

**Public-private partnerships in early childhood education in Maringá (PR):
a historical analysis of privatization strategies**

*Parcerias público-privadas na Educação Infantil em Maringá (PR):
uma análise histórica das estratégias de privatização*

*Colaboraciones Público-Privadas en la Educación Infantil en Maringá (PR):
un análisis histórico de las estrategias de privatización*

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Resumo: Este trabalho apresenta uma breve retomada histórica da educação infantil no município de Maringá (PR), estabelecendo uma relação entre passado e presente e destacando momentos significativos de interação entre os setores público e privado. Trata-se de um recorte da dissertação de mestrado defendida no Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação da Universidade Estadual de Maringá, cujo tema central são as parcerias público-privadas no município. O objetivo consiste em compreender a trajetória histórica da educação municipal, com ênfase em dois momentos marcantes: a implantação das escolas cooperativas, na década de 1990, e a aprovação e execução do projeto de compra de vagas para a educação infantil, a partir de 2018. Esses dois marcos evidenciam as estratégias adotadas pelo poder público para suprir as demandas educacionais em diferentes contextos históricos. A análise desses dois importantes modelos de privatização da oferta educacional revela que, embora separados por aproximadamente 30 anos, ambos estão inseridos em um mesmo contexto social, econômico, político e cultural da sociedade capitalista, no qual a privatização e a terceirização de serviços públicos são adotadas como alternativas frente a desafios estruturais.

Palavras-chave: Educação Infantil; Privatização; Educação.

Abstract: This work presents a brief historical review of early childhood education in the municipality of Maringá (PR), establishing a relation between past and present, highlighting significant moments of the public and private sectors' interaction. This excerpt is part of a master's thesis defended in the Graduate Program at the State University of Maringá, whose central theme is the public-private partnerships in the municipality. The aim of this article is to understand the historical trajectory of municipal education, emphasizing two remarkable moments: the implementation of the cooperative schools, in the 1990s; and the approval and execution of a project to purchase school placements in private institutions for early childhood education, from 2018 onward. These two milestones evince the strategies public power adopted to meet the educational demands in different historical contexts. The analysis of these two important privatization models of the educational provision shows that,

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although separated by approximately 30 years, both are part of the same social, economic, political and cultural context of capitalist society that adopts privatization and outsourcing public services as alternatives to structural challenges.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education; Privatization; Education.

Resumen: Este trabajo presenta un breve repaso histórico de la educación infantil en el municipio de Maringá (PR), estableciendo una relación entre pasado y presente y resaltando momentos significativos de interacción entre los sectores público y privado. Se trata de un recorte de la disertación de maestría defendida en el Programa de Postgrado en Educación de la Universidad Estatal de Maringá, cuyo tema central son las asociaciones público-privadas en el municipio. El objetivo es comprender la trayectoria histórica de la educación municipal, con énfasis en dos momentos destacados: la implantación de las escuelas cooperativas, en la década de 1990, y la aprobación y ejecución del proyecto de compra de plazas para la educación infantil, a partir de 2018. Estos dos marcos evidencian las estrategias adoptadas por el poder público para suplir las demandas educativas en diferentes contextos históricos. El análisis de estos dos importantes modelos de privatización de la oferta educativa revela que, aunque separados por aproximadamente 30 años, ambos están integrados en un mismo contexto social, económico, político y cultura de la sociedad capitalista, en el que la privatización y la subcontratación de servicios públicos son adoptadas como alternativas frente a desafíos estructurales.

Palabras clave: Educación Infantil; Privatización; Educación.

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Introduction

This article aims to study public-private partnerships in early childhood education in the municipality of Maringá, focusing on the temporary acquisition of vacancies in private educational institutions to meet the demand for this stage of basic education. The research problem investigates the implementation and consolidation of strategies for privatization of early childhood education in the municipality of Maringá/PR, especially through cooperative schools and, later, the purchase of vacancies through partnerships with CSOs.

