

## Early childhood education in the historic struggle for the dignity and rights of babies and young children

*Educação Infantil na luta histórica pela dignidade e direito dos bebês e das crianças pequenas*

*Educación Infantil en la lucha histórica por la dignidad y el derecho de los bebés y de los(as) niños(as) pequeños(as)*

**Interview:** Rita de Cássia Freitas Coelho

Menissa Cícera Fernandes de Oliveira Bessa <sup>1</sup>  
Federal University of Tocantins

Jocicleia Souza Printes <sup>2</sup>  
Amazonas State University



Doctor honoris causa from the Federal University of Campina Grande (UFCG). General Coordination of Early Childhood Education (COGEI), linked to the Basic Education Department (SEB) of the Ministry of Education (MEC). Rita Coelho is reference in the campaign for public policies on early childhood education in Brazil. She is tireless in mobilizing for the dignity of childhood, respect for children's rights and against hunger E-mail: [educacaoinfantil@mec.gov.br](mailto:educacaoinfantil@mec.gov.br).

<sup>1</sup> PhD in Education. Professor of Pedagogy at the Federal University of Tocantins, Palmas, Tocantins, Brazil. E-mail: [menissa.bessa@uft.edu.br](mailto:menissa.bessa@uft.edu.br); Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/6176132217099400>; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1941-5524>.

<sup>2</sup> PhD in Education. Amazonas State University. Tabatinga, Amazonas (AM), Brazil. E-mail: [jprintes@uea.edu.br](mailto:jprintes@uea.edu.br); Lattes: <https://lattes.cnpq.br/2493027648589841>; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6065-6058>.

**Summary:** Rita Coelho is one of the main names linked to the defense of children's right to early childhood education in Brazil. She was in charge of COGEI (SEB/MEC) for nine years - 2007 to 2016 - and returned under the current federal government, seeking ways to build and implement public policies. In the interview, she tells us about her choice and work in favor of childhoods and children's access to education. Her dialogue with us is full of rich experiences and from these she reveals arenas of conceptual and budgetary disputes, the fierce political clashes, the advances and setbacks of this process of struggle. Finally, Rita reinforces her optimism in regard to progress in the education of babies and young children, as well as the fight against poverty, which victimizes children in a striking way.

**Keywords:** Early Childhood Education; Public Policies; Babies; Small Children; Dignity.

**Resumo:** Rita Coelho é um dos principais nomes ligados à defesa do direito das crianças por Educação Infantil no Brasil. Ela esteve à frente da COGEI (SEB/MEC) por nove anos – 2007 a 2016 – e retornou, no atual governo federal, buscando caminhos para a construção e implementação de políticas públicas. Na entrevista ela nos conta sobre sua escolha e atuação a favor das infâncias e ao acesso das crianças à educação. Seu diálogo conosco é encharcado de ricas experiências e destas ela revela arenas de disputas conceituais e orçamentárias, o acirramento de embates políticos, os avanços e os recuos desse processo de luta. Por fim, Rita reforça seu otimismo no avanço da educação dos bebês e das crianças pequenas, assim como, o enfrentamento contra a pobreza que vitimiza de forma marcante as crianças.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação Infantil; Políticas Públicas; Bebês; Crianças pequenas; Dignidade.

**Resumen:** Rita Coelho es uno de los principales nombres ligados a la defensa del derecho de los(as) niños(as) a la Educación Infantil en Brasil. Ella estuvo al frente de la COGEI (SEB/MEC) durante nueve años – 2007 a 2016 – y regresó, en el actual gobierno federal, buscando caminos para la construcción y la implementación de políticas públicas. En la entrevista, ella nos cuenta sobre su elección y actuación a favor de la infancia y del acceso de los(as) niños(as) a la educación. Su diálogo con nosotros está inmerso de ricas experiencias y, a partir de estas, ella revela espacios de disputas conceptuales y presupuestarias, el recrudecimiento de enfrentamientos políticos, los avances y retrocesos de este proceso de lucha. Por último, Rita refuerza su optimismo en el avance de la educación de los bebés y de los(as) niños(as) pequeños(as), así como en la lucha contra la pobreza que victimiza de manera marcante a los niños(as).

