"They want it close to home": interviews with early chidhood public education managers[1]

"Eles querem do lado de casa": entrevistas com gestores municipais da Educação Infantil

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present article is to assess interviews that are part of a research on the expansion of Preschool in four municipalities of Rio de Janeiro State to identify controversial aspects, ambiguities, challenges and advances regarding Childhood Education. The choice to study the expansion process of Childhood Education lied on better understanding that every enunciation has social nature, is ideologically marked. Moreover, subjects develop their actions in social interaction spaces in everyday life. Speeches are produced by given, concrete, historical subjects. References address several authors, mainly Bakhtin (2003; 2006), studies about the decentralization and municipalization of Childhood Education public policies (VILASBOAS; PAIM, 2018; KRAMER, 2005), and others. Results show in the education managers' perception about families, daycare and Preschool access expansion, as well as about training and teaching demands. This analytical path has brought conclusions and propositions to policies, for instance, mandatory Preschool education has induced municipalities to

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create expansion strategies, but many answers are precarious arrangements; the very low operational capacity of municipalities to build new preschools based on federal agreements; the distance from the open access to daycare centers is expressive, even for privileged contexts.

Keywords: Expansion. Mandatory education. Childhood Education.

RESUMO

Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar entrevistas realizadas no âmbito de uma pesquisa sobre a expansão da pré-escola no estado do Rio de Janeiro, compreendendo esse processo em quatro municípios da Região Metropolitana, identificando aspectos polêmicos, ambiguidades, desafios e avanços. A escolha pelo estudo da política de expansão da Educação Infantil deve-se à compreensão de que toda enunciação é de natureza social, ideologicamente marcada, e que é no cotidiano, em espaços de interação social, que os sujeitos constroem seus afazeres. Os discursos são produzidos por sujeitos situados, concretos, históricos. Os referenciais foram tecidos com vários autores, especialmente com a filosofia da linguagem de Bakhtin (2003; 2006), com os estudos no campo da descentralização e da municipalização e da política da Educação Infantil (VILASBÔAS; PAIM, 2008; KRAMER, 2005, entre outros). O material revela a percepção dos gestores sobre as famílias, a ampliação da cobertura de creche e pré-escola, a formação e as demandas docentes. Este percurso analítico trouxe conclusões e proposições para as políticas, destacam-se: a existência de um olhar preconceituoso sobre as famílias e que tem colaborado para a construção de uma relação assimétrica; a obrigatoriedade da pré-escola tem induzido os municípios a criarem estratégias de expansão, porém muitas respostas são arranjos precários; a baixíssima capacidade operativa dos municípios na construção de novas pré-escolas a partir de convênios federais; a distância da democratização da creche mostra-se expressiva até para os contextos privilegiados.

Palavras-chave: Expansão. Escolaridade obrigatória. Educação Infantil.

Introduction

The current research analyzed the expansion of mandatory Childhood Education (CE) in Rio de Janeiro State, Brazil, and its main aims are to present and assess the main themes addressed during interviews conducted with CE

public managers; their understanding about the mandatory nature of Childhood Education; its impacts on cities; managers' concern about quality during the expansion process; responses from municipal educational public policies regarding children aged zero to three years after changes in the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education (*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação* – LDB, 1996).

Interviews were carried out in the cities of Duque de Caxias, Niterói, Nova Iguaçu, and Belford Roxo , and in the Metropolitan Region of Rio de Janeiro. They aimed at better understanding Preschool expansion in order to to identify its polemical aspects, ambiguities, advances and challenges in each of those cities. The current article addresses the backstage of this expansion process, daycare center conditions, the construction of new units, public school management, teacher training, active search for enrollments, among other actions. The intention was to find clues that could clarify the complex political process involved in CE expansion in the assessed cities based on statements by different interlocutors and marked by social and historical dimensions, within different contexts. How does the Federal Government implement the project at city decision-making level? How does a city prepare itself to face the universalization challenge? How is urbanization related to society? Therefore, the interviews were a cross-sectional space to involve interviewer and interviewee to share knowledge, to attribute meanings to daycare centers and Preschool - in their ethical, political and educational dimensions.

The article is divided in 5 parts: (a) the first part addresses the research field and the methodological options; (b) the second one shows managers' perception about families already using the educational service; (c) the third part addresses the meaning attributed to the demand for vacancies; (d) the fourth part reveals the expansion strategies and (e) the fifth one concerns teachers' training and demands, as well as points out the final conclusions.

