



## “Brushing” the agenda: the child education school in the 1990's<sup>1</sup>

“Escovando” as agendas: a escola de educação infantil na década de 1990

“Cepillando” las agendas: la escuela de educación infantil en los años 90

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### Abstract

The article investigates the school of Early Childhood Education in the 1990s in Brazil by analyzing two agendas that served as communication between family and teachers. To interpret the practices of the “Presipe”, an institution located in the city of Londrina that belonged to the former Paraná Social Security Institute, IPE, the idea of school culture in Julia was adopted. Based on bibliographic and documental research, we discuss the liturgical character of the agenda, the educational policies under course in the 1990s directed at the education of children, and the content of the agendas to understand the pedagogical objectives of the institution. We conclude by showing that the “Presipe” was maintained mainly with community resources and that the practices concerned children's entry into elementary school.

**Keywords:** Early Childhood Education; School agendas; History of Education.

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## Resumo

O artigo investiga a escola de Educação Infantil na década de 1990, no Brasil, a partir da análise de duas agendas que serviam de comunicação entre a família da criança e seus professores. A fim de interpretar as práticas do “Presipe”, uma instituição localizada no município de Londrina, pertencente ao antigo Instituto de Previdência do Paraná, o IPE, adota-se a ideia de cultura escolar em Julia. Com base em pesquisa bibliográfica e documental, discute-se o caráter litúrgico das agendas; as políticas educacionais em curso nos anos de 1990 direcionadas à educação infantil; e o conteúdo dos bilhetes que havia nessas agendas, no intuito de compreender os objetivos pedagógicos da instituição. Conclui-se demonstrando que o “Presipe” era mantido sobretudo com recursos da comunidade, e que as práticas ali empreendidas guardavam uma preocupação com o ingresso das crianças no ensino fundamental.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação infantil; Agendas escolares; História da Educação.

## Resumen

El artículo investiga la escuela de Educación Infantil en la década de 1990, en Brasil, a partir del análisis de dos agendas que sirvieron de comunicación entre la familia del niño y sus profesores. Para interpretar las prácticas de la "Presipe", institución ubicada en el municipio de Londrina, perteneciente al antiguo Instituto de Previsión Social de Paraná, el IPE, adoptamos la idea de cultura escolar en Julia. A partir de la investigación bibliográfica y documental, se discute el carácter litúrgico de los temarios; las políticas educativas en curso en la década de 1990 dirigidas a la educación infantil; y el contenido de las notas que figuraban en estos temarios, para comprender los objetivos pedagógicos de la institución. Concluimos mostrando que el "Presipe" se mantenía principalmente con recursos de la comunidad, y que las prácticas que allí se realizaban tenían que ver con el ingreso de los niños a la educación primaria.

**Palabras clave:** Educación infantil; Programas escolares; Historia de la Educación.

## Introduction

Manoel de Barros, the poet, wrote in his book “Invented Memories” that he would like to brush the words to “hear the grimace of each one” as archaeologists do while brushing bones to find traces of old civilizations buried for millions of years (BARROS, 2018, p. 17). To be devoted to the scour of agendas, or even notebooks, is to perform, just as Barros and archaeologists, a brushing of appearances necessary to reach the deep of things concealed by the effects of time and human activity.

Analogous to the work of historians, who are concerned with some material to turn it into history (Certeau, 2013), the brushing exercise is due to curiosity around things, defined by an almost always submerged essence, where their origins inhabit, routes, and the rest of their characteristics only revealed after the efforts of individuals to know the unknown, usually covered by the stains of time. Without presenting itself immediately, what remains immersed leaves signs and traces of its past. Once unable to exist as before, certain things only are back to life in reason of those who detain the art of brushing, as in the case of the historian's work, who, in possession of the rules that guide him, reveals the apparent, inviting it to show itself from a new guise done by the history of who wrote it.

Taking the agendas as a “brushing” object while investigating the school of early childhood education reflects a concern regarding the trajectory of school materiality, recognizing in its study a chance to comprehend the formation offered to children in a given time. Regarding this interest, Souza (2007, p.169) notes that “the artifacts are the product of human labor [...]” and, therefore, “they act as mediators” of their activities. Constituent of the culture of the place in which they are absorbed, the configuration of materials happens, as highlighted by Escolano Benito (2010), p.52), in an “actual history of the institution and agents that have managed education”<sup>2</sup>, as well as of teachers and students who attend to it, printing a “catalog of experiences that take to the production of objects that concretizes that culture [...]”<sup>3</sup> (ESCOLANO BENITO, 2010, p.49), as is the case of the establishment of school agendas in the Childhood Education institutions.

