

ARTICLE

BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT: CONTRASTS IN ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN THE FEDERAL DISTRICT*

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ABSTRACT: The foundation of Brasília occurred in the midst of utopias, especially that to overcome the Brazilian urban centers' social problems. One of the strategies proposed by Anísio Teixeira was the presentation of an innovative educational project, based on unrestricted access to public education from pre-school to university. Contrasting the past and present, we sought to highlight aspects of inequalities in the new capital with a focus on Early Childhood Education, analyzing two moments in time: 1) events documented in the first years after the inauguration of the capital; and 2) contemporary data about income and access to Early Childhood education. We demonstrate that the social exclusion that characterizes the capital goes back to its inauguration and persists beyond the geographical divisions between the Pilot Plan and the other Administrative Regions of the Federal District. Inequality is also observed in the educational system, especially in Early Childhood Education.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education; Social Inequality; Federal District.

ENTRE O PASSADO E O PRESENTE: CONTRASTES DE ACESSO À EDUCAÇÃO INFANTIL NO DISTRITO FEDERAL

RESUMO: A criação de Brasília ocorreu em meio a utopias, sobretudo a de superar os problemas sociais dos grandes centros urbanos brasileiros. Uma das estratégias encontradas por Anísio Teixeira foi a apresentação de um projeto educacional inovador, baseado no acesso irrestrito à educação pública da pré-escola à universidade. Ao contrastar o passado e o presente,

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procuramos evidenciar aspectos das desigualdades na nova capital com foco na Educação Infantil, analisando dois recortes temporais: 1) acontecimentos documentados nos primeiros anos após a fundação da capital; e 2) dados contemporâneos de renda e de acesso à Educação Infantil. Demonstramos que a exclusão social que marca a capital remonta a sua fundação e persiste para além das divisões geográficas entre o Plano Piloto e as demais Regiões Administrativas do Distrito Federal. As desigualdades também são observadas no sistema educacional, sobretudo na Educação Infantil.

Palavras-chave: Educação Infantil; Desigualdade Social; Distrito Federal.

INTRODUCTION

As compared to other Brazilian states, the Federal District (*Distrito Federal*, or DF) is politically and administratively divided in a unique manner. It is the only unit of the Federation with overlapping state and city management responsibilities, including education. With a population estimated at three million inhabitants (IBGE, 2017), the DF territory is marked by notable social contrasts, as has been observed by studies conducted throughout the decade (IPEA, 2012; IBGE, 2014; DISTRITO FEDERAL, 2016). The Gini index¹ suggests that the DF has high-income disparity and social inequality. Brazil has historically been classified as having very stark and pervasive income inequality; in the DF, this index is above the national average. The Brazil Gini index in 2016 was 0.549; in the DF, it reached 0.583, the highest among all states of the Federation (IBGE, 2016). Hence, the DF has a high degree of inequality, which has persisted over the years; in fact, extreme poverty in the DF has actually increased, in contrast to decreases observed in the Midwestern region and elsewhere in Brazil (IPEA, 2012).

To further understand the DF's socioeconomic characteristics, it must be noted that its population's overall income is high compared to that of the rest of Brazil. For example, while the average household income for the DF population was R\$5,192.38² in 2015 and income per capita was R\$1,652.97, during the same period, the Brazilian per capita income did not exceed R\$1,052.00 (IBGE, 2016). Although the DF population's overall income is above the national average, inequities are apparent when differences in income between the 31 Administrative Regions (ARs) that comprise it are considered.

Through data analysis (DISTRITO FEDERAL, 2016), it can be seen that the per capita income in various DF regions varied significantly. For example, certain ARs earned approximately 10 times the income of the lowest-earning ARs. The income of the lowest-earning AR (AR XIV - SCIA) amounted to little more than the minimum wage, but the income of a more privileged AR (AR XVI - Lago Sul) was slightly more than 10 times the minimum wage.

Notably, in the Pilot Plan³ area (AR I), the highest average household income is four times that of the DF average. In addition, inequities are also found within AR subdivisions. This is exemplified by the case of AR XX - Águas Claras. This AR is divided into three sub-regions: Águas Claras Vertical, Arniqueiras, and Areal. The monthly household income in the first sub-region within the AR is R\$11,692.54 (13.29 times the minimum wage); in the second, the monthly income is R\$5,744.90 (6.53 times the minimum wage); and in the third, the monthly income is R\$4,361.43 (4.96 times the minimum wage) (DISTRITO FEDERAL, 2016). The gaps between the lives of Pilot Plan area inhabitants and of those residing in other ARs, known as satellite towns, transcend geographical and income limits. These gaps are manifested in the inhabitants' lifestyles, occupation characteristics, and displacement in urban spaces, and they underscore the marked differences observed between the core of the city and its outlying areas.

