

# **EVALUATION IN CHILDHOOD EDUCATION:** analysis of Brazilian educational legislation (1996 to 2018)

Rayner Raulino e Silva<sup>1</sup>, Mirian Barbosa Rodrigues<sup>2</sup>, Anna Lívia Ferreira da Silva<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Professor of the Pedagogy course at the Centro Universitário do Espírito Santo - UNESC, Master in Education from Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo - UFES, PhD student in Education at the Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo - UFES. <sup>2</sup>Graduate of the Pedagogy course at Centro Universitário do Espírito Santo - UNESC. <sup>3</sup>Pedagogy student at the Centro Universitário do Espírito Santo - UNESC.

# **ABSTRACT**

We understand that Early Childhood Education, a stage of Brazilian Basic Education, is an achievement of social movements and, as such, comes from a socio-historical process. However, it is a recent achievement and is undergoing intense changes. Among these changes is the re-signification of the evaluation process. Therefore, this article aims to analyze how legal documents approach evaluation in Early Childhood Education, through documentary research of six normative documents, dating from 1996 to 2018, which have influenced changes in the Brazilian educational context. The documents that form part of this study reflect a view that demarcates a notion of society, the individual and education. In this analytical process, we concluded that the school and its teachers understood evaluation as a continuous process that should take into account the child's development, directly linked to the pedagogical practice itself, as well as their own development as a parameter for analyzing the evaluation process.

**Keywords**: Early Childhood Education, Teaching and Learning Assessment, Brazilian Educational Legislation.

## 1 A HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL INTRODUCTION TO CHILDHOOD

Early childhood education is a social process, and therefore a historical one, which stems from the social movement and the feminist movement, both of which were provoked by the capitalist system. It was after the 1988 Federal Constitution that Early Childhood Education (EI) in Brazil became the first stage of Basic Education, making it the duty of the State to provide this stage of education. This has led to a reformulation of the organization of work in basic education.

One of these reformulations is present in an overview by Faria (1997), in which, based on historical foundations, there is a re-signification of the different conceptions of childhood linked to economic, social, historical and religious factors, which brought distinctions between adults and children. In this sense, it is a social fact, since, insofar



as the forms of authority of a given society are reproduced, the child's dependence on the adult is present in one form or another in the various social classes.

Among the various meanings of childhood constructed throughout history, Faria (1997) realizes that, in capitalist society, there is also a concept of childhood that is intrinsically linked to the child's social insertion in their class, political and economic context. It must therefore be assumed that children have completely different lifestyles and social backgrounds, which is reflected in the different degrees to which adults value childhood. With this, there are appropriations of new norms for childhood, recognizing its different cultures.

This is a recognition of the child as a subject with rights and as a social subject who produces culture and history. Processes for the institutionalization of children are designed to recognize social, historical, economic and moral processes.

Witiuk (2004) points out that in Brazil, from the 1930s onwards, the Welfare State generated a social protection system rooted in the accelerated processes of industrialization, urbanization and transformation of the Brazilian social structure, resulting in the structuring of compulsory and free basic education and later the extension to eight years of basic education.

Souza (1996, p. 13) uses psychological development as the axis of her research and the author states that a certain notion of psychological development based on Piaget starts to guide and frame the notion of pedagogical normativity, in other words, "developmental psychology is at the service of producing knowledge that should provide criteria for the educational system to group children according to the evolution of their cognitive capacities and specific aptitudes". On the other hand, Souza (1996) is betting on a new approach to psychological development, by adopting an approach that moves simultaneously in two directions, which will be presented below.

The first would be to redefine the question of human temporality, because capitalist rationality completely disregards human time. The fragmentation of men into separate periods (childhood - maturity - old age) treats human time as if it were not a total, unitary, simultaneous thing. The second direction is therefore to restore contemporary man's character as a social, historical and cultural subject.

Therefore, to be a subject is to place oneself as the author of social relations. Based on this understanding, language within developmental psychology occupies a social place in the constitution of subjects and of the theories that talk about the

processes of social interconnections. In short, language is the place where meanings are produced and the point where play, creativity and critical thinking converge.

Reflecting on this approach, we can see the need to think about educational practices in institutional spaces that serve these individuals and that respect their rights and recognize their culture and history. Because, before being educated, he is a child, and when he is educated, he doesn't stop being a child. So we need to think about pedagogical practices based on a conception of children and society.

