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TEACHER'S TRAINING IN EARLY CHILD EDUCATION: REFLECTIONS BETWEEN INITIAL AND CONTINUOUS TRAINING

A FORMAÇÃO DOCENTE NA EDUCAÇÃO INFANTIL:
REFLEXÕES ENTRE A FORMAÇÃO INICIAL E CONTINUADA

FORMACIÓN DOCENTE EN LA EDUCACIÓN INFANTIL:
REFLEXIONES ENTRE LA FORMACIÓN INICIAL Y CONTINUA

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ABSTRACT: This text addresses the theme of teacher training in early childhood education with the objective of reflecting on aspects of the initial and continuing training of teachers in early childhood education. Thus, the option was to carry out a bibliographic research by using the theoretical support of authors like Barbosa, Freire, Kishimoto, Imbernón, Morés, Nóvoa, and Oliveira-Formosinho, among others, who address initial and continuing teacher training in their research which contains reflections and reveals the contemporary challenges of training. In this perspective, the initial and continuing training is addressed based on aspects of the Brazilian legislation and in studies that strengthen teacher training, aiming at a public policy in motion, reinforcing action and critical reflection on teaching in early childhood education and, in articulation, in high and basic education.

KEYWORDS: Early childhood education. Initial training. Continuing education.

RESUMO: Neste texto, contempla-se a temática da formação docente na educação infantil, cujo objetivo é o de refletir sobre aspectos da formação inicial e continuada de professores na educação infantil. Assim, optou-se por realizar uma pesquisa bibliográfica, tendo o aporte teórico dos autores Barbosa, Freire, Kishimoto, Imbernón, Morés, Nóvoa e Oliveira-Formosinho, dentre outros, que contemplam em suas pesquisas a formação docente inicial e continuada, as quais contêm reflexões e revelam os desafios contemporâneos da formação. Nesse viés, aborda-se a formação inicial e continuada com base em aspectos da legislação brasileira e em estudos que fortalecem a formação de professores, visando uma política pública em movimento, reforçando a ação, e a reflexão crítica sobre a docência na educação infantil e na articulação, na educação superior e na educação básica.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Educação Infantil. Formação inicial. Formação continuada.

RESUMEN: En este texto se aborda el tema de la formación docente en la educación infantil con el objetivo de reflexionar sobre aspectos de la formación inicial y continua de los maestros en la educación infantil. Por lo tanto, se optó por realizar una investigación bibliográfica, con el aporte teórico de autores como Barbosa, Freire, Kishimoto, Imbernón, Morés, Nóvoa y Oliveira-Formosinho, entre otros, que contemplan en sus investigaciones la formación docente inicial y continua, las cuales contienen reflexiones y revelan los retos contemporáneos de la formación. En este sentido, se aborda la formación inicial y continua, basándose en aspectos de la legislación brasileña y en estudios que fortalecen la formación de docentes, con el objetivo de lograr una política pública en movimiento, reforzando la acción y la reflexión crítica sobre la docencia en la educación infantil y, en la articulación, en la educación superior y la educación básica.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Educación infantil. Formación inicial. Formación continua.

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INTRODUCTORY MOBILIZING REFLECTIONS AND INVESTIGATIVE PATHWAYS

This article aims to reflect on aspects of initial and continuing teacher education in early childhood education, incorporating studies and reflections from educational research linked to teacher education and its formative immersions in early childhood education. Emphasis is placed on a model of teacher education that promotes critical reflection on teaching and learning processes, rather than being conceived as a linear, technical, or isolated mode. Instead, it is understood as a continuous learning process in which teachers position themselves as active subjects in their own professional development.

By foregrounding teacher education as the central theme of this text, we acknowledge the importance of seeking information, studies, and research in the field of education in order to contextualize, contribute to, and enhance both teacher education and pedagogical practice. The educational landscape reveals challenges experienced within school contexts and early childhood education institutions, which also point to the need to expand teaching practices to address diverse realities. In line with these reflections in favor of transformative formative processes, the perspectives of Josso (2010) are highlighted. The author argues that, for teacher education to be truly meaningful, it must transform those who experience it so that educational practice can become a reflective act. Josso (2010), when addressing teacher education, emphasizes the critical importance of genuinely experiencing the formative process rather than engaging in it superficially, internalizing it and intertwining it with teachers' everyday professional lives.

