

Policies for Early Childhood Education in the governments of Luiz Inácio da Silva¹

Políticas para a Educação Infantil nos governos de Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva

Políticas de Educación Infantil en los gobiernos de Luiz Inácio da Silva

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Abstract: This article, developed within the Graduate Program in Education at the Federal University of Acre, analyzes the main public policies for Early Childhood Education implemented during the governments of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula) between 2003-2006, 2007-2010, and 2023-2026, with the objective of mapping the most relevant initiatives of this period on the subject. It is a qualitative study with a bibliographic and documental approach, based on previously published empirical studies, such as data from IBGE and MEC, legislation, resolutions, and periodicals circulating within the defined period. The study shows that, throughout Lula's three terms, significant advances were made in the creation of programs, guidelines, and pedagogical materials aimed at Early Childhood Education, with particular emphasis on teacher training initiatives. These initiatives reflect a special focus during Lula's governments, implemented through public policies aimed at promoting Early Childhood Education, seeking both to qualify teachers without specific training for this field and to provide continuous professional development for practitioners in the area.

Keywords: Public Education Policies; Early childhood education; Lula government.

Resumo: Este artigo, elaborado no seio do Programa de Pós-graduação em Educação, da Universidade Federal do Acre, analisa as principais políticas públicas para a Educação Infantil implementadas nos governos de Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula), entre 2003-2006, 2007-2010 e 2023-2026, com o objetivo de mapear as iniciativas mais relevantes deste período quanto ao tema. Trata-se de uma pesquisa qualitativa, de caráter bibliográfico e documental, pautada em estudos empíricos já publicizados como: dados do IBGE e do MEC, legislações, Resoluções e em periódicos circulantes no período delimitado. O estudo evidencia que, durante os três mandatos de Lula, houve avanços significativos na criação de programas, diretrizes e materiais pedagógicos voltados para a Educação Infantil, com destaque para as ações de formação docente. Tais iniciativas refletem uma especial atenção durante os governos Lula, implementadas através de políticas públicas afetas ao incentivo da Educação Infantil, a qual busca tanto qualificar professores sem formação específica para atuar neste campo, quanto oferecer capacitação continuada aos profissionais da área.

Palavras-chave: Políticas Públicas Educacionais; Educação Infantil; Governo Lula.

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Resumen: Este artículo elaborado en el seno del Programa de Post grado en Educación, de la Universidad Federal de Acre, analiza las principales políticas públicas para la Educación Infantil implementadas en los gobiernos de Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula), entre 2003-2006, 2007-2010 e 2023-2026, con el objetivo de hacer un mapeo de las iniciativas más relevantes de este período a lo que se refiere al tema. Se trata de una encuesta cualitativa, de carácter bibliográfico y documental, pautada en estudios empíricos ya de carácter público como: datos de IBGE e del MEC, legislaciones, Resoluciones y en periódicos circulantes en el período delimitado. El estudio evidencia que durante los tres mandatos de Lula, hubo avances significativos en la creación de programas, directrices y materiales pedagógicos vueltos para la Educación Infantil, la cual busca tanto calificar profesores sin formación específica para actuar en este campo, cuanto ofrecer capacitación permanente a los profesionales del área.

Palabras-llave: Políticas Públicas Educativas; Educación Infantil; Gobierno Lula.

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Introduction

This article has as objective to Analyse the main public policies to Early Childhood Education implemented at the national sphere through Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's governments, between the 2003-2006, 2007-2010 e 2023-2026's madates. Starting from legal foundation about the theme, this study verified that education is constituted as universal and inalienable rights, as established by the 205 article, from the *Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil* from 1988 (CRFB/88) and consolidated by other subsequent legal devices such as Plano Nacional de Educação (PNE – Law nº 13.005/2014), Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC - Resolution CNE nº 2/2017), bem como a Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional (LDB - nº 9.394, from December 20th, 1996). This set of standards instituted, among others, the Early Childhood Education, that compreehends Years from 0 to 5 and 11 months old (Brazil, 1996), ensuring their right to a free, quality public education, being a duty of the state to promote such guarantees through maintenance of institutions focused on Early Childhood Education.