Research field and methodological options

Three features were used to choose the cities, to better understand how public management responded to mandatory Childhood Education and to show whether there was any interference of city characteristics on the expansion process, namely: a) gross domestic product (GDP), which represents the resources each city can apply to education; b) population, which shows the complexity of municipal management and c) Preschool attendance level, which points out how

far each city is from achieving universalization. Four cities in the Metropolitan Region of Rio de Janeiro were chosen based on these guidelines by establishing similarities among GDP, population and Preschool attendance level differences. The studied was carried out from 2010 to 2017, because this period corresponds to the expectations about the universalization policy.

The first pair of cities encompasses Duque de Caxias and Niterói, both with more than 400,000 inhabitants and GDP higher than R$ 20,000,00.00 . Back in 2010, their attendance level recorded for the resident population in the age group of 4 and 5 years reached 45% in Duque de Caxias and 115% in Niterói. The attendance level increased to 62% in Duque de Caxias in 2017, whereas it decreased in Niterói, in the same year. The second pair of cities encompassed Nova Iguaçu and Belford Roxo, both with population higher than 400,000 inhabitants, GDP close to R$10,000,000.00nd attendance level of children in the age group of 4 and 5 years of approximately 45% in 2010. However, they presented very different results in 2017: Nova Iguaçu expanded its attendance level by 50%, whereas Belford Roxo recorded a 22% decrease in it.

Cities have relative autonomy and the local government is responsible for organizing its agenda, setting priorities and making decisions about the demand for Childhood Education. However, research about federative decentralization highlights that the Federal Government plays a key role in achieving municipal policies, for example, "through the transference of financial resources to cities when they comply with specific policies" (VILASBÔAS, PAIM, 2008, p. 1240). Therefore, the effectiveness of right to education depends on the action of public managers.

Interviews were transcribed and to the process built categories was conducted by creating approaches and distances, and by identifying ambiguities and tensions in the recorded speeches, which allowed to "cross data, compare different types of speech, confront speeches from different subjects about the same reality [...]" (FONSECA, 1998, p. 64), and to perceive how social reality is woven. According to Fonseca (1998), it is possible reaching a system beyond individual cases through social dimensions, by starting from the general to the particular, because this process can help developing theoretical propositions applicable to different contexts, to important reasoning about practice and policies. The present research opened paths to deal with issues such as otherness and knowledge about others. Therefore, participants took part in the cultural history of designing policies and of highlighting challenges, advances, ambiguities and tensions in Childhood Education.

Perception about families: "*They don't even want to open the gate; they want to throw it over the fence*"

Childhood Education is the stage when the pedagogical work follows the relationship with students' family members, which means that child's formative process depends on school's relationship with families. Several researches, official documents and the legislation point out the relevance of family-school interaction.

The moment when children start going to school is the object of study of research aimed at assessing the transition from house to school. Until the early 1990s, this process was known in the literature as "adaptation period"; however, nowadays it is called "process of welcoming, receiving or inserting" children and their families. Name changing brings along a conceptual perspective according to which "welcoming", or the act of "taking into account, receiving", is the meaning to be given to the entry of children and their family in school. Receiving means being open to accept different features, expectations, desires and doubts about the education process from its beginning to end. According to Corsaro and Molinari (2005), transition is a group of collective processes taking place in social or institutional contexts. Although these authors do not overlook the importance of individual constitution in personal development, they highlight that the group plays a key role. The concept of primary events is relevant, since events are the preparation for inevitable changes in a transition process and can be seen as rites of passage.

Based on Thin (2006), there are significant divergences between socialization in school and lower-class families, and they can be an obstacle to poor children. Many challenges remain in the CE context, although the development of research in the childhood field reinforce the role played by family in this process, with emphasis on child's rights. One of the interviewed managers stated:

> *Unfortunately, I think that this is the reality in our country. Sometimes a mother that needs, that is working, is left outside. And a mother who went there and subscribed* [...]. *Then she gets a document telling that she works at a family's house because it is accepted, the law makes us accept it. The child is there and she is around the corner drinking beer because she receives government benefit, receives I don't know what else... With*

> *the money they end up not buying anything for their child, this is the reality in our country. Sometimes, a mother who needs it, that is currently working, stays at the fringes of society* (Helio, December 2016, p. 13)[1].