Inequality in the DF is not a recent phenomenon and appears to be linked to the new capital foundation. Lucio Costa (1902-1998),⁴ the creator of the Brasília urban planning, compared the city that had been envisioned 20 years earlier to the actual city. He suggests that the inhabitants' experiences differ depending on the region in which they live:

I examined the ground realities, and one thing that surprised me was the bus station in the evening. I always said that this bus station was the link between the metropolis, the capital city, and the improvised satellite cities of the periphery. It is a spot where all the population that lives outside encounters the city. Then I felt this movement, this intense life of the real *brasilienses*,⁵ a mass that lives outside and converges on the bus station. Their home is right there; it is the place where they feel comfortable. They procrastinate until they return to the satellite city, staying there and sipping drinks. I was surprised with the good mood of those strapping guys. And the "shopping center" is, surprisingly, open until midnight... This is all very different from what I had imagined for this urban center, as something refined, kind of cosmopolitan. But it is not. Those real Brazilians who built the city and are there legitimately were the ones who took care of it. Only in Brazil... And I was proud of that, I was satisfied. That's it. They are right, I was the wrong one. They took over what had not been conceived of for them. It was a bastille. So, I found that Brasília has real Brazilian roots. It is not a greenhouse flower, as it could have been. Brasília is working and will work even more. The dream is smaller than the reality. The reality is greater, more beautiful (ArPDF/CODEPLAN/DePhan/GDF, 1991, p. 9).

This article goes beyond generalizations, to investigate contrasting aspects between what was originally planned and executed and what was realized in the DF inhabitants' daily lives. In particular, it focuses on the differences observed in young children's participation in the education system, addressing access to

early childhood education in light of the city having been designed as a utopian project aiming to offer the same opportunities to its inhabitants, regardless of their origins. In this context, this article examines how the distribution of population from birth through age six⁶ has taken place in the DF educational institutions in relation to the income of these children's families.

We contrast urban and educational planning and documentation of the early years of the new capital with contemporary data on income and access to early childhood education in the DF. In the first part of the article, we use pieces published on *Correio Braziliense*, the newspaper with the greatest circulation in the city.⁷ In light of this empirical information, we analyze data from the PDAD-DF,⁸ a survey conducted between 2015 and 2016 (DISTRITO FEDERAL, 2016), and educational census data published by the Education Department of the Federal District (2017a). We demonstrate the distribution of children involved in early childhood education programs since the inauguration of Brasilia, based on data that illustrate the inequity experienced by the inhabitants of different ARs in the DF.⁹

Contrasting two different time periods, this study eschews 19th century positivist historiography, which sought to explain and justify the present through simplistic causality relationships using similar circumstances. By investigating a historical process that is still in motion and thus unfinished, this article aims to establish a broader understanding of issues pertaining to access to early childhood education in the DF, which has been influenced by historical conditions and contradictions. Such historicity may provide elements capable of consistently informing our actions and contemporary choices in order to achieve greater equality in early childhood care in the DF.

THE ORIGINAL EDUCATION PLAN AND KINDERGARTENS¹⁰

Inaugurated in 1960, Brasilia was a utopian concept. Incorporating the ideals of Brazil's President at the time, Juscelino Kubitschek (1902-1976), the urban planning project that resulted in the creation of Brasilia sought to provide its inhabitants with everything necessary to live, such as green areas, schools, trade, and access to hospitals. In addition to the practical issues, the creation of Brasilia was connected with ideas regarding the modernization of Brazilian society in specific ways, which eventually clashed with the difficulties of the social constitution of the country. Discussing Brasilia nearly four years after its construction, Milton Santos (2010, p. 73) reflected on the relationship between the utopia imagined in the urban development plan and the reality of the inhabitants'

living conditions, in which he saw inequity and underdevelopment as hindering the “creative will.” According to Santos,

Brasília was already born with a predetermined destiny to be “the head of Brazil,” the “brain of the highest decisions in the nation.” An administrative capital city and a construction site, these two realities - the planned reality and the conditional reality for the first one - will give it a physiognomy, a rhythm of life, a content. Ideally, as intended by the planners, the planned reality would end up replacing the conditional reality. Brasília would gradually become a voluntarily built capital city, but less of a construction site. In opposite directions, this further development could continue to leave a mark on life in the city if it was not for a more complex factor between the two of them: the underdevelopment of the country and everything that comes with it.

The conflict between the “creative will” and the obstacles of a country branded by inequities also appears to have been reflected in its educational framework. The Education Plan of Brasília, formulated by Brazilian educator and intellectual Anísio Teixeira (1900-1971) and published in 1961 in the *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos*,¹¹ aimed to overcome the significant social divisions found in Brazil, a purpose also included in the new capital city project. Teixeira adopted the perspective of a quality educational system with a clear democratizing focus, in which public schools played a key role (CARVALHO, 2011; PEREIRA; ROCHA, 2011; SOUZA, 2016; VASCONCELOS, 2013). Formulated in an articulated way and integrated with the urban development plans the Plan of School Constructions of Brasília proposed placing schools equitably and equidistantly so that the routes to the schools were as short as possible. This would prioritize the children’s safety and autonomy (SILVA, 1985).

The educational plan devised for Brasília provoked discussions. In 1963, a *Correio* reporter asked Anísio Teixeira if there were specificities in Brasília that required a different education plan, to which he replied:

The problem of a city that has no story, but was created artificially, has obvious peculiarities. One could say that the problem of cities created by artificial processes, such as Brasília, is unprecedented. In fact, competent people must be invited to find solutions to these problems, whether they are anticipated or not. They are of a unique nature. On the other hand, considering the subject in question, the school system may be implanted with hardly achievable innovations in other urban centers, where certain concepts are already crystallized, and the prevailing mentality is oftentimes impervious to innovations (*Correio Braziliense*, 21 June, 1963, p. 7).