The institutionalization of young children is a reality that needs to be guaranteed by public policies, both in terms of democratizing access, as Camini (2009) points out, since the Brazilian state is still unable to meet the demand for free public Early Childhood Education Centres (CEI's), and in terms of guaranteeing their quality and coordination with the different public sectors.

Public policies influence everyday life in early childhood education and have an effect on institutional spaces. We have, for example, the 1988 Brazilian Federal Constitution, which began the municipalization of education, with the argument that in this way the "community" would have the school of their choice and it would be possible to contribute to the construction of "popular power", which would closely monitor and evaluate a service provided by the public authorities (BRASIL, 1988).

Thus, article 208, item IV, establishes "day care and pre-school for children up to five years old" (BRASIL, 1988). Paragraph 2 of Article 211 states that "municipalities shall give priority to primary education and early childhood education" (BRASIL, 1988). In this sense, these guarantees of rights in the Federal Constitution are underpinned by a bias towards making the different education systems responsible for the different stages of education, thus guaranteeing a system of collaboration.

Thus, the proposal for quality early childhood education includes a series of factors, ranging from public policies for children to the physical conditions of equipment, educational materials and, above all, teacher training. They are responsible for the organization of institutional time and space, for the proposals that will result in the expansion of children's experiences, in the production and appropriation of knowledge, as well as for the establishment of affective bonds, the institutional climate and the countless interactions that the institution fosters between children, adults and the community.

According to Saviani (2008, p. 13), the essence of educational work consists of "[...] the act of producing, directly and intentionally, in each individual, the humanity that

is produced historically and collectively by all men". Thinking about the education of children requires considering the concept of education for these individuals. Constitutional Amendment 59/2009, which establishes the quality indicators for early childhood education, states, as mentioned above, that this is the first stage of basic education, with day-care centers and pre-school institutions being the teaching-learning spaces, which must be supervised by the education systems. However, there are discourses in which this is a space where there is no "teaching", but only caring and monitoring development. However, authors such as Pasqualini (2010, p. 63) question this ideological position.

Given this situation, we understand that the specific role or contribution of early childhood education in shaping and promoting children's human development is made clear in the National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education, which point out the need to take children's experiences into account in order to articulate them as a set of practices produced throughout human history (BRASIL, 2009).

In this direction, it is necessary to delimit pedagogical purposes that, based on scientific knowledge about the characteristics and peculiarities of child development, can overcome the mere socialization of the young child - the greatest expression of the reduction of purposes that has historically characterized the work carried out in early childhood education institutions, in order to achieve integral development (BRASIL, 2009).

Early Childhood Education must move away from the so-called socialization of the young child, which is present in the legal documents in the term interaction, and really, based on scientific knowledge, promote complete child development (Pasqualini, 2010). In order to know if the child has developed, it is necessary to evaluate, which is the main theme of this article, whose central objective is to analyze how the legal documents deal with evaluation in Early Childhood Education.

In order to answer our general objective, we are looking for specific objectives:

- to map the Brazilian legal documents that deal with evaluation in Early Childhood Education;
- understand the meaning of evaluation in the documents;
- identify the notion of education and childhood in the documents.

# 2 DIALOGING WITH OTHER AUTHORS ON THE ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING IN CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

In order to problematize the assessment of learning in the context of early childhood education, we begin the debate on the role of education in our society. To this end, we turned to the studies of Magalhães and Marsiglia (2017) when they reflect on the meaning of school in different historical periods.

In this sense, the context of a more diffuse society has influenced the meaning of the school's educational function, which is understood not only as having the socialization of knowledge at its core, but also as a space for recognizing human diversity. In this sense, the evaluation of learning takes on a new body, which is the sense of recognizing the different movements of learning.

[...] assessment must take the student for their development possibilities and not have as a parameter what the teacher wants them to learn, understanding it as a discriminatory and prejudiced act to expect from a student what they cannot give, because their development is not "ready" for what the teacher wants (Magalhães; Marsiglia, 2017, p. 236).

Therefore, thinking about assessment requires recognizing different learners as individuals with different possibilities: cognitive, intellectual and global development. According to Luckesi (2002), evaluating the student implies "first of all, accepting them in their being and way of being, as they are, in order to decide what to do" (Luckesi, 2002, p.01). To this end, assessment is a continuous process of the educational act, which should not only take place in the classroom, but should be collective and go beyond the classroom walls, involving teachers, teaching staff, family and classmates.