It is relevant asking when families' sociocultural heritage meets the institutional culture, because they can converge to the institutionalization process, or not. The narrative above highlights that some families have more rights than others, and that the government fosters unemployment and child abandonment by granting families with direct income from transfer programs. The following comment emerged in two different moments during the interviews and it shows managers' impression about the families: "*They come to the school with little shorts, with a kerchief here, drop the child there and go to sleep.* [...] *I think this policy should be changed*"; it is also mentioned that mothers circumvent the system to ensure enrollment: "*She managed to get a document saying that she works home* [...]*. There should be a social worker here to go visit her*" (Helio, December 2016, p. 13).

The highlighted events show the distance and asymmetry in the relationship between school and students' families and the discriminatory view of mothers, who are seen as absent, not careful with their children and as negative influence on them and on the educational system. Once again, the old social discriminatory stereotype presents itself inside the aforementioned relationship. According to Patto (2009), this stereotype accounts for the maintenance of lower social classes' social exclusion. School and family seem to be opponents, and women/mothers are the focus of criticism because they are seen as the only responsible person for their children (fathers are not mentioned in the interviews).

It is not enough assessing this conflict only based on the socioeconomic dimension. According to Norbert Elias and John Scotson (2000), only economic, ethnic and educational differences, or professional activity differences, cannot explain power relations. The dominant group can uphold distinctions by occupying prestigious and important positions and by ensuring its social coherence. Therefore, stigmatization mechanisms act in the relationship between established and outsiders by building unequal realities that features outsiders as bad, unpleasant and anomic.

Institutions seem to put public managers in a prestigious position; therefore, they maintain the relationship between established and outsiders: education professionals have scientific and moral knowledge necessary to teach children,

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1 Fake names were created to reserve the identity of participants.

whereas lower-class mothers are seen an unworthy people, as negative influence on children, without character or morality. Is it important highlighting that this narrative was heard from interviewees from the city lesser capable of expanding Childhood Education. Thus, lack of vacancies in daycare centers emerges as an issue caused by others, other than the Department of Education, which is supposed to implement a better educational policy.

On the other hand, there is also the understanding that CE is a child's right and a right of their mothers, no matter if they have a job, or do not.

> *A few years ago [...] some employees at the daycare center wanted to add a condition (to enroll in the center) – that the mothers worked. However, this didn't go forward because we argued that the right belongs to the child, not to parents. So, whether the mother is working or not it is not a criterion to participate in the draw* (Olivia, April 2016, p. 7).

Prejudice makes positive relationships difficult to be achieved because it does not take into account diversity. Based on Sarti (2008), this crystalized place occupied by students' families is "put in place by juridical, medical, psychological, religious and pedagogical mechanisms, namely: the disciplinary devices existing in our society" (SARTI, 2008, p. 23) and mapping the adequate or inadequate families. The hard time disrupting the ideal sense of family comes from the fact that the so-called 'official speech' culturally imposes the understanding of a certain social group about it. An educational work focused on democracy and participation with openness, listening, and acknowledgment of families' cultural diversity. The outcome of assessed events points towards the urgent need of facing the relationship model prevailing in the long history of CE.

Looking at the demand: "*But I don't know if everyone was served in the city*"

According to Rua (1997), public policies result from the processing of demands existing in the environment and, often, demands that come from the political system. Demands can be for goods and services, but also to participate in the political system. Therefore, the concept of demand used in the current article addresses the aspirations of many actors to solve a particular political

problem. The research reports managers' and teachers' expectations regarding the solutions found, or not, for children's access to a vacancy in the municipal public system, among other issues.

Lack of knowledge about the pent up demand for access to CE is another aspect observed in the interviews. According to participants, management does not organize its actions based on the size of the child population, since the number of children who need enrollment in daycare centers or Preschool is unknown – "*But I don't know if everyone had access or if everyone who looked for it had access.*" (Helio, December 2016, p. 4); "*Every (child) that looked for it was in school. Many did not look for it*" (Helio, December 2016, p. 1). Previous studies have shown cities that do not plan CE policies based on a diagnosis of childhood conditions. According to Nunes, Corsino and Kramer (2011), two different researches conducted in 1999 and 2009 showed many employees at municipal education bureaus who did not know the number of resident children in the age group zero to six years, the number of enrollments, the demand for daycare vacancies and other essential information for education policies. Based on the document "Planning the Next Decade Knowing the 20 Goals of the National Education Plan" (2014):

> [...] it is essential knowing in detail the demand for daycare centers and Preschools, in order to carry on the expansion, planning and inclusion of mechanisms of an active search for children at municipal level by establishing a project supported by State and Federal Governments, to expand the existing services (funds for restructuring and equipment) and to train education professionals (p. 10-11).