Thus, Brasília was born from the idea of creating an innovative educational system that could overcome the issues experienced in crystallized educational systems and reflected in the duality between schools for the affluent and schools for the poor. The educational project attempted to include children from all social classes in each

institution through the development of an innovative pedagogical plan, from a modern perspective (PEREIRA; ROCHA, 2011; SILVA, 1985).

In this climate, the *Correio* covered the first school year after the city inauguration, enthusiastically reporting interactions between the children of congressmen and those of construction workers at the educational institutions: “The children of congressmen and *candangos*¹² play together there, in an environment as healthy as possible, with free distribution of snacks” (*Correio Braziliense*, 27 April, 1960, p. 8). The Education Plan of Brasília signaled a systemic, comprehensive understanding of education, from preschool to university. In this sense, it put forward a proposal capable of preparing citizens for modernity and democracy. It was also an education model for the rest of the country. According to Teixeira:

The school construction plan for Brasília had the purpose of creating opportunity for the Capital Federal to provide the nation with a set of schools that could set an example for the country's educational system. Since the needs of modern civilization increasingly impose obligations on schools, increasing their tasks and functions, the plan comprises each level of education, from elementary to higher education. It comprises a set of buildings, with various functions and a considerable variety of forms, and aims to meet the specific education and teaching needs and also the need for living spaces and social life (TEIXEIRA, 1961, p. 195).

Even before the Brasília education plan was fully developed, demand for education was already present. On the one hand, records of the history of Brasília show that the first settlement groups were mostly made up of unaccompanied workers and employees, and therefore, few children. On the other hand, this reality had already begun to change in 1957, the period in which most of the families begin to arrive. According to the Education Department:

The Urbanizing Company of the New Capital of Brazil, a representative of the government, worried about meeting the main elementary education demands of their civil servants and workers' children, and took over this responsibility. In late 1956, it created the Department of Education and Health, later named the Department of Education and Cultural Diffusion (Ordinance no. 103/B/59 NOVACAP), with the aim of promoting educational activities until the Education System of the Federal District could be permanently implemented. On September 10, 1957, the first public primary school of Brasília, the GE-1, later named after Julia Kubitschek, was inaugurated (Distrito Federal, 2001, p. 29).

Thus, the demand for educational institutions increased along with the migratory flow. With increasing pressure caused by population growth, gaps began to emerge in the Education Plan's execution. For example, part-time education systems were implemented instead of full-time ones, an idea presented in the original plan. In addition, there were financial issues due to the allegedly prohibitive costs

involved in developing the proposal. Ultimately, other issues were pointed out, such as a lack of school buildings and an insufficient number of teachers (CARVALHO, 2011; PEREIRA; CARVALHO, 2011; PEREIRA; ROCHA 2005, 2011).¹³

At the end of 1959 (even before the city's official opening), the DF hired more than 100 teachers, distributing them between 18 primary schools and three kindergartens; this indicates the rapid growth of the Brasilia education system. At that time, the number of children enrolled in public and private educational institutions exceeded 6,000. Of these, 4,682 attended public institutions, according to a survey by pioneer Ernesto Silva:¹⁴

TABLE 1. Number of enrollments in Brasilia's public education institutions in 1959

INSTITUTION	ENROLLMENT
Casas Populares Kindergarten	44
Ernesto Silva Kindergarten	45
21 de Abril Kindergarten	160
School Group n. 1 (Velhacap)	560
School of COENGE - CCBE	60
Ipase School	113
Casas Populares School	218
Vila Amaury School	480
Metropolitana School	162
Granja do Torto School	86
Granja do Tamanduá School	52
Pery da Rocha França School	200
Ernesto Silva School	145
Taguatinga School	785
Papuda School	102
Granja do Riacho Fundo School	120
Fercal School	40
Superquadra 308 School	640
Fazenda do Gama School	30
Construtora Rabelo School	320
Candangolândia School	320
TOTAL	4,682

Source: SILVA (1985).

Since its early years, the DF education system had to deal with the contrast between ideals and the practical needs arising due to rapid population growth. The impact of the increase in student enrollment during that period can be understood by noting that in 1960, 6,575 students were registered to attend school, whereas in 1970, the registrations had risen to 157,799, an increase of 2,300% in only one decade. In this respect, it is said that:

There were particularly grim times, such as the initial 15 years, when the population growth was more than 25% per year. In fact, not only was the year 1960 marked by the inauguration of the new capital education system, there was a high deficit in service due to settlements outside the area called Pilot Plan. Those were hard years, since the quantitative aspect imposed itself over the qualitative one. The education service took on an emergency nature, with an increase in enrollments throughout the school year (Distrito Federal, 2001, p. 12).

Although there are some records available on the development of early childhood education in the DF education system, there is little information on kindergartens and nursery schools, except for pieces in the *Correio* written during that time.

