

## THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION TEACHERS: THE CASE OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF IVAIPORÃ – PARANÁ



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### ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the impact of continuing education on the pedagogical practice of Early Childhood Education teachers in Ivaiporã, PR. The central question investigated is: how does the process of continuing education contribute to teaching practice and meeting the needs of early childhood? Based on references such as Paulo Freire and the BNCC guidelines, the study adopts a qualitative approach with questionnaires, interviews and document analysis, involving early childhood education coordinators. The results show that continuing education is recognized as essential for professional updating and adaptation to the demands of early childhood education, but faces challenges such as the gap between theory and practice and the need for more contextual and applicable approaches. It is concluded that training should integrate theory and practice, prioritize inclusive methodologies and promote the integral development of students.

**Keywords:** Inclusive Methodologies. Integral Development. Basic Education. Pedagogical Practices. Teacher Training.

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## INTRODUCTION

The study examines the Continuing Education of Early Childhood Education teachers in Ivaiporã-PR, considering its relevance to improve educational quality. Continuing education is pointed out as an essential pillar for up-to-date pedagogical practices that are sensitive to the needs of children, especially in early childhood (Ximenes, 2022; Coconut, 2018; Alsina and Pastells, 2013). The research focuses on how these trainings contribute to the teaching practice and generate changes in the school routine.

The main question of the study is: how does Continuing Education in Ivaiporã-PR impact teaching practice? With this, it seeks to unveil perceptions about courses and training activities, evaluating their effectiveness in supporting daily practices. In addition, it seeks to understand how training can be adjusted to better meet the local demands of educators and students (Vogt and Morosini, 2012; Silva et al., 2018; Gomes et al., 2019). Analysis of these insights identifies strengths and areas for improvement.

The main objective is to evaluate the perceptions of teachers about the training offered, exploring factors that help or hinder the practical application of the knowledge acquired. This understanding can offer subsidies for more effective policies aligned with modern pedagogical needs (Rodriguez and Silva, 2015; Kalmus and Souza, 2016).

The relevance of continuing education in Early Childhood Education is justified by the need to take a close look at the demands of this stage. Training is not limited to the transmission of knowledge, but encompasses the development of skills to deal with socio-emotional and cognitive aspects of children (Lyon et al., 2009; Lang et al., 2017). In Ivaiporã, these programs can have a significant impact on pedagogical development and adaptation to local needs.

Inspired by Paulo Freire's thought, the research adopts a critical approach, seeing training as a tool for transformation. Freire argues that teaching is also learning, and that teaching practice must be continuously questioned and adapted to the realities of students (Freire, 1967, 1981, 1991; Darder, 2014). This model of reflection enriches the educational experience and strengthens the bond between educators and students.

Freire's approach underpins the analysis, emphasizing the need to go beyond technique and include practical reflection (Reis and Ostetto, 2018b; Peloso and Paula, 2011). This perspective is applied in the analysis of Continuing Education in Ivaiporã, seeking practices that are more conscious and transformative. The proposal includes promoting active participation and dialogue among those involved (Fortuna, 2015; Shor,

1987; Elbaz, 1988).

In Early Childhood Education, teachers face challenges related to the early stages of student development. Continuous training programs are crucial to update educators, prepare them to face pedagogical challenges, and create welcoming and inclusive environments (Azevedo et al., 2010; Albritton, 2009). In Ivaiporã, these programs help teachers to adapt their practices to the children's profile, promoting creativity and critical thinking (Craft, 2003).

The Continuing Education programs in Ivaiporã train teachers to face issues such as the inclusion of students with special needs and the implementation of active methodologies. Such practices encourage children's socio-emotional and cognitive development (Robinson and Myck-Wayne, 2016; Gerent and Hotz, 2003). Additionally, these programs promote a more equitable and accessible education, allowing each student to reach their full potential.

The research highlights the importance of reflective practices that go beyond technical training. Continuing education should inspire teachers to adapt their pedagogical practices to the demands of students and the local context, promoting more effective and innovative strategies (Oriente et al., 2017; Saleh et al., 2018; Muñoz et al., 2015).

In this context, Continuing Education is fundamental for the professional development of Early Childhood Education teachers in Ivaiporã. Public policies aimed at continuous and contextualized training are indispensable to maximize the impact of these programs, transforming them into effective tools for improving pedagogical practice and inclusive teaching (Reis and Ostetto, 2018b; Peloso and Paula, 2011).