Referring to the agendas was not occasional, and understanding them as such is a methodological option that proceeded from the analysis of writings in them. Therefore, it is worth reporting why we used them in this research and clarifying the motive for choosing the term diary, not school notebook.

In the first place, the denomination of materials as agendas derives from its content organization, such as dates on all pages on which there is a message or note to the family of the agenda owner, and in this case, held by a single child of five years, from the year of 1993, from now on referred in this article as “Agenda A”; and owned by the same child, now with six years old, of the year 1994, from now on referred as “Agenda B”. Both agendas had a kind of identification on their cover, accompanied by pictures and, on the inside, the family home address and telephone. In the case of the first agenda, “A”, a spiral grouped the sheets, and it was 15 cm long and 9,5 cm wide. The second agenda, “B”, was 14,5 cm long and 10 cm high.

Concerning the motive of using these agendas as objects of research, it is due to the original nature of the material, not explored yet, and also to the history of the Early Childhood Education institution they belong to, the “Presipe”, more recently with financial difficulties to maintain itself, according to news of the site “Bonde”, which informed that the school has “a noose around the neck”. (SITE BONDE, 2018). Located in the Londrina municipality, the “PRESIPE”, linked to the former Paraná Social Security Institute, the IPE, was supported by public resources and the community. It is relevant to mention that the IPE turned into the

<sup>2</sup> “historia efectual de la institución y de los agentes que han gestionado la educación” (authors’ translation)

<sup>3</sup> “catálogo de experiencias que conducen a la producción de los objetos en que se concretiza dicha cultura [...]”

PARANAPREVIDENCIA in 1998 as the fruit of state law no. 12.398, of December 30 (PARANÁ, 1998), and, with this, there is the supposition that the institution of early childhood education began to face financial difficulties once it had no state public power support any longer.

In addition, it is worth placing the agendas as components of school practices, inscribed in what the field of history of education has limited as “school culture”, here understood as “a set of norms that define knowledge to teach and conducts to inculcate and a set of practices that allow the transmission of this knowledge and incorporation of these behaviors [...]” (JULIA, 2001, p.10). Thus, as part of the childhood education school culture in question, the establishment of agendas in daily life could be understood as the result of multiple factors that come, by one side, from the subjects’ practices conditioned by the day-by-day demands of the institution; by the other side, from the historical effect elapsed in the Brazilian case of transformations in the scope of school organization at the end of the XIX century. In this respect, Razzini (2008), in his work about school writing instruments, clarifies the form through which the teaching institutions have been adopting new technologies and incorporating new practices in their interior, as an example, the use of the didactic book and the substitution of the feather pen by the metallic pen, as well as the use of other types of school materials.

In the case of the present work, agendas, possibly due to their purpose of promoting communication between the school and the child’s family, can be taken as a “school object”. For Souza (2007, p.177), something defined by itself, in accordance to the “intentionality and use in certain situations and historical conditions”, since they constituted almost indispensable ingredients in the life of the institution, as the progress of actions was possible once the family replied to the teacher’s messages, who requested varied materials and information, most likely for practices with the children. However, these agendas held different characteristics, although they suited to a common goal. While “Agenda A” was from 1993, and the child at “kindergarten I”, by teacher Gisele, “Agenda B” was from 1994, of “Kindergarten II”, by teacher Neide. Another difference between the agendas regards the communication period with the child’s family. While “Agenda A” is from March 12, 1993, to December 14, 1993, “Agenda B” is from May 30, 1994, to November 29, 1994.

This article, backed by documentary and bibliographical research, is organized into three sections. In the first section, we discuss the agenda as part of a group of rites of the school of early childhood education, based on the analysis of its regularity as a communication means between the institution and the child’s family, whether to require materials for the development of pedagogical propositions, or hygienical materials. In the second section, we discuss, even if briefly, the educational policy, especially about childhood, in the 1990s, marked in the Brazilian context by the participation of international organizations. In the last section, we analyze both agendas, trying to extract from their pages the school practices underway at “PRESIPE”. In the end, we seek to understand the pedagogical guidelines of that institution, as well as the organizational and political dynamic behind the agenda messages.