Only six days after the capital's inauguration, on April 27, 1960, the *Correio* published an article describing kindergarten children's enthusiasm: "The children left the classrooms screaming to see the president's helicopter that was flying over (...) when the *Correio* journalists (...) arrived there to cover the resumption of classes" (*Correio Braziliense*, p. 8). However, on that same day, the newspaper publicized the inadequacy of the education that had been planned for that age group. Thus, the newly launched education project began experimenting with adjustments and adaptations that were popular at that time in the country's early childhood education programs:

Once enrollment was started, it had to be interrupted the next day. Two-hundred and thirty-eight children had applied for the kindergarten, which had been planned for only 100 children. The remedy to this problem was to allocate the kindergarten activities into two periods: in the morning, there is one class for six-year old children, two classes for five-year old children, and one class for four-year old children. In the afternoon, there are two classes for six-year old children, one class for five-year old children, and one class for four-year old children (*Correio Braziliense*, 27 April, 1960, p. 8).

Despite the belief that the imbalance between supply and demand for early childhood education would be solved, as illustrated by the news above, this problem quickly arose again. It was the *Correio* itself that highlighted a new issue, on the day after the inauguration. As noted in journalist Ari Cunha's column:

This is what Brasilia education is like: the superblock 108 kindergarten was inaugurated yesterday. They enrolled students of all superblocks with no warning. Now, the students of that block do not have access to a kindergarten because the capacity of each room is 25 students, but there are already 30 students. Judging by the education plan, the kindergarten deficit is massive. The waiting line at block 108 has more than 40 children. There's something wrong here. The fact that a student cannot enroll in his superblock is just disappointing (*Correio Braziliense*, 23 October, 1961, p. 9).

Another aspect of this story is revealed in the record of the first teachers' strike in Brasilia in 1960. Among their claims was the government's failure to fulfill certain promises made to the teachers upon hiring, including the provision of nursery care for the teachers' children. Pereira and Carvalho (2011, p. 107) stated that:

Since the first months of 1960, the civil-service teachers who had come to Brasilia had already expressed dissatisfaction with promises unfulfilled by the administration. Some of them were the nurseries for their children, and, notably, the serious housing problem. This became the main cause of the events leading to the first DF teacher strike in September.

Another concern of early childhood education projects can be observed among institutions inaugurated between the late 1950s and the 1980s. During that time, 18 kindergartens were opened. The only contemporary information found on nurseries refers to a nursery built in 1967 by the former Institute of Retirement and Pensions (IAPB), built for the children of the institution's employees. The former Federal District Education Foundation¹⁵ stated the following regarding this nursery:

It was soon found that a kindergarten would be of better use at that place. In 1968, FEDF worked on implementing a kindergarten that would serve that superblock school community. As of February 12, they could count on Teacher Maria Ângela Coutinho Ferreira as its first principal (Distrito Federal, 1985, p. 119).

Of the 18 kindergartens, nine were located in the South Wing – *Asa Sul* – and five in the North Wing – *Asa Norte*. Only four other kindergartens were opened beyond the limits of the Pilot Plan area. Nonetheless, the primary schools were already being inaugurated in other regions during the late 1950s and early 1960s, as shown below in Table 2.¹⁶

TABLE 2. DF public kindergartens through 1980

	INSTITUTION	FIRST PRINCIPAL	INAUGURATION
1	21 de Abril Kindergarten	Maria Tereza de Medeiros Falcão	1959/1960
2	208 Sul Kindergarten (IPASE)	Tereza Pimenta Pedroso	1960
3	108 Sul Kindergarten	Mirthô Pfeitscher Gonçalves	1961
4	114 Sul Kindergarten	Tereza de Pimenta Pedroso	1962
5	404 Norte Kindergarten	Ajaíse Melo Minervi	1964
6	6 th COMAR Kindergarten - Lago Sul	Meiry Monteiro dos Santos	1964
7	305 Sul Kindergarten	Dulce Helena Cramer Garcia	1964/1965
8	Número 01 do Cruzeiro Kindergarten	Lídia Maria de Freitas	1965
9	308 Sul Kindergarten	Vera Lucia de Melo Pires	1965
10	312 Norte Kindergarten	Maria Ângela Coutinho Ferreira	1968
11	Número 01 de Sobradinho Kindergarten ¹⁷	Maria Celina Guimarães Batista	1971
12	316 Sul Kindergarten	Maria José Teixeira Aversa	1973
13	314 Sul Kindergarten	Mirian da Conceição Duarte Bauer	1975
14	102 Sul Kindergarten	Carmélia Carneiro da Silva Jacob	1975
15	106 Norte Kindergarten	Genesi Silva Mendes	1976
16	304 Norte Kindergarten	Angela Maria da Silva Pereira	1976
17	302 Norte Kindergarten	Irani de Souza Barroso	1976
18	Lago Norte Primary School and Kindergarten	Nanci Lima Coelho	1980

Source: DISTRITO FEDERAL (1985)

In conclusion, the differences noted as inequalities between the planned city and its satellite towns emerged at the beginning of the capital city's construction. Based on what can be found in contemporary studies on Brasília's education system, the fact that the public preschool institutions were maintained almost exclusively in the Pilot Plan area for more than two decades reflects the inequity that appears to characterize the DF; this will be discussed in the following section.