While some cities do not know how big the demand for daycare vacancies is, managers from one of the cities have stated that they do not have any problem with vacancies – "*There are plenty of vacancies*" (Paula, February 2017) to reassure Preschool universalization. The amount of vacancies in daycare centers widely differs among the assessed cities. According to one of the interviewees:

> *Many children are outside* [CE programs]*, but in many cases, mothers don't know or don't want, they want a closer unit. There are these factors* [...]. *In 2014 there were 23 thousand children aged 4 and 5 years outside* [...]. *Putting together private and public, we reach up to 79% of children aged 4 and 5 years* (Glaucia, August 2016, p. 2).

Many cities are developing strategies to ensure access to Preschool; however, the paths chosen to do so do not always respect children's right to high-quality education. Some of the interviewees have shown that Preschool expansion resulted from the implementation of Preschool classes in Elementary Schools – "*All of them were created* (preschool)*, where they weren't, we put them in small rooms in Elementary Schools*" (Helio, December 2106, p. 7); "[...] *there were 13 new schools. They are Elementary Schools built with Preschool rooms*" (Glaucia, August 2016, p. 2).

The interviews pointed out the gap between right to daycare centers and its effective implementation to children who are forced into a social and historic invisibility by public policies. The distance between open access to daycare centers and polemics about its importance, shows the historic division between daycare and Preschool and the need to deepen the discussion about how to take care of children aged zero to three years, since it remains as an "unavoidable evil".

The distance from open access to daycare centers is more significant, since it is the most fragile level, even in more privileged contexts – "*Zero to two years is our weak spot*"(Paula, February 2017, p. 8); "*Only one* (Emei) *serves two years old*" (Glaucia, August 2016, p. 6). It seems that, for public policies, children are born at the age of 2. This is a trend countrywide – only 35.6% of children aged zero to three years are in daycare centers (OBSERVATÓRIO PNE, 2018).

Besides the insufficient number of daycare center vacancies, we also noticed, based on the interviews, that criteria for enrollment are different between daycare centers and Preschools, and it reinforces the aforementioned gap.

> *For the daycare center, we make a draw.* [...] *During the draw, we make a minute together with the School Council and the community. Then we make the draw of all registered students. If we have 100 vacancies, we make the draw of 500 children. Then they enter the waiting list in the Department of Education* (Olivia, April 2016, p. 2).

Excluding children in the age group 3 years, or younger, from educational public policies is a major problem. Brazilian reality remains far from social justice and political equality, when it comes to small children. However, the first stage of Education is gaining notorious visibility – "*Childhood Education stood out, its visibility is significant. Monthly meetings, joint meetings with partner schools. Participation on Play Day* (Glaucia, August 2016, p. 8).

The intervention of Public Prosecution to enforce transparency mechanisms such as the single registration list and the pressure to create new daycare centers vacancies resulted in a positive impact on enrollment criteria. According to the interviews, the fact that Childhood Education is mandatory seemed to have institutionalized the enrollment by starting a process of active search to help cities to face the unequal offer of vacancies in CE – "*The single registration list was great because formerly the city councilor came here. Suppose the daycare center only had two vacancies. Then the city councilor wanted it. Today this doesn't happen because he has to be on the single registration list* (Helio, December 2016, p.3). About preschool: "*What we did was a public call. We put signs, advertisements on health clinics, in the school, in the union schools.* [...] *It was different from previous years* [...] *when we had a draw* (Olivia, April 2016, p. 1)

> *Enrollment is online. Everything is online and there are also service centers to help those people who don't have access. So, we always have three days with the service centers open* [...] *to those people who couldn't make it, who made a typing mistake, who used the mobile phone and didn't understand it. It is to solve all the problems* (Paula, February 2017, p. 3).