**Palabras clave:** Educación Infantil; Políticas Públicas; Bebés; Niños(as) pequeños(as); Dignidad.

---

**Received on:** June 3, 2025

**Accepted on:** August 8, 2025

---

## Interview

**REPOD:** To start our meeting, let's find out more about your story: where were you born, what was your childhood like, did you attend an institution or class corresponding to early childhood education?

**Rita Coelho:** I was born in Minas Gerais, in Barbacena, a town in Serra da Mantiqueira mountain range, which connects Minas to Rio. It's a city that was home to great hospices of Minas Gerais, considered the Brazilian holocaust. But it was also a city of rose plantations, strawberry plantations, a very cold city. I was born there circumstantially,

because my father had taken a national exam for the former IAPI (Institute of Retirement and Pension of Industrial Workers) and he was assigned to the Barbacena superintendence, where we lived for two years and then moved to Belo Horizonte. In Belo Horizonte, when I was four years old, I went to Delfim Moreira Kindergarten, a pre-school, with that kindergarten concept, a beautiful building in the city center, but a very authoritarian concept of preparatory early childhood education. I remember the horrible punishments we experienced, but I also remember a very rich curriculum involving ballet, theater, music, parties, lots of reading and libraries.

**REPOD: Looking at your personal history and today's social organization, what is your understanding of the reasons that led us to guarantee in law that the education of babies and young children is the first stage of basic education?**

**Rita Coelho:** In the constituent assembly, I defended early childhood education, nursery and pre-school care, recognized as a right to education. Firstly, because it was a social need that clearly appeared in the constituent movement. Secondly, because it was linked to social assistance in a conception of philanthropy and the right of the poor, and it was already understood that it was a right of all children, because even rich children are often disrespected in their right to be educated in a playful way, in a dialogical way. I have no doubt that early childhood education, from nursery care, the age group from zero to three, is a right to education and I thought it was very appropriate to link it to the Brazilian education system, for better or for worse, because the education system has very important characteristics for babies and young children, but it has very inadequate characteristics, because they were all designed to children from the age of seven.

**REPOD: Based on your background in sociology, how did you become interested and how did your relationship with early childhood education develop?**

**Rita Coelho:** It was because of poverty, social inequality and the suffering of childhood. I saw education as a possibility for justice, even if it wasn't total. First the issue of childhood, babies, young children, vulnerability and then the issue of poverty, inequality. I suffered a lot from this. Sometimes I took home beggars with small children on their laps, in baskets. That was a problem for my family. Even after I was married, I sometimes did this. I'd take them to shelter, to have a bath, to arrange a ticket for them to leave. It was because of the extent of the injustice and vulnerability of childhood.

**REPOD: Among the professors you had at the university, what reading or research did you do on any professor who was a reference in this discussion of education for young children, for babies?**

**Rita Coelho:** None! But my university was very good. I studied at the Federal University of Minas Gerais. I got into the Faculty of Economic Sciences. Sociology was an option in the third year, when we had to choose between Economics or Social Sciences, but then the entrance exams were unified and we went on to study Social Sciences and Philosophy. So, at my university, I don't remember any work linked to childhood. I remember a lot of work on poverty, social inequality, with real masters who are still national and international references, but not on childhood. Childhood was a dimension that I became aware of as a possibility in politics in the 1990s, after the municipal elections in Belo Horizonte. At that time I took part in the program of PT (Workers' Party) candidate, Patrus Ananias, who was our mayor, our

secretary, a minister and is today a federal deputy. He was a supporter of the community day-care centers. I was part of a group that drew up a project called Criança Cidadã (Citizen Child), which was part of his government program. At that time, I joined the fight movement for daycare in Belo Horizonte, the groups at the Faculty of Education, PUC (Pontifical Catholic University) of Minas Gerais, and UFMG (Federal University of Minas Gerais), already with these characteristics of the fight for early childhood education.

