

Continuous Professional Development of Early Childhood Education Teachers in the National Commitment to Literate Children: an analysis substantiated

Formação continuada de docentes da educação infantil no
Compromisso Nacional Criança Alfabetizada: uma análise circunstanciada

*Formación continuada de docentes de educación infantil en el
Compromiso Nacional Niño (a) Alfabetizado (a): un análisis detallado*

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Abstract: This article addresses the continuous professional development of early childhood education teachers within the National Commitment to Literate Children (NCLC), through the Reading and Writing in Early Childhood Education (RWECE) course. Considering that the NCLC is a literacy policy, we questioned the guidelines that enable the inclusion of the first stage in the actions of this policy. Therefore, the methodology adopted began with a bibliographic survey from a critical and historical perspective of education, followed by an analysis of Decree No. 11,556/2023, which established the Commitment. While contextualizing the historical particularity of teacher training, the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LGBNE) of 1996, highlighted the dilemma regarding literacy instruction in early childhood education; mediating with the macro view of neoliberal policies and the singularity of the NCLC, a field of political, ideological, and budgetary disputes is revealed, in which early childhood education continues to be secondary in the context of Basic Education.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education; Teacher Training; Public Policy; NCLC; LGBNE.

Resumo: Este artigo trata da formação continuada de docentes da educação infantil no Compromisso Nacional Criança Alfabetizada (CNCA), por meio do curso Leitura e Escrita na Educação Infantil (LEEI). Sendo o CNCA uma política de alfabetização, questionou-se sobre as diretrizes que viabilizaram a inclusão da educação infantil em ações dessa política. Para tanto, a metodologia partiu do levantamento bibliográfico em uma perspectiva crítica e historicizada da educação e seguiu com a análise do Decreto n. 11.556/2023 que instituiu o CNCA. Assim, destacou-se a formação de professores em uma abordagem histórica e legislativa com os dizeres da Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional (LDB) discutindo, também, a alfabetização na educação infantil. Essa particularidade mediou uma visão macro de políticas neoliberais e a singularidade do CNCA, o que revelou um campo de disputas política, ideológica e orçamentária em que a educação infantil segue secundarizada no contexto de políticas da educação básica.

Palavras-chave: Educação Infantil; Formação docente; Política pública; CNCA; LEEI.

Resumen: Este artículo trata sobre la formación continuada de docentes de educación infantil en el Compromiso Nacional Niño (a) Alfabetizado (a) (CNNA), por medio del curso de Lectura y Escritura en la Educación Infantil (LEEI). Siendo el CNNA una política de alfabetización, se cuestionó acerca de las directrices que viabilizaban la inclusión de la educación infantil en acciones de esta política. Para esto, la metodología partió del levantamiento bibliográfico con

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una perspectiva crítica y historizada de la educación y continuo con el análisis del Decreto n° 11.556/2023 que instituyó el CNNA. Así, se destacó la formación de profesores desde un enfoque histórico y legislativo, con base en los lineamientos de la Ley de Directrices y Bases de la Educación Nacional (LDB), discutiéndose también la alfabetización en la educación infantil. Esta particularidad expuso una visión macro de las políticas neoliberales y la singularidad del CNNA, lo que reveló un campo de disputas políticas, ideológicas y presupuestarias en que la educación infantil sigue siendo relegada en el contexto de las políticas de la educación básica.

Palabras clave: Educación Infantil; Formación docente; Política pública; CNCA; LEEI.

Received on: July 29, 2025

Accepted on: September 13, 2025

Introduction

This article focuses on the continuing education of early childhood education teachers within the scope of the National Literacy Commitment for Children (CNCA), including the training offered by the Reading and Writing in Early Childhood Education (LEEI) course.

Starting from the premise that the CNCA is a literacy policy, established by Decree No. 11,556 of June 12, 2023 (Brazil, 2023), from the Ministry of Education (MEC)², [1] the question is: what are the constituent elements in the principles, guidelines, and objectives that encompass the early childhood education stage? Thus, the purpose of the text is to know and analyze this triad of the CNCA – principles, guidelines, and objectives – to elucidate the motivations for including early childhood education in this policy.

The definition of this objective demanded an examination of the conjuncture of teacher training in its historical, social, economic, and political nuance; therefore, the approach adopted was a critical analysis of education, understanding, with Saviani (2018a, p. 65), that “education is always a political act.” It is understood that the elucidation of this social totality implies a systematic view of the historical asymmetries of Brazilian society and the neoliberal rationalities that have triumphed, as in the economic sphere as in the subjective one of people in the present.

Thus, the categories of apprehension of reality are employed from a dialectical perspective (universal-particular-singular), understanding that several elements compose a totality and they are interdependent, for “apprehending a phenomenon considering its totality

² The text is part of the results of the research “The course of Reading and Writing in Early Childhood Education (LEEI): public policy, teaching training, and conceptions”, registered by Research Prorector of Universidade Federal do Tocantins (UFT), through a University Project Management Administration (GPU), under the record No. 7,959/2024 (GPU/UFT).

means apprehending the system of mediations and determinations to which it is integrated, unveiling its most essential internal relations, in other words, the relations that engender and sustain it” (Pasqualini, 2020, p. 3), including its contradictions, which are inherent to the phenomena and processes of reality.