It shouldn't just be about certification of completion, but about the appropriation of knowledge and the process of socialization, which promotes the subject's autonomy in their subjectivity and an awareness of their worldview that enables them to take a critical look at their reality. We therefore need to think about learning assessment, because the didactic process is the responsibility of the teacher's work. Libâneo (1994, p. 195) states that:

Assessment is a necessary and permanent didactic task in the teaching profession, which must accompany the teaching and learning process step by step.

Through it, the results obtained in the course of the joint work of the teacher and the students are compared with the proposed objectives in order to verify progress, difficulties, and reorient the work to make the necessary corrections (Libâneo, 1994, p. 195).

Therefore, assessment cannot be a separate act, but an aspect that influences educational action, triggering the construction of knowledge and giving teachers a new dimension in their pedagogical practice, providing information that allows them to reflect on the teaching-learning process. Luckesi (2002, p. 06) tells us that:

[...] in order to improve our students' learning, it is important, on the one hand, to be clear about the theory that we use to support our teaching practice, and, on the other, the teaching plan that we establish as a guide for our teaching practice during the teaching units of the school year. (Luckesi, 2002, p. 06).

In this sense, Luckesi (2002) emphasizes that the practice of learning assessment should aim to bring out the best in each individual, which is why it is diagnostic and does not stop at verification. In this way, the act of evaluation also has a diagnostic function, as it provides evidence of decision-making with the aim of enabling an enriching didactic process for all the individuals involved in this relationship with knowledge. Thus, "learning assessment is a loving act, in the sense that assessment itself is a welcoming, integrative, inclusive act. To understand this, it is important to distinguish evaluation from judgment" (Luckesi, 2002, p.172).

#### **3 MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The aim of this article is to carry out a qualitative study using a documentary analysis approach. According to Richardson (2012, p. 90), qualitative research "can be characterized as an attempt to gain a detailed understanding of the meanings and situational characteristics presented by the documents analyzed [...]". In this sense, qualitative research involves a more circumscribed study, bringing the researcher closer to his field of analysis, in order to provide a more thorough investigation, considering analytically how this process can be configured to the context based on experience, expressed under the view of the researcher with a sensitive eye to the focused context (Clifford, 1998).

The methodological basis for writing this article is the documentary analysis of official documents that contain notes on assessment in early childhood education. It was therefore necessary to identify how the production of meanings on this subject took place between 1996 and 2018 (Michel, 2015).

The documents selected for this article were: National Education Guidelines and Bases Law - LDB No. 9.394 (1996); National Curriculum Framework for Early

Childhood Education (1998); National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education (RESOLUTION CNE / CEB No. 5, 2009); Law No. 12.796 of 2013 and the National Common Curriculum Base - BNCC (2018).

From the mapping of normative documents, the focus was on finding answers to two investigative questions: What does the normative document say about what it means to evaluate and how to evaluate in Early Childhood Education?

# 4 DISCUSSION

In Brazil, we have seen a collective of official and legal documents produced since the 1988 Federal Constitution. This marks thirty-four years of legal documents that regulate early childhood education, with a focus on guaranteeing children's access and permanence, some of which we will discuss in this article: National Education Guidelines and Bases Law No. 9.394 (1996), National Curriculum Framework for Early Childhood Education (1998), National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education (RESOLUTION CNE / CEB No. 5, 2009), CNE / CEB Opinion No. 20 (2009), Law 12.796 (2013) and the 3rd version of the Common National Curriculum Base (2018).

We started by analyzing the Law of Guidelines and Bases - LDB (1996), which demarcates Early Childhood Education as the first stage of Basic Education, being offered through nurseries and pre-schools for children from zero to six years of age and going through the action of municipalization of this stage of education. Article 31 states that "[...] in early childhood education, assessment will be carried out by monitoring and recording development, without the aim of promotion, even for access to primary education" (BRASIL, 1996). In this sense, the document infers that assessment is necessary and fundamental for teachers to promote and monitor children's development. However, the evaluation process should not be aimed at passing or failing children, neither within the cycles of this modality, nor at promoting or failing children for entry into elementary school.

After the 1996 LDB (National Educational Bases and Guidelines Law), we had in the Brazilian context, through a set of educational reforms, an action by the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso in the promotion of a document in 1998, the National Curriculum Framework for Early Childhood Education (RCNEI), unexpectedly and without dialog with professionals in the area, who were in the

process of constituting a National Policy for Early Childhood Education, between the years 1994 to 1998.

Another aspect worth highlighting is that the RCNEI also violated the MEC's own guidelines, since it was published even before the National Curriculum Guidelines, which are mandatory, were approved by the National Education Council. There was an urgency on the part of the MEC to publish the document (Cerisara, 2002, p.336).