Research on public policies aimed at early childhood education reveals a marked scenario of ideological disputes, often contradictory, which is directly related to the social, economic, political and cultural context of capitalist society. In this context, the municipality of Maringá has stood out in the search for solutions that will meet the demand for vacancies in the age group of zero to three years, through partnerships and contracts with the government. To understand how the project to purchase vacancies for early childhood education was developed in the municipality, the methodological path initially includes a literature review, in a database, in order to gather the existing productions. Data collection was carried out on the transparency portal of Maringá, between January and September

2022, in order to gather the documents referring to the contracts signed between the city of Maringá and the educational institutions between 2019 and 2022. The documentary survey resorted to national, state and municipal legislation, pertinent to the object of research.

Regarding the bibliographic survey used, some authors who analyze public-private relations in Brazilian education from the 1990s stand out, such as Peroni (2003; 2010; 2012; 2015), Adrião (2015), Carvalho (2020), among others. These studies show the principles of privatization, the logic of the market increasingly latent within institutions that contribute to the worsening of the weaknesses of the educational sector.

As for the theoretical-methodological approach, historical materialism was adopted, based on the writings of Marx and Engels, for understanding that it is necessary to know the inequalities present within society to overcome them. The chronological cut of the research begins with the approval of Law No. 10722 of September 2018, which instituted the purchase of a vacancy in the municipality of Maringá, extending until 2022, when a new notice was published for the care of one thousand children from zero to three years old who are in the waiting line for vacancies in the municipality.

Cidade Canção: origin and foundation of the municipality

The city of Maringá, located in the Northwest region of the state of Paraná, approximately 450 km from the capital Curitiba. In addition to its good socioeconomic indicators, Maringá has an educational path that stands out at the state and national levels. Among these initiatives, we highlight the public-private partnerships established over the last decades, which sought to meet the growing demand for vacancies in the municipal network. Understanding this path is fundamental to reflect on the impacts of privatization and outsourcing strategies on the supply and quality of public education in the municipality.

As described in official documents and historical books, the colonization of the territory that currently belongs to the state of Paraná, happens from the arrival of the British, attracted by the fertile lands of the region. However, the first inhabitants of Northern Paraná were the indigenous peoples, such as the Guarani, Xetá, Kaingang and Xokleng, who, since 1500, had their lands violently taken by the Europeans who began to occupy the region. Around 1808, Dom João VI ordered that indigenous peoples should be catechized, civilized and their territories should serve as a cattle ranch, so the governor of the province of São Paulo summoned the military Diogo Pinto to command the expedition, which attacked the Kaingang in Paraná. Even losing the battle, the native people continued to offer resistance. The colonization of Paraná was a process marked by conflicts with

indigenous people, economic exploitation and the arrival of immigrants who helped shape the state's cultural identity (Mota, 2012).

In 1924, a British government mission visited the country and its members were impressed with the fertility of the lands of Northern Paraná. Back in England, Lord Lovat, in contact with interested investors and, together, founded Brazil Plantations Syndicate Ltda, which was later replaced by Paraná Plantations Company in 1925, which would raise funds for the purchase of land and construction of a railway (Luz, 1997).

In Brazil, the English company created a subsidiary, called Companhia de Terras Norte do Paraná, (CTNP) and is acquiring about 500,000 bushels of land in the region between the Paranapanema, Tibagi and Ivaí rivers from another company, Companhia Marcondes de Colonização. In 1944, CTNP was managed by two São Paulo investors, Gastão Vidigal and Gastão de Mesquita Filho and from 1951 it was called Companhia Melhoramentos Norte do Paraná (CMNP) (Luz, 1997).

On November 10, 1942, the foundation stone of Maringá was laid and the first buildings began to be erected to accommodate the migrants who passed through there, currently this region is known as Maringá Velho. However, May 10, 1947 is considered the official foundation of Maringá, as it is the date that CMNP opened its first office in the city of Maringá and began to sell the first lots in the region of Maringá Novo (Luz, 1997).

Despite being mainly focused on rural life and aiming at agricultural exploitation, the colonization developed in the North of Paraná did not neglect, in its general planning, the establishment of urban centers that could serve as points of convergence for the vast region, which increasingly needed public and private services, as a rearguard for its development (Luz, 1997, p. 3).

It can be said that the population that occupied the territory of Maringá was attracted by the work in the coffee plantations, either as owner or employee, in addition to the search for better living conditions, as published by the CMNP. This new dynamic directly impacted the region's economy and development, resulting in the creation of rural schools to meet the growing demand (Luz, 1997).