Therefore, a structured methodological sequence that started, on the theoretical and analytical level, with a literature review concerning the proposed investigative theme, and subsequently, proceeded with the selection of documents, on the normative and analytical level, especially the Decree No. 11,556 of June 12, 2023, which “institutes the National Literacy Commitment for Children” (Brazil, 2023, n.p.) and the *Guidelines for the formulation and implementation of continuing education strategies within the scope of the National Literacy Commitment for Children* (MEC, 2023b).

With these aphorisms, the text is organized into three parts: it is initiated with a brief historical problematizing the contextualization of the initial and continuing teacher training in the first step, in a particularly Brazilian dimension; immediately associated with a universal, explicatory dimension of the advancements of the neoliberal process in education policies; and, subsequently, the singularity of teachers’ training is revealed, in other words, early childhood education teachers³, concerning the CNCA, portraying and analyzing the legal text from its principles, guidelines and objectives.

1. Early childhood education and literacy teachers' training: a historical contextualization and structural roots

The need for training teachers to act in daycare centers and preschools is a theme exposed since, at least, the 1930s in Brazil, when these institutions started to multiply in the great urban centers. Nevertheless, the theme of this professional training was neglected across almost the entire XX century. Only from the 1970s⁴ did systematized public initiatives emerge, and it was not until the 1990s that the emphasis on this theme thrived (Barbosa, 2011).

³ It is worth remembering that just over a hundred years ago, when women began leaving their homes to care for babies and young children in the first institutions of this kind, this work was not regarded as a professional activity, because it was understood that such a task was directly tied to women’s “vocation” for caring for children (Micarelho, 2011). For this reason, among others, teaching in early childhood education is still carried out predominantly by women today.

⁴ It was in the 1974 that the federal government indicated that teachers’ training for the so-called pre-school should have a qualification at the secondary level. This was Indication No. 45, entitled *Pre-school Education*, from the Federal Council of Education (MEC, 1979).

The favorable context was the redemocratization of the country with the promulgation of the Federal Constitution (Brazil, 1988), which made early childhood education a right (Article 205), and, following, with the approval of the new Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB) (Brazil, 1996a), which specifies teacher training norms to act in basic education, including early childhood education, as the first step.

Given the objective of this article, the propositions of the LDB (Brazil, 1996a) regarding teacher education, contained in Article 62, are highlighted, as well as the few changes that have occurred over the years, as shown in Table 1, which presents the original wording and subsequent amendments.

Table 1 – Original text of Article 62 of the LDB, in 1996, and its changes in 2013 and 2017

Original text from 1996	Text given by Law No. 12,796/2013	Text given by Law No. 13,415/2017
Art. 62. The training of teachers to work in basic education shall take place at the higher education level, in full undergraduate licentiate degree programs offered by universities and higher education institutes. As a minimum qualification for teaching in early childhood education and in the first four grades of elementary education, teacher training at the secondary level, in the normal modality, is required.	Art. 62. The training of teachers to work in basic education shall take place at the higher education level, in full undergraduate licentiate degree programs offered by universities and higher education institutes. As a minimum qualification for teaching in early childhood education and in the first five years of elementary education, teacher training at the secondary level, in the normal modality, is required.	Art. 62. The training of teachers to work in basic education shall take place at the higher education level, in full licentiate degree programs. As a minimum qualification for teaching in early childhood education and in the first five years of elementary education, teacher training at the secondary level, in the normal modality, is required.

Source: Organized by the author based in Brazil (1996a, 2013, 2017).

In addition to this article, which began to guide teacher education policy texts, it is important to remember that when the LDB was approved, the so-called *Decade of Education* was established in Article 87, Title IX, Transitional Provisions (Brazil, 1996, n. p.). In its 4th paragraph, it indicated that “until the end of the Decade of Education, only qualified teachers at a higher level or graduated by training in service will be admitted” (LDB, 1996a, n. p.). This goal wasn’t achieved, which led to the extension of deadlines to the target, as seen in the changes introduced by Law No.12,796, of April 4th, 2013 (Brazil, 2023, n. p.), that “changes the Law No. 9,394, of December 20th 1996, which establishes the guidelines and basis of national education, to line up over the formation of education professionals and take other actions”. In Table 1, it is possible to see the new wording of Article 62, with the extension of elementary education to nine years and setting the enrollment age limit for children at five

years old in early childhood education, as established by Constitutional Amendment (CA) 53 (Brazil, 2006b)⁵, did not introduce any changes to teacher education requirements.”

Didonet (2014), in a study of the legislative path of Law No. 12,796/2013, clarifies that its origin is Bill No. 5,395/2009, submitted by the Presidency of the Republic, to implement Article 62 of the LDB, concerning teacher training in basic education. The intention is no longer to admit the hiring of teachers with a Normalist Education, in other words, high school level, in the initial grades of elementary school. However, other necessities were added, like the age adequacy in early childhood education, due to the EC 53, besides the polemic related to teachers’ training and the capacity of the municipalities to hire teachers of a higher educational level in several Brazilian regions.

Thus, besides Law No. 12,796/2013 having lost its initial purpose, this device evoked the 4th Paragraph, which indicated it, as previously mentioned. According to Saviani (2020), “procrastination” is one of the main problems of education in Brazil. Even in such a great and diverse country as Brazil, with its well-known difficulties, it is inadmissible that it still allows teachers in elementary schools to work without a higher education level. The same can be said for the early stage.