**REPOD: Nowadays, how do you assess the contribution of academic studies on public policies for early childhood education, as well as Brazilian activism, such as MIEIB (Brazilian Early Childhood Education Interforum Movement)?**

**Rita Coelho:** The production of knowledge, research and studies has grown a lot in Brazil in this area, and it is fundamental for defending the policy. On the other hand, the priority of policies is not always related to the effectiveness of the policy. We often see in academic research objects that are far removed from the policy of care, far removed from tackling inequalities, even in the field of social movements. In early childhood education, we have a specific movement, which is the Movimento Interfóruns de Educação Infantil do Brasil (Brazilian Early Childhood Education Interforum Movement), of which I was and am a member and one of the organizers. And I think that research, social movements and the social need of families are the great strength of early childhood education, of early childhood education policy. I think it doesn't just come from research, it doesn't just come from the social movement, which for a long time has been closed off in its identity struggle and still has little dialogue with other areas, such as statistics, evaluation and economics. The articulation of social movement, social need - because sharing the education of young children today is an unequivocal need of society, the development of society - and the question of research, which are three elements that have come together and are important for the progress of the policy.

**REPOD: In 2003, during Lula's first government, the National Seminar on Financing Early Childhood Education took place in Brazil in partnership with UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), with broad participation from civil society through university researchers, members of parliament, state and municipal education leaders and representatives of social movements. In 2004, based on the seminar, a collection was published, of which you were one of the organizers, with analyses of this situation and proposals for meeting the challenge of increasing the supply of quality places for the first stage: "Financing early childhood education: perspectives under debate". What advances in quality and supply have been made in early childhood education policies since that movement? How do you perceive the role of multilateral organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) in early childhood education policies in Brazil?**

**Rita Coelho:** Firstly, it's clear that funding is an important issue because early childhood education was only recognized in FUNDEB (Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and Valorization of Education Professionals) (Brazil, 2007) from 2007 onwards as a transfer to municipalities, but it was recognized at a level that was absolutely insufficient. Recognizing it meant cheapening it, ignoring the needs, the necessary inputs for early childhood education. I believe that funding does not guarantee early childhood education. In Brazil, we have a problem of conception that prevails even among municipalities or policies that have financial resources. So that's my first observation. In fact, at the time you're referring to, I said several times that

fortunately we didn't have funding, because the concept was so precarious, so inadequate, that if we had money, the problem would have been much worse in terms of implementing the policy. Since then, this debate has grown a lot, which is not to say that funding has grown, but this debate has been qualified in the CAQUI, the cost of initial pupil quality. I took part in these studies together with Fineduca (National Association for Research into Education Financing), together with UNESCO, and MEC itself. So the understanding of inputs grew and so did the pressure for more resources, which didn't always mean more resources. In the latest update of FUNDEB (Brazil, 2020), resources for early childhood education have increased, which does not mean that they have been regulated and implemented in early childhood education. Just a reminder that in FUNDEB, the application of the resource is not linked to the enrollment that generated the transfer of the resource. The second major article of FUNDEB gives the manager the option of where to apply the funds. We have resources that come in linked to early childhood education enrollment and that are applied to primary education, EJA, infrastructure. There are various studies, various Court of Auditors' monitors showing us this. This latest FUNDEB law has made progress in early childhood education, but our regulations still don't guarantee the VAAR (Student Value Year Result), the 50% of the federal government's percentage linked to early childhood education. So it's a dispute! It's a dispute of interests, it's a dispute of power and this dispute is often based on the fragility of the concept, not on legal fragility. But in the fragility of early childhood education, society still accepts anything. I'm currently very affected by the discussion about teaching in early childhood education. We saw this in Santarém, we saw it at other seminars. The understanding is that to be a teacher in early childhood education you don't necessarily need to have a university degree, you don't need to be in a teaching career. This is in the law, but in practice, society accepts it. Would society accept heart surgery by a nursing assistant? No, it wouldn't. But the child accepts it, the parents accept it, the manager accepts it, society accepts it.