Public education in Maringá

According to Schaffrath (2006), shortly before the official foundation of Maringá, on the initiative of Napoleão Moreira da Silva, Ângelo Planas and Octávio Periotto, merchants of the time, who intermediated with the mayor of Apucarana (Maringá was a district of this municipality), the first school in Maringá was created, called Casa Escolar. The institution

was founded in March 1946, and the following year it was renamed Escola Isolada do Maringá Velho (Maringá Velho Isolated School). Teacher Dirce de Aguiar Maia (1921-2012) was invited to take over the direction of this school and worked with families to send their children to classes.

In 1947, due to a new territorial reorganization of the state of Paraná, Maringá became a district of the city of Mandaguari, the Isolated School was renamed Grupo Escolar Visconde de Nascar, having its adequate space to meet the increasing demand of students. In 1949, Companhia Melhoramentos Norte do Paraná built the second public school in Maringá, Grupo Escolar do Maringá Novo, which would later become Grupo Escolar Dr. Oswaldo Cruz, from this period, other schools were being created in the district of Maringá (Luz, 1997).

In 1951, Maringá was elevated to the category of municipality of the state of Paraná by State Law No. 790, of November 14, 1951. The following year, the election of the first mayor (1952-1956) took place and, in 1953, the city's first municipal school, Escola Municipal Bandeirantes, was built. The municipal administration prioritized the expansion of education, especially in the rural area, whose residents moved to the neighborhood now known as Maringá Velho to study. The educational model adopted followed the pattern of Rural Education in Brazil, guaranteeing fixed salaries and regular payments to teachers (Amaro; Rodrigues, 1999).

However, Schaffarth (2006) points out some challenges such as the scarcity of public resources for the construction of new schools and the lack of qualified teachers, which led to the hiring of people with little or no training. To address this deficiency, these professionals received guidance directly from the school principal.

The accelerated economic growth of Maringá resulted in the formation of richer layers of the population, who began to seek higher quality education for their children. This scenario led to the simultaneous development of public and private education networks. It was in this context that, in 1953, Colégio Santa Cruz emerged, directed by the Carmelite sisters, becoming the first institution to offer early childhood education in the city. In the same year, on a land donated by Companhia Melhoramentos Norte do Paraná (CMNP), Ginásio Maringá was founded, which later, in 1969, became Colégio Marista de Maringá (Sanches, 2002).

According to Lara (s/d), in addition to Colégio Santa Cruz (1953), other private institutions attended early childhood education such as Colégio Adventista (1956); Santo Inácio (1957); Nossa Senhora da Glória (1958); São Francisco Xavier (1963); Regina Mundi (1967); Paraná (1967) and Luz Amor (1969).

From 1956, schools began to be neglected by the municipal government, and teachers faced delays in paying their salaries, resulting in the loss of credibility with local merchants. In addition, school facilities began to suffer damage, leading farmers — owners of the land where the schools were built — to hire private teachers to ensure the continuity of classes (Zamferrai; Shelbauer, 2020).

Schaffrath (2006) describes that the need to improve the municipal educational network led to the creation of the Municipal Inspectorate of Education, which was responsible for the administration of teaching in pedagogical and administrative aspects. From 1977, the municipal management implemented a system of polarization of teaching in rural schools, adapting the buildings and improving student service.

In the urban area, more than 233 classrooms were built, through renovations and constructions, in addition to offering more than 3,000 places in preschools in establishments maintained with the help of the Brazilian Legion of Assistance and private organizations. At that time, the largest preschool in the State was in Maringá, the Dona Guilhermina Cunha Coelho Preschool (Sanches, 2002).

In 1969, the Pre-school Action Pole Unit (UPAPE) was implemented, which was built in Vila Operária and inaugurated on June 26, 1970 and later expanded to other neighborhoods (Filipim, 2014).

Regarding the content taught in schools, Amaro and Rodrigues (1999) assert that, until 1969, students were taught what teachers considered necessary, from 1970 onwards, the education department prepared a single curriculum plan, which was later improved based on article 4 of Law No. 5692/71. This law also provided for the implementation of elementary school education in eight grades under the responsibility of the municipality, initially, this reform occurred in 12 of the 43 schools.

