Pimenta (2017) and Sousa and Pimenta (2018) – in the press, provided that the purposes of early childhood education are met – as recommended by the current legal framework – which are anchored in national and foreign literature subsidies related to this field of study.

Received on 16th July, 2018

Approved on 26th September, 2018

Notes

- 1 Regarding Saeb please consult: <<http://portal.inep.gov.br/educacao-basica/saeb>>.
- 2 In the counting of municipalities, the following were not considered: Brasília, considered as a federal territory (district); Fernando de Noronha, considered as a territory of the State of Pernambuco.

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