In Brazil, institutional childcare developed based on distinct conceptions of thir social function (Guimarães, 2017). Many of these institutions emerged with the purpose of welcoming only children in situations of social vulnerability, pointing to education as the mainstay for combating poverty and social problems such as the high infant mortality rates that plagued the 16th century. In this context, childcare institutions emerged and were transformed through a "[...] set of social, cultural, economic, and political factors that resulted from the ruptures and continuities of each historical period" (Guimarães, 2017, p. 135).

Currently, the legal devices direct toward care that considers the specific needs of each child, integrating care and education without reverting to a merely welfare-based function. In this sense, Law N°. 13.257 of March 8, 2016, recognizes early childhood—the first six years of life—as an essential stage for the integral development of the human being, encompassing the physical, psychological, intellectual, and social dimensions, indispensable for lifelong learning. Thus, from this perspective, ECE transcends its historical welfare-based function, establishing itself as a unique stage in the process of individual development and the full exercise of citizenship from the earliest years.

It is worth highlighting that ECE, according to Guimarães (2017, p.132), “was almost never a priority for the State, as the analysis of its trajectory demonstrates the recurrence of low-cost policies, even when the policy resulted from official educational bodies [...]”. Given this scenario, we have delimited for this moment the mapping of the main educational policies implemented in the Lula government, covering both the first two governments (2003-2006 and 2007-2010) and the current one, which began in 2023 and is in force until the present moment.

The objective is to identify improvements and challenges that persists on the implementation of the right to an Early Childhood Education of a socially referenced quality. With that being said, a few indagations guided this study, they are: Before the investments with destiny to education in Lula governments, which were the educational policies specially aimed at Early Childhood Education?

This study is characterized by being of a qualitative approach, of a bibliographic nature taking into consideration that it is intended to collect information before the empirical studies that are already published regarding of research object, embracing the historical, social, economic and educational context that permeated the three terms of Lula government. According to (Gil, 2002, p. 44) “Bibliographic research is developed based on already published material, consisting mainly of books and scientific articles.” The research is also presented as documentary since the data collected was done through searches on publicly available websites such as: Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE), Ministério da Educação (MEC), as well as legislation, Resolutions and news.

With that being said in an introductory way, the article is structured into three more sessions. It continues with an exploration of the concept of public education policies in the light of Stephen Ball's contributions, establishing the theoretical foundations that guided this study's analysis. Next, we present the legacy of Lula's three terms in office, delving into the specific context of policies and programs for Early Childhood Education. Finally, in the conclusion, we highlight the challenges that are still present, attempting to contribute to the debate in this fundamental field of Brazilian education.

Stephen Ball's Policy Cycle: A Theoretical Approach to Educational Public Policy

To discuss about public policies demands, before everything, to comprehend the complexity of the scenario, marked by a broad variety of concepts that seek to establish a dialogue with the relationship that it put between the interests of civil society, its subjects and the public power. To understand the strength that rule the formulation of a public policy is essential, in order to avoid a naive reading of any public policy, whether social or educational. The naivety in the act of reading is manifested in the passive acceptance of the texts, without the construction of a critical analysis of the produced reality (Freire, 1982)

The current situation of education in Brazil is directly linked to the formulation of public policies and to the way that they are implemented, interpreted, followed by and evaluated. To comprehend this process, we resorted on an analysis of the policy cycle by Stephen Ball, an important theoretical reference to the educational policies studies. This approach helps us to understand the steps that go from the construction to the execution of a policy, which, amid the diversity that compose society, seeks to mediate conflicts of interest and produce political decisions in favor of social consent (Mainardes, 2006).

According to (Mainardes, 2006), the critical analysis of policies and programs involve three main contexts: the influence context, text production context and practical context. The first is the influence context, which represents the source of all politics, emerging from movements of diverse interests. As Espínola and Cavalcante (2014) highlight, such interests may derive from the demands of the social environment itself - issues or problems shared by certain groups of the population—or they may be generated within political power itself, independent of experiences in the external political environment. At this stage, policies are shaped in light of the demands presented by groups vying for positions of power and seeking to influence political decisions.