This process lasted until 1978, when the implementation of nuclearization began, with the creation of three nuclei, in 1979 it increased to three more and in 1980 it expanded to seven centers. Each center corresponded to a school with four or more classrooms, room for pedagogical staff and dental outpatient clinic. For Amaro and Rodrigues (1999, p. 379).

One of the main objectives of the nuclearization project was to solve the issue of infrastructure, leaving pedagogical improvement to a later moment. This fact can be explained by the perilous situation of physical facilities, with regard to the high costs of conservation, maintenance and renovation of isolated schools.

At the same time, the first daycare centers in Maringá were founded, between 1978 and 1979. These institutions, aimed children from 0 to 6 years old, were agreed with the extinct

LBA (Brazilian Legion of Assistance) and administered by the Municipal Department of Education, they had a welfare character, in order to serve less favored families.

With regard to the 1970s, Lara (s/d) portrays that:

If preschool education has “recently” left its welfare character, passing in this period to a compensatory characterization, it is assumed that, in the absence of concern for preschool education, on the legal level, academic discussions will tend to present a lack of theoretical and empirical knowledge, a problem that will tend to be overcome in the 1980s (Lara, s/d, p.9).

In 1983, the daycare centers were separated from the Department of Education and started to be administered by the Maringá Social Development Foundation. The municipal network served from preschool to 8th grade of elementary school (Amaro; Rodrigues, 1999).

Between 1989 and 1991, the municipal management, driven by neoliberalism, developed a policy in which it transferred the responsibility for the management of public services such as education, health, garbage collection, among others, to the private sector. Some public educational institutions went through the experience of the privatization of public services, which consisted of hiring companies, consisting of teachers and other professionals, responsible for the management of the institutions and for this they received an amount per student. To better understand the project implemented by the municipal administration, a brief contextualization is necessary.

Notes on the Maringá cooperative school

In the municipality of Maringá, the so-called outsourcing of public services occurred through the hiring of companies to advise or even perform services, aiming at reducing costs on the part of the government (Amaro; Rodrigues, 1999).

Founded in 1947, Maringá had experienced a relatively accentuated process of economic and urban development, becoming very early, the hub of a vast region and the third largest city in the state. This development, which was expressed in the growth of the urban population, corresponded to the formation of a significant structure of public services: education, health, cleaning, transportation, etc. [...] with the exception of public transport, managed [...] by the private sector [...] until 1989, when the Executive announced the start of privatization, there is no news of popular dissatisfaction with the quality of municipal public services (Dias, 1995, p.4)

According to Dias (1995), the new municipal administration, in 1989, began the privatization process with the publication of the notice for companies to acquire the assets of the garbage collection sector.

In April of the same year, several civil entities of the municipality participated in the Maringaense Forum in Defense of Public Heritage, alerting the population about the impacts of the municipal administration project. Faced with resistance and political wear and tear, the initiative was postponed and resumed only the following year, when, taking advantage of legal loopholes, the privatization of the garbage collection service was achieved by hiring a private company to perform the service.

In the second phase of the privatization project, the “experience acquired more complex models”, a structure based on the private management of the public service, but announced by the administration as the “adoption of a new paradigm of public services” (Dias, 1995, p. 9 and 10). At that time, public education had good levels of quality, even so the distortion in the educational system, the increase in the number of public servants were the supposed challenges to be overcome by the management that had the liberal perspective as a model to be followed (Gadotti; Romão, 1993). Due to this, the private micromanagement model in education was adopted.

The purpose of this proposal was to deliver the administration of the school units to the workers' cooperatives, which would provide service to the government, without a labor relationship. The contract would be signed after a bidding process, by which rules, obligations of both parties and sanctions were established, if the clauses were not complied with (Gadotti; Romão, 1993, p. 6).

Dias (1995) points out that, unlike the outsourcing of garbage collection, where the company with all its infrastructure was hired to manage the sector, in the municipal education network the hiring took place so that third parties could manage all infrastructure and public resources.

The implementation of this new public school management model began with the publication of the bidding notice in January 1991. The first contract signed, valid for 12 months, was validated for the management of the school Prof. Agmar dos Santos, which had 630 students enrolled. In the second half of 1991, a new bidding process was opened for the management of two more schools. In early 1992, 13 of the 14 urban schools in the municipality were integrated into the project. In the end, all urban schools were transformed into cooperative schools.