**REPOD: Professor Rita, tell us about your work with the National Union of Municipal Education Councils (UNCME) and your relationship with the National Union of Municipal Education Directors (UNDIME).**

**Rita Coelho:** I was a UNCME councilor in Belo Horizonte. From that position, I was elected president of the National Union of Municipal Councils. I consider and am very recognized for this work because when I took over the UNCME, in a good way, it was a club of four friends: three from the Northeast, one from Santa Catarina. There was no institutionalization. Four great friends who were passionate about the cause, who dedicated themselves to it, who discussed it. When I took over the presidency, my first commitment was to institutionalize UNCME. It had to have minutes of its creation, it had to have its headquarters in Brasília, it had to have internal regulations and periodic elections. We built all this up. And today it is a great organization based on that work. But I must stress that none of my work is individual. So, when we talk about work and I respond, I'm always talking about collective work, it's always a work of articulation. Today I'm in the gallery of presidents and I receive titles and tributes and the current president always mentions the importance of my administration, but I emphasize that it has always been a work of partnerships. With regard to UNDIME, we have always been partners in seminars, organizations, debates and conferences. Because early childhood education is UNDIME. But I never held any position. I've always been a collaborator.



**REPOD: And how is the relationship with UNDIME and UNCME today in terms of partnerships for current early childhood education policies?**

**Rita Coelho:** They are very impacted by the current context of the government. I would say all the organizations and social movements. MEC itself today is impacted in its role as coordinator, of providing national guidelines for early childhood education. It is very much impacted by the current context. We've just suffered a budget cut. And the composition of the government is not a composition articulated to a single project, it's a broad front composition. This all has a very big impact. But they are entities that have been getting stronger. UNDIME is currently undergoing an election process. They are going to hold a new election for the board of the national presidency. Of course, this is always a contradictory process, with disputes and priorities for the organization, but they are our partners. They were in Santarém, they were in Recife, they will be in São Paulo, they will be in Belo Horizonte, which are the next seminars. They are powerful and well-respected organizations and we have a dialogue that we don't give up.

**REPOD: You've been in this position of coordinator before, haven't you? From 2007 to 2016, in the General Coordination of Early Childhood Education. Tell us about that previous experience and your current experience again as COGEI (General Early Childhood Education Coordination) coordinator.**

**Rita Coelho:** There were other difficulties. I even have an interview in a CNTE (National Confederation of Education Workers) booklet, which is from that time and which you could read. People were very impressed by the fact that I was at MEC for so long. I went through five ministers in that period. And in my assessment, it was a period in which early childhood education was a priority for the Ministry of Education due to social pressure, the fragility of our integration into the education system, the complexity of this integration, because in education we are not a single system, like health and care, we are linked to a system that can be federal, state, municipal or district and they are autonomous systems with competing functions. The municipality can also standardize, regulate and it is not subordinate to the Union, it is not subordinate to the State, especially if it has organized itself as its own system, as a municipal system around education, you see? It's all very complex, it's still very complex. In the first administration, this was the focus of work that was an agreement of the ministry. There was a project that involved the FNDE (National Education Development Fund), INEP (National Institute for Educational Research Anísio Teixeira), SEB, SECADI (Secretariat for Continuing Education, Literacy, Diversity and Inclusion), focused on the dilemmas of early childhood education. This was very rich and much less stressful, because the project was the government's, it wasn't COGEI's or SEB's, it was a project of the federal government, Lula government and then Dilma government. But what a contradiction! While this project existed with such consistency, it was in this context that the federal government suffered a coup, the coup of impeachment. It's a very interesting story because it really isn't a straight line and it isn't an ascending line. How is it possible for a government that had a state government project, that was moving forward with this project, a dialogued project, a democratic project, to suffer a coup? It was a very good time, very rich, very fluid for working in contradiction, because we don't work in any garden, any bed of roses. We work in a contradictory society, permeated by interests, disputes, disloyalty and traditions. But it was a very good piece of work that suffered a defeat, in our opinion, also linked to the situation of having a woman president, very much linked to chauvinism. It was a huge pain, but we left with our heads held high. In my case, the leaders of MEC came to me to say: "We're leaving, do you want to leave with us?" I said: "No, I want to give them a job."