Therefore, although legislation preferably indicates higher education as the required qualification for working in early childhood education, the question of the importance of this professional having a university degree, or even a secondary-level teaching certificate, remains a fragile point and a motivation for administrative and financial disputes within municipal governments. This fragility drives the relentless and exhausting pursuit of professional recognition for educators working in the early stages of schooling (Barbosa et al., 2019).

The amendments to Article 62 of the LDB were further expanded by Law No. 12,796/2013, which added paragraphs fifth and sixth, Article 62A, and the Sole Paragraph, regarding continuing education, highlighting:

Sole Paragraph. Continuing education shall be guaranteed for the professionals referred to in the main section, either in the workplace or in basic and higher education institutions, including vocational education courses, full undergraduate or technological degree programs, and postgraduate courses (Brazil, 2013, n. p.).

⁵ The referred amendment replaces the Fundef with the Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and Appreciation of Education Professionals (Fundeb), subsequently approved by Law No. 11,494, of June 20th, 2007 (Brazil, 2007). With this fund, all stages and modalities of Basic Education started receiving investments, also updating the education age from six to five years.

As can be seen, the LDB does not overlook the matter of continuing education, as stated in the Sole Paragraph. However, the debate imposes the same proportions as the initial training of early childhood education teachers, when administrative instances minimize the need to provide such training within their school systems, as well as in the political and budgetary disputes related to the issue.

From these arguments concerning the training of early childhood education teachers, it is possible to situate the questions related to literacy. The question of whether preschool should or should not teach children to read and write has been on the agenda since the establishment of the first institutions for children aged four to six in the early twentieth century (Arce, Martins 2007; Arce, Jacomeli 2012; Nunes, Baptista, Corsino, 2023).

Throughout the twentieth century, the transformations in Brazilian society brought by industrialization and urbanization, helped highlight both the charitable nature of early childhood services (aimed at poor children) and the absence of early childhood education within government policies, which evidence, still, the conception that triggered the incentive to private companies, from the 1950s, as well as the federal government's adoption, starting in the 1970s, of a compensatory/preparatory approach (intended to supposedly make up for the "cultural deficits" of poor children). According to Saviani (2018a, p. 26), compensatory education ignores "the evidence that school failure, which predominantly affects socioeconomically disadvantaged students, is due to external factors to the functioning of the school; it was, therefore, a matter of acting on those factors." Therefore, compensatory education programs in Brazil played a role mainly in the field of social assistance, which is not strictly part of the school system. "The consequence is the scattering of efforts and resources with practically null results from an educational point of view" (Saviani, 2018a, p. 27).

From Saviani's (2018a) perspective, the formalization of this educational intent results from the liberal bourgeois ideology which, forged within the context of severe social inequalities in Brazil, exposes its own contradictions in the impasse where schooling has lost its ideal of human emancipation, giving way instead to a reactionary educational approach, in other words, the formation of a hard-working, orderly and peaceful people.

In the 1990s, although the LDB, in Article 29, sought to define early childhood education as the first stage of basic education, there are still ambiguities regarding its purpose - "the full development of children up to 5 (five) years of age, in their physical, psychological, intellectual, and social aspects" (Brazil, 2013, n. p.). What is clear, however, is that literacy is not its responsibility. The following section situates teachers' education within the widely disseminated and consolidated accommodations of the global liberalizing order reflected in Brazil.

2. Neoliberalism, education and teacher training

In the macro-social sphere, it is essential to grasp the prevailing correlations between social inequality and disparities in teacher and schooling training that take shape in early childhood education, impacting the democratization of the right to professional qualification and the provision of quality education to the detriment of equal opportunities, understanding that reality is materially and historically shaped, in other words, directly produced through human actions over time (Marx; Engels, 2008).

By taking the inherent crises of capitalism at a global level as a point of reference, we encounter the theories of neoliberalism. These theories reemerged in the 1940s but began to exert a strong influence from the 1970s (Anderson, 1995), signaling a complex process of capital restructuring and, consequently, of society. The intense crisis of that period produced a recession that reached its peak in 1973, with the well-known oil crisis, and, consequently, a cascading effect across other sectors, leading to production stagnation, inflation, and the destabilization of commodity values (Anderson, 1995). In the following decades, agendas were set for economic liberalization, the redefinition of the role of the State, and the attack/dismantling of labor/human rights, as well as public goods, such as social and sectoral services (hospitals, schools, universities, state institutions, and companies, among others).

According to Brandão (2017, p. 49):

The struggles for hegemony within interstate and interterritorial systems, along with the hierarchies of states, currencies, and weaponry, that shape the new/old form of the world, explicitly reveal that this form of capitalism is driven by the major interests of financial power, by the forces of massive corporate structures, and by renewed capacities to control and exploit both labor and nature in multiple ways.

Brandão (2017) states that Brazil went through three rounds of neoliberalization. The first occurred during both governments of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995–2002). In this period, the strategies used were in the mode known as offensive attack or roll-back, in which the institutions for capital regulation suffered intensive dismantling, with privatization of state-owned companies and internationalization of the economy, promoting the opening of capital flows. Thus, in Brazil, there was a dismantling of work unions, a strong demobilization of social movements, a wage squeeze, and limitations on access to social rights (Brener; Peck; Theodore, 2012).