While most cities have shown enrollment advancements, only one city could not make changes – "[...] *this is a dream.* [...]. *The only thing that appears in newspapers is the calendar for enrollment.* [...] *There are the enrollment ordinance, posters, and signs on the gate* (Glaucia, August 2016, p. 3).

The migration from the private sector to the public one, which, according to the accounts, begins at the daycare centers, is another issue addressed in all interviews – "*Because we had not only in the daycare centers but also in Elementary Schools,* [...] *a migration of students from private to public schools*" (Olivia, April 2016, p. 6); "*Mothers are taking their children off private schools and bringing them to public schools* (Glaucia, August 2016, p. 5). "*We are listening, it is an oral communication: - My child used to study in a private school, but I need a place, I need a place!*" (Paula, February 2017, p. 16).

Childhood Education stands out and, in this crisis scenario, the idiom "public for the poor" changed in many daycare centers vacancies. The arrival of a privileged social group to the public sector raised a question: would this migration be a new element to change the idea people have about daycare centers in different social contexts?

Expansion strategies: "*An emergency stop to organize*"

The expansion of Preschools through the implementation of preschool classes in Elementary Schools is an old strategy in public schools (KRAMER; TOLEDO; BARROS, 2014). Therefore, it should not be a problem, since both CE and Elementary Schools have children. Even if the specificities of these two education categories were taken into account, both should attend to children's needs, ensure access to toys, as well as to large and adequate spaces counting on furniture suitable for children, on literature books and on miscellaneous materials. However, new vacancies created for Preschool in Elementary Schools do not always respect children's needs. Elementary School can become a priority because of educational goals and mandatory assessments, such as learning to read and write.

The interviews highlighted how the lack of prestige and the creation of new daycare vacancies without quality can harm education – "*little rooms*", "*Monstrous Ciep* [integrated public education center]". They showed that the expansion capacity of one of the cities came from the efforts of "*only 13 new schools*". Rooms for small children are in a "*monstrous Ciep*", in a "*white elephant*". Who would like to be in a place that is compared to a monster? Even hypothetically, it is possible identifying the precarious arrangements made for Preschools:

> [...] *let us suppose that I am in [name of the neighborhood], a hypothesis. There wasn't any partnership, any Preschool, anything. So, I had to create new vacancies. There was this monstrous Ciep, a white elephant, with 15 empty rooms. So, Childhood Education was created there.* (Helio, December 2016, p. 5).

Most managers do not comply with the strategy of opening new Childhood Education vacancies in Fundamental Schools because they do not consider them the most adequate option for children aged 4 and 5 years. – "*The Childhood Education classes in Fundamental Schools are ending. But we still have them; the price to pay for the universalization is to still have these classes*" (Paula, February 2017, p. 2). The following comment rose in another interview: "*We inaugurated two daycare centers and opened a school. But we didn't open the school for this. We opened a school. And then we arranged it in a manner that would serve everyone*" (Olivia, April 2016, p. 5).

Participants pointed out different paths to fulfill universalization: rear-ranging rooms and providing Rio Card to families that live far from the educational institutions – "[...] *we have Rio Card for companions*" (Paula, February 2017, p. 1). The aforementioned benefit only partially solves the demand for daycare center vacancies, since it changes the family routine. Building new schools also appears as an expansion strategy.

> *So, we went on making, together with the More Childhood Program, we went on nationalizing. And we went on building and repairing Childhood Education* [...]. *Seventeen new Umeis were inaugurated from 2013 to 2016* (Paula, February 2017, p. 10).

However, managers are not always prepared to face the challenge of vacancies lack in the classrooms – "*The city hasn't built anything in 12 years* [...]. *Because we've lost the federal government daycare centers*" (Helio, December 2016, p. 5).

According to the government's Transparency Portal website, the aforementioned city has a very low operative capacity to plan and execute what was settled in proposals submitted to the National Fund for the Development of Education (NFDE). Out of the 15 agreements/contracts between the city and the Ministry of Education set between 2007 and 2018 (each one to build one daycare center or Preschool), 12 construction sites were canceled, one is unfinished and two proposals remain in the planning stage (those last two had their agreement signed in 2013). The NFDE has tarnsferred 3,638 million reais to the city to build 15 schools.

Educational managers do not know how to deal with agreements set between NFDE and the city – "*One of the difficulties is that we didn't get the expected number of daycare centers and the* Proinfancia [...] *first there were 28, then 13, then 11, and now from 3 it is changing to none* (Glaucia, August 2016, p. 2).