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Teacher training in Brazil has evolved significantly, especially in early childhood education, driven by legal frameworks such as the 1996 Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB). This legislation highlighted early childhood education as the first stage of basic education, prioritizing the qualified training of teachers. Before the LDB, teacher training was informal and focused on welfare care. From the 1980s onwards, movements for the democratization of education promoted a change, demanding greater qualification to meet the specificities of childhood (Brasil, 1996, 2005; Coconut, 2018; Gomes, 2017; Saviani, 2009).

The Federal Constitution of 1988 reinforced the right to education and the need for qualified teachers to meet the integral development of children from zero to six years of age (Brasil, 1988; Gomes, 2017). From then on, public policies promoted pedagogy courses and specializations. The LDB consolidated continuing education as a right and a necessity, emphasizing the integration of theory and practice and recognizing the central role of teachers in the quality of teaching (Reis and Ostetto, 2018; Barros and Medeiros, 2014).

In Paraná, the Curriculum Reference for Early Childhood Education (Paraná, 2018), aligned with the BNCC (Brazil, 2018), established competencies and skills for teachers, promoting contextualized training. The BNCC valued the integral development of children and socio-emotional skills, highlighting the need for teacher training that supports these practices. This highlights the crucial role of continuing education programs in pedagogical alignment with the new guidelines (Paraná, 2018; Rosa and Ferreira, 2022).

Several authors, such as Imbernón (2009, 2022), argue that teacher training should be continuous, integrating theory and practice, allowing teachers to adapt their practices to the context. In early childhood education, pedagogical challenges require constant updating and strategies that promote children's involvement and learning (Graaf, 2022; Paudel, 2023; Silva et al., 2018; Brínguez and Racet, 2014).

Freire (1967, 1981, 1991) complements this perspective by treating the teacher as a critical and reflective agent. He argues that teacher training should include tools to question and improve pedagogical practices, promoting inclusive education that meets the individual needs of each child. This contributes to a welcoming and dialogical learning environment (Peloso and Paula, 2011; Mahmoudi et al., 2014).

Implementing the guidelines faces challenges, especially in locations with fewer resources. In Paraná, specific programs have helped in the continuing education of teachers, aligning pedagogical practices with the guidelines of the BNCC and the State Curriculum Framework. These programs are fundamental for adapting to the local context and improving early childhood education (Osborne and Barker, 2010; Givigi et al., 2017).

In Ivaiporã-PR, the Continuing Education program has been crucial for the adaptation of pedagogical practices. With a focus on inclusion and active methodologies, it strengthens interactive and accessible teaching, reflecting the importance of public policies in the positive impact on educational quality. This training trains teachers to meet the demands of children and promote more equitable teaching (Sade et al., 2016; Justus and Brandalise, 2018).

Continuing education also addresses diversity and inclusion, considering the growing presence of children with special needs. Inclusive pedagogical strategies empower teachers to create equitable learning environments, promoting equal opportunities. This practice is essential for early childhood education (Canen and Xavier, 2011; Lunardi-Lazzarin and Hermes, 2015).

Effective training programs value the teaching experience, promoting the exchange of experiences and collaborative solutions. This space for dialogue between teachers facilitates adaptation to changes and contributes to more meaningful and contextualized pedagogical practices (Monteiro et al., 2021; Silva et al., 2018).

In early childhood education, continuing education should focus on the integral development of the child, involving cognitive, emotional and social aspects. This approach requires adaptive pedagogical practices that are sensitive to individual needs, strengthening the transformative role of the teacher in child development (Carvalho, 2019; Martinez and Pereira, 2016).

Over time, technical and decontextualized initial training has lost space, giving way to programs that prioritize practical challenges and interdisciplinary approaches. In early childhood education, these changes are fundamental to meet the demands of innovative teaching adapted to the specificities of childhood (Pozo and Ribot, 2014; Oliveira and Behrens, 2015).

Finally, continuing education is essential for the professional development of teachers, promoting effective and inclusive pedagogical practices. In early childhood education, this ensures the integral development of children and prepares educators to respond to contemporary challenges in an ethical and sensitive way (Li, 2023; Bertram, 1996).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research uses a qualitative approach to investigate the process of Continuing Education of Early Childhood Education teachers in Ivaiporã-PR, between 2021 and 2023. This method was chosen because it allows an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences and perceptions, offering an interpretative analysis of educational phenomena (Cooley, 2013; Neuman, 2014). The qualitative approach favors the interaction between researcher and context, essential to capture the complexity of teacher training (Rivero, 2016; Muñoz, 2012; Hooley, 2013).

The case study was the methodological design adopted, ideal to explore the process in a specific context. This approach allows us to understand contemporary phenomena in the real environment, observing variables without direct interference (Gil, 2008, 2021). This choice is especially relevant in complex educational contexts, such as the training of teachers for Early Childhood Education (Coimbra and Martins, 2013; Macpherson et al., 2000).