CHILDREN'S CURRENT ACCESS TO KINDERGARTEN

The State Department of Education official site states that the DF government run public school system currently comprises 27 kindergartens, 31 childhood education centers, and 189 primary schools that serve children from birth through age five (Distrito Federal, 2017b). This system is complemented by 42 early childhood education centers (CEPIs)¹⁸ and 59 affiliated nurseries.

This study investigated the coverage and current access to early childhood education based on the relationship between different AR families' per capita income and the number of children outside the formal education system.

Review of the data on access to early childhood education revealed that in the lower income ARs, more than 8% of children between birth and age six were not in the formal education system. This is more than twice the number of unenrolled children from medium and high per capita income regions. The rate is also high in ARs with a per capita income between one and two times the minimum wage, as shown in Table 3.

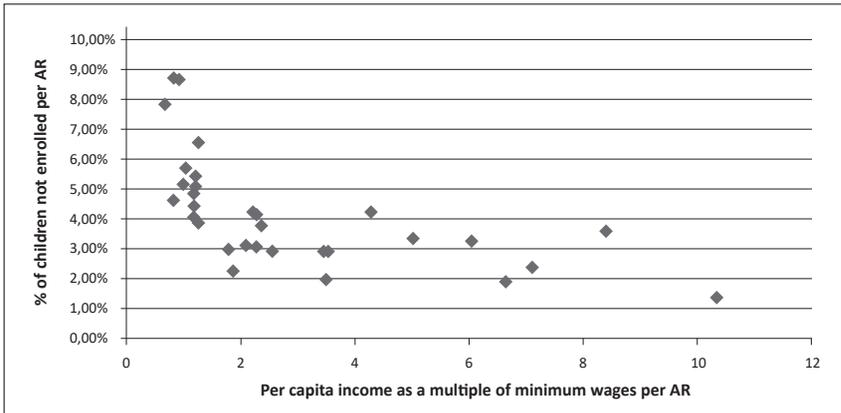
TABLE 3. DF AR socioeconomic data

Administrative Region	Per capita income compared to the minimum wage	Average monthly household income compared to the minimum wage	% of children between birth and 6 years old in relation to total population	% of children between birth and 6 years old not enrolled in formal education
SCIA	0.66	2.5	11.59	7.76
Fercal	0.79	2.89	12.10	8.67
Varjão	0.8	2.88	10.49	4.62
Itapoã	0.89	3.24	12.71	8.63
Paranoá	0.96	3.51	10.41	5.17
Recanto das Emas	1.02	3.68	9.00	5.67
Santa Maria	1.13	4.15	8.93	4.83
Samambaia	1.16	4.4	8.39	4.42
Ceilândia	1.16	3.9	7.84	4.06
Riacho Fundo II	1.18	3.96	9.13	5.41
Planaltina	1.19	4.26	8.82	5.09
São Sebastião	1.23	3.92	9.89	6.54
Brazlândia	1.25	4.34	8.85	3.89
Gama	1.77	5.76	6.13	3.01
Candangolândia	1.85	5.68	5.47	2.27
Riacho Fundo	2.06	6.18	7.20	3.11
Sobradinho II	2.2	7.36	7.97	4.26
SIA	2.24	7.43	8.32	4.16
Sobradinho	2.25	7.2	7.01	3.09
Núcleo Bandeirante	2.34	6.58	7.04	3.79
Taguatinga	2.54	7.28	6.40	2.92
Guará	3.41	9.41	5.53	2.96
Cruzeiro	3.46	9.31	6.20	2.02
Vicente Pires	3.5	10.92	6.99	2.92
Agua Claras	3.85	10.69	8.13	4.26
Jardim Botânico	4.99	15.07	7.90	3.35
Lago Norte	6.01	14.83	6.68	3.25
Park Way	6.61	19.89	4.90	1.92
Plano Piloto	7.06	15.73	6.37	2.43
Sudoeste/Octogonal	8.36	17.71	6.77	3.60
Lago Sul	10.3	27.53	3.17	1.42

Source: DISTRITO FEDERAL (2016).

The greatest concentration of unenrolled children is found among the ARs with lower per capita income, especially those with a per capita income of no more than two times the minimum wage. The number of unenrolled children in ARs with medium and high per capita income¹⁹ varies from approximately 1.5% to 4%, as shown in Graph 1.

GRAPH 1. Distribution of the percentage of children between birth and 6 years old not enrolled in the DF education system in relation to the AR per capita income in terms of minimum wages.



Source: Authors, based on Distrito Federal (2016).