### **Rite and ritualization of practices in Early Childhood Education**

In Boto’s text (214, p.102), in the beginning, there is an interpretation “that the school life unfolds in the social board as a rite, as a liturgy”. Still, according to the author, “there is a manner of being a school that expresses itself through rituals, mobilizing feelings, experiences, and symbols”. From this, the agendas arrive as a result of the concentration of notes, mirroring a habit that cannot be interrupted as they are indispensable in the day-by-day of the institutions, whether to ask for a toy, information

about the child, hygienical material, or another kind of demand, but keeping some differences identified by the occasion of the content of the notes and the way teachers write them.

Still, according to Boto (2014, p.103), “there is in the educational dynamic an inner logic that sets school life rules, norms, laws, and guides, with its rituals and habits, uses and customs” (BOTO, 2014, p. 103), which makes each institution singular, a strange to the usual of its neighbors, tied to its particularities, namely, of region; individuals that educate, and under education; and their interpretation of the law. Thus, we understand that the agenda messages configure an indication regarding the school's daily practices and, consequently, of its liturgy once they announce political and pedagogical intentionalities. While observing teachers' requests on the agendas, it is possible to deduce the project in progress, the work proposal with the children, and the conception of education of the professionals.

However, the writing of agendas, if carried out by teachers daily, does not reveal a solitary projection displaced from historical constraints. Such practice, as many others, helps to build or “construct a web in which historical traditions, local and regional variants, formation elements of lecturers, and appropriation of the subjects within other variables that operate in reality interact [...]” (ESCOLANO BENITO, 2017, p.146). Such actions are sometimes confounded with the institution's history, as if they were one, ignoring the changes characterized by the rejection and acceptance of certain practices in its interior. In other words, the agenda use, in addition to not being natural, is not a construct of a group or anyone in particular. Its use runs through a set of circumstances, born by the teachers' need to communicate with families, something emerged from the web in which they find themselves.

The notes in the agendas addressed to the families, besides their regular character, reinforce the liturgical nature of this practice while asking for materials or research on specific subjects, essentially in the case of the artifacts of the present study. In agenda “A”, for example, on April 13, 1993, the professionals ask the family to bring “2 empty matchboxes [...]” and, on the following day, ask them “to send a cap on Friday” (AGENDA A, 1993). Then, two days later, they ask the children to research the Indians. In Agenda B, similarly, there are other requests, like the ones on the 7th and 8th of Jun, where they ask the children to “bring a picture of a beautiful and well-kept nature” and “a picture of destroyed nature” (AGENDA B, 1994).

In a universe of hundreds of thousands of agendas, maybe it is impossible to affirm that all are the same according to these attributes. For sure, the use of agendas by early childhood education institutions is diverse, demanding systematical and deep research to trace its nature profile. Yet, with the agendas we have in our hands, it is much evident its triple character: (1) pedagogical, once teachers asked the families for materials and research; (2) political, as the collection of notes expressed in the agendas keeps content in particular and by consequence intentionality that tends to educate children according to a social perspective; and, for last, (3) informative, as in fact, the notes informed the families the meetings dates, events, beginning and end of the school year, besides holidays and commemorative dates.

Recognized many times for their use in school environments, agendas are part of a list of practices absorbed by institutions by the occasion of chronological order, besides the economic and historical aspects, like notebooks and other materials. For that, the comprehension regarding their use cannot run from the idea of school as an institution that “[...] composes for its actions and assets a form of liturgy” (BOTO, 2014, p. 102). In other words, according to what they produce, institutions give birth to “particular ways of being”,

all linked and germinating in conformity with the subjects around them, becoming something whose shape is distinctive.

Another issue to evaluate about agenda ritualization concerns the consequences of outer and inner events of the school. They contribute, in effect, to the consolidation of any ongoing practice, although some practices are longer than others, whether due to legislation (outer aspect) or agreements realized within the school community (inner aspect). Therefore, the agendas incorporation process in the daily life of school gives itself, depending on the institution, characteristics related to these artifacts usage as if each subject involved in it would deliver an appearance. An example is the case of agendas, the object of analysis of this article, on which teachers, the Association of Parents and Teachers (A.P.M), and the child's relatives exchange messages, assigning to the object a manner, a value, a purpose, and finally an aesthetics, i.e., the use of the agenda is the synthesis of these various hands, which modulate it, and write on it. It guides us to the consideration of Escolano Benito (2017, p.150) while understanding that the school micro-society, “in its daily life [...] recreates [...] the territory and the ritual culture in force there”, either to say, in the case of this study on agendas, that, as their usage is daily, they can recreate different ways of being used, implying a change in practices, usual up till then.