Data collection was carried out through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and document analysis, allowing a triangulation that strengthened the validity of the results. The questionnaires captured initial data on the profile and perceptions of the participants, while the interviews delved into emerging themes. Document analysis complemented these instruments, providing an institutional view of the process (Zappellini and Feuerschütte, 2015; Bekhet and Zauszniewski, 2012).

The participants included thirteen Early Childhood Education coordinators, two from the Municipal Department of Education and eleven working in the CMEIs. These professionals were essential to understand the impact of Continuing Education on pedagogical practice and on the inclusion of students with special needs. The diversity of participants contributed to the richness of the analysis.

The questionnaires explored information about the professional profile, functions in the CMEIs and perceptions about Continuing Education. With thirty-one open and closed questions, these instruments offered an initial overview of the contributions and challenges faced by the coordinators, guiding the subsequent stages of the research.

The semi-structured interviews deepened the data collected in the questionnaires, allowing greater flexibility in the approach to the themes. Carried out in person, these interactions promoted an environment of trust and adaptability, making it possible to explore institutional and individual perceptions about Continuing Education and its implementation (Gil, 2021; Bekhet and Zauszniewski, 2012).

The documentary analysis included materials such as the Pedagogical Political Project (PPP) and records from the Municipal Department of Education and CMEIs. This stage revealed how public education policies are reflected in daily practices, highlighting the challenges and advances in the implementation of the guidelines (Figaro, 2014; Camargo and Justo, 2013).

The triangulation of the data, integrating questionnaires, interviews and document analysis, ensured a comprehensive and grounded view of the process of Continuing

Education in Ivaiporã-PR. The use of the IraMuTeQ software helped in the categorization of the answers, identifying patterns and key concepts, enriching the analysis with a systematic and detailed approach (Ramos et al., 2018; Chaves et al., 2017).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The discussion of this research seeks to understand how the process of Continuing Education in Ivaiporã-PR impacts the teaching practice in Early Childhood Education. The analysis focuses on the perceptions of teachers and coordinators, exploring the impact of training on pedagogical improvement and adaptation to the specific demands of early childhood. The focus is on identifying positive points and limitations, such as the gap between theory and practice and the need for more contextualized training (Gomes, 2019; Genske et al., 2019; Santos et al., 2020).

Continuing Education is seen as a strategic tool to meet the diversity of educational needs. In Ivaiporã, coordinators highlighted the value of these trainings for professional updating, but pointed out the need for more applied and practical approaches that reflect the real challenges faced in daily school life (Amin et al., 2017; Kryptou & Sofianopoulou, 2019).

The exploratory questionnaire revealed positive perceptions of the trainings, but also limitations. Composed of 31 open questions, the questionnaire sought to capture the professional profile of the coordinators, information about enrolled students and the functions performed in the CMEIs. More experienced coordinators seek pedagogical innovation, while newcomers see training as an opportunity to consolidate knowledge (Gil, 2008, 2021).

The data indicate that the ratio of students to teachers is high in some age groups, representing a challenge. The coordinators pointed out the need for training that helps in the management of large classes without compromising the quality of teaching, in addition to inclusive and active methodologies that consider the individuality of children (Rios and Nascimento, 2018; Almeida et al., 2016).

The semi-structured interviews deepened the perceptions about the impact of Continuing Education. The participants reported that the contents covered are often far from school realities, limiting their practical application. It is recommended to align training with the demands of schools and include case studies to facilitate the theory-practice transposition (Fomin and Boiko, 2022; Jeder, 2014).

Another highlight was the training to deal with children with special needs, such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Coordinators reported that the approach to training is often theoretical, lacking practical tools for effective inclusion. This gap undermines the attendance to diversity in classrooms (Avşaroğlu and Bural, 2012; Sukartono et al., 2016).

The documentary analysis included the Curricular Pedagogical Proposal and the Pedagogical Political Project (PPP), which highlight continuing education as an essential support for inclusive pedagogical practices. The documents highlight the need for strategies adapted to the local reality, promoting the integral development of children and strengthening the pedagogical skills of teachers (Orlando-Bacciotti and Campos, 2021; Schmidt and Souza, 2019).

The PPP of each CMEI emphasizes the role of coordinators in mediating between educational policies and pedagogical practice. They report difficulties in balancing administrative and pedagogical activities, indicating that training should include managerial skills to help them face these demands (Laffin and Nakayama, 2013; Baptaglin et al., 2014).

