

## Introduction to the Dossier – Special Edition

### Early Childhood Education: defending public management and the right to quality

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Theodor Adorno, a German philosopher, in his text “Education after Auschwitz”, dismayedly highlights an essential function of education: “the demand that Auschwitz not be repeated is the first of all for education” (Adorno, 2003, p. 119). This statement has resonated since its publication in the 1960s; however, the current context compels us to revisit this reflection to amplify the warning about the need to confront the processes of barbarism inherent in human behavior (Adorno, 2003). We are currently experiencing setbacks in the most diverse areas of life, and children, only partially seen and respected, are brutally affected.

Upon examining the text, we observe that Adorno (2003) gives special visibility to Early Childhood Education, stating that “[...] education aimed at preventing repetition needs to focus on early childhood” (Adorno, 2003, p. 122). The theorist helps us to (re)affirm that educational attention for babies and young children is decisive for humanizing us. Thus, the historical struggle for education for early childhood in the world, and especially in Brazil, has been fueled by movements of civilizational evolutions and involutions, such as the advent of modernity and the ideation of concepts and practices of democracy, citizenship, and civil rights. The State, marked by contradictions, is apprehended, from a critical perspective, as a field of complex processes of struggles and disputes. In this context, state policies carry these

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same marks, expressing contradictions that directly affect the guarantee of protection and the rights necessary for the full development of childhood.

In these processes, throughout history and considering the many idiosyncratic particularities of different national contexts – and although children were involved – they were not seen, and it is still common today for them not to be perceived. They are not always respected or protected and, not infrequently, are defenseless victims of social violence such as racism and other ethnic prejudices, gender inequality, religious intolerance, and poverty.

Throughout time, childhoods have been destroyed by wars and misery, often abandoned by those responsible, and daily robbed of their rights by the negligence of political, governmental, and judicial authorities. All of this is happening now, even as we see progress. In Brazil, this progress is particularly evident in the 1980s, with this period of redemocratization representing a watershed moment for Early Childhood Education. Amidst various manifestations of political openness, all states in the federation expressed support for the expansion of daycares and preschools, women's movements fought for better conditions in childcare institutions, and educators denounced the prejudice against these institutions as places for the poor with no educational profile.

Kuhlmann (1998, p. 180), when recounting his involvement with the historical events of the late 1970s and the 1980s, including the struggles for the education of young children, reveals that it was an intense period of generalization of large social movements. “We participated in student demonstrations, reopening Academic Centers that had been closed by repression, and holding marches for democratic freedoms”. The scholar emphasizes that the people mobilized and “we witnessed the strength of the workers and the entire working class [...]”. Daycares appeared as a result, as a concrete symbol of these struggles [...]”. The Constitutional text of 1988 (Brazil, 1988) registers education in daycares and preschools under the icon of law. But as Kramer and Alves assess (2025, p. 20):

The trajectory of Early Childhood Education in Brazil is marked by the protagonism of social movements, the engagement of intellectuals, and the normative evolution, but remains permeated by the challenge of equity in the realization of quality, requiring continuous mobilization and public investment (Kramer; Alves, 2025, p. 20).

Thus, the Constitutional Charter represented very significant gains for young children by recognizing them as subjects with the right to early childhood education, since the legal language legitimized educational care in a specific phase of life, with their needs raised to the highest consideration. This contribution moves towards breaking with the perverse

conception of merely providing support and assistance in the provision of services to early childhood. This culminated in the right to early childhood education in Brazil. Therefore, over these 37 years since the approval of the 1988 Federal Constitution, the institutionalization of early childhood has gained the status of formal education, in which the subjects involved (scholars in the field of education, agents of the Ministry of Education, municipal education secretaries, directors, and teachers) have discussed daycare centers and preschools within the scope of education as a social right from birth.

As is known, these social achievements occurred concomitantly with regulatory measures that, since the 1990s, have worked to introduce Brazil into the neoliberal capitalist project and dismantle the achievement of social rights. Thus, we highlight, by way of example, two fiscal adjustment laws that impacted the right to access early childhood education. In 2000, the Fiscal Responsibility Law n. 101, (BRASIL, 2000) was approved with the objective of controlling public debt and seeking fiscal balance. The limitation of public spending then occurs, as the law stipulates that the government cannot spend more than 60% on employee payroll expenses. These impositions encourage municipalities, responsible for providing the first stage of education, to seek solutions such as public-private partnerships. Given that many municipalities are already at their spending limit for personnel and the demand for places in early childhood education only grows, this becomes an alternative permitted by versions of the Fund for Maintenance and Development of Elementary Education and Valorization of Teachers (FUNDEB), which is the law financing basic education.