In line with Mainardes's (2006, p. 51) notes, "It is in this context that interest groups compete to influence the definition of the social purposes of education and what it means to be educated.", however, not all demands are met, what determines this is the interpretation and priority that the State assigns to the problems expressed. Therefore, it is from this perspective that Mainardes (2006) relates the questions "what is it?" and "who is it for?" considering that every policy aims to serve a specific audience, based on the conflicting interests of the social groups involved, which among them we can mention: politicians, researchers, the media that

carries the strength of the population, and international agencies such as the World Bank (WB), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that pressure the public power.

The second context is of text production, which corresponds to the representation of politics through official texts. These texts, as Mainardes (2006, p. 52) explains, "[...] can take various forms: official legal texts and political texts, formal or informal commentaries on official texts, official pronouncements, videos, etc." They are, therefore, the materialization of interests expressed by social groups, revealing which problems or causes are being prioritized by the State. At this step of political text development, the struggle between groups for control of these representations becomes evident on a macro level.

The third context of the policy cycle is practice, in which different interpretations and interventions by those involved in the educational process—managers, teachers, coordinators, and the school community—become essential. After deciding which demands will be represented and the elaboration of the law text, the policy implementation and realization phase arrives. This step, however, is marked by great complexity: in the Brazilian educational landscape, many measures are regulated but not fully implemented in practice.

This way the policies, given the interpretations of those involved, are subject to re-creation, undergoing a process of adjustment, reinterpretation, and even disregard, considering environmental conditions and the difficulties encountered. According to Mainardes (2006, p. 52), "[...] teachers and other professionals play an active role in the process of interpreting and reinterpreting educational policies, and thus, what they think and believe have implications for the implementation process."

During Lula's government, it is possible to identify a growth in public educational policies, implemented through government programs and actions aimed at ensuring advances in education. However, from a macro perspective, the Brazilian scenario reveals limitations: changes in government often result in a relaxation or weakening of these policies, which can be interpreted as a setback. An analysis based on the Policy Cycle allows us to more clearly understand these fluctuations.

The Legacy of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's Three Terms in Office for Early Childhood Education (2003–2006, 2007–2010 and 2023–2026)

Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was the first Brazilian politician to occupy for three times the Republic Presidency by the sovereign will of the people, elected in the Years of 2002, 2006 e 2022. His two firsts terms were marked by inumerous achievements in

enconomical, social and educational fields, despite having assumed his first term in a context marked by discontinuities and privatization of various sectors of the Brazilian economy, specifically the educational sector, in which he was influenced by neoliberal ideology (SILVA, [s.d.]).

The shift to the left in Brazil required Lula to adopt bold measures to change the unstable reality left by the previous government, defending the growth and implementation of policies to combat unemployment, exclusion and social inequality, in order to eradicate hunger and provide access to education for thousands of Brazilians who still lived in situations of need, including children who, given their social condition, from an early age saw work as the only alternative to guarantee sustenance at home, since they were deprived of the basic conditions for subsistence.

In this way, Lula took into account the interests of the popular class, which for years had been disenfranchised and marginalized. However, Espínola and Cavalcante (2014) point out that the Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC) administration handed over the presidency of the country having practically doubled the public debt owed to International Organizations (IOs), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank (WB). This fiscal reality of the country was not the only difficulty faced by the Lula administration; another obstacle to the approval of the government's ECE goals was the fact that the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) constituted only one-fifth of the National Congress.

In this sense, the situation was only reversed with the return of the country's sustainable economic growth, which had been stagnant during eight years of the FHC government. Teixeira and Pinto (2012, p. 923) point out that “Between 2003 and 2010, Brazil went through the largest growth cycle in the last three decades. GDP grew 4,1% per year, almost the double that it is observed between 1980 and 2002 (2,4% per year)” and this is due to favorable conditions abroad with Chinese demand for commodities.

However, other factors stood out positively, changing the country's scenario, for example, the improvement in family farming through the incentive of the Harvest Plan aimed at small producers, which began to guarantee an average of 70% of sustainable food, policies to increase the minimum wage became possible after Brazil's distancing itself from the IO, IMF and WB, in addition to the reduction in the unemployment rate with stimulus for entry into the job market and the reduction in interest rates, which provided growth in the domestic consumer market, boosting the Brazilian economy.