The triangulation of the data revealed that the training courses continue to face challenges in aligning with the local reality, but highlighted advances in the inclusion of active methodologies. This alignment is crucial to maximize the impact of training on pedagogical practice and child care in the CMEIs of Ivaiporã (Reis and Ostetto, 2018a; Vogt and Morosini, 2012).

Coordinators suggest that future training include practical discussions and the exchange of experiences among professionals. This collaborative approach enriches the training process, promoting solutions adapted to the specific conditions of schools, while valuing teaching expertise (Monteiro et al., 2021; Silva et al., 2018).

The documentary analysis reinforces that the integration between the Curricular Pedagogical Proposal and the PPP is essential for the success of the training. This ensures that the guidelines are translated into effective pedagogical practices and contribute to improving the quality of early childhood education in Ivaiporã (Lopes et al., 2016; Lazzari, 2015).

The data indicate that Continuing Education needs to go beyond technical knowledge, promoting critical reflections on practice. This process strengthens educators' confidence and ability to face the specific challenges of Early Childhood Education, ensuring inclusive and adapted teaching (Junior et al., 2020; Fernandes and Corrêa, 2014).

The coordinators report that more practical training adapted to local realities is essential to make learning meaningful. Interactive methodologies, inclusion tools, and management strategies are pointed out as priorities for future training (Côco, 2018; Barros and Medeiros, 2014).

The research concludes that continuing education in Ivaiporã-PR has contributed to pedagogical advances, but faces challenges such as the distance between theory and practice. To be more effective, programs must prioritize direct application in daily school life and consider the diversity of professional trajectories of the coordinators (Gomes, 2019; Vogt and Morosini, 2012).

The inclusion of practical tools is especially important to meet the specific needs of children with special demands. This requires investments in technical and reflective training, which enable teachers to promote a truly inclusive environment (Jeder, 2014; Choy et al., 2014).

The overload of administrative functions reported by the coordinators interferes with the impact of pedagogical training. Proposals that include administrative support can increase the effectiveness of training, freeing up more time for pedagogical monitoring (Reis and Ostetto, 2018a; Baptaglin et al., 2014).

Continuing education plays a central role in the implementation of educational guidelines, but they need to be contextualized to ensure their effectiveness. Adaptations that dialogue with local realities can enhance their impact on pedagogical practices (Santos et al., 2022; Lopes et al., 2016).

Finally, the research suggests that training in Ivaiporã should include greater dialogue between trainers and teachers, promoting practical and reflective strategies. This will ensure that training not only updates teachers, but also prepares them to respond to the specific demands of Early Childhood Education (Fernandes and Corrêa, 2014; Barros and Medeiros, 2014).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Continuing education is essential for Early Childhood Education, especially in contexts such as Ivaiporã-PR, where there is great diversity and needs for inclusion. These programs train teachers to deal with the complexity of pedagogical practice, promoting the integral development of children and updating teachers with modern and adaptive

methodologies. In addition, they help to face challenges such as inclusion and socio-emotional development, which are fundamental for school success.

The coordinators of Early Childhood Education see continuing education as a mechanism for professional growth and improvement of pedagogical practices. Although they recognize their role in updating knowledge, they point to the need for a greater connection between theory and practice. This gap is a challenge to effectively implement the knowledge acquired in everyday school life and demands adaptations in training programs.

Topics such as educational inclusion and strategies to serve students with special needs, such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), are priorities for future training. Pedagogical practices focused on the socialization and emotional development of children are also highlighted as indispensable, expanding the preparation of teachers to meet the demands of Early Childhood Education in an integral way.

Classroom management is another area that requires attention in continuing education. Teachers need organizational skills to handle large and diverse class sizes, including planning techniques and communicating with families. These skills strengthen the educational environment and promote a more collaborative interaction between school and community.

Active methodologies are essential to make teaching more dynamic and participatory. These approaches put the student at the center of learning, encouraging children's curiosity and engagement. Training that explores these practices helps teachers apply them in resource-limited settings, ensuring greater effectiveness in teaching.

Training in socio-emotional skills is also crucial for teachers. These professionals play a vital role in children's early development, and training in this area allows them to create safe and welcoming learning environments. This helps to promote the emotional and social well-being of students, positively impacting their integral development.

A collaborative approach in training can enrich the process, allowing the exchange of successful experiences and practices between teachers. This dialogue strengthens collective learning and promotes solutions adapted to school realities, expanding the impact of training in everyday educational life.

Although continuing education is a foundation for teaching practice in Ivaiporã, adjustments are needed to make it more practical, contextualized and collaborative. These changes can enhance its transformative impact, preparing teachers to face the complex

challenges of Early Childhood Education and ensure quality teaching that promotes the integral development of children.

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