To conclude the reflections about the agendas as components of a singular school rite, it is convenient to point out that sending them to the families is far from a protocol and expresses the intentionality of a pedagogic nature, even political, probably camouflaged by notes that are short and seem disinterested. It is also possible to observe through other messages, especially those from the A.P.M. and school's direction board, a political nature, as they were in charge of requesting financial help and scheduling parent-teacher conferences, besides taking a position about difficulties for the employees' payments. It is curious to observe that the frequency of messages is daily, not weekly, monthly, or yearly, though their delivery is subject to the presence, or not, of a particular teacher, because certainly there are teachers that are more punctual than others in this delivery job, even though all of them send messages, independently of the frequency. That is what the reflections led us to think based on the analysis of the agendas studied in this article.

### **Early Childhood Education Policy in the 1990's**

Before entering the agenda and “brushing” them, we seek to adopt Oliveira's idea (2009, p. 23) that, “to understand what is happening inside school walls, it is necessary to observe outside them”. So, in this part of the article, the purpose is to outline a scenario of the educational policy at the end of the XX century in a try to understand the effects of its application on the offer of early childhood education in the country, especially in Paraná, and the city of Londrina, location of the institution where the agendas were required and produced.

At the beginning of the 1990s, Brazil experienced the promulgation of its new Constitution, called Citizen, different from the others due to rights establishment as a part anterior to the State organization (Cury, 2013). According to Cury (2013, p. 197), “it is as if the State should organize itself based on fulfilling the priority placed on citizenship rights”. By the way, it is with this Magna Carta that Early Childhood Education had its credit as a child right, and based on it, years later, the Law of National Education Guidelines and Bases consolidates the first stage of elementary schooling in the country, a triumph placed in the scope of what Kuhlmann Jr. (2016) considered as the overcome of social segregation spaces that isolated needy children in educational institutions connected to social aid bodies.

Also, in this period, it occurs the implementation of another law, the Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA), which, according to Nunes and Corsino (2012, p. 17), “tunes the Brazilian childhood as a particular time of the social existence of individuals, defined from the recognition of the child as a social being that needs protection and support”. Once inaugurated, this entire legal apparatus most likely interfered in how provision, practices, and policies oriented to early childhood education occurred in the early 1990s. Before, it was primarily in connection to health or social aid, becoming, since then, under the duty of the state and municipality educational bureaus, the elaboration of proposals, curriculum, and education offered to children. However, as Kuhlmann Jr. (2000, p. 7) explains, the incorporation of kindergartens into the educational systems did not necessarily provide the overcoming of the welfare education concept, notwithstanding the defense of its educational character by the fighting movement for the daycare centers as occurred at the end of the 1970s, led in particular by female workers, who achieved, according to Nascimento (2012), an expansion of its offer in the public network.

It is interesting to note that the scenario of the country short after its re-democratization was one of state reform and reformulation of educational policies driven by agreements with international organizations. In this regard, Oliveira (2009) analyzes that since the World Conference on Education for All, education policies, especially in the poorest and most populated countries in the world, started to seek education for social equality under the strong influence of international organizations connected to the United Nations (UN). According to the author, this occurred through technical aid provided to the ministries or in the form of loans that ended by defining the type of educational enterprise, oriented by the available financing lines” (OLIVEIRA, 2009, p. 25).

Also, regarding this context, Campos (2013) states that education occupies a strategic centrality linked to economic logic. “Following this logic, education is proclaimed [...] as an axis of productivity with equity, which makes it necessary [...] to guarantee the opportunity for access and maintain a minimum standard of learning quality to promote the intended equity” (CAMPOS, 2013, p.197, emphasis added). More particularly, about early childhood education, Campos (2013), when analyzing some documents produced by UNESCO and UNICEF, realizes

the indication for an educational organization of children from 0 to 6 years old segmented by age: under three years old, the recommendations are basically on the logic of protection, nutrition, and family education; differently, for children over four years old, the recommendations still have future schooling in mind. With that, we observe a ratification of the old dichotomy in the daycare and preschool model, which also marked early childhood education in Brazil and has been a criticism object by researchers, teachers, and social movements (CAMPOS, 2013, P. 198).

Nunes (2012) points out this dichotomy when considering that the “identity of early childhood education sometimes tends towards schooling/preparation for elementary school, sometimes towards aid, understood as caring for children deprived of attention [...]” (NUNES, 2012, p.35), what could be observed in practice when “brushing” the diaries since communication between family and institution took turns at requesting items for hygiene and for activities, as believed, of a pedagogical nature.