The economic progress was not the only highlight of the Lula government, but building on it, other measures were imposed, such as the development of social programs designed to provide greater access to basic education and higher education. Regarding early

childhood education, the subject of this study, the Lula government began to recognize it as an indisputable investment point rather than a public expenditure, highlighting it as fundamental not only for individual development but also for the country's development. Thus, throughout the Lula administrations (2003-2006, 2007-2010), and also during the first two terms of his successor, Dilma Rousseff (2011-2014 and 2015-2016), the highest levels of investment were made in early childhood education, through the development of policies and programs aimed at accessibility and improving education at all levels.

On this perspective, Anderson (2011, p.29) reports that “Since 2005, government spending on education has tripled, and the number of university students has doubled.” Committed investment increased from R\$50,6 billion in 2002 to R\$132,3 billion in 2015 in values adjusted for inflation for 2021, a real increase of 161,7%, according to data from Siga Brasil.

During these governments, education became a tool to fight inequality, resulting in several achievements, such as: the creation of the Fundo de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica (FUNDEB), a set of 27 funds used as a mechanism for redistributing resources to all stages of Basic Education, including Early Childhood Education; the allocation of 75% of oil royalties and 50% of the Fundo Social do Pré-Sal to education; the creation of the ProUni and Fies programs; the creation of 18 federal universities and 178 campuses; the achievement of the national minimum wage and the Plano Nacional de Formação dos Professores da Educação Básica, which guaranteed higher education to educators who did not yet have a degree; and the creation of the Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica (IDEB) in 2007 to assess the quality of education in public schools.

In the third term of the Lula government 2023-2026, in just 100 days of management it was possible to execute 250 actions that changed the course of Brazil, as highlighted in an article published on the government website (2023⁴) and, in particular, the actions for education we highlight the readjustment of up to 200% of scholarships for study, research and training of teachers and students, covering undergraduate, postgraduate, scientific initiation and the Permanence Grant, the readjustment of the minimum wage for Basic Education teachers by almost 15%, going from R\$ 3,845.63 to R\$ 4,420.55 the base salary, in addition to the commitment to resume dialogue and annual meetings with deans of federal universities and institutes.

⁴ News published on April 10, 2023, celebrating the first 100 days of President Lula's third term. The publication lists 250 achievements that changed the political landscape, generating hope with an emphasis on social causes. Available at: <https://www.gov.br/planalto/pt-br/acompanhe-o-planalto/noticias/2023/04/em-100-dias-250-realizacoes-que-ja-mudaram-os-rumos-do-brasil>. Accessed on: March 5, 2025.

Main Legal Marks for Early Childhood Education in the Lula Governments (2003-2006, 2007-2010 and 2023-2026)

Before delving specifically into the educational policies for Early Childhood Education created during the Lula government, it is necessary to understand the political contexts that underpinned and preceded them. The 1988 Constitution was the driving force behind numerous educational policies created to defend the rights of children and adolescents. Another important law was Law N° 8.069, approved on July 13th, 1990, the Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente (ECA). This law constitutes a legal mechanism that regulates the rights and guarantees of children and adolescents, recognizing them as subjects with full rights and requiring special care. It also establishes mechanisms for participation and social oversight in the formulation and implementation of childhood policies. As stated in the 1990 ECA:

Art. 3º Children and adolescents enjoy all fundamental rights inherent to the human person, without prejudice to the full protection provided for in this Law, ensuring them, by law or other means, all opportunities and facilities, in order to enable them to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially, in conditions of freedom and dignity.

In this way, ECA recognizes, categorically, that children and adolescents are subjects that have the right to the full exercise to citizenship, of education, healthcare, household and other protections that ensure them the dignity of the human person. The ECA establishes yet, the principle of the full protection of children and adolescents, placing everyone's responsibility on - of the family, the community, society in general and public power – to ensure and make these rights effective, foreseeing the integral development of these individuals.