The second round of neoliberalization focused on re-regulation or roll-out: "there is a re-entrenchment, confronting various modes of governance previously established and

carrying out a regulatory incursion and implementation that ensures modes of conformity to the intentions of the markets" (Brandão, 2017, p. 50). These actions, in Brazil, took place during the governments of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010) and Dilma Vana Rousseff (2011 - August 30th, 2016). These governments "mixed conformity to markets with the defense of some social rights" (Brandão, 2017, p. 64). Thus, in the period between 2003 and 2015, progress was made along with social policies that aimed at protecting the most destitute layers of the population and in the expansion of the domestic popular consumption market. It is worth highlighting the advancement of income transfer policies, the growth of formal employment, the appreciation of the minimum wage, the expansion of the volume and lines of credit (including payroll-deductible credit), the expansion of professional training and higher education, etc., in addition to progress in the more general struggle of recent decades, fought for the permanence of the achievements and sociopolitical gains of the 1988 citizen constitution, with improvements in income distribution and the quality of the labor market (Brandão, 2017).

The third round, however, occurred after the impeachment process of Dilma Vana Rousseff, when Michel Miguel Elias Temer Lulia (August 31st, 2016-2018) assumed the presidency and was part of a re-reorganization with characteristics of both roll-back and roll-out, featuring the most alarming objectives of total liberalization and a retrograde assault on democracy, public goods, social rights, and the working class. "The historical phase is one of indetermination, of the predominance of the exception, of the permanent emergency, of anti-democratic extra-economic violence, and of the conservative counter-reaction" (Brandão, 2017, p. 49). This was followed by the government of Jair Messias Bolsonaro, inaugurated in 2019, which ended in 2022. At that time, the feeling of the "predominance of the exception" was amplified by the public health state of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and an executive branch with positions aimed at dismantling political achievements in the field of education.

It is at this moment that the conceptions of Brener, Peck, and Theodore (2012) are validated, as they explain that the processes of neoliberalization are strongly contradictory, since they frequently destroy the conditions that were previously created in the socio-institutional and politico-economic spheres for their own successful implementation. Therefore, the resulting policy failure becomes a key point in the diversified forms of neoliberal action, which continuously germinates new local reinventions. "Thus, it is crucial to note that the endemic failure of policies actually tends to stimulate further rounds of reforms within the political and institutional parameters" (Brener; Peck; Theodore, 2012, p. 23), in other words, that the failures are intentional, leading to endless reforms.

In this article, it is also worth noting that neoliberalism is understood as going beyond the economic sphere. According to Laval (2019, p. 9), neoliberalism “is above all the rationality of capital transformed into a general social law,” which interferes with and shapes people’s rationality. From this perspective, schools also adapt to this new form of rationality, and educational institutions become pressured to promote changes, such as managerialism. New Public Management, beyond being a package of guidelines and management practices, is meticulously rooted in liberalizing ideals and reorganizes itself within the logic of the market, viewing education as a commodity and as an important share of market competition.

According to Freitas (2018), there is a “corporate reform of education,” since it is not only about management but rather a shift in the very understanding of the nature of public schools. In this context, one can point to processes such as public–private partnerships, the purchase of teaching materials/education systems, vouchers for tuition payments in private schools, and other mechanisms. Regarding teacher education, for both teachers and the broader public of basic education, the mercantilist agenda and superficial training through standardized systems persist (Laval, 2019).

Thus, within the sphere of Brazilian educational policy and, especially, concerning teacher education, it is worth examining the changes made to the LDB (Law of Guidelines and Bases for National Education) to understand the “endemic failures” (Brener; Peck; Theodore, 2012). In 2017, Law No. 13,415 of February 16th, 2017 (Brazil, 2017a, n. p.) altered Article 62, as shown in Table 1, by removing the indication that higher education institutions are acceptable for teacher training, deleting the wording “in universities and higher institutes”; this weakens the quality of the initial teacher education process. Furthermore, paragraph 8th was added, stating: “the curricula of teacher education programs shall be based on the National Common Curricular Base” (Brazil, 2017a, n. p.), to comply with Resolution CNE/CP No. 2 of December 20th, 2019, issued by the National Council of Education (CNE, 2019, p. 1), which “defines the new National Curricular Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education for Basic Education and establishes the National Common Base for Initial Teacher Education (BNC-Formação).”

It was a setback movement and without collective participation (Freitas, 2019), in which this Resolution CNE/CP No. 2/2019 was constructed and instituted, shoving the process that resulted in the National Curricular Guidelines (DCNs) for initial education in higher education (bachelor’s degree, pedagogical training courses for graduated students and courses as a second degree), and for continuous education (CNE, 2015). In the analysis by Fonseca and Lima (2023, p. 1), “teaching education has been reduced to reproduction and subject’s application, which extinguish the possibility of a critical, human and emancipatory training”. The contradictions present in the

restructuring of neoliberalism lead to the destruction of the basis of a successful process, and generate a crisis, to propose a new project afterwards, and then, successfully making the crisis a new normal (Brener; Peck; Theodore, 2012).

In short, neoliberalism has disfigured public education and teacher training. The school process, rationally, is also flexible, corporate and mercantile; in other words, it is guided by financial interests, comprehending education as a commodity. Thus, the social actors, responsible for the execution of teacher education policies, tend to, with few exceptions, conduct these actions in a liberal perspective.