Still on the opposition between aid and schooling, much present in the history of early childhood education institutions, Kuhlmann Jr. (2000, p. 12) observes that “in this polarity, educational or pedagogical are seen as intrinsically positive, as opposed to aid,

negative, and incompatible with the former.” In this way, “certain aid services, such as food and hygiene care, seemed to represent a threat to the educational character of the institutions” (Kuhlmann Jr, 2000, p.12), which, to counteract the aid character, invested in control and discipline processes, such as those reported in the text by Kuhlmann Jr. (2000), experienced in the early 1990s.

With the so-called State Reform, known for the introduction of neoliberal policies<sup>4</sup>, it is possible to note, particularly under Fernando Collor administration, “a financial liquidation of the State as an immediate consequence of the process of globalization of the economy [...]” (COSTA; OLIVEIRA, 2011, p.92). Thus, the effect of this implementation was the establishment “of a logic that proclaimed that society should develop education with support from the State and not the other way around [...]” (COSTA; OLIVEIRA, 2011, p. 95). Furthermore, another essential point was the idea that it was necessary to advance the entry of children into early childhood education as a way of assuring them more success at school in the future, as analyzed by Campos (2013), once, according to the World Bank, human capital would be increased, especially for the poorest, ensuring that they would be able to compete for better jobs in the labor market.

To Rosemberg (2002), when the World Bank entered in the field of Early Childhood Education, besides recovering some proposals similar to those raised by UNESCO and UNICEF in the 1970s, - “disregarding the short Brazilian journey in the construction of a democratic ECE” (ROSEMBERG, 2002, p.40) -, it established elementary school as the “level at which public resources should be concentrated”, since the rates of return, according to the bank economic vision, would be higher than other school levels (ROSEMBERG, 2002, p.42)

Supported by reflections regarding education focused on equity, in the attempt for early childhood education to establish itself as adverse to social aid and oriented on preparing for elementary education as a result of its identification with the process of “schooling” as if it was a natural way (NUNES, 2012), we begin the analysis of the next section of this article on the “PRESIPE” agendas, which, as we will see, were marked by requests for materials to the relatives of the child who owned the agenda.

### **“Brushing” the agendas: practices in the Early Childhood School**

Apart from belonging to a child, the agendas had a link to the early childhood education school called “PRESIPE”, established in 1979<sup>5</sup>. This institution had essential financial support from the government of the State of Paraná through its Social Security Institute and from the families of the children who made monthly contributions. According to the article published in the “Folha de Londrina” newspaper in June 2004, “PRESIPE”

was created by the State Pension Institute (IPE), which maintained it through an agreement with the State Department of Education. In 2000, the State extinguished the Paraná Social Security Institute (IPE). From then on, the building became linked to the Paraná Welfare, and the State

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<sup>4</sup> To Costa and Oliveira (2011, p.91), “neoliberal ideas had their birth soon after the II World War, in the United States and Europe, capitalism cradles par excellence. Neoliberalism had its conception from a theoretical, political, and economic reaction against the interventionist Welfare State”.

<sup>5</sup> This accuracy regarding the foundation year is due to the celebration of the 15th anniversary of the institution, held in 1994, as stated in the agenda. According to the note dated August 2nd of this same year, “our School turns 15 years old, and, once more, we would like to register this date with your participation” (AGENDA B, 1994).

stopped transferring money to the school. Parents of students who previously paid monthly symbolic fees are now paying for the school in full (FOLHA DE LONDRINA, 2004)

Regarding the way of maintenance and organization of “PRESIPE”, it is possible, based on the notes contained in the agendas, to state that the resources coming from the government did not always arrive on time to pay all the school staff at once. In one of the notes, for example, addressed to families on 05/04/1993, the school requested some food to assemble the basic food basket for the employees “in charge of General Services [who] did not receive their salary” (AGENDA A, 1993). What was the food designated for this family, almost at the end of the text, after an underlined section in which it stated that the contribution was not mandatory but to “those who can collaborate” (AGENDA A, 1993).