According to the Federal Government, integrated monitoring and enforcement system websites are among the 23 proposals submitted by the aforementioned city, eight were canceled because resources were not released. There are 15 proposals still in the planning stage, but one agreement was signed with NFDE. The total amount of 2,860 million reais was released for these proposals by the fund. The Federal Government provides the funds for construction sites; however, construction site control is flawed. Based on information provided by the Federal Government, it is possible noticing the waste of public resources and how the lack of high-quality daycare centers and Preschools affect small children.

Out of 239 Childhood Education construction projects submitted by cities in Rio de Janeiro to NFDE, 18% were concluded, 8% are in course, 25% remain in the planning stage, 1.5% is not concluded yet, 3% are at bidding stage, 6.7%

are at reformulation stage and 4.5% are at hiring stage. The report "Transparency Brazil" (2017) stated that, after 10 years of funding, the *Proinfancia* Program only concluded 37% of the planned construction sites, whereas 642 of them were canceled and 7,453 remain unconcluded. The report has assessed data from 12,925 new daycare centers and Preschools agreements set between cities and NFDE until July 2017.

According to Falciano, Santos and Nunes (2016), "the biggest challenges for Childhood Education are the expansion of the service and the improvement of its quality. They are inseparable" (p. 886). Once again, the importance of public policies to reach the planned goals are addressed, in other words, it is necessary to have enough physical room for the expansion projects. The following question rose from the report: how did cities in Rio de Janeiro State manage to increase educational services without being able to build new schools? Manager Olivia's statement gives some clues:

> *The only polemic measure we took was the multi-age classes. For us it was fine. Some classes were in distant vacancies. Then we changed them to multi-age classes and everyone had access* (children aged 4 and 5 years). *This was already happening in many rural schools. Rural schools from the third and fourth districts already are multi-age* (Olivia, November 2016, p. 4).

Organizing groups with children at different age groups (multi-age classes) does not seem to be a pedagogical option, but an answer to the lack of daycare vacancies. It also seems to be the case of children aged zero to three years old, since daycare centers are not even mentioned. It is possible noticing that vacancies occupied by babies and children in the age group of two years, or younger, in the public service.

Challenges in teachers training: "Teachers who finish the course offer to provide training – our homegrown talents"

Where are we going with Childhood Education? Why do we need training? Who receives contributions from it? Curriculum, pedagogical proposals, children, and their rights, quality of work, evaluation processes or teachers themselves? There are many difficulties arising from training conceptions,

tools and procedures designed to qualification purposes. These points guided current assessments and reflections about the search for clues, propositions and positive political ideas.

Training is a process where subjects (the teachers) occupy a place of continuous making and remaking, they are the authors of a permanent dialogue between theory and practice. Guimarães, Nunes and Leite (1999, p. 160) highlighted the incompleteness of human beings and the dynamic process of knowledge. Their perspective points towards the never-ending feature of training, since every time we act, we interfere in and are affected by, our actions. Therefore, theoretical approaches that can handle the effects and meanings of interactions and dialogues between instructors and teachers, teachers and children and among children are needed in order to provide a wider conception about oneself and about how a person can influence reality. Thus, thinking about training means taking into account subject/teacher's identify or, in other words, "reflecting about one's process of learning, relationship with students, dilemmas, conquests and history" (GUIMARÃES; NUNES; LEITE, 1999, p. 161).

The following narrative provide evidence about how professionals think about practices and choices undertaken in educational processes collectively conducted with children: "*The team felt an urge to study.* [...] *So, we created a notebook where we put the topics that they wanted to discuss and then we expanded it to directors, teachers, continued training, partners*" (Glaucia, November 2016, p. 6). Managers accept the needs reported by professionals because they understand that management must be committed to think about training. However, the idea of creating a "notebook" brings the following questions: what is its format? Would it be a notebook filled with dialogical texts that invite teachers to ask questions about their practices or is it some sort of instruction booklet about teaching? Knowing the worldview guiding us can lead us to create, change and produce patterns, rather than just repeating them. Bakhtin (2003) states that meaning is not in the word itself, nor in speakers' soul, or in interlocutors' souls. Meaning comes from the speaker/listener interaction resulting from materials of a certain complex of sounds; it is like an electrical spark produced when two opposite poles meet (p. 137). One of the proposals emphasized the need of acting in the women–teacher context; it pointed towards a more complex understanding of everyday challenges. Managers sought to implement new training experiences to promote teachers participation.