3 – Early childhood education teacher training in a literacy politics: a disputed field

The propositions that frame early childhood education teacher training, briefly discussed in the first part of this article, explain what inspired the Reading and Writing in Early Childhood Education Course (LEEI), which managed, in the current federal government, the public policy called The National Commitment to Literate Children (CNCA), with the inclusion of early childhood education teachers, as will be shown below.

3.1 – Localizing LEEI in CNCA's sphere

It is worth noting that the idealization of LEEI course was initiated before the CNCA. The website of the Research Group on Reading and Writing in Early Childhood (LEPI), registered in 2014, in the National Council of Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), and linked to the Education School of Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG), contains information regarding the creation and development of the Reading and Writing in Early Childhood Education project (LEEI).

In LEPI's records (2025, n. p.), stated that the project “emerged from the necessity of improving the debate and searching for a better understanding of Early Childhood education role in expanding childhood experiences related to verbal and writing languages”. Researchers in these fields discussed the theme with professionals from the General Coordination of Early Childhood Education (COEDI), which is linked to the Basic Education Office (SEB/MEC) in 2008. This initiative, the Curriculum in Movement Program, was launched, leading to studies and, later, publications in 2010 on early childhood education and literacy at this stage of schooling. The idea of a training course already existed: “from the beginning, teacher education was seen as a central strategy” and “it should result from a broad debate and

theoretical deepening on the relationship between Early Childhood Education, orality, reading, and writing” (LEPI, 2025, n. p.).

Furthermore, in 2013, the project Reading and Writing in Early Childhood Education gathered a team of researchers from Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG) and Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO), as well as professionals from SEB/MEC (Nunes; Baptista; Corsino, 2023).

Both researches conducted, “Reading and Writing in Early Childhood Education: The state of knowledge (1973 – 2013)” and “Reading and Writing in Early Childhood Education: educational practices”, contributed to tracing an overview of knowledge [...] and the pedagogical practices developed in daycare and preschool classrooms in Brazil [...], with the collaboration of municipal secretaries, early childhood education administrators, and teachers from six cities (MEC, 2016, pp. 11–12).

As a result, from this work, LEEI was born: a capacitation course for teachers involved with the education of babies and small children. In LEPI’s website (2025a, n. p.), it is recorded that the course ‘Reading and Writing in Early Childhood Education’ aims to provide early childhood education teachers with training so they can effectively work with oral and written language in daycare centers and preschools.” To this end, specific teaching materials were developed: the LEEI booklets, published in 2016.

The complexity of this task led us to structure the course into eight booklets, each highlighting topics related to the overall theme and addressed in an interconnected way. Each booklet consists of three texts written by different authors, which broaden the dialogue on the theories and practices that inform and give substance to teaching (LEPI, 2025a, n. p.).

It should be noted that the LEEI course was planned during Dilma Rousseff’s second term as part of a continuing education policy for early childhood education teachers. However, the *impeachment* process brought this initiative to a halt. In the following years, the course was offered in some states, such as Minas Gerais; however, it only returned to the national stage with the arrival of the current federal government in June 2023.

3.2- The National Commitment to Literate Children: What has early childhood education to do with it?

On June 12th, 2023, the Presidency of the Republic enacted Decree No. 11,556 (Brazil, 2023), which established the CNCA. This initiative is grounded in the recognition of one of the functions of the Ministry of Education (MEC), as a federal body, described in Article 8 of the LDB (Brazil, 1996a, n. p.), paragraph 1st: “the Union shall be responsible for coordinating the national

education policy, articulating the different levels and systems, and exercising normative, redistributive, and supplementary functions in relation to other educational bodies.” Along these same lines came the weight of the goals of the National Education Plan (PNE), Law No. 13,005 of June 25th, 2014 (Brazil, 2014), whose first directive is the eradication of illiteracy.

The CNCA, according to social actors within the Ministry of Education (MEC), represents a vigorous response by the current federal government to the challenge of ensuring literacy in the early years of elementary education and recovering learning losses resulting from social distancing during the pandemic. The objective of the Commitment is “to guarantee the literacy of all children in Brazil by the end of the 2nd year of elementary school, as well as to recover the learning of students in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades affected by the pandemic” (MEC, 2023b, n. p.).

In chapter I, from the General Provisions, Article 1, affirms the CNCA has, “through the combined efforts of the Union, the States, the Federal District, and the Municipalities,” “the purpose of guaranteeing the right to literacy for Brazilian children, a structuring element for building successful educational trajectories” (Brazil, 2023, n. p.). Based on this text, it is clear that the Commitment constitutes a clear literacy policy targeting elementary school students (first to fifth grades), and more specifically, six and seven-year-old children, to ensure that they are literate by the end of their first two years of schooling. Article 1 also highlights that this is a cooperative initiative among the different levels of government.

Article 2 states that “the Ministry of Education is responsible for the strategic coordination of the policies, programs, and actions resulting from the Commitment” (Brazil, 2023, n. p.). Therefore, the federal government takes the lead in implementing strategies based on the objectives, principles, and guidelines established in the CNCA. Chapter II, Article 3, sets out the principles of the Commitment:

Article 3, the principles of the commitment are:

- I – collaboration among federative entities, in accordance with Article 211 of the Constitution;
- II – the strengthening of forms of cooperation predicted in item II of the caput of Article 10 of Law No. 9,394 of December 20th, 1996;
- III – the guarantee of the right to literacy as a structuring element for building successful educational trajectories;
- IV – the promotion of educational equity, considering regional, socioeconomic, ethno-racial, and gender aspects;
- V – pluralism of ideas and pedagogical approaches;
- VI – respect for freedom, the promotion of tolerance, and the recognition and appreciation of diversity;
- VII – the appreciation and commitment to ethno-racial and regional diversity;
- VIII – respect for the pedagogical autonomy of teachers and educational institutions; and
- IX – the appreciation of professionals in early childhood education and the early years of elementary education (Brazil, 2023, n. p.).