Embedded in these formative principles, theoretical knowledge and the development of professional knowledge contribute to the planning of pedagogical practices that foster multiple languages (Malaguzzi, 1987, cited in Edwards et al., 2016) in the daily life of early childhood education institutions. Furthermore, teacher education—both initial and continuing, carried out in partnership with higher education institutions and basic education systems—should also contribute to teachers perceiving themselves as qualified professionals, with the capacity to develop innovative pedagogical actions and to strengthen critical thinking and creativity in order to embrace and mobilize learning situations in everyday early childhood teaching practice.

The theoretical and methodological pathway of this text is based on a bibliographic study grounded in qualitative research contributions, inspired by Lüdke and André (2013), who emphasize that qualitative research enables an understanding of the meaning and interpretation of phenomena present in the investigative context. For data analysis, the framework proposed by Moraes and Galiazzi (2020) was adopted. These authors outline two stages of data analysis: first, the organization of all collected material, dividing it into parts to facilitate the identification of relevant samples aligned with the research objectives; second, the

reassessment of the patterns established in the initial stage, seeking relationships pertinent to the object of study and the researcher's intent. Accordingly, Discursive Textual Analysis, based on Moraes and Galiazzi (2020), was employed for data analysis. This approach aligns with the organizational stages proposed by Lüdke and André (2013), with both frameworks complementing each other and enabling a coherent sequence of data analysis.

The theoretical and methodological contributions presented in this text encompass reflections on initial and continuing teacher education grounded in the teaching profession, contributing to pedagogical practices that support quality and advancement in early childhood education.

IMMERSIONS IN INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION AND THEIR ADVANCEMENTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Upon immersing in this investigation, emphasis is placed on initial teacher education within the context of teaching practice in early childhood education. Significant advancements have occurred over recent decades, particularly following the 1988 Federal Constitution. With the enactment of the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB) (Law No. 9,394/1996), early childhood education was recognized as the first stage of basic education, leading to an expansion of educational opportunities. Prior to the promulgation of the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil in 1988 (Brazil, 1988), early childhood education primarily focused on children's health and social assistance, as noted by Kramer (2013). In this context, the prevailing view was that daycare centers and preschools existed mainly to care for young children while their guardians were at work.

Subsequently, LDB No. 9,394/1996 established early childhood education as the first stage of basic education and guaranteed the right of all infants and young children to attend educational spaces—now recognized as schools (Brazil, 1996). Teacher education for early childhood education was thus defined as requiring higher education, although completion of secondary-level teacher training (Magistério) was accepted as an initial qualification. For many years, it was believed that upon completing initial training—understood as Normal School or Magistério and later undergraduate education—teachers would be fully prepared to perform their professional roles. It was assumed that teaching competence would be acquired in practice, particularly in early childhood education, where care was considered the primary focus.

Currently, studies and research challenge this perspective and highlight changes in formative processes. Legislative support also plays a role, particularly through the National Curriculum Guidelines for Teacher Education (Brazil, 2002, 2015, 2019) and the National Education Plan for the 2014–2024 decade (Law No. 13,005/2014), which regulate teacher

education with the aim of ensuring quality (Brazil, 2014). As indicated by Luce (2017, p. 18), “teacher education must be addressed—in a space and time of dialogue and articulation, of interaction between higher education and basic education—as a complex issue and a public policy in motion.”

In line with these premises, Gatti et al. (2021) emphasize that initial teacher education plays the role of providing an essential foundation which, beyond offering specialized knowledge—albeit in an interdisciplinary manner—recognizes that knowledge cannot be treated in isolation. Moreover, teacher education must integrate school culture and develop the knowledge and competencies required for teaching in early childhood education.

Teacher education in early childhood education challenges higher education institutions to provide early childhood schools with studies and research that encompass pedagogical practices prioritizing playfulness and children’s holistic development. Recognizing early childhood schools as formative spaces can also contribute to initial teacher education by bringing it closer to the realities of early childhood contexts, since “the locus of initial teacher education continues to be centered on training courses, disregarding early childhood education units” (Kishimoto, 2005, p. 186).

As stated by Kishimoto (2005), schools hold significant learning potential—among children, between children and adults, and among adults who (co)exist within these spaces. The verb (co)exist is deliberately used to highlight the importance of these environments, which should be perceived far beyond places where children stay and teachers work, but rather as spaces of care and learning that enable self-formation and collective living. When schools are understood as spaces with formative potential,

teacher education is a central space in the defense of public schooling and the teaching profession. There can be no good teacher education if the profession is weakened or fragile, as the participation of the profession is indispensable to professional education. Likewise, there can be no strong profession if teacher education is devalued and reduced merely to subjects to be taught or pedagogical techniques. (Nóvoa & Alvim, 2022, p. 111)

In alignment with Nóvoa and Alvim (2022), the formative potential of schools as educational spaces is affirmed. Consequently, it becomes necessary to rethink teacher education and professional practice in order to overcome repetitive, transmissive, and content-centered approaches. The fragility of the teaching profession is reflected in this context, reinforcing the need to reconsider all dimensions of the teaching profession.