They're going to have to take me out. I'm not going to leave quietly." And they took me out in a very bad way, which made me suffer a lot. I was in Fortaleza representing MEC at an event, in a packed auditorium, when the Secretary for Basic Education called me to say: "Today your resignation was published, you no longer represent MEC." I left the auditorium very moved, very supported, under applause, but that's no way to treat a professional. The current administration is very challenging, because there is no government project for early childhood education. There is a MEC project, there is a project by our minister for Basic Education. But MEC today has other priorities, including budgetary priorities, which are full-time education, the *National Commitment to Literate Children*, secondary education, connectivity, the *Pé de Meia* program. And in these priorities, early childhood education is not included, either in the budget or in the dispute over conception or space. On the other hand, I am clear, and I share this clarity with some of our MEC leaders, that the importance of early childhood education today is not given by its characteristics as the first stage of basic education, but by its commitment to democracy. And we in the government are defending early childhood education as a pillar, as a condition of democracy, of a democratic society, of a just society. In this sense, today's project is bigger than the previous one, because the context in which democracy is threatened, the context of the polarization of our society, the context of the coup of January 8, makes the defense of early childhood education much more strategic, much more than in the previous administration, which was a defense of Basic Education, of the first stage of Basic Education. Today it's a different context and this, at the same time as it justifies my presence in MEC, strengthens us, supports us, because it gives you peace of mind so that you don't consider some losses like the ones we're having in early childhood education programs, like *EI Manutenção*, which is a strategic, exemplary program, in expanding enrollment in partnership with the municipalities and we're lacking funding for that, for other things too. But I'm talking about this place of mine. So this lack of budget doesn't affect us so much because our place here is in a much bigger struggle. It's a fight for the dignity of children, a fight for respect for children's rights, a fight against hunger. This is fundamental in a society that wants to be democratic.

**REPOD:** During the same period of the first administration (2009), we had the revision and updating of the National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education (DCNEI) (Brazil, 2009), a reference for the work, including for the organization of the BNCC (Brazil, 2018). To what extent do you believe that this document has contributed to the understanding of early childhood education as a stage of education? What problems do we still face in understanding the role of early childhood education?

**Rita Coelho:** Regarding the first Guidelines, with all due respect, I don't think there were any guidelines, there were some very general principles: it was a set of principles and a great silence on the issues of early childhood education. In 2008, when the National Council was asked to update the Curriculum Guidelines, we held regional seminars with the National Council and UNDIME. It was an exemplary, wonderful process, and I'm very proud of it. I consider the Opinion that underpins the guidelines to be a basic, unequivocal text on the concept of early childhood education. That had to be included in the Enem (National High School Exam), it had to be included in the entrance exam. It had to be compulsory reading in every Pedagogy course. Reading the opinion because the resolution is something else. The text of the opinion contains some beautiful things. Its definition of curriculum is wonderful: curriculum is practice, not text, not a document. Curriculum is what happens in practice, when I pick up the child or hug them or in my tone of voice. The revision of the guidelines was a very important, very enjoyable job, with the consultancy of Professor Zilma de Oliveira and Ana Paula Soares, both from USP (University of São Paulo), with the rapporteur Professor

Moacir Feitosa, who was a councilor representing UNDIME and then secretary in São Luís. He is a great companion of ours in this fight for early childhood education. People often ask me questions and I ask them to read the opinion on which the guidelines are based. Even in our parameters, which we recently spent four years discussing, they are very much enlightened by the guidelines, because the guidelines talk about equity, education in the countryside, riverside populations, children with disabilities, quilombolas. They are very much in favor of the guidelines and they saved us in the Base, they saved us at various moments in our daily lives. It's a pity that they didn't take such an extensive stance on assessment. They talk about school assessment, not failing children and large-scale assessment, but they don't go into the concept of assessment, which is a major dispute in our field today.