In addition to the growth of the privatization movement in early childhood education with the contribution of the Fiscal Responsibility Law, Constitutional Amendment 95 of December 15, 2016 (Brasil, 2016), which was in effect until 2023, was approved in 2016. This Amendment redefined the Fiscal Regime and set a 20-year spending cap, which paralyzed increases in public social investment. Approved in a context of a “State of Exception” during the administration of Michel Temer (Brazilian Democratic Movement, 2016-2018) after the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff, a moment in which the economic and political elite realigned with international economic interests (Saviani, 2017). There were many effects in social areas; in education, among others, we experienced the starvation of resources and political-social interests for the execution of the goals of the National Education Plan (PNE) (Brasil, 2014) - which is currently closing its extended period by one year, that is, extended to 2025. Thus, in relation to the development of Brazilian education and goal 20 of the PNE, which foresaw the expansion of investment in education to the level of 10% of GDP, was never reached, directly impacting the goals of universalizing pre-school enrollment and expanding daycare places.

Goal 1, which aimed to universalize preschool education for children aged four to five by 2016 and expand the provision of early childhood education in daycare centers to serve at least 50% of children up to three years old by the end of the Plan's term, was not achieved. Currently, 94.6% of children of preschool age attend school, and 41.2% have access to daycare (INEP, 2025) at the national level, with significant variations when considering the rates by major regions and states. The right of access, a basic element, is coupled with the necessary guarantee of quality early childhood education, with socially constructed parameters that ensure the full development of all children.

In interpreting these reactionary normative brakes, one perceives the neoliberal objectives implemented in public policies that lack commitment to children or the diverse childhoods in our country. Abramowicz and Kramer (2023, p. 5) summarize the dismantling of progress by stating that there is:

a process of “philanthropization of daycare centers,” in which children from zero to three years old are being cared for in affiliated daycare centers, mostly religious, a “voucher” for daycare for poor families as a public policy to meet demand, a process of incorporating private materials into preschools, coupled with a social atmosphere of political dispute, in which authoritarian, conservative, and far-right forces impose an agenda on the education of young children, contesting their bodies, their territories, their subjectivity through public policies in order to empty the history and the achievements of the struggles for a public, secular, and quality Early Childhood Education for the Brazilian population.

It is compelling that the struggle continues! Let us fight for the strengthening of a democracy that effectively guarantees the rights of children, which, beyond school access, works to forge critical and emancipated individuals, given that “[...] education only makes sense as education directed towards critical self-reflection” (Adorno, 2003, p. 121). An education that humanizes. An education not subjugated to the market, but one that works in full respect for the multiple Brazilian childhoods, whether in large and small municipalities, whether rural childhoods and in quilombola communities, whether the childhoods of the waters and forests.

The child who lives their childhood deserves to be seen and understood in their specificities, as all of them are vibrant in their manifestations of interest and curiosity. Children may arrive at school in wheelchairs, or with vision limitations, they may have diagnoses of neurodiversity or other disabilities, and each of them has the right to be attended to and respected in their needs. Therefore, teacher training is a key point for the quality of education; furthermore, sufficient budget is required, and all of this depends on political will.

This special edition of the dossier “Public Policies for Early Childhood Education and the Historical Struggle for Access and Quality” opens with the article “Teacher Training in Early Childhood Education within the scope of the National Commitment to Child Literacy: Meanings of Quality in Dispute” by researchers Juliana Diniz Gutierrez Borges and Liziana Arâmbula Teixeira, both from the Federal University of Grande Dourados. The research, of a qualitative nature, examines formative documents and records of teacher training actions, seeking to understand the disputes that permeate formative practices. Inspired by the approaches of Stephen Ball (1994; 2001) and Ernesto Laclau (2006; 2011), quality is conceived as an empty signifier in dispute. The results indicate that the quality claimed in formative actions is anchored in the valorization of multiple languages, culture, and the experiences of children and teachers, resisting tendencies of curricular standardization and anticipation of literacy.