According to Josso (2010), meaningful teacher education must be transformative, so that educational practice itself becomes a reflective act. It is believed that, for educational reality to be transformed—especially in early childhood education—it is essential to value what

is done in the daily life of schools, deserving the attention and commitment of all those who work in these environments. Freire (2002) emphasizes that reflection on one's own practice is fundamental to ongoing professional development, enabling teachers to observe the foundations of their pedagogical practice. As Freire (2005, p. 39) states, "in the permanent education of teachers, the fundamental moment is that of critical reflection on practice. It is by critically reflecting on today's or yesterday's practice that one can improve future practice."

Based on these reflections, it is important, as noted by Freire (2002), to emphasize that critical reflection has not always been accepted as a necessary component of teachers' work, given the many transformations education in Brazil has undergone over the years. With the implementation of the National Common Core Curriculum (BNCC) in 2017 and the challenges and debates that emerged thereafter, rethinking teacher education and encouraging pedagogical practices grounded in critical reflection have become essential. This perspective is fundamental in educational programs that recognize and value teachers' professional trajectories, considering school contexts and the culture that permeates daily interactions with students. According to Barbosa (2016, p. 136), "just as children have a body, a history, and a life outside school, teachers do as well." Therefore, it is increasingly necessary to create spaces for reflection and discussion within teacher education contexts, allowing personal and biographical elements that shape each teacher's trajectory to emerge and resonate in their professional practice. As Nóvoa and Alvim (2022, p. 111) assert, "it is in this in-between time that we truly become teachers, acquiring a professional skin grafted onto our personal skin." This interwoven time between school and teacher education constitutes a unique potential for professional development and teaching practice.

Thus, it becomes evident that initial training through a degree in Pedagogy, although comprehensive, is not sufficient to meet the demands arising from teaching practice. Continuing education therefore emerges as an essential complement to initial training, offering teachers opportunities to deepen their knowledge, update their competencies, and reflect on their practices in light of new findings and educational demands. In this regard, Morés (2020, p. 1419) highlights the need to strengthen "new knowledge and experiences during teacher education, establishing connections with the educational reality present in the everyday context of pedagogical practice."

In this regard, continuing education enables teachers to engage in ongoing professional development focused on children's holistic development, keeping pace with new methodologies and theories of child development. Continuing education strengthens educators' capacity to create meaningful educational spaces that respond effectively to students' needs. Thus, teachers are continually formed and reformed, intertwining their pedagogical practices with the knowledge developed throughout their formative trajectories. It is along this path that

teachers also develop as teacher-persons, rendering education programs far more than mere titles or nomenclatures. “It is within this interweaving that professional education gains strength, in the broadest sense of the term—education for a profession. The link between education and the profession is central to building coherent education programs” (Nóvoa, 2019, p. 7).

It is evident that a long path still lies ahead for early childhood education teachers to participate in their formative processes as active subjects—integrating into their professional practice the experiences lived and reflected upon during education—so that they may be recognized and respected as agents of educational action and deemed worthy of quality education articulated between theory and practice within a single formative educational context. In this sense, the discussion turns to studies on continuing education.

REVERBERATIONS OF CONTINUING EDUCATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Within the current context of continuing education, the essential role of teachers in constructing meaningful pedagogical practices is underscored, particularly in early childhood education. This stage of basic education is especially complex and requires an articulation between theory and practice grounded in childhood. Therefore, discussing this distinctive form of education is relevant to understanding educational processes involving young children, as it “has an educational proposal that differs from that of elementary school. Consequently, it requires teachers to possess knowledge that addresses the specificities of very young children” (Vargas et al., 2018, p. 17).

Continuing education thus becomes a key element in enhancing pedagogical practices and fostering teachers’ professional development. In this regard, the contributions of Freire (2021), Imbernón (2010), and Nóvoa (2009) are emphasized, as they recognize continuing education as an essential process of professionalization that directly benefits the teachers involved.