According to Silva (2007), pedagogical guidance was the responsibility of the Board of Education, which held study and planning meetings with teachers and team members, in

addition organize courses and seminars. Teachers in the cooperatives had 4 hours of weekly workload to participate in these activities.

Azevedo (2021, p. 56) highlights that:

‘Private micromanagement’ transformed each school into a cost unit’ and the municipal network into a system of ‘continuous production’; and the municipal network into a system of ‘continuous production’ that is characterized by the serial training (production) of students, considered, by this managerialist model, standardized products, whose costs could be calculated in spreadsheets and whose quality of education could be measured by the results in also standardized evaluations.

The advertising conveyed by the administration emphasized that the school would continue to be public, universal and free, however, it would gain more efficient contours in administrative and qualitative aspects with the private administration. Azevedo (2018), says that it would not be correct to classify Cooperative Schools as public and free education with private micromanagement, as cooperatives resembled a private organization aiming profit.

Dias (1995, p. 16) points out that the so-called "Liberal Administration" used the idea that all public management is inefficient and subject to deterioration to justify its privatization initiatives. Even with cooperative schools still at an early stage, the municipal administration resorted to advertising to promote an alleged early success of the model.

In the second half of 1991, the Municipality of Maringá already distributed the magazine "Escola Cooperativa: Ensino Público com Microgestão Privada" (Cooperative School: Public Education with Private Micromanagement), presenting it as a reference of the supposed advantages of privatization. The publication reinforced privatization as a solution to the challenges of public administration, adopting an ideological discourse that disregarded the real demands and educational debates.

The project faced resistance both inside and outside educational institutions, with the mobilization of the Forum in Defense of Public Heritage and other entities. On September 24 and October 17, 1991, teachers organized marches against privatization.

On October 24, 1991, a new demonstration had greater adherence, with the participation of students from state schools, parents, teachers, university students and members of the community in general, all united against the privatization models under implementation. At the time, a petition with approximately 19,000 signatures was sent to the mayor, the City Council and the local section of the OAB, demanding the end of cooperative schools (Dias, 1995).

Paulo Freire, in an interview granted during his time at the State University of Maringá, took a stand in defense of the public school:

[...] Education should never be a source of profit, like any other commodity. If this is happening in Maringá, they must protest [...]. The transfer of responsibility from the municipality for education to the private sector is inadmissible. The executive has the duty to create and assist municipal schools. This means an attack on freedom, only verified in authoritarian rulers and without the premise of working for the well-being of their community. I hope that the mayor of Maringá will go back on this real racket against elementary school. I am totally against it and, if necessary, I will fight for the maintenance of public education. (JORNAL DO POVO, Oct 19, 1991, p. 4 apud Silva, 2007, p. 94 and 95).

In October 1991, in an articulation between the Fórum Maringaense and the Fórum Paranaense in Defense of the Public School, he issued an open letter exposing his position, questioning whether the public character of the school would be preserved, since what was being propagated was a system of productivity and the commodification of teaching. Another point of the letter refers to the fact that privatization would be more costly than public management, because in addition to the profit margin, the city still paid for all the infrastructure necessary for the execution of the service. Dias (1995, p. 14) states that the Forum warned about:

The search for profitability would lead to the scrapping of materials, wage tightening and the hiring of cheap and low-skilled labor, a fact stimulated by the lack of a competition for admission to the teaching staff. In addition, the name "cooperative" was an advertising screen to cover up a business company for limited quotas [...].

The Forum in Defense of Public Heritage argued that cooperative schools represented a form of privatization of education in the city. In addition, it pointed out the unconstitutionality of the initiative, as it involved the transfer of public funds to private for-profit entities. However, the relationship between cooperative schools and the community was intense, to the point that, during the 1992 electoral campaign, many parents mobilized for the future administration to maintain the project (Gadotti; Romão, 1993).

Despite this popular support, the model began to decline at the end of 1993, with the end of municipal management and due to the various challenges faced by the administration. The Public Prosecutor's Office of the State of Paraná filed a Public Civil Action against the City Hall, as the implementation of the project occurred before the legal regulation that would allow private companies to receive public funds for this purpose, so the action was considered valid, the bids carried out by the city hall for the contracting of companies providing educational services were declared null and void. (Azevedo, 2018).