About school financing, in addition to relying on the State, the school also counted on the families of the children. According to the message of 04/06/1993, the family should present the monthly fee proof of payment for March and February so that the institution could write them off on its control (AGENDA A, 1993). It was usual while financing school activities such as birthdays, parties, or even bus transportation for trips, to request money from the families. In one of these requests, the school informed that “on 12/16/1993, we will hold the Birthday Party of November and December. As your child is among those whose birthday is in November and December, we ask you to send us Cr\$ 300.00 to purchase a film, balloons, et cetera” (AGENDA A, 1993). In another message from 09/23/1993, they asked the following: “Mom, I will take part in a trip to SESC today, 09-23, visiting the Book Fair. I need to bring tomorrow CrR20.00 to help with the bus freight” (AGENDA A, 1993). The following year, there was a visit to the “Party of the book Trip to the World of Word at SESC Airport”, and the message asked to bring R\$1.00 for transport expenses (AGENDA B, 1994). In the same year, they requested another contribution to the families concerning “Children's Week” this time. According to the note, it was necessary to send R\$5.00 to the school by Monday (10/11) to cover transport costs on tours [...] (AGENDA B, 1994).

Even though, at that time, the “Presipe” was aimed, fundamentally, at the sons and daughters of civil servants and maintained in its entirety by the State, as shown in the CBN Londrina article signed by Marcos Garrido about the severe difficulties the institution found itself on 2018, the school systematically resorted to financial support from the families of the children enrolled there, whether asking them for money, attendance at parties or time for them to work there, in a way to make it possible to raise resources. After the help, the institution thanked the families. “In the same way (sic) that we came to you asking for collaboration, today we came to thank and congratulate everyone who collaborated, attended, and worked for the benefit of our school, our students, our future [...]” (AGENDA B, 1994).

When approaching the issue of financial maintenance of the school, it seems necessary to identify the possible elements that made it an institution maintained with the contribution of the families and not just the State. As the creation of the institution was at the end of the 1970s, it obeyed the educational guidelines of 1971, which stated the following: “§ 2 Education systems will ensure that children of a younger age to seven years old receive appropriate education in nursery schools, kindergartens, and equivalent institutions” (BRASIL, 1971). Kuhlmann Jr. (2016) analyzes the effects of this legislation on early childhood education, reflecting that the term “velarão” (will veil), originated from the Latin word “vigilare”, comes from the idea of keeping watch or lit candles, “which in turn resembles the last moments with the deceased, or the care of the dying patient, as the republican project for organizing early childhood education institutions seems to have been [...]” (KUHLMANN JR., 2016, p.490)

About the period of years that preceded the creation of “PRESIPE” at the end of the 1970s, it is worth remembering the triggering of the expansion of daycare centers, derived from the pressure of social movements, particularly urban ones, which later gained strength with the participation of women’s social movements (NASCIMENTO, 2012). It is also worth highlighting the compensatory nature attributed to early childhood education during this period when the country was under a dictatorship. Despite the expansion of daycare centers in particular, this enterprise constituted a government strategy for the “obtention of consensus”, as analyzed by Campos (2013, p. 202-203), “through the speech on *attention to the needy*” (author emphasis). Therefore, “early childhood education had the role of compensating for the cultural deficiencies of needy children and, thus, creating conditions for access to educational opportunities, promoting social equalization” (CAMPOS, 2013, p.203).

There is, however, a gradual increase in the number of middle-class children in daycare centers since women, as Nascimento (2012) explains, “also left for the labor market, which contributed to legitimizing daycare as a collective institution of early childhood education and no longer as a place where the emotional, nutritional, cultural or cognitive deficiencies of children, from low-income groups, were compensated” (NASCIMENTO, 2012, p.123). From here, according to Costa and Oliveira (2011, p.95), neoliberal ideology solidified, which presented itself in the next decade as the “imposition of a logic that proclaimed that society should develop education with support from the State and not the other way around; downsizing of the state machinery, this latter directly linked to the optimization of material and human resources”.

In this context of the expansion of Early Childhood Education in which “PRESIPE” emerges, marked by the beginning of neoliberal reform, widely instituted from the 1990s onwards, we see a defined concern with preparing children for schooling, as expressed in the content of the messages sent in the agenda. Both agendas asked for “research”, which was intended for the child owner of the diary, although their parents wrote them. The research content was limited to the child and different issues, such as those related to animal characteristics or the life of the institution municipality, as evidenced in the requests below from the teachers.