On the subject of learning assessment in early childhood education, this document points out that the focus of this procedure is "learning situations". Therefore, the analysis will be based on the context in which the child is developing, linked to the opportunities offered, and recording is fundamental as a teacher's working tool (BRASIL, 1998).

However, the RCNEI should be considered as support material for teachers to use as an aid to their reflection and not understood as a legal document. It is not mandatory or compulsory. Education systems choose to use it in their schools (Cerisara, 2002).

Thus, as a national guideline, we have the National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education - DCNEI (BRASIL, 2009), which in a clearer way, present some guidelines to be adopted by early childhood education institutions. This document complements the LDB, and in its tenth article on evaluation, it states that:

- Art. 10. Early Childhood Education institutions must create procedures for monitoring pedagogical work and evaluating children's development, without the aim of selection, promotion or classification, guaranteeing:
- I the critical and creative observation of children's daily activities, play and interactions:
- II use of multiple records made by adults and children (reports, photographs, drawings, albums, etc.);
- III the continuity of learning processes through the creation of appropriate strategies for the different moments of transition experienced by the child (transition between home and early childhood education institution, transitions within the institution, transition between nursery and pre-school and transition between pre-school and elementary school);
- IV specific documentation that allows families to get to know the institution's work with children and the child's development and learning processes in Early Childhood Education;
- V the non-retention of children in Early Childhood Education (BRASIL, 2009, p. 18).

Based on the guidelines, we can confirm the idea that assessment should not be a procedure that serves to hold children back at this stage. The second point we highlight refers to "critical and creative observation of activities". In this sense, teachers need to be aware of how to assess, what to assess and from what perspective, in order to take a different view of child development, one that escapes the notion of classifying children.

Another important point is the use of multiple records, diverse forms of recording, which can help to analyze development, if the teacher and the other players involved are aware of the act of evaluation and its nuances. Systematic recording can contribute to a critical analysis of the teacher's educational act, so that it is possible to evaluate the child's learning development and check for gaps in this development, in order to articulate other actions that make it possible for the child to appropriate socially produced knowledge.

In the same year the National Education Council issued its opinion number 20 on the DCNEI (2009), with the "perspective of guaranteeing rights" as its background, and among the points made we highlight the evaluation process:

Assessment is an instrument for reflecting on teaching practice in the search for better ways to guide children's learning. It should focus on the entire learning context: the activities proposed and the way they were carried out, the instructions and support offered to individual children and to the group of children, the way the teacher responded to the children's expressions and interactions, the groupings the children formed, the material offered and the space and time guaranteed for carrying out the activities.

Assessment, as established in Law No. 9.394/96, must have the purpose of monitoring and rethinking the work carried out.

It cannot be emphasized enough that there should be no inappropriate practices for checking learning, such as tests, or mechanisms for retaining children in early childhood education.

Systematic, critical and creative observation of the behavior of individual children, groups of children, play and interactions between children in everyday life, and the use of multiple records made by adults and children (reports, photographs, drawings, albums, etc.), made throughout the period at different times, are necessary conditions for understanding how children appropriate culturally constituted ways of acting, feeling and thinking (BRASIL, 2009, p. 16-17).

From the above excerpt, we can see that assessment must cover the entire context of learning, so the opinion emphasizes that assessment is not only carried out on the child separately, but in the context in which he or she is inserted. Thus, we reaffirm the idea that assessment is not a procedure for retaining children at this stage. Observation is therefore based on the whole context and its relationships. In this stream of changes, in 2013 there was law number 12.796, which made some changes to LDB 9.394 of 1996:

Art. 26. The curricula of early childhood education, primary education and secondary education must have a common national basis, to be complemented, in each education system and in each school, by a diversified part, required by the regional and local characteristics of society, culture, economy and students

Art. 29. The purpose of early childhood education, the first stage of basic education, is the integral development of children up to the age of five (5), in their physical, psychological, intellectual and social aspects, complementing the actions of the family and the community.

Art. 31. Early childhood education will be organized according to the following common rules:

I - assessment by monitoring and recording children's development, without the aim of promotion, even for access to elementary school;

IV - attendance control by the pre-school education institution, requiring a minimum attendance of 60% (sixty percent) of the total hours;

V - issuing documentation to certify the child's development and learning processes (BRASIL, 2013,  $\mbox{s/n}).$ 

In this stream of changes, we see that the age of the children to be served at this stage of basic education changes from 0 to 6 years to 0 to 5 years. We also see the notion that the purpose of this stage is to complement the actions of the family and community. Early childhood education must therefore develop the child in collaboration with these two aforementioned social spaces. This law therefore divides responsibility for the child's development between the family and/or guardians and the education systems.