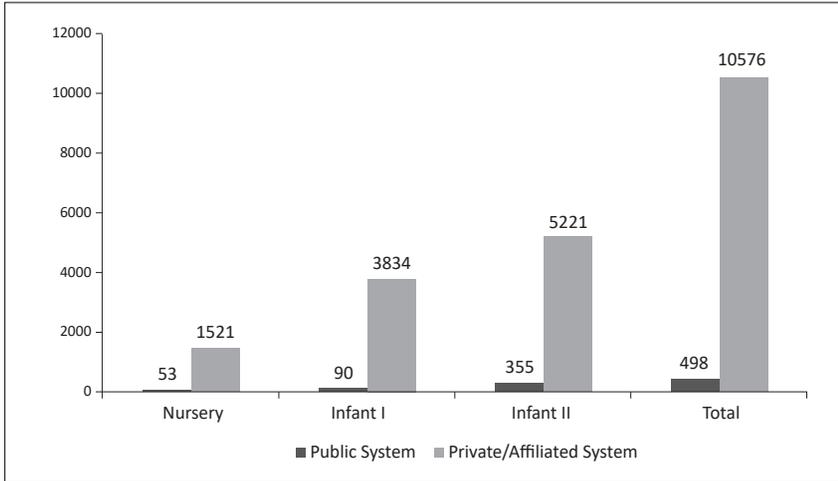
However, the various elements and complexities involving the city's social dynamics demands a contextualized interpretation of these data. Thus, it cannot be stated that the absence or presence of children from birth through age six at educational institutions is exclusively related to income. To better understand such a process, more studies must consider other factors and variables. Nevertheless, these data might be used to elaborate hypotheses helping to explain the percentage of children in this age range who do not attend early childhood education centers in the DF. For example, because of the low number of vacancies in public early childhood education centers, especially for children up to the age of three, this problem becomes less visible in the higher income ARs. This may be because the private school system emerges as a viable alternative in these areas.

The data from the Education Census conducted by the DF Department of Education in 2016 show a considerable number of registrations in public institutions or private/affiliated institutions. The vacancies in nurseries²⁰ are predominantly offered by affiliated systems; however, an inverse relationship was found in preschools.

In total, there were 10,576 nursery registrations in the private/affiliated school system. In the public school system, there

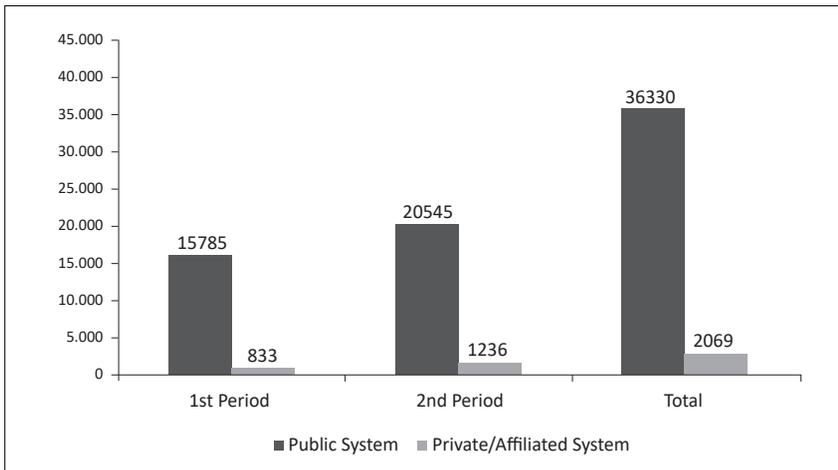
were only 498 registrations. In preschool, while the public system had 36,330 registrations, the private/affiliated system total was 5,170 registrations, as observed in Graphs 2 and 3.

GRAPH 2. Distribution of nursery enrollments (birth to 3 years) in DF public and private/affiliated systems.



Source: Authors, based on Distrito Federal (2017a)

GRAPH 3. Distribution of preschool children (ages 4-5) in DF public and private/affiliated system



Source: Authors, based on Distrito Federal (2017a).

The data analysis suggests that the constitutional right to early childhood education has been somewhat neglected in the DF,

particularly among lower-income families, that is, those with a per capita income of up to two times the minimum wage. Similarly, the 2015 and 2016, PDAD-DF reports highlighted the inequities in access to early childhood education, especially in lower-income ARs. While in AR I, the Pilot Plan area, the percentage of children from birth through age six who were not enrolled in early childhood education was less than 3%, in AR XXXI, Fercal, this percentage reached 8.67%.

In addition, the enrollments in the private/affiliated system must be noted. Several studies have demonstrated that the private/affiliated system offers low quality educational services (CAMPOS, FÜLLGRAF; WIGGERS, 2006; CAMPOS *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, the low quality of institutions serving lower income families appears to be a reality in the DF, which mirrors the situation found across the country:

Some of the variables associated with better quality results refer to socioeconomic characteristics of neighborhoods and the clientele served by the institution. This suggests that not only is access more difficult for lower income segments, the education quality provided at the institutions located in these neighborhoods also tends to be worse (CAMPOS, ESPOSITO, BHERING, GIMENES; ABUCHAIM, 2011, p. 47).

Using other research on early childhood education conducted in Brazil, it was determined that children in poorer regions are more likely to suffer the consequences of low quality education even if they are enrolled in the education system. The lower income families' problems are not only access, but also quality (CAMPOS *et al.*, 2011; CAMPOS, 2012).