The text entitled “Autistic Children in a Municipal Daycare Center in the City of Recife - Pernambuco: From the Right to Access to Inclusive Permanence” by Maria Heloíse Rodrigues da Costa, Eunice Maria Marinho de Santana, and Tícia Cassiany Ferro Cavalcante, authors from the Federal University of Pernambuco, aims to analyze the pedagogical and inclusion practices for autistic children in a daycare center located in the city of Recife. Using a qualitative approach, with a case study procedure, data was collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed through the semantic-categorical aspect of Content Analysis. The authors demonstrated that the educational institution studied in is well-articulated in the inclusion process to promote the permanence of autistic students in the formal teaching space, despite the daily challenges presented by the interviewed teachers. Considering the increasing relevance of the discussion on the inclusion of people with disabilities and the numerous problems that affect the true meaning of school inclusion, the text seeks to contribute to the understanding of access policies for autistic children in early childhood education.

The third text in this special edition is “A study on the implementation of Goal 1 of the National Education Plan (2014 -2024): monitoring the Municipal Education Plans of Vale do Sambito, Piauí,” authored by researchers Isabel Cristina da Silva Fontineles, Mary Gracy e Silva Lima, Gerlândia Amorim da Silva, and Karinne Williams Silva Lemos, all from the State University of Piauí. The text seeks to understand how policies to expand access to Early Childhood Education have been implemented, based on net enrollment data extracted from the Abrinq Foundation Observatory. The research adopts a quantitative approach, monitoring the indicators of Goal 1 of the National Education Plan (PNE) established in each municipality of Vale do Sambito. The research

findings highlight the challenges these municipalities face in advancing access. In many cases, the data show that Goal 1 of the PNE is still far from being achieved in practice, especially in more vulnerable contexts.

The manuscript “The Implications of Neoliberal Ideology in the Policy of Purchasing Slots for Daycare Centers in Brazil: A Review” by professors Bruna Thais Rodrigues Furyama, Gisleine Cristina da Silva, and Elizangela Dias Santiago Fernandes from the State University of Maringá, aims to investigate the neoliberal ideology in the policy of purchasing slots for daycare centers in Brazil. To this end, they used electronic tools such as the Portal de Periódicos of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SCIELO), and Google Scholar. Eight articles were selected. The analysis concluded that for the expansion of slots in early childhood education, the government has used access based on the partialization of care, mainly for preschools, and/or the expansion of agreements, via the purchase of slots, fundamentally for the care of children from zero to three years old in daycare centers. The consequences of the influences of the neoliberal ideology on the policies of purchasing slots for daycare centers are accelerated through the process of judicialization and/or the social condition of the child. It is highlighted that this slot purchase mechanism has weakened the quality of educational care offered in early childhood education, especially in daycare centers, as the right of access has prevailed over the right to quality.

Bruna Eduarda Martins Santos, Lucinéia Maria Lazaretti, Lussuede Luciana de Sousa Ferro, and Vanessa Alves Pedro Santos, from the State University of Paraná, are the authors of the text “Profile of Municipal Trainers of LEEI and Teacher Identity: An Analysis of the Northwest Region of Paraná.” The article intends to analyze the profile of municipal trainers of the continuing education program Reading and Writing in Early Childhood Education (LEEI) and the implications for teacher identity. To this end, the research was developed through a bibliographic study associated with a questionnaire with open and closed questions, directed to 21 participating teachers. The analysis of the data collected revealed that political, institutional, and personal investment is needed to enhance the work between different generations of teachers, ensuring the systematization of reading and writing practices that contribute to the humanization and emancipation of children from an early age.

“Public-private partnerships in early childhood education in Maringá (PR): a historical analysis of privatization strategies” is the title of the sixth article authored by professors Adriana Regina Pereira de Abreu and Telma Adriana Pacífico Martineli, from



the State University of Maringá. The objective is to understand the historical trajectory of municipal education, with emphasis on two significant moments: the implementation of cooperative schools in the 1990s, and the approval and execution of the project to purchase places for early childhood education, from 2018 onwards. These two milestones highlight the strategies adopted by the government to meet educational demands in different historical contexts. The analysis of these two important models of privatization of educational provision reveals that, although separated by approximately 30 years, both are embedded in the same social, economic, political, and cultural context of capitalist society, in which the privatization and outsourcing of public services are adopted as alternatives to structural challenges.