**REPOD: The permanent FUNDEB (Brazil, 2020) was a victory for early childhood education in terms of investment, although we know that we have a long way to go, because even with this opening up of funding, we still have difficulties in terms of expanding places in nurseries. How do you see public-private partnerships in this expansion movement and actions such as the use of vouchers, as is already happening in Chile?**

**Rita Coelho:** More than I think, our legislation doesn't allow this. FUNDEB allows the use of public school partners. It's in that item I mentioned earlier that it's the manager who decides where he wants to spend it. This is a prerogative of the FUNDEB law. The use of public funds in private, for-profit schools is forbidden, the law does not allow it. And I'm against it. In the meantime, we get into a dispute over conceptions. There are public prosecutors who order vouchers to be used, who order vacancies to be bought in private for-profit schools. So I want to go back to my point: funding is a problem, is funding enough? No, but our problem isn't just one of funding, our problem is also one of design. We need to look at this within a larger context of ways in which the Brazilian state, not early childhood education, has been expanding the forms of privatization of the state, not just of education. I say this a lot in my interviews, in my lectures: some of the problems we experience in early childhood education are not related to early childhood education, they are structural problems in the country that are manifested in early childhood education, just as they are manifested in higher education, just as they are manifested in health, just as they are manifested in social assistance. This distinction is very important. I see this issue of privatization manifesting itself in early childhood education as a result of the structural choice Brazil is making for privatization. Look at what we're discussing this week in relation to the issue of Brazil's state-owned companies that have deficits. The big defense is privatization, privatization of the Post Office, privatization of Infraero. This distinction is important. Curriculum is a discussion about early childhood education, in which we had to have more say, more will, more political articulation, more strategies. Teacher training is an early childhood education discussion. Privatization is a discussion that takes place in early childhood education, but it's not about early childhood education.

**REPOD: In 2024, we had the publication of Resolution 1 of the National Operational Guidelines for Quality and Equity in Early Childhood Education (BRASIL, 2024). What do you see as the main obstacles to ensuring that these regulatory frameworks can, in fact, break with the historical process of socio-economic and educational inequality that drastically affects the public in early childhood education? And what are the benchmarks for implementation?**



**Rita Coelho:** The implementation benchmarks are in the Parameters, they are comprehensive and there is no possibility of implementing them unless it is done gradually and progressively. The other issue, again, is the problem of conception. The Parameters at federal level are regulated, standardized by the highest regulatory body in education, which is the National Education Council. They have been approved by the Minister of Education. They have been published in the Federal Official Gazette, which means that, at federal level, this discussion has been exhausted. People don't understand this. Questioning the Parameters now occurs at the Supreme Court. There's nothing more we at MEC can do. They have been regulated, approved, homologated and published. The Supreme Court has already said that the highest level of standardization and regulation in the field of education is the National Education Council. It has already taken a position. However, in this position, it directs that the normative bodies of the respective systems also update their regulations. So where is the dispute now? In the State Education Councils, the District Education Council and the Municipal Education Councils. There's no point in sending a request to repeal this resolution to the National Council or to the minister, because it's out of their competence. On the other hand, the Parameters don't solve everything, because there is no consensus on everything. A lot remains in dispute and this dispute is recorded in the Parameters. Teaching in early childhood education is a dispute that the Parameters did not resolve, and even delegated to the respective state, district and municipal systems. That's where we have to go now and have this discussion. The very question of equity, the Parameter recognizes, but does not resolve. Who is going to guarantee equity? The municipality provides for quilombolas, in the countryside, in the waters, in the forest, for children with disabilities. It's the municipality, not the Parameter. It doesn't determine what percentage I have to meet, what relationship the percentage of children with disabilities has with the percentage of attendance in the municipality, in the plan, in the PTA (Annual Work Plan). This is all still to be worked out. Resolution 1 is for analyzing the municipality's teaching and learning indicators, building the Annual Work Plan, the secretary's technical team, the Municipal coordinator and the Pedagogical Unit supervisor. Systematically consolidating the annual meeting schedule, taking into account the educational moments for Pedagogical Supervisors and Pedagogical Unit Supervisors, moments for discussion, analysis, decision-making, monitoring and revisiting the Annual Work Plan is a major provocation to the respective systems, with the MIEIB itself making a mess of things. The CNE is open to reasoned dialog.