The new mayor elected for the term (1993-1996) extinguished privatization initiatives throughout the public sector, including Cooperative Schools, which despite its short duration, made clear the mercantile bias, as it treated public institutions and education as a product to be managed by the private sector (Dias, 1995).

The new administration, after resuming the public management of municipal institutions, reopened tenders for hiring employees for the Department of Education, since the framework that the past administration had left was insufficient to keep the structure functioning (Amaro; Rodrigues, 1999).

The education department, at the beginning of 1993, presented a study showing the divergences between the reality found and the supposed success pointed out by the previous administration. Among the reported data are problems such as the scrapping of public buildings, the low quality of teaching materials, difficulties in hiring personnel, and an increase in the number of employees for the inspection of companies. Another fact pointed out by the report is that, due to the high turnover of companies and employees, the city had to bear costs and services that should be the responsibility of the contracted companies. There were also cases of non-compliance with labor laws, further aggravating the precariousness of the educational service (Dias, 1995).

Municipal Early Childhood Education: from 1993 to the present

With the new directions, from January 1993, early childhood education was again under the responsibility of the Maringá Social Development Foundation, an agency of the City Hall, responsible for transferring funds to institutions (Maringá, 2015).

In compliance with the Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education 9394/96 and Resolution 003/99 of the State of Paraná, in 2000, the municipality incorporated the staff of the Foundation and in early 2001, the Secretary of Education under the new Municipal Administration concluded what was determined in the LDB and assumed full responsibility for municipal early childhood education, incorporating 42 more Early Childhood Education Institutions, 26 governmental and 16 philanthropic or contracted, which began to be maintained only by the city hall (Maringá, 2015).

As of 2001, the Department of Education began a process of reorganization and implementation of policies for early childhood education in line with national and state policies, with the objective of affirming the educational character of this age group, moving away itself from the welfare actions that still permeated the institutions (Silva, 2006).

Since the incorporation of Early Childhood Education in the Department of Education, legal provisions affirming democratic management in institutions have been approved, implemented and even revoked during this period. One can mention the decree that provided for the election of directors³; and the establishment of the criteria for enrollment in early childhood education centers⁴; in 2003, the elaboration of the Political-Pedagogical Project for Early Childhood Education and the School Regulations; in 2004, the Curriculum Proposal and Project of the Municipal Education Plan; in 2015, the Municipal Education Plan⁵; in 2017, the law establishing the Democratic Management⁶ and Internal Regulations of the Municipal Education Council⁷.

Regarding the data from public institutions, it can be seen that, in the year the city hall took over the responsibility for municipal early childhood education, in 2001, the network had 185 teachers, 5,810 students and 42 institutions. In 2024, the number of teachers was 1,353 to meet the demand of 13,587 students in the 64 units.

An extremely relevant fact for municipal early childhood education happened from 2017 onwards. In order to meet the existing demand, the city published the accreditation Notice No.158/2017, for the conclusion of partnerships with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to carry out an activity aimed at serving Early Childhood Education students. The purpose of the notice was to reach vacancies for the care of 300 children from zero to three years old, however, only 75 students were contemplated because a CSO participated in the process.

In the following year, in 2018, although the municipality already served approximately 13,000 children from zero to five years of age in the 63 Municipal Centers for Early Childhood Education, the waiting list still had about 3,700 children. Due to the large number of children awaiting care, the Public Prosecutor's Office of Paraná (MPPR) filed a lawsuit requesting that the municipality zero this list. To comply with this action, the government claimed that the vacancies in the CMEIS were filled, in addition to the impossibility of hiring personnel to meet new classes, due to the fact that the municipality is close to the prudential limit established by the Fiscal Responsibility Law. Such allegations led the city to create the Law 10.722/2018, sanctioned on September 19, 2018, which deals with the temporary acquisition of vacancies in the teaching of early childhood education in private educational entities.

³Municipal ? Decree No.1281/2001

⁴ Ordinance 001/2002 – Maringá - PR

⁵ Law n° 10.024/2015

⁶ Law No. 1096/2017

⁷Municipal ? Decree No.822/2017

The Law provided that the municipality should meet the offer of public vacancies in the municipal public early childhood education network, through the expansion of the public network, however, it authorized the municipality to sign contracts and agreements with the private sector for the temporary acquisition of vacancies to supply the surplus demand. Regarding the form of financing, the Law provides that:

Art. 9. Expenses arising from this Law will be borne by the budget allocation of the Municipal Department of Education – SEDUC and the Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and the Education Salary, and there may also be allocation of free resources from the Municipal Treasury, if necessary (MARINGÁ, 2018).