Another significant factor regarding the visible difference between the policies adopted for nurseries and preschools in the DF is that studies have shown that nurseries require the most support, but preschools have better conditions with regard to matters such as teacher training, infrastructure, and routine organization (CAMPOS, FÜLLGRAF; WIGGERS, 2006). These problems become more complicated when vacancies are offered in affiliated or philanthropic nurseries:

Nurseries, especially the community and affiliated ones, generally present greater deficiencies in the premises and equipment, considering comfort, sanitation, and age range appropriateness. Generally, preschools have better conditions, but they are likely to be restrictive regarding spaces for games and autonomous activities for children (CAMPOS, FÜLLGRAF; WIGGERS, 2006, p. 119).

It is concerning that more than 90% of the nursery vacancies offered in the DF are located at private/affiliated institutions. After comparing these data and information with the records and analyses of the historical development of childhood policies in Brazil, it was determined that despite some progress, public policies have not

benefited the entire population uniformly. Although problems were found with access to early childhood education for children belonging to lower income families, this problem may be even more critical for children up to the age of three, considering the policies that have been adopted for this segment.

Studies that examine the most recent data on access to early childhood education indicate that, despite the expansion of access, the need for alternative welfare policies persists. According to Coutinho (2017):

The identification of failing to prioritize very small children in education policies and a conception of nursery education as assistance explain the alternative policies, which often have been the government's priority (p. 26).

Hence, data on the discrepancies in access to early childhood education for the children of more socially vulnerable families, as well as the differences in public actions intended for children aged from birth to three years, compared to those aged four and five, have been broadly covered. These data clearly reveal glaring inequalities. Moreover, the actions taken to correct these disparities have paradoxically been characterized by low quality, less investment, and greater inequity (CAMPOS, 2017; CAMPOS, 2012; COUTINHO, 2017; KRAMER, TOLEDO; BARROS, 2014; ROSEMBERG, 1999; ROSSETI-FERREIRA, RAMON; SILVA, 2002).

CONCLUSION

This article aimed to present a historical perspective of access to early childhood education in the DF. This perspective reveals a relationship between our past and present, as the same phenomena persist even today. This leads to the following questions: What has this study revealed regarding access to early childhood education in Brazil's capital city? What perspectives does this study propose that can broaden our outlook on this issue?

In general, two main aspects stood out in the analyses conducted based on the PDAD and Education Census data from the DF Department of Education: the number of children not enrolled in early childhood education institutions in relation to the per capita income of the AR in which they live, and the distribution of their enrollments in the public or private/affiliated system during the early childhood education stage (nursery or preschool).

The first aspect to be considered relates to the idea that the children from the lowest income families are more vulnerable; they are

the ones regularly deprived of the right to education. This statement is based on the observation that the largest percentages of children not enrolled in educational institutions are found in these areas. Other studies with similar results suggest that the differences in access to early childhood education are directly associated with the large inequities that exist in our country. The second aspect is the sizeable number of children up to the age of six enrolled in affiliated institutions, which historically have been recognized in Brazil to be of low quality.

Another relevant issue discovered by considering the DF early childhood education policies from both a historical and contemporary context is that preschool, and especially nursery school, has not been a priority in DF education policies. In addition to the lack of reference in legislation, the option for lower-cost programs and the consequent prioritization of enrollment in the private/public system are evident, with no guarantee regarding quality. The data reveal that although the early childhood education system has significantly expanded in the country, including in the DF, there is evidence that this expansion is centered on quantitative aspects, neglecting those related to quality.

Assuming that the comprehension of the current reality is also a consequence of the actions performed temporally and geographically, we may say that we live in a stratified society, marked by huge social gaps that are reflected in the education system. Therefore, this brief analysis of the policies and conditions regarding the access to and supply of DF early childhood education suggests that such policies remain characterized by the duality present in Brazil's childhood-education policy history.

In conclusion, education policies and related actions must be prioritized, especially those focused on helping socially vulnerable children. Although this study does not deny that significant progress has been made, there is evidence that quality-related problems persist, especially for groups that have been socially excluded in the country's capital.

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NOTAS

¹This refers to a measure of the degree of a distribution concentration for which the value varies from zero (perfect equality) to one (maximum inequality) (IBGE, 2016).

²All currencies are in Brazilian Real; US\$1.00 was equal to R\$ 3.34 in April of 2018.

³In Portuguese, “Plano Piloto.” This is an urban project that was developed by Lúcio Costa for the new capital of the country, consisting of the road axis in the north-south direction (South and North Wings) and the Monumental Axis in the east-west direction.

⁴Lúcio Costa was an architect, urban planner, scholar, and architectural theorist. He participated in the 1957 contest to choose the new capital project, which he won with a quite simple proposal – the Pilot Plan. This gave him national and international visibility (Encyclopedia Itaú Cultural, 2017).

⁵People born in Brasília.

⁶Even though early childhood education is aimed at children between birth and five years of age, the age range selected was birth to six years, because of data availability (DISTRITO FEDERAL, 2016). However, this focus should not invalidate the study, given that most of the children not enrolled in formal education systems fall in the age range of birth through age three, for which access to education is not mandatory.

⁷The *Correio Braziliense* (*Correio*) is still in operation today; it was founded along with the city on April 21st, 1960. For this reason, it is a key source for studying the Federal Capital's education history. Considering Robert Darnton's studies on the role of press in history (1996), we could argue that *Correio* was a witness to the events reported on its pages. For this article, the first four years of the newspaper were examined.