**REPOD:** Professor Rita, you are one of the references in the discussion on public policies for early childhood in Brazil. What possibilities do you see on the horizon for early childhood education in the coming years? What next steps are needed to ensure that babies' and children's right to permanent access to public, free, secular, inclusive and socially-referenced quality early childhood education is guaranteed?

**Rita Coelho:** Although the dispute is extremely difficult, I have evidence that we have made progress and will continue to do so. It's more or less as if you were to ask me: "Will Brazil move forward?" Of course it's going to move forward! Brazil is moving forward. If you analyze the indicators, analyze the school census, the supply, the public debate, the involvement of different ministries, what the research shows, I have no doubt that we will move forward, move forward in the dispute, in the struggle. That's why democracy is fundamental, because without it we can go backwards, because then it's a question of authoritarianism, it's a question of fascism and children are the population that suffers the most in these crises of authoritarianism. You're seeing in Gaza, you're seeing in Ukraine how this dispute, how the violence, how the hunger affects children barbarously. But I believe, and I have proven through a historical trajectory, that it can only be interrupted by an anti-democratic fascist right-wing authoritarian process. The path of early childhood education is advancing and will

continue to do so, very much so, not least because childhood is something else today. These children are very competent, very curious, they are our great partners. That's my position, but it's more than a bet, because we have data. The pandemic has shown the importance of early childhood education in the crisis. We are the stage that recovered our rates before the pandemic, we recovered more quickly.

**REPOD: Professor Rita, thank you so much for your time, for your willingness. It's always a privilege to listen to you, to be in this historic time with you.**

**Rita Coelho:** How nice! And it's great to be with you too.

### Reference to legal frameworks discussed in this interview

CONSELHO NACIONAL DE EDUCAÇÃO (CNE). Resolução nº 5, de 17 de dezembro de 2009. Fixa as Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para a Educação Infantil. *Diário Oficial da União*, Brasília, DF, 18 de dezembro 2009. Seção 1, p. 18.

BRASIL. Presidência da República. Casa Civil. Lei nº 11.494, de 20 de junho de 2007. Regulamenta o Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica e de Valorização dos Profissionais da Educação – FUNDEB. *Diário Oficial da União*, Brasília, DF, 21 jun. 2007. Disponível em: [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/\\_ato2007-2010/2007/lei/l11494.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2007-2010/2007/lei/l11494.htm). Acesso em: 12 ago. 2020.

Presidência da República. Casa Civil. Lei nº 14.113, de 25 de dezembro de 2020. Regulamenta o Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica e de Valorização dos Profissionais da Educação (FUNDEB), de que trata o art. 212-A da Constituição Federal; revoga dispositivos da Lei nº 11.494, de 20 de junho de 2007, e dá outras providências. *Diário Oficial da União*, Brasília, DF, 25 dez. 2020. Disponível em: [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/\\_ato2019-2022/2020/lei/l14.113.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2019-2022/2020/lei/l14.113.htm). Acesso em: 18 mar. 2025.

CONSELHO NACIONAL DE EDUCAÇÃO (CNE). Resolução nº 4, de 17 de dezembro de 2018. Institui a Base Nacional Comum Curricular na Etapa do Ensino Médio (BNCC-EM), como etapa final da Educação Básica, nos termos do artigo 35 da LDB, completando o Conjunto constituído pela BNCC da Educação Infantil e do Ensino Fundamental, com base na Resolução CNE/CP nº 2/2017, fundamentada no Parecer CNE/CP nº 15/2017. *Diário Oficial da União*, Brasília, DF, 18 de dez. 2018. Seção:1, p.120.

CONSELHO NACIONAL DE EDUCAÇÃO (CNE). Resolução nº 1, de 17 de outubro de 2024. Institui as Diretrizes Operacionais Nacionais de Qualidade e Equidade para a Educação Infantil. *Diário Oficial da União*, Brasília, DF, 22 out. 2024. Seção 1, p. 40.