> *With the training program and interventions in the schools of Baixada [PUC - BF]. Beginning with this first partnership, the Department created a project so the girls could do a post-graduation course at PUC and with*

> *the UFRRJ [...]. Teachers that graduate offer to provide training – our homegrown talents [...]"* (Glaucia, November 2016, p. 8).

The transcription above highlights the influence training actions can have on public education services by ensuring the time and place for training, which allow teachers to go back to their schools and trigger new discussions and reasoning about the topic and give new meanings to their practices. However, it is noteworthy that women-teachers are treated as "girls", and it can point towards lack of prestige to their position. Kramer (2005) highlighted that this is a common expression in the CE context; therefore, it is essential asking what meanings rise from this 'profile' set to this population. The use of the word "teacher", instead of "aunt", to name education professionals, is a conquest ensured by LDB after long struggle to acknowledge education professionals in daycare centers and Preschools

There is an ideological conception that pictures women-teachers as less competent, as underage girls and as young-adult workers, and weakens the social role played by these professionals. The aforementioned author points the following questions:

> If in the process of raising awareness, the word spoken by others, becomes our word and, in daily activities, the ideological values and struggling stories remain tight in the language, one can ask if teachers will answer or will these professionals remain being named "girls", thus naturalizing this expression and reinforcing a given social role? Will the teachers answer when they are called "girls" or they will continue to be identified as the children they work with? Would teachers become, in this manner, more girls than adults, more girls than professionals, children just like the children they take care of and teach? What are the meanings conveyed by the world "girls" in the ideology of everyday activities? What awaits these girls, female children, nor teacher nor women? (KRAMER, 2005, p. 127).

The interviews also showed that training experiences remain episodic on top of the aforementioned aspects:

> *Bosses chose the themes. We check the demand and try to bring someone who knows that theme. Let's suppose, if I find 3 people in these two months, there will be 3 people, if I don't find any there will be none* (Helio, December 2016, p. 8).

> *Yes, we are very frustrated. Training all over the public education service was concentrated in one training center [...] the secretary of education invites professors that work in public education to be part of the center, a training policy for the seminary. But this didn't go through. The only training we have in Childhood education is the contact established with an NGO. It is the only one* (Olivia, November 2016, p. 10).

It appears that demands for further training will not be concluded, despite the attempts made to listen to them. Answers depend upon the goodwill of managers, and it indicates the lack of consistent training policies. Besides, in some vacancies, bosses chose the training themes. One might ask what are the criteria used to choose these themes and whether they took into account the specificities of CE.

According to Kishimoto (2002), teachers do not have specific training to deal with small children. Likewise, Gatti (2012) reviewed how the Brazilian Journal of Pedagogical Studies (from 1998 to 2011) addressed the teachers' training topic and concluded that there were few advancements and innovations in courses and that the demanded professional profile is one of the challenges faced by public policies. According to her,

> One of the articles specifically addresses the work by professionals who teach teachers, these professors who work in bachelor courses (Andre *et al.*, 2010). The research showed that the new characteristics of undergraduate students, the designs of some educational policies and the situation of teaching institutions emphasize the urgent need of restructuring the models that were developed there (p. 435).

There are many teachers' training projects in Brazil, mainly ones conducted by the Ministry of Education. They try to rise up the level of educational policies. In the last few years, the Ministry of Education started several programs aimed at improving the initial education offered in graduation courses, both for future professors and for those working in Basic Education. The National Plan for Training Basic Education Teachers (*Parfor*), the Institutional Teaching Initiation Scholarship Program (*Pibid*), the National Exam for Teachers and online courses offered by the Brazilian Open University (*UAB*) stood out among these projects. According to the research "Exploratory Study about Brazilian Teachers" (2009), published by the Ministry of Education, indices of teachers from daycare centers and preschools are positive; however, they do not assess the quality of the training programs.

Career Plans are an important element for professional qualification. It is noteworthy how the ideology of daily practices and systems interact; based on Bakhtin (2006), the sign and social situation are involved.

> *Check out the level of our teachers... Because our Career Plan encourages teachers to study. Today there are teachers with a very good level. Most of them have masters or doctorate, so, we have, how can we say, very smart teachers* (laughter). *And it is not just because of the Plan, but our teachers are very studious* (Paula, December 2016, p. 12).