The article “The Resumption of the Politics of Early Childhood Education in Rural, Water, and Forest Areas: Notes for Reflections on the Demands of Families”, by Luciana Pereira Lima from the Federal University of Uberlândia and Ana Paula Soares Lima from the São Paulo State University, aims to present and discuss aspects of the families' demand for care in daycare/preschool in rural territories, brought about in the process of resuming the agenda of Early Childhood Education in Rural, Water, and Forest Areas (EICAF), through the collective and participatory construction of the Project “Quality Indicators of EICAF – IndiqueEICAF” (FAPESP PPPP 2023/10272-0). IndiqueEICAF is developed by the Ministry of Education (MEC), within the scope of the implementation of the National Parameters of Quality and Equity of Early Childhood Education (PNQEEI). The data were collected in workshops held in the Northeast, Southeast, South, and North of the country, with different social actors in early childhood education, rural education, managers, teachers, and researchers. The consensus in the discussions, translated and materialized in pre-indicators, reaffirms and radicalizes the positions on care necessarily in the territory, sensitive to diversities.

The eighth text, entitled “Literary Reading in Early Childhood Education: What do the official documents say?” is by Andreia Borges de Oliveira Carvalho from the State Department of Education of Minas Gerais and Ilsa do Carmo Vieira Goulart from the Federal University of Lavras. They aim to identify the guidelines set out in official documents regarding reading in early childhood education, to reflect on the process of implementing public policies aimed at literary education in childhood. To this end, the authors carried out documentary analysis research, prioritizing a study on the documents National Curriculum References for Early Childhood Education (1998), National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education (2009), Reading and Writing Notebooks in Early Childhood Education (2016) and National Common Core Curriculum (2018). It was noticed that public policies were

mobilized and investments made feasible; however, the guidelines on working with reading and literary reading became increasingly synthesized, which indicates disregard for teacher literary education in early childhood education.

The Presence of Alterity in the District Public Policies of Early Childhood in Bogotá: a Reflective Hermeneutic Reading from Vulnerable Childhoods, is the latest article in this special edition. Juan Francisco Remolina Caviedes from Institución Educativa Pozo Nutrias Dos (Colômbia) and Sandra Patricia Medina Camargo from Universidad Autónoma de Bucaramanga (Colômbia), analyzed the presence of alterity in the district policies of early childhood education in Bogotá (Colômbia) during the last two gestures, using a reflexive hermenêutic approach. It is based on the principle that, based on the policies currently mentioned in a differential approach, there are significant gaps in their implementation that affect the reconstitution of children belonging to vulnerable populations, such as migrants, displaced people, indigenous people and people with disabilities. The research is based on a documentary analysis of regulatory directives and regulatory plans, from an external ethical perspective, supported by authors such as Levinas, Dussel and Gadamer. It is concluded that alteridade does not become a guiding principle of public policies, or that it limits the guarantee of the right to a truly inclusive children's education.

The last two texts are reports of important experiences in the field of public policies in Early Childhood Education. The text “Inclusion of the Public of Special Education in Early Childhood Education: The Role of Different School Actors in the Implementation of Public Policies of Access and Quality” is the report of the professors from the Municipal Department of Education of Uberlândia: Vilma Ramira de Jesus, Helaine Rúbia Gonçalves da Silva, Kelly Alves Camilo, and Flávia Junqueira da Silva. The discussion highlights the importance of collaborative pedagogical practices and the integrated work of school professionals in guaranteeing access, permanence, and learning through Special Education. In this sense, the report highlights the challenges and possibilities faced in daily school life, reaffirming the need to transform the school into an inclusive space.

The second account is authored by Kezia Rodrigues Nunes, Karolyne Scheyner Rodrigues Amorim, and Cristany Toretzani Lima, all from the Federal University of Espírito Santo, and is entitled “Teachers, your experiences are valuable! Childhoods in a systemic approach in the composition of the Pedagogical Political Project”. This text addresses teacher authorship in school productions, with the aim of sharing tactical compositions in continuing education for the elaboration of the Pedagogical Political Project (PPP). The setting is a course lasting 120 hours, in a hybrid format, with the in-



person participation of 100 students and the voluntary participation of approximately one thousand professionals. It integrates 45 Municipal Centers for Early Childhood Education, the Municipal Department of Education, and the university. The methodology employs research with everyday life and uses the narratives of the students as sources. The analyses indicate the relevance of a systemic organization that promotes objective conditions and the relevance of confronting standardizing logics, which replace unique experiences with closed models.

We conclude this presentation by expressing our gratitude to the journal *Educação e Políticas em Debate* (REPOD), to the authors who sent us their manuscripts, and to all the people who contributed with the evaluations which made the publication of these research and studies in the field of Early Childhood Education possible. To the readers, we immensely hope that this dossier represents yet another form of manifestation in favor of the consolidation of the right to quality education for babies and young children.

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