Schools play a central role in teachers’ continuing education, serving as the primary setting for “action–reflection as the basic unit of change, development, and improvement” (Imbernón, 2010, p. 56). In this context, the action–reflection–action cycle emerges as an essential tool for promoting continuous improvement and the evolution of pedagogical practices, highlighting the importance of schools as the core of continuing education. As Barbosa and Richter (2009, p. 35) state, “working with young children requires education, as it is not merely a task of care or protection, but an educational responsibility that demands clear theoretical propositions, planning, and documentation.” Thus, the educational practices advocated by teachers must be integral to the teacher education process, as it is through these

dialogues—grounded in the reality of each institution—that pedagogical practice is strengthened and develops its own identity.

Formative moments become opportunities to reflect on pedagogical practice based on professional experience. In this sense, continuing education takes place in a contextualized and meaningful manner, as it is directly linked to the real demands and needs faced by teachers in their daily work.

When discussing education, Nóvoa (1995) states:

we are living in a time of metamorphosis of the school, of a change in the form of the school. We do not yet know what the future will be like, but we already know that the current school model will not endure for much longer. One of the main changes, as seen in many ongoing experiences, is the shift from an individual teacher, working alone with 'their' class of students, to collaborative work among teachers within a diversity of forms of pedagogical organization. (p. 23)

This transformation, as described by Nóvoa (1995), signals the urgency of renewing educational practices to meet new educational demands. It is essential to foster educational practices in which teachers and students feel a sense of belonging, actively participate in necessary choices and decisions, and act as producers of knowledge. The traditional teaching model—characterized by isolated pedagogical practice—has gradually been replaced by collaborative and diversified forms of work.

Continuing education aims to “foster the personal, professional, and institutional development of teachers, enhancing collaborative work to transform practice” (Imbernón, 2009, p. 44). It is framed as a process of growth in which teachers occupy a central position, initiate change, and promote the restructuring of the profession.

Accordingly, emphasis is placed on strengthening teacher education through collective and collaborative movements and dimensions, in which teaching practice reinforces the collective in favor of pedagogical initiatives that transcend institutional distances and boundaries. As Morés (2023, p. 25) asserts, “beyond reflecting on knowledge and social relations, it enables the transformation of ways of seeing, understanding, and producing, extending beyond the present toward future perspectives.” Therefore, it is expected that teacher education institutions will strengthen and enhance dialogue, lived experiences, knowledge, and research aimed at improving the quality of teacher education.

Oliveira-Formosinho (2009) supports the notion of teachers' professional development by stating that

providing teachers with ‘opportunities to learn’ lies at the heart of efforts to improve educational quality. However, providing these opportunities implies providing ‘opportunities to teach.’ It is within the different interpretations of what it means to provide ‘opportunities to teach’ that the various descriptive perspectives are situated. (Oliveira-Formosinho, 2009, p. 227)

In this sense, one way of conceptualizing teachers’ continuing education is to view early childhood education schools as learning spaces for all stakeholders—including teachers—through the creation of formative environments. When administrators and teacher educators invest efforts in creating individual and collective learning spaces and situations within the school context, these initiatives are reflected in the educational practices of these professionals.

In early childhood education, teachers’ continuing education constitutes a process of ongoing learning aimed at developing and refining professional competencies. Its purpose is to enhance pedagogical practices characterized by the inseparability of care and education. Through play and interactions (Brazil, 2009), children are afforded opportunities to learn and develop. This engagement with children is fundamental to the development of pedagogical practice, as it enables more contextualized approaches that recognize each child as a unique and active participant in their learning and development process. In this way, continuing education for early childhood education teachers—combined with a teaching stance grounded in listening and observation—emerges as an essential pathway for ensuring that pedagogical practice in early childhood education is sensitive, up to date, and aligned with children’s needs and the realities of contemporary society.

Thus, responsibility for the education of young children, grounded in the unique characteristics of childhood, establishes the essential foundations for teacher education, and these particularities “constitute a specific professionalism of early childhood educators’ work” (Oliveira-Formosinho, 2002, p. 44). Teaching professionalism, therefore, is a state of continuous development, characterized by the capacity to innovate and respond to educational and social demands. It can be understood as a process of growth in which teachers occupy a central role, fostering change and promoting the much-needed restructuring of the profession.

From this perspective, the education of a professional—specifically, the teacher—is not limited to a single moment or course, but rather unfolds in a systematic and continuous manner, contributing to reflection on professional practice. Rinaldi (2019) supports this view by arguing that

personal and professional development, as well as education, should not be seen as a static and immutable quality, achieved once and for all. On the contrary, it should be understood as a process, a pathway that we follow from birth and throughout our entire lives, now more than ever. Personal and

professional development and education are constructed by ourselves in relation to others, based on values that are chosen, shared, and jointly elaborated. This means living in a permanent state of inquiry. (Rinaldi, 2019, p. 247)

Based on Rinaldi's (2019) assertion, the ongoing challenge faced by early childhood education teachers in pursuing their own professional development is acknowledged. Consequently, continuing education for early childhood education teachers is considered essential for the advancement of educational practice, and it should encompass both common and specific aspects of professional development in this field in order to enhance the qualifications of the teachers who work within it.