The public notice No. 248/2018, for the accreditations of private educational institutions, for the care of children aged 0 to 3 years and 11 months, was opened on September 25, 2018. There were several positions against this proposal, such as the Union of Municipal Public Servants of Maringá (SISMMAR) and the Maringá Social Observatory (OS), which led the Maringá City Hall to accept the recommendation to challenge the items on extracurricular activities and the absence of accredited classification criteria, however, on November 20, 2018, the city hall suspended this notice for 15 days, and, as requested by the Municipal Management Secretariat, on December 19, 2018 it was revoked.

In 2019, the city started the accreditation of private educational institutions, with the opening of a new notice, No. 002/2019, aiming to serve 2,000 children from zero to three years old. In 2020, accreditation was suspended due to the advance of the coronavirus pandemic (SARV-CoV-2) caused by Covid-19 in all countries, including Brazil, where several measures to contain the virus were adopted. In the state of Paraná, Decree No. 4.258/20 determined the suspension of face-to-face classes and in Maringá, the municipal government determined the closure of school units as of March 20. Regarding the contracts between the city of Maringá and the private institutions, a new amendment suspended the transfer of the amounts and it was agreed to suspend the contract on April 1, 2020 until the date that it was possible to return to classes. As of 03/01/2021, a new amendment was signed with the private institutions already accredited, thus ceasing the contractual suspension, allowing the return of classes in the form of face-to-face, hybrid and/or non-face-to-face teaching, according to the guidelines of the legal authorities and Municipal and/or State Decrees.

In 2022, a new amendment was signed with the same institutions, renewing their contracts for the period from 02/01/2022 to 01/31/2023, but a new notice, No.

29, was also opened for the accreditation of new institutions. The new contacts were signed during this year.

In 2023, accreditation notice No. 27 opens space for the accreditation of private institutions to serve up to 1,000 children, at which time 9 more contracts were signed.

Notice No. 276 was issued on November 21, 2024, aiming at the care of another 772 children, being paid by the government \$1,447.04 (one thousand, four hundred and forty-seven reais and four cents) monthly / per child. Data from the Maringá transparency portal indicate that about 17 institutions have signed a contract with the city hall.

It can be seen that over the years the number of students served and the amounts paid by the government increased significantly. According to the data made available by the city hall, the forecast is that, in 2025, about 3,500 students will be served by the job purchase project. Regarding the attendance of the early childhood education stage, the municipality currently has 64 Municipal Early Childhood Education Centers that serve about 13,547 students.

Final considerations

The history of education in Maringá is intrinsically linked to the economic and social development of the city, reflecting urban, industrial and demographic transformations. From the creation of the first rural schools to the expansion of public and private networks, there is a path marked by challenges, advances and ideological clashes.

The privatization of education, although often presented as a solution to the structural challenges of public education, has generated a series of factors that compromise not only equity in access to education, but also its social function as an instrument of inclusion and development.

In the context analyzed, municipal education was influenced by the neoliberal model, which already predominated in public management at the national level. This influence manifests itself in different ways throughout the history of municipal education, such as in the creation of cooperative schools and, later, in the implementation of the purchase of vacancies in early childhood education. Both moments reflect the increasing insertion of the privatization logic in public education, although they are configured in different ways in terms of management and impact.

The data analyzed show that partnerships between the private sector and the government have become a growing trend in several sectors of public administration, especially in education. This expansion is driven by factors such as fiscal restrictions,

austerity policies and the influence of international organizations that promote privatization as a solution to structural challenges in the sector.

Due to this scenario, it is essential that educational policies prioritize the strengthening of free and quality public education, ensuring adequate investments in school infrastructure, valuing teachers and expanding the supply of vacancies without depending on privatization. Only a sound and inclusive education system can reduce inequalities, promote social development, and guarantee the right to education as a public good rather than a commodity. Thus, it is essential that managers and civil society act in defense of an educational model committed to the collective interest and the democratization of education.

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