Research and write down your parents’ profession (AGENDA A, 1993);  
 research with your family your name, surname, the city you were born in, and how old you are (AGENDA A, 1993);  
 research the turtle’s habitat and diet (AGENDA A, 1993);  
 search for names of animals that have 4 legs and animals that have 2 (AGENDA A, 1993);  
 Research what folklore is (AGENDA A, 1993).  
 Search for battery- and electricity-powered toys [...] (AGENDA B, 1994);  
 research and bring a book that talks about water (AGENDA B, 1994);  
 research the precautions and dangers of electricity at home (AGENDA B, 1994);  
 research why our city is called Londrina (AGENDA B, 1994).

From that arrives a pedagogical question that deserves consideration: why were the “research” tasks aimed at children answered by their parents? Regarding this practice, so deeply rooted in the institution, given the numerous sets of “research” requested, whether on agenda “A” or agenda “B”, some hypotheses are kept in mind. The first concerns the

research realization, which, although directed at the child, their parents responded to them, most certainly due to the writing lack of command of the child. The second involves understanding the excessive requests of “research” as a way to get the relationship between school and family closer. A third hypothesis concerns the belief that this could contribute to the learning and development of the child.

It seems that the intention of sending “research” aimed at the child was to have him study at home, not only at the institution. There is here a conception that the finality of the early childhood education school is to orient to the preparation of children to the elementary level, which is typical, from one side, of international organizations’ policy, and, from the other, of a certain number of professionals interested in “showing work”, as we can notice from three particular messages. Two of them asked for materials beginning with “A”, and the other referred to the term class (“aula”, in Portuguese), the configuration of the relationship between teacher and children at the institution.

Bring cutouts of figures that begin with the letter A (AGENDA B, 1994).  
 Bring packaging of products that begin with the letter A (AGENDA B, 1994).  
 Tomorrow normal class for the Kindergarten II (AGENDA B, 1994)

About these two records, it is relevant to point out that even at the beginning of the 1990s, some pedagogies designated for early childhood already signaled the need to think about the education of children from other modes of organization, different from those observed in most schools. Elementary and secondary levels, which imposed a banking educational model, have been criticized since the beginning of the 20th century as having “austere methods, while the teachings ignored the student experience of life” (ELIAS; SANCHES, 2007, p.155). The author of this criticism was a French educator, Célestin Freinet, owner of a pedagogical proposal focused on cooperation (ELIAS; SANCHES, 2007), which proposed organizing the room into corners or workshops [...], leaving the center free for the circulation of children and teachers (ELIAS; SANCHES, 2007, p.159). The teacher, in this case, acted driven by the one concern, the one of respecting the life impulses of the children, and it was up to him to “intervene and stimulate, in a natural way” (ELIAS; SANCHES, 2007, p.161), the children.

Thus, teaching, as aimed in elementary education, often trying to standardize learning, does not talk with what Freinet suggests as the Portuguese word “aula” (class) invariably corresponds to the Portuguese term “ensinar” (teaching), related to the term “mark” as it is clear while consulting the dictionary, which shows that the Portuguese word “ensinar” (teaching) derives from the Latin “insignia”, which means “to put a mark” (TEACH, 2022). In this way, teaching in early childhood education would be equivalent to assigning a mark to each child or crossing them with marks, in fact, contents, as usually seen in elementary school. That would make it impossible to see them as producers of heterogeneous cultures, owners of a concreteness that makes them unique, i.e., “childhood [considered] as a condition of the child”, as Kuhlmann Jr. (2015, p.30) argues when reflecting that representations about them must take into account their place in social relations.

Another indication that leads us to think that preschool was concerned with preparing children for elementary school is the note dated November 29, 1994, regarding the call-up of the families for a student evaluation meeting, which took place at school in two periods, in the morning, at 10:30 am, and in the afternoon, at 4:15 pm. Thus, the note emphasizes that “there will be no classes for students on this day, as from 7:45 am to 10:15 am or from 1:30 pm to 4 pm the teachers will be in a pedagogical meeting” (AGENDA B, 1994). It is worth highlighting that the term “student”, used in schooling

means, refers to an environment and format that moves far from pedagogies aimed at childhood, like the idea itself that the name of the class “Kindergarten” recalls, because, according to Kishimoto and Pinazza (2007, p.46), the German educator Friedrich Froebel founder of the “Kindergarten”, it is opposed to “the concept of education as a preparation for a future state”.

The discussion about the grade nomenclature seems very interesting as it can give clues about the type of educational practice developed at the institution. In the case of Brazil, it is clear that the assignment of names to early childhood education classes went through changes, especially at the beginning of the 1920s, when

little by little, we no longer considered nursery school as it was suitable for poor people in opposition to kindergarten, and defined as the institution that would suit the age group from 2 to 4 years old and the kindergarten for those aged 5 to 6 years old. Later, the name of classes incorporated this age range within institutions with children aged 0 to 6 (nursery, kindergarten, preschool) (KUHLMANN JR., 2000, p.09).