⁸The Household Sample Survey of the Federal District (PDAD-DF) is performed by the Planning Department of the Distrito Federal (CODEPLAN) with the purpose of producing information on the DF's socioeconomic characteristics. Its first issue was published in 2004. The survey was conducted again in 2011, 2013/2014, and 2015/2016.

⁹Created by Law n. 4545/ 64.

¹⁰The early childhood education public institutions in the DF currently have various but not well-used classifications. Institutions serving children from birth through age five, that is, with nursery and preschool classes, are called early childhood education centers. They predominantly offer full-time services. Institutions offering preschool to children aged four

and five years are referred to as kindergartens; they operate on part-time shifts. In addition, the primary schools offer preschool classes. Even though a justification for using this nomenclature was not found in the documents, in the DF, at the time Brasília was founded, a set of ideas circulated between Froebel, Decroly, Dewey, and Anísio Teixeira. Presenting the “Education of Man,” a work by Froebel, Bastos writes (2001, p. 7): “By creating the kindergarten, abolishing the children’s institutions of that time was conceived. Nonetheless, other things were considered, such as organizing a socio-pedagogical supplementary family, and a model institution in which young women, interacting with playing children, could prepare for the most important task within the family.” Froebel (1895, p. 7) linked humanity to nature: “Men, as children, remember the flower of the plant, the flower of the tree; what they are like in relation to the tree, as well as the children in relation to humanity - a young sprout, a fresh flower and, as such, this provides, includes, and proclaims the incessant reappearance of new human life.” Certainly, as occurred in other cities documented by Kuhlmann, Jr. (2000), the term kindergarten drew the same pedagogical inspiration from Froebel’s ideas in the recently formed Brasília. This is part of another research project.

¹¹ Anísio Teixeira was chosen to devise the Brasília education plan because of his experience as director of Inep, an institution largely responsible for research on education in Brazil before the creation of graduate education programs in the country. However, he was also nationally acknowledged for his extensive experience in various positions related to education in Bahia and Rio de Janeiro. Some highlights of his activism in the field of education are his signing the *Manifesto dos Pioneiros da Escola Nova* (1932) and the *Manifesto Mais Uma Vez Convocados* (1959). His political and pedagogical thoughts were rooted in the struggle against privatization in education and all citizens’ access to public, free, and secular schools. He was inspired by John Dewey’s pragmatism. For further information, see Nunes (2001).

¹² Construction workers of Brasília.

¹³ For a further look at the building of the city and its schools, and the role women played in both, please see the 2010 documentary by Tania Fontenele Mourão and Monica F. Gaspar de Oliveira, who produced *Dust and Lipstick in Planalto Central - 50 Women in the Construction of Brasília*, which gives an account on the experiences of the first women who arrived before the inauguration of Brasília. In 2015, the exhibition “Female Memories of the Construction of Brasília,” also curated by Tania Fontenele Mourão, was launched. It documented the construction of the new capital through the newly arrived women’s eyes. The women came from several parts of Brazil and other countries. These two materials document women’s contributions to urban design, and, especially in the case of teachers, to the educational project.

¹⁴ Ernesto Silva (1914-2010) occupied a prominent position in Brasília’s construction. He was the Secretary of the Location Commission of the New Capital of Brazil (1953/1955); the President of the Commission of Construction Planning and Change of the Capital City (1956); the director of the Urban Planning Company of New Capital - NOVACAP (1956/1961); and an advisor in the Education Foundation and the DF Hospital Foundation (1960/1961). He was responsible for publishing Brasília Pilot Plan public notices in 1956. After Brasília’s construction, he contributed to the new capital Plan for Education and Health.

¹⁵ The department formerly known as the Federal District Education Foundation (FEDF) is currently called the Federal District Department of Education (SEDF).

¹⁶ There is a record of a kindergarten in Planaltina that closed down. It was named the “Kindergarten of the Satellite City of Planaltina.” It was created in 1974 and was incorporated into the Educational Center 01 de Planaltina in 1976.

¹⁷ Its original name at the time of inauguration was “Sobradinho Satellite City Kindergarten.”

¹⁸ They originate in the National Restructuring Program and the Installation of the public-school system of early childhood education (ProInfância). According to the information from the Education Secretary of State (Distrito Federal, 2017b), the building belongs to the DF government, but management is outsourced per a partnership with philanthropic and non-profit entities.

¹⁹ ARs with an average per capita income between four and five times the minimum wage are exceptions. Águas Claras (RA XX) and Jardim Botânico (RA XXVII) are part of this group. They are both newer ARs and are located relatively farther away from the Pilot Plan area. More studies are needed on the causes of this phenomenon.

²⁰ The DF government (2017b) admits to a deficit in the number of children from birth through age three who could be enrolled in nursery schools. While the deficit for children aged four and five (preschool) is 2,439 vacancies (although preschool is a mandatory part of young children’s education), approximately 20,000 children up to three years of age are not enrolled in schools. Thus, the supply and demand relationship of day care is quite unbalanced.

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