Analyzing these paragraphs, it is clear that they outline the general guidelines for educational policies in accordance with higher legislation, in other words, the Federal Constitution and the LDB. The 9th paragraph refers to an important principle of the Commitment, which is the recognition of early childhood education teachers and those working in the early years of elementary education. Thus, it can be concluded that the MEC, from the beginning, includes professionals from the first stage of basic education, considering their appreciation and, consequently, investment in training, in other words, continuing professional development.

Despite this significant inclusion, it is important to critically note that many early childhood education policies tend to ride on the coattails of elementary education initiatives, which often leads to regrettable operational shortcomings that could be avoided if the articulation between educational stages and the different levels of government were better designed with more equitable budget negotiations, besides a conceptual understanding of the role of early childhood education.⁶

For example, Laws No. 11,114/05 (Brazil, 2005) and 11,274/06 (Brazil, 2006a) excluded six-year-old children from early childhood education. Campos (2017, p. 2) highlights the significant challenges municipal education systems face in integrating preschools, noting that “overcoming a model that sees it as a lower appendix of elementary education has also been difficult.” Furthermore, since the 1990s, there has been strong public pressure to provide school for six-year-olds. Including this age group in elementary education, which was already practiced in several schools, became a more financially feasible alternative⁷ than expanding early childhood education institutions. On this issue, Saviani (2020, p. 3) states:

In fact, the anticipation of the start of Elementary School at six years of age was a demand from mayors, which was due to FUNDEF absorbing 60% of the educational resources of states and municipalities designated for Elementary Education. [...] Hence, the mayors' demand to enable the last year of Early Childhood Education to be covered by FUNDEF resources.

This fact occurs in conformity with the notion that Saviani (2020, p. 3) calls “improvisation” and which “...is manifested in the fact that, for every point raised as

⁶ Within the scope of this text, it is not possible to deepen the discussion regarding the role of early childhood education, its pedagogical practices, or conceptions of children and childhood. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that these ideas are crucial for shaping educational policies.

⁷ At the time, the Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Elementary Education and Appreciation of Teaching Professionals (Fundef) (Brazil, 1996b) was in effect, which is an education budget law that lasted from 1996 to 2006. This law was crucial for the universalization of compulsory education, but it did not allocate any resources for the first stage and, therefore, deliberately forced the enrollment of six-year-old children in elementary school.

important, an effort is immediately made to approve a constitutional amendment, a law, or issue a decree or ordinance without considering its actual necessity and its juxtaposition”. This movement, therefore, proved to be a useless effort, once a new fund for all of Basic Education and the expansion of compulsory schooling starting at four years of age were soon approved.⁸ However, this caused great confusion for parents and for the municipal education secretariats, resulting in losses to the six-year-old child and the dismantling of the structure of the first stage.

Something similar is currently emerging with the introduction of teachers from the first stage, who are not responsible for teaching how to read and write, into a policy focused on formal literacy⁹, with the possibility of creating greater instability regarding the uncertainties of what is inherent to early childhood education, as well as solidifying the existing pressure to literate children aged four and five.

The CNCA guidelines, which are a total of seven, are inscribed in Chapter III, Article 4, and include provisions regarding early childhood education in item II, as can be verified:

Article 4: The following are guidelines for the implementation of the Commitment:

- I - the recognition of the autonomy of the federative entities and the inducing, articulating, and coordinating role of the Ministry of Education in carrying out public policies for Basic Education;
- II - the recognition of the leading role of the Municipalities in offering early childhood education and the first stage of elementary school, and in the literacy processes;
- III - the technical and financial assistance from the Federal Government to the States, the Federal District, and the Municipalities;
- IV - the strengthening of the collaboration regime of the States with the Municipalities, focusing on the promotion of educational equity in the territory;
- V - addressing regional, socioeconomic, ethnic-racial, and gender inequalities;
- VI - the centrality of teaching-learning processes and the needs of schools; and
- VII - the training policy aimed at teachers, technicians, and educational managers (Brazil, 2023, n. p.).

The quoted Article 4 reveals the idealization of the CNCA guidelines, considering the provisions foreseen in the LDB and the PNE, in which the MEC sees itself as the regulator of the policy, without, however, denying the autonomy of the federated entities. The CNCA itself

⁸ Fundef was replaced by the Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and Appreciation of Education Professionals (Fundeb) (Brazil, 2007), regulated by law, with funding for all of Basic Education. Furthermore, the Constitutional Amendment 59 (Brazil, 2009) changed the wording of Article 208, clause 1, which expanded compulsory schooling from four to seventeen years of age, that is, from pre-school to high school.

⁹ It refers to the understanding that literacy, as stated in Article 32 of the LDB (Brazil, 1996a, n. p.), is the responsibility of elementary education: in item I - “the development of the ability to learn, having as basic means the full mastery of reading, writing, and arithmetic”. It also considers the concepts of Magda Soares (2004, p. 14): “the acquisition of the conventional writing system - literacy - and the development of skills for using this system in reading and writing activities, within the social practices that involve written language - literacy practices.”.

is carried out through the voluntary adherence of the municipalities and states, including the Federal District, as in Chapter V, Article 6 (Brazil, 2023, n. p.).