In 1996 it was implemented the Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional (LDB) in which put Early Childhood Education as the first step of Basic Education, establishing the principles and guidelines that rules the organization and functioning of education on the country. This legislation, in this 29th article, defines clearly the purpose of Early Childhood Education, highlighting the compromise to promote full development of children until 5 years old, covering their physical, psychological, intellectual and social aspects, complementing the role of family and community

This law established a new educational model based on valorization of diversity, on access to education and in the strengthening of learning institution's autonomy. The changes occurred in all educational levels and among the decisions, we highlight the offer of

teacher training courses, in which up until now, had not been claimed in legal devices. The LDB/96 recognizes that to best address the specific needs of children and address their comprehensive development, there is an urgent need to qualify teaching professionals, and in the case of Early Childhood Education, a teaching degree, that is, a higher education degree, is now required (Brazil, 1996).

By establishing guidelines that promote continuing education and improved working conditions, the LDB/96 seeks to ensure that teachers are prepared to perform their duties with greater acuity. In order to make it possible to implement improvements in relation to teacher professionalization, as well as to expand the quality of educational provision, a new Constitutional Amendment was necessary, nº 14, which was regulated through Law No. 9,424, of December 24, 1996, the Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento do Ensino Fundamental (FUNDEF), which consisted of an accounting fund, created with the objective of guaranteeing the sub-allocation of education resources for Elementary Education and ensuring their better distribution.

The financial resources of FUNDEF were transferred to states and cities, in a collaboration regime, distributed based on the number of students enrolled in the elementary years in public schools. The systematization of educational resources through FUNDEF contributed to the weakening of the education system, since "according to Law 9.424, enrollments in Early Childhood Education, Educação do Jovens e Adultos (EJA), and Secondary Education are not considered for the purposes of resource redistribution" (Davies 1999, p. 17). Thus, Early Childhood Education ended up having to organize itself through low investments, suppressing some children's rights, such as the lack of specialized professionals.

In FHC's government, it was created through Law nº 10.172, from 2001, the Plano Nacional de Educação (PNE), that started from the understanding that education is an indispensable element of a person and for that reason, it must be present since birth, highlighting the importance of Early Childhood Education to children from 0 to 5 years and 11 months, taking into consideration that many families, given the social context in which they live, they are unable to monitor development and provide an education that fully meets the needs of their children. Therefore, recognition of the importance of early childhood education within the context of the PNE/2001 is based on twenty-five goals, including the expansion of daycare and preschool openings, minimum infrastructure quality standards, professional training, and the evaluation and improvement of early childhood education, among other aspects.

The Plano de Desenvolvimento da Educação (PDE), launched on April 24, 2007, during the Lula government under then-Minister of Education Fernando Haddad (Partido

dos Trabalhadores), encompassed a set of programs of transversal nature that addressed all educational modalities and aimed to improve education in all of the Brazilian territory. In search to overcome the challenges that were affecting Brazilian education, the PDE was implemented through a collaborative effort between the Federal government, States, and Cities. Regarding Basic Education, priority was given to teacher training and valorization, as well as financing and ensuring access to Early Childhood Education, through various government measures and actions. The PDE prioritized the training and development of education professionals through the implementation of initiatives that addressed both initial and continuing education.

When it comes to initial education, we can highlight the Programa de Iniciação à Docência (PIBID), still in operation, whose objective is to improve initial training in undergraduate programs, providing future teachers with their first exposure to the reality of the country's basic education schools, connecting theory and practice. Similar to the continuing education courses offered by the Universidade Aberta do Brasil – UAB, this program aims to expand the offering of higher education through distance learning.

Regarding Early Childhood Education infrastructure, it is worth mentioning the Programa Nacional de Reestruturação e Aquisição de Equipamentos para a Rede Escolar Pública de Educação Infantil (Proinfância), created by Resolution/CD/FNDE nº 6 of April 24th, 2007, whose objective was to expand access and improve the infrastructure of daycare centers and preschools nationwide. This public policy aims to strengthen Early Childhood Education and is funded by resources from the Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação (FNDE)

It is worth noting that during this period the Plano de Ações Articuladas (PAR) was created, instituted by Decree nº 6.094, of April 24, 2007, executed under a collaborative regime, which consists of a technical and financial assistance strategy that aims to improve Brazilian public education and contribute to the improvement of the Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica ((Ideb), which directly reflects on the development of Early Childhood Education.