Therefore, we can suggest that the name “Garden I” in 1993 and “Garden II” in 1994, for the class of the child owner of the agendas, is a result of the political and social changes that the country crossed and had no relation to the institution pedagogical ideas as we will try to show through reviews of the conception of *kindergarten*<sup>6</sup>, established by Friedrich Froebel, a German philosopher and educator from the 19th century, and the content of agendas notes.

The pedagogical proposal of Froebel is to be considered firstly from his understanding of a child, a creative being who holds within him a natural force capable of boosting his development (KISHIMOTO AND PINAZZA, 2007). Therefore, Froebel defended “education based on freedom and respect for the capabilities of each individual” (KISHIMOTO; PINAZZA, 2007, p.46). In the words of the German educator himself, “teaching and education must necessarily adapt, accompany, follow (only safeguarding and protecting), but never prescribe, determine, impose” (FROEBEL, 1896, p.7 apud KISHIMOTO; PINAZZA, 2007, p.46). Therefore, according to Kishimoto and Pinazza (2007), the education process should be based on self-activity and play because the belief was that the child would externalize their knowledge and develop through them.

Taking into account the discussion about Froebel's ideas that circumscribed his education project materialized in “Kindergarten”, the belief is that “PRESIPE” did not want to inform that it was an establishment of Froebel's pedagogy while giving the name “Garden” to the classes, even if the practice of requesting research from family of the child owner of the diaries can lead us to see as such as it required some initiative from them. However, the excessive amount of research could be considered as a desire for schooling the children, contradicting the child specificity that Froebel employs, which “requires a practice that does not focus on systematized knowledge but on development and self-initiated learning by the child [...]” (KISHIMOTO; PINAZZA, 2007, p.57).

There was also a profusion of notes in the agendas calling the child's family to a variety of meetings, which dealt with parties to happen, but also with student evaluation and other unidentified matters, as was the case with the note dated August 19th of 1993,

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<sup>6</sup> German term for nursery school.

which called for a parent-teacher conference on the 25th of the same month, at 5:30 pm. The note said: "Please attend, your presence is essential" (AGENDA A, 1993). Yet, the other communications that announced a subject always highlighted the importance of the presence of parents, such as the note dated May 6, 1993, which stated that their presence was crucial since "the decisions taken must have the acceptance of everyone" (AGENDA A, 1993). This request for family participation in the school's actions points to its interest in becoming an open institution, i.e., sensitive to the community's opinion, besides an economic order need, as its maintenance depended on donations. Thus, "PRESIPE" observed in the families of its students the possibility of extending its operation since their presence also meant the development of pedagogical proposals, given the large request for "research" and materials.

### **Final Considerations**

In this article, we intended to analyze two agendas from 1993 and 1994 of an early childhood education institution in Londrina, Paraná, called "PRESIPE". We verified that this school was created in the late 1970s by IPE, the State Pension Institute, although the maintenance of the educational institution was the responsibility of the families of the children, too, as noticed in the notes of the agendas in which the "PRESIPE" required for financial assistance from the community.

About the agendas, we also discussed their continuous nature in the life of the school, i.e., we concluded that the almost daily notes show that the agendas constituted a rite incorporated as a result of historical aspects, definitely associated with the need of the school in communicating with the families of the children.

Furthermore, we observed that teachers, when sending notes through the agendas, requesting research on many different topics, sought to prepare the child for elementary school since the requests were frequent and kept the appearance of "homework", which is much more usual in the next stage of education. The profusion of these notes led us to interpret them as a wish from teachers "to cause a good impression", who, it seems, had a children's learning extensive concern.

The choice to research the practices of an early childhood education institution of the early 1990s, based on the agendas of a child, is an effort that aimed to give visibility to a type of document qualified to help reveal not only the actions of the school but also the reaction of the families to the school requests. What we analyzed had some limits, such as the difficulty in checking whether the material requested reached the hands of professionals at school and whether the requested homework complemented the work in the classroom. Despite this, we believe that the analysis carried out here constitutes an essential finding, as they lead us to reflect on some of the practices undertaken in early childhood education, in this case, influenced by the political transformations that the country was experiencing, such as the end of the dictatorship; the promulgation of the new constitution and the participation of international organizations in education.

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