In the analysis of the guidelines, there is an exaltation of the leading role of municipal administrators in the provision of early childhood education and the first years of elementary school. The guidelines continue to affirm the technical and financial assistance from the MEC, the collaboration regime, the courage for the entities to jointly (Federal Government, states, and municipalities) address territorial inequalities and needs, and finally, the implementation of training for basic education professionals, including early childhood education teachers. In summary, there is nothing new in the forging of the CNCA guidelines regarding general provisions and principles, and once again, the fragility of introducing early childhood education into the context of this policy is verified.

In Chapter IV, Article 5, the CNCA outlines objectives that are quite consistent with its principles and guidelines:

Article 5: The objectives of the Commitment are:

I - to implement policies, programs, and actions so that Brazilian children are literate by the end of the second year of elementary school; and

II - to promote measures for the recomposition of learning, focusing on literacy and the expansion and deepening of reading and writing skills of children enrolled in the education system until the end of the initial years of elementary school, prioritizing those who have not reached the adequate literacy standards by the end of the second year of elementary school (Brazil, 2023, n. p.).

The objectives are entirely focused on elementary school, as seen in the legal text. Thus, two elements justify the inclusion of early childhood education in the CNCA: the valorization of early childhood education teachers and, consequently, continuing education/training, as in principle IX of Chapter II and guideline VII of Chapter III.

When studying the document *“Guidelines for the formulation and implementation of continuing education strategies within the scope of the National Literacy Commitment for Children”* (MEC, 2023a), it is noticed that it dissected several characteristics of the Commitment, including strategies, planning, conceptions, and evaluation, which help to situate the first stage in the policy outlook. The following indication can be noted:

This is an investment focused on the expansion of individual and collective professional capacities with the central objective of guaranteeing good learning experiences in orality, reading, and writing for all Brazilian children (MEC, 2023b, p.11).

It is in this context that the LEEI Course comes in as a theoretical/methodological tool for the continuing education of early childhood education teachers, within the scope of

the Commitment. The Course was administered in the year 2024, in states across the five major Brazilian regions, and continues to be administered for the federated entities that expressed interest in the year 2025.¹⁰ According to information from the MEC, in 2024, 26 federation units and 3,792 municipalities (68% of the total) participated in the initiative, involving 223,964 pre-school teachers. (MEC, 2025).

This involved a powerful budgetary allocation that reached early childhood Education teachers in public schools, as never before seen in history. Thus, the CNCA proves to be a policy for the valorization of public educational institutions, that is, as an important collective asset of Brazilian society. This is possible because, despite Brazilian governments being aligned with neoliberalism, the current executive power, identified as center-left, has maintained social policies, even with characteristics focused on poverty alleviation, which contribute to reducing inequalities (Brandão, 2017).

Regarding literacy, when the MEC guiding document mentions orality, reading, and writing with young children, it indicates a meaning different from the concept of literacy and literacy practices in the experience of elementary school. In fact, it reports the

recognition of literacy as a discursive process which acknowledges that children are born and live in a world built upon multiple literacies, shaped and constituted by social practices of reading and writing, which are organized from certain regular structures that invite and call on each person to use written language for diverse and varied purposes (MEC, 2023b, p. 16).

From this perspective, the policy aligns with the approach of the LEEI course, which is grounded in the studies of Vygotsky and Bakhtin¹¹, whose “perspective considers the child’s mental activity not only in its cognitive aspect but also in its discursive aspect” (Smolka, 2014, n. p.). This means that “language, the word - oral or written - is, or can be, at the same time, a means/way of interaction (inter and intra) regulation of actions, and an object of knowledge. The emphasis on social relations and dialogic practice characterizes the discursive dimension” (Smolka, 2014, n. p.).

Nevertheless, a MEC news release from April 2024 presents the following view:

¹⁰ MEC’s Decree No. 85, dated January 31st, 2025, established the Continuing Education Program in Reading and Writing in Early Childhood Education - Pro-LEEI - within the framework of the National Commitment to Literate Children. In 2025, there are 28 partner universities involved in training, 24 states participating, and 207,000 teachers enrolled in the program. Only the states of Ceará, Goiás, and Tocantins did not join this policy. On September 22nd, 2025, MEC launched the Pro-LEEI cycle for the year 2026 (MEC, 2025).

¹¹ Solange Jobim e Souza deepens the epistemological reflections derived from Mikhail Bakhtin and Lev Semenovich Vygotsky, highlighting “a conception of language understood as a space for recovering the subject as a historical, social, and cultural being” (Souza, 2012, p. 16).

“LEEI is a national effort to implement strategic actions dedicated to ensuring that all Brazilian children can succeed in the literacy process. From this perspective, early childhood education is part of the National Commitment to Literacy for Children (CNCA), seeking to integrate children into the culture of written language while respecting the specificities of this stage of basic education” (MEC, 2024, n. p.).