Hierarchy in schools is another recurrent issue, despite all democratic management ideals. This outcome also stands out in other research; even tenuous hierarchies result in tensions between teachers and school daily activities. This tension becomes even stronger in CE because teachers and teaching assistants share the same space, perform very similar functions but are subjected to very different working conditions.

> *Yes, our work regime is very complex. We have public teachers in classrooms with children aged one, two, three years* [...]*, and daycare workers, 40 hours. So, inside the classroom, there are the teacher and the daycare worker to assist in the pedagogical process. The teachers only stay in the morning, four hours* (Olivia, November 2016, p. 9).

Specific conditions of each city modify the intentions contained in the laws during policy implementation. The need for teacher's training and qualification in Elementary School is no longer discussed. However, the situation in Preschools, mainly in daycare centers, is heterogeneous and rules are circumvented. One has to deal with political decisions made by previous managers; they are mixed with new ways of understanding the role played by teachers in children's socialization process.

It is possible finding law-abiding proposals and modern discussions about CE in the same place one finds fragile realities, for example, in community institutions.

> *There are two teachers in every classroom. It is biteaching. This goes on all the time. We even have to increase it. According to the modulation.*

> *Three teachers for nursery. Three teachers.* [...] *One teacher and one assistant in community schools* [...]. *Yes, but here is for the partner school* (Paula, November 2016, p. 4).

Public policies must remain trying to solve many challenges faced by CE, despite all advancements in teachers' training.

Final considerations

CE is the first step of Basic Schools and part of the public education system. Governments must provide them due to democratic policies and ensure their quality. The Preschool expansion process is very fragile in Rio de Janeiro State; besides, it perpetuates an uneven reality. The interviews conducted with managers in charge of CEs provided a rich pathway for further research; it allowed thinking about challenges and outcomes of expansion processes. Interviews also allowed participants to highlight urgent questions about public policies. It is possible concluding that the relationship between CE expansion policies and its performance on a given city did not always walk together with Federal Government efforts. Intentions behind municipal governments indicated in the Ten Years Educational Plans, School Census and transcribed narratives allowed better understanding local governability. Federal laws do not always shape cities' intentions. Different types of governability - electoral, political-institutional and interinstitutional factors – emerge from actions by municipal education councils, educational policies projects, population assessments, inter-institutional partnerships, commitment to teachers' training, service's monitoring and assessing, legal actions regarding vacancies, among others. Career plans and managers' technical training are also part of the herein addressed scenario.

Clear principles, political effort and public responsibility shape the way municipal managers exercise governability to offer a high-quality public education.

The points below show the conclusions reached during the analytical path followed through the research time. The interviews highlighted:

- The discriminatory view about families in different speeches – juridical, medical, psychological and religious – that collaborate to develop an ideal version of families. The diversity of family cultures is not treasured and the participation principle is fragile. It is urgent changing this ideological model, which displays superiority over poor families seeking a vacancy in public schools.

- The lack of assessments on childhood conditions. Managers do not know the real demands and do not organize their actions based on the number of children who need access to public education.
- The mandatory nature of preschool forced cities to develop expansion strategies. However, these processes do not have the same quality. Many responses result from precarious arrangements, for example, "small rooms" in Elementary Schools
- Managers have reduced operational capacity to build new preschools. Management does not always have the tools to face lack of vacancies classrooms – There are many technical difficulties placed for process to plan and build new schools.
- Daycare centers are significantly far from universalization, since they are the most fragile stage, even in more privileged contexts. It appears as if children were born at the age of two. The interviews showed the gap between the right to access daycare centers and their real situation in children's lives - in the lives of children who are put in an invisible social place due to lack of adequate public policies.
- Mandatory enrollment for children starts at the age of four, as proposed by the new legislation, but it did not change the expansion or reduction of preschool enrollments in the assessed cities. Further research is needed to understand the impacts of rising the number of children in each classroom.
- The coexistence of different professional categories inside classrooms usually decreases the quality of educational processes. One manager pointed out the importance of biteaching practices in the educational context of one of the assessed cities.
- Democratic management still has to be reached. Hierarchy inside schools, even if tenuous, can result in tensions among employees.
- It is important to set partnerships with universities for teachers' training, both at professional training and graduation course levels.

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