As emphasized by Barbosa (2018, p. 11), the school—as a social institution with its own trajectory, enriched by the voices of its members—must design educational projects with a strong commitment to the future and to building ties with the community. Such education should emerge from the specific needs of the school and provide time, space, and resources so that all those involved—teachers, families, and children—have opportunities to express themselves, engage in creative processes, and implement change.

Early childhood education has its own specificities; therefore, professional education for those working in this field must be planned with these singularities in mind, such as the importance of interactions and play in children's daily lives. Kishimoto (1998, p. 128) notes that, although the importance of play is widely acknowledged, continuing education programs rarely address it as a fundamental object of study. When play is addressed, it is often treated in a theoretical manner, without providing the competencies necessary to create learning environments that genuinely encourage playful experiences.

In this way, continuing education conducted within early childhood education schools offers opportunities for the exchange of experiences and knowledge among teachers. Barbosa and Gobbato (2019, p. 356) consider such moments to be highly valuable, noting that “in addition to learning from one's own experience, it is greatly enriching in the teaching journey to learn from the experiences of others, by becoming acquainted with what they do or have done, which, in turn, broadens the knowledge necessary for renewing pedagogical practices.” Thus, when continuing education for early childhood education teachers takes place within their own professional settings, it enables teachers to reflect on their practices based on contributions and feedback from other school professionals. This ongoing dialogue offers new perspectives and solutions to challenges, reinforcing the understanding that teacher education is a constantly evolving process.

In summary, continuing education for early childhood education teachers aims to address the specific needs of each institution by providing the necessary time, space, and resources for teachers, families, and children to express themselves and engage in processes

of change. In doing so, it enhances early childhood education as a space for children's holistic development and affirms it as a site of continuous professional education for those who inhabit this educational environment.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Writing about and reflecting on teacher education—particularly initial and continuing education in early childhood education—highlights the importance of critical reflection on aspects of Brazilian educational legislation. As analyzed in this text, there have been advances in legislation—especially regarding early childhood education—following the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution and Law No. 9,394/1996, among other guidelines and education policies, reinforcing the notion of public policy in motion (Luce, 2017).

However, challenges remain in qualifying the formative processes initially proposed by higher education institutions. In this regard, a collective commitment is advocated to strengthen collaboration with basic education institutions, encouraging study groups, professional education, self-education, and the transformation of teaching practice through research that permeates investigative, theoretical, and methodological processes. These processes act as catalysts for experiences and practices that mobilize everyday life in early childhood education.

Accordingly, the value of formative processes in support of early childhood teaching is emphasized, promoting the recognition and reflection of educational daily life and the relationships built throughout formative trajectories and education policies. It is therefore essential to acknowledge the relevance of studies on early childhood teacher education in order to improve the quality of early childhood education.

Emphasis is placed on strengthening connections and dialogue between formative processes, focusing on initial and continuing education in early childhood education. This aims to enhance pedagogical practice, provide meaningful learning opportunities, prioritize experiences in open natural environments—often involving multiple teachers working collaboratively—and strengthen formative groups and networks. This represents a new pedagogical construction being developed collectively with teachers in the context of education, as meaningful transformation requires teachers to be engaged and committed to teamwork and collaborative practice.

Nóvoa (2023) affirms the fundamental need for others, as no one becomes integrated into a profession in isolation, nor is it possible to construct new pedagogical practices without collective reflection. Interaction with peers is essential to becoming a teacher.

Pedagogical movements that contribute to the education of early childhood education teachers are evident, enabling creation and innovation. Continuing education in early childhood education is a powerful pathway that deserves attention, particularly in efforts to bring teachers together as a collective to reflect on their work and actions, and to construct alternative ways of experiencing daily life with children in respectful and welcoming ways. This underscores that teacher education is a continuous process developed throughout one's professional life, supported by spaces that allow for reflection, creation, movement, and invention. Therefore, early childhood education is understood as a place of formative potential, where teacher education effectively occurs by interweaving studies, research, experiences, and knowledge. In this sense, teacher education becomes inseparable from the profession itself, articulating higher education and basic education.

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