The wording of this news piece reveals a mistaken assimilation of preparing preschool children for the next stage, particularly in terms of literacy. Thus, the pendular movement of early childhood education’s role in this policy becomes clear. When analyzing the CNCA text (Brazil, 2023), it can be concluded that the focus is on literacy actions. However, this profile is softened through the guiding document, which details the specificities of early childhood education. Such legal, conceptual, and informational statements reinforce the tension between “either this or that”- to paraphrase Cecília Meireles - which opens the possibility of interpreting the LEEI course as merely preparing young children for elementary school.¹² From the perspective of historical-critical pedagogy, the idea of anticipating content from the next stage for early childhood education, especially preschool, aligns with policies of standardization and mass professionalization that begin affecting individuals as early as early childhood education (Saviani, 2018b).

Moreover, the current educational scenery is highly complex and reveals ideological disputes over the role of institutionalized education, amid a conservative uprising against democratic public institutions, as well as a constant struggle for public funds by the so-called philanthropic and private sectors operating in education. The current federal government is a broad coalition, which complicates the allocation of financial resources for social purposes, such as the CNCA policy. Furthermore, a large portion of these funds is managed by private entities.¹³

According to Dourado and Silva (2025, p. 36), the privatization of education is manifested “through policy networks that bring together organizations/foundations, private companies, and governments; ‘market solutions’ are being proposed and sold to national and subnational governments as alternatives to the ‘problems’ of public education.”

Bem Comum Association (ABC),¹⁴ for example, is one of these institutions that manages public funds with a market-oriented approach. In 2019, ABC created the Partnership

¹² It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the conceptions of the LEEI. It is known, however, that the terms chosen to designate training actions can potentially lead to contradictory understandings; that is, “reading and writing in early childhood education” immediately directs the understanding, at a superficial level, toward formal literacy.

¹³ The LEEI Course, in its specific case, was under responsibility of the federal public universities, a situation resulting from fierce competition with private agents.

¹⁴ It is an association, a private law legal entity, non-profit, with the objective of contributing to the elaboration and execution of public education policies. Thus, its professionals work in the public management of public education systems in 15 Brazilian states. The Bem Comum association's mission

for Literacy under a Collaborative Regime (Parc), a program that channels public resources through partnerships and currently operates in 15 states and nearly 3,300 municipalities (ABC, 2025). Thus, this aligns with Freitas (2018), regarding the shifting understanding of the nature of public schools, for the logic of this democratic and publicly managed institution loses its essence, becoming financially and ideologically driven by market interests.

Historical-critical pedagogy posits that, although education is shaped by society and ongoing hegemonic processes, this is not a one-way street, in other words, what is determined also acts upon its determinants, creating new conditions, because, as Saviani (2013, p. 80) states, “consequently, education also interferes in society, and can contribute to its own transformation.” From this critical standpoint, public teacher education policies should be managed and implemented by public agents.

Moreover, the historical-critical pedagogy contributes to the analysis of early childhood education as a means of overcoming both the historical bias of welfare-oriented approaches and the narrow focus on preparing children for primary education. It also offers a framework for rethinking work with oral language, literary reading, and written culture during this initial stage. Therefore, the inclusion of early childhood education in the CNCA represents a loophole, or, more accurately, an opportunity found by executive administrators within the MEC who advocate for its integration into basic education policies. Nevertheless, this inclusion reflects a degree of improvisation, revealing that early childhood education is not treated as a priority.

Final Considerations

The objective of this article is to uncover, through an analysis of the principles, guidelines, and objectives of the CNCA, which elements underpinned the inclusion of early childhood education within a literacy policy. Adopting a critical perspective, the study undertakes an exercise of tracing the paths toward understanding reality through dialectical categories. To this end, it seeks to grasp the particularities of teacher education for early childhood education, linking them to broader clarifications within a universal dynamic of neoliberal conceptions, to serve as a mediator between the macro and the singularity of the Commitment’s policy.

The arguments presented based on the historical problematization and liberalizing constructs (theoretical/analytical plan), as well as the documentary study of the public policy and its executive guidelines (normative/analytical plan), led to the conclusion that the

is “to support states and municipalities to ensure quality education in an effective, equitable, and sustainable manner throughout the educational cycle, with an emphasis on literacy up to 7 years of age” (ABC, 2025, n. p.).

emphasis on valuing early childhood education teachers and their training are the key elements highlighted in the text of the Decree that justify the inclusion of the first stage within the CNCA. This inclusion carries an inclusive character in the sense of seizing an opportunity for continuing education; in other words, it is circumstantial. It is understood that the proposed approach reinforces the supporting role that early childhood education has historically occupied, and continues to occupy, within public policies.

It is considered that a specific policy for the teachers' training in the first stage of education is more appropriate than tying it to a literacy initiative, which, at the very least, reinforces the notion that preschool is meant to prepare children for elementary school. Although early childhood education is a well-established field of study and research, and despite being the first stage of basic education with its role defined in the LDB, it continues, as in previous moments, to trail behind the policies and practices of elementary education.

In presenting these final considerations, the intention is not to disregard that the implementation of the LEEI, supported by the CNCA, has become an important continuing education policy. It is the responsibility of the MEC to evaluate the first offering of the LEEI, carried out in 2024, as well as the second edition currently underway, and, certainly, the Ministry must continue to monitor its developments among professionals, children, and schools. Additionally, teachers in school units, early childhood education researchers, and organized civil society in general should analyze the repercussions of this policy to understand the entirety of the formative processes and, perhaps, its potential contribution to transforming social reality, recovering the democratic and social losses of recent years.

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