This law (BRASIL, 2013) points the way to the next legal document. Article 26 sets out the common national base and a diversified part for the curricula of nursery, primary and secondary education. Thinking about a common national basis is a complex issue, as it presents a context of tensions in its preparation and discussion at public hearings.

With regard to evaluation in early childhood education, the content presented in the Common National Curriculum Base is not clear on the differentiation between follow-up, monitoring and evaluation. Based on the BNCC, we understand that "[...] part of the educator's job is to reflect, select, organize, plan, mediate and monitor all practices and interactions, ensuring a plurality of situations that promote the full development of children" (BRASIL, 2018, p. 35). Thus, there is a need to specify this differentiation between follow-up, monitoring and evaluation.

Monitoring focuses on teaching and learning practices, understanding how the teacher teaches and how the child learns. With regard to learning, she must focus on each child individually in order to understand their development as individuals in a social environment. Monitoring is only related to the child's development and not to the

whole educational act, which includes all the relationships involved, such as the conceptions present in the educational act. Thus, through the different records, monitoring is present in the teacher's planning, and the teacher is able to monitor the children's development.

The document points to the assessment of learning as a loose element in relation to the development process, as if it were watertight only in the child. In this way, assessment should be understood as a process of producing senses and meanings about teaching and learning.

Therefore, evaluation opens up the possibility of restructuring pedagogical practices and, in this way, taking different learning paths into account, since there are no "homogeneous" classrooms; they are made up of differences. The evaluation process must presuppose constant action-reflection-action, with a view to guaranteeing the success of children/students, especially those living in poverty or extreme poverty, as they are the ones most affected by school failure, which is one of the facets of social inequality (Esteban, 2013).

# **5 CONCLUSION**

Throughout the work, the importance of evaluation as a space for reflection on teaching and learning processes is addressed. It addresses the issue of development, evaluation as a continuous process, observed at all times and in different ways through different evaluation instruments (diaries, photographs, portfolios, school records, videos, recordings, etc.).

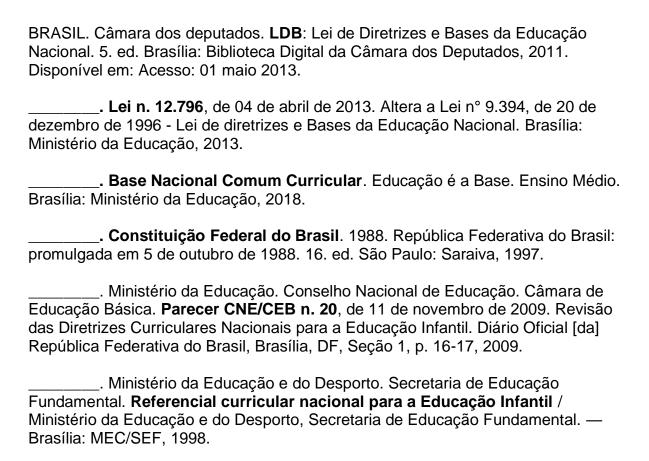
Considering these movements experienced in teaching, the challenges are intense in the face of the demands of evaluation in early childhood education, including an evaluation of the perception we have of the child when they arrive at school and come to be seen as "part" of the school space, the internal movements to pay specific attention to the students and the prospects for their continued stay at school, thus guaranteeing their development in a sense of totality.

What we can see in these laws is that the purpose of assessment should not be to classify, promote or select children in early childhood education. It is mainly based on critical observation. Observing requires investigation at the same time. In this sense, evaluation in Early Childhood Education must be understood as a process of investigation, and must be attentive to the smallest details, to small and large gestures.

As such, child development is directly related to the social relations exercised under the child. It is through these external factors that the transition from dependence to autonomy occurs.

Thinking about a new learning assessment format at school is what many studies in the field of education are pondering. This requires the school and its teachers to understand assessment as a continuous process that must take into account the child's development, which is directly linked to the teaching practice itself. It's up to the teacher to bring out the individuality of each child and with it all their subjectivation so that they can contribute to the development of each child as a whole. In order to verify this development, evaluation must be a continuous process, which must be observed at all times, in all areas of interaction. In short, the evaluation process must be well grounded in what will be evaluated, for what purpose, what the reason for this evaluation is, and how it will be carried out so that, in a continuous process, we can analyze the path taken by the child and their development.

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