To effectively implement actions already implemented in the educational context, the PAR contributes to the multi-year planning of educational policies and has four key indicators: educational management; training of teachers, of service professionals, and school support; pedagogical and assessment practices; and physical infrastructure and pedagogical resources.

Thus, PAR not only strengthened but also encouraged the continuation of educational programs, always striving for improvement. According to Ribeiro (2017, p. 22), "Regarding Early Childhood Education, the FNDE states that cities that have signed up to implement

PAR in their city and, consequently, completed it, prioritize the construction of daycare centers and the improvement of school infrastructure."

Posteriorly, due to the negative effects of the Fundef on Early Childhood Education, which excluded it from this funding, was implemented under the Lula government, through Law nº 11.494/2007, the Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica e Valorização dos Profissionais da Educação (FUNDEB), comprised of a total of twenty-seven funds from taxes and transfers from the Union.

However, with the implementation of nine-year Elementary Education by Constitutional Amendment Nº 59 of 2009, it was determined that enrollment would become mandatory for public school students aged 4 (four) to 17 (seventeen). As a result, Fundeb, like the previous financing policy, prioritized Elementary Education, excluding daycare centers that offered services to children aged 0 to 3.

Nevertheless, the Conselho Nacional de Entidades de Base (CONEB) (2008) and the Conferência Nacional de Educação (CONAE) (2010 and 2014) also brought relevant notes regarding the training and qualification of education professionals, reinforcing the need to offer continuing education courses to lay teachers in education, especially in Early Childhood Education, promoting more quality in children's education.

Public Policies and Programs focused on Early Childhood Education in Lula Governments (2003-2006, 2007-2010 and 2023-2026)

Throughout Lula's three terms in office, policies, programs, and initiatives were developed to address the challenges faced by early childhood education, such as limited access to educational institutions, such as a lack of investment and specialized training for education professionals.

The Qualidade na Educação Infantil Award, approved in 1999 by the Ministry of Education (MEC) in partnership with the União Nacional dos Dirigentes Municipais de Educação - UNDIME (CORREA, 2011), was maintained under the Lula government until 2005. This policy, as published on the MEC website, had the primary objective of rewarding educational projects and recognizing the role of teachers as key players in improving the quality of ECE. However, in addition to fostering competitiveness among educators, this policy also placed them directly responsible for improving teaching. Correa (2011, p. 22) corroborates this by stating that "This type of award, in addition to not considering the objective conditions in which pedagogical work is carried out, fosters the idea that the greatest share of responsibility for the quality of education lies with the individual teacher."

This action reveals the state's lack of action in the face of the challenges that plague the educational system, by assigning teachers a duty that needs to be shared among all those involved in the school environment — teachers, managers, students and their families — as well as other factors that are relevant to achieving minimum quality standards, such as: student reality, infrastructure conditions, school operation, school supplies etc. (Correa, 2011).

Nevertheless, in 2005, two important initiatives were launched: PROINFANTIL (Formação Inicial para Professores em Exercício na Educação Infantil), a program created "as an emergency alternative to overcome the high rate of early childhood education professionals without the minimum training required by the LDB" (Cabral; Silva, 2019, p. 2). This is a high school training course in the Normal format, developed through a distance communication system, whose target audience was ECE teachers working in daycare centers and preschools in public schools.

Although its methodology provides students with unique learning experiences, enabling them to obtain information, socialize, share information, and clarify doubts, a distance learning course creates contradictions. Cabral and Silva (2019, p. 2) point to

[...] difficulties and contradictions in quality (emergency course at intermediate and simplified levels) and in the implementation of the program in terms of financial investments and content overload.

Regarding the second initiative, it is worth highlighting *Revista Criança*, a periodical publication aimed at disseminating public policies and teacher training, which has established itself as a reference for 25 years of circulation.

In 2006, three normative documents stood out: the *Parâmetros Nacionais de Qualidade para a Educação Infantil* (Volumes 1 and 2). This policy aimed to "enable compliance with the constitutional precept of administrative decentralization and to fulfill the MEC's goal of collectively developing public education policies" (Brazil, 2006). These parameters recognize that providing quality education presupposes promoting children's full development, valuing their prior knowledge and creating conditions for the development of new learning. Furthermore, they establish that:

1) quality is a socially constructed concept, subject to constant negotiations; 2) it depends on the context; 3) it is based on rights, needs, demands, knowledge and possibilities; 4) the definition of quality criteria is constantly stressed by these different perspectives (Brasil, 2006, p. 25).

Consequently, the *Os Parâmetros Básicos de Infraestrutura para Instituições de Educação Infantil* (2006) was released, a document resulting from regional seminars attended

by administrators and experts. This initiative aimed to establish adequate infrastructure conditions to ensure the provision of quality education. That same year, the Universidade Aberta do Brasil (UAB) was created, a program offering higher education programs, including teaching courses degrees and continuing training for elementary and secondary school teachers, aiming to expand access to public higher education.

The Proinfância Program, launched in 2007, sought to expand children's access to daycare centers and schools, as well as improve the physical infrastructure of the early childhood education network. In 2008, two initiatives stood out: the publication of *Monitoramento do Uso dos Indicadores da Qualidade na Educação Infantil*, aimed at improving municipal departments, and the Teacher Portal, a digital platform that supports the teacher training process and allows the storage and circulation of a collection of multimedia educational content in different formats, in addition to links and functionalities that support research and interaction in Early Childhood Education.

The year 2009 was marked by regulatory and evaluative advances, such as the publication of the *Indicadores da Qualidade na Educação Infantil*, a self-assessment proposal that guided institutions on educational practices that respect children's fundamental rights and help build a more democratic society. The *Orientações sobre Convênios* for the provision of Early Childhood Education by nonprofit institutions and the *Critérios para um Atendimento em Creches* were also published, providing guidelines for pedagogical practices and public policies. Furthermore, the *Relatório de Avaliação da Política de Educação Infantil no Brasil* systematized diagnoses and support for the area, while the *Plano Nacional de Formação de Professores (PARFOR)* offered emergency courses for public school teachers, addressing the demands identified in the strategic plans developed by the *Fóruns Estaduais Permanentes de Apoio à Formação Docente*.

In 2010, the *Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para a Educação Infantil* established the foundations for organizing pedagogical proposals. The following year (2011), the publication *Deixa eu falar!* encouraged new educational practices committed to children's rights, seeking to articulate their experiences and knowledge with cultural, artistic, environmental, scientific, and technological knowledge to promote their full development. The document *Subsídios para Construção de uma Sistemática de Avaliação* analyzed assessment instruments for this stage.

In 2024, the Ministry of Education (MEC) published Resolution CNE/CEB nº 1, dated October 17th, 2024, which established the *Diretrizes Operacionais Nacionais de Qualidade e Equidade para a Educação Infantil*, seeking to guarantee all infants and children, from birth to five years old the access to and permanence in Early Childhood Education, as well as quality and equity in educational provision in terms of educational management, infrastructure and educational

environments, pedagogical processes, and other conditions that promote their learning and development. Other initiatives were implemented, such as the Curso de Formação Continuada em Educação Infantil Ambiental, which aims to contribute to the theoretical and practical training of Early Childhood Education teachers so that they can be committed to intervening with children in their territories, equipping them to promote climate justice and new ways of thinking and acting in environmental education for the quality of life on Earth.

In the same year, the Continuing Education Curso de Formação Continuada Leitura e Escrita na Educação Infantil – LEEI was implemented, developed within the scope of the Compromisso Nacional Criança Alfabetizada –(CNCA) This program carries out training activities for Early Childhood Education teachers, with the aim of introducing children to written culture. The CNCA was officially launched by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva on June 12, 2023, established through Decree No. 11.556, with the goal of ensuring that all children are literate by the end of the 2nd grade of Elementary School, as established by the *Base Nacional Comum Curricular* (BNCC). This initiative was proposed under a collaborative regime among the Union, States, Federal District, and municipalities, with the intention of fostering cooperation among these spheres in the development of the policy.

Linked to the CNCA, based on axis 2, which concerns the Training of Early Childhood Education Professionals, the LEEI program was established, focusing on reading, writing, and oral skills. This program was created to theoretically and methodologically support teachers so they can develop educational practices that broaden children's experiences with oral and written language, aiming for social justice, given that not all children have access to these skills within their families. This vision is managed through the National Curricular Guidelines for Early Childhood Education (DCNEI), which establish interactions and games as the structuring axis of the curriculum, aiming to guarantee experiences that allow children to “[...] interact with oral and written language, and coexist with different oral and written textual supports and genres” (DCNEI, 2009, p. 25).

Recently, LEEI was established and regulated by MEC Ordinance No. 85, dated January 31, 2025, and became the Programa de Leitura e Escrita na Educação Infantil - Pro-LEEI. As pointed out by Nunes, Baptista, and Corsino (2023), the program was conceived based on the recognition of the insufficiency of teacher training policies specifically aimed at issues related to written language in Early Childhood Education. The authors emphasize that the proposal of LEEI is grounded in the understanding of the child as a subject of rights and a producer of culture, in alignment with the Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para a Educação Infantil (DCNEI).

The program's theoretical-methodological foundation is analyzed in depth by Baptista, Correia, and Melo (2023), who emphasize the interactionist and sociocultural perspective adopted by LEEI. The program conceives of the appropriation of written language as a complex cultural process that begins before formal literacy, highlighting the importance of meaningful social interactions mediated by language in the context of Early Childhood Education. Thus, reading and writing occur in real and meaningful situations, that is, embedded in social practices, and therefore necessary for interaction between interlocutors.

These policies seek to ensure meaningful learning for children, articulating appropriate theoretical and practical knowledge to promote their full development, taking into account their cognitive, emotional, social, and physical needs. However, given the policies presented, it is worth noting the emphasis on elementary education, while Early Childhood Education, specifically the provision of services to children aged 0 to 3, has been neglected. Furthermore, it is clear that the policies and programs established during the Lula government are strongly influenced by the guidelines outlined by the World Bank for Education, which reflect their ultimate goals and objectives for the education system.

Conclusion

At the end of this study, it was possible to confirm that, throughout the Lula governments, there was progress in the formulation of programs, guidelines, and teaching materials aimed at Early Childhood Education, especially regarding the consolidation of regulatory frameworks, the expansion of teacher training initiatives, and the strengthening of the quality agenda for this step.

We observed that during Lula's first term, there were some ruptures and continuities in relation to the previous government. Consequently, in the second term, education gained greater representation, and through the PDE, many educational policies were created aimed at the initial training of teachers who did not yet have specific training required by the LDB/96, such as Proinfantil.

In the third term, still ongoing, it was possible to identify some actions aimed at training Early Childhood Education teachers, such as Pro-LEEI and the Curso de Formação Continuada em Educação Infantil Ambiental, in addition to other initiatives already on the public agenda for implementation in 2025, such as the Mais Professores program, which is part of the teacher development measures.

The development of these programs and other initiatives demonstrate the state's concern for Early Childhood Education and teacher training at this step of Basic Education. However, this progress must be balanced against persistent challenges, such as insufficient investment in the construction and maintenance of daycare centers and preschools, the lack of adequate infrastructure, and the still outdated training of professionals in this field. Added to this are the persistence of regional inequalities that makes it difficult the guarantee of equitable and high-quality provision throughout the country. Thus, even though government efforts have represented progress in recognizing Early Childhood Education as a right, the limitations encountered demonstrate that universal access and socially benchmarked quality remain goals under construction.

Analyzing educational policies during the Lula governments in light of Stephen Ball's Policy Cycle allows us to understand how these programs were influenced, formulated, and implemented. Within this context, the influence of various interest groups is evident, from social movements advocating for early childhood to international organizations pushing for educational reforms. In the context of text production, these demands are materialized in laws, decrees, and programs, often marked by contradictions and disputed narratives. This theoretical approach reinforces the idea that educational policies are not linear, but rather dynamic processes, subject to continuous reinterpretation and adjustment.

It is worth highlighting that this research did not cover the context of practice, the stage in which policies are tested. Future work suggests investigating how teachers and administrators received these initiatives—whether they implemented them as planned, adjusted them to the realities of their schools, or encountered setbacks in their implementation.

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