

Universalização da educação infantil em Belo Horizonte/MG e o fim da vigência do PNE 2014-2024

*Joyce Soares Rodrigues Petrus*¹

*Rita de Cássia Oliveira*²

*Diego Araújo de Almeida*³

Resumo

Este trabalho tem como objetivo conhecer as dimensões quantitativas da universalização do acesso à pré-escola no município de Belo Horizonte. Com o reconhecimento da educação infantil como a primeira etapa da educação básica e a obrigatoriedade da universalização do acesso até 2016, tornou-se extremamente relevante conhecer como o Estado tem cumprido estas obrigações legais. Tal responsabilidade recai, constitucionalmente, sobre os municípios, que devem implementar as estratégias necessárias para atender às demandas de acesso à educação infantil. Neste trabalho, o estudo quantitativo foi realizado com dados do Censo Escolar, entre 2012 e 2022. Como resultado, observamos que a ampliação do atendimento na pré-escola se deu basicamente em unidades municipais à medida que o atendimento à creche foi sendo absorvido por conveniamentos com escolas privadas. Tais estratégias, embora contribuam para o alcance da primeira meta do PNE, podem não garantir as mesmas oportunidades educacionais a todas as crianças.

Palavras-chave: Acesso. Direito à Educação. Educação Infantil.

¹Doctoral Candidate in Education, Federal University of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte/MG, Brazil. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2479-5066>. Email: joyceufmg@gmail.com

²PhD in Education and Professor at the State University of Minas Gerais, Barbacena/MG, Brazil. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1410-5511>. Email: rita.oliveira@uemg.br

³Doctoral Candidate in Education, Federal University of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte/MG, Brazil. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1612-6252>. Email: diego-almeida@ufmg.br

Universalization of early childhood education in Belo Horizonte/MG and the end of term of the PNE 2014-2024

Joyce Soares Rodrigues Petrus

Rita de Cássia Oliveira

Diego Araújo de Almeida

Abstract

This paper aims to understand the quantitative dimensions of universal access to preschool in Belo Horizonte. With the recognition of early childhood education as the first stage of basic education and the mandatory universalization of access by 2016, it has become extremely important to know how the State has fulfilled these legal obligations. Constitutionally, this responsibility lies with municipalities, which must implement the necessary strategies to meet the demands of access to early childhood education. In this work, a quantitative study was carried out with data from the School Census, between 2012 and 2022. As a result, we observed that the expansion of pre-school care took place basically in municipal units as daycare service was being absorbed by partnerships with private schools. Such strategies, although they contribute to achieving the PNE's first goal, may not guarantee the same educational opportunities for all children.

Keywords: Access. Right to education. Child education.

Universalización de la educación infantil en Belo Horizonte/MG y fin del PNE 2014-2024

*Joyce Soares Rodrigues Petrus
Rita de Cássia Oliveira
Diego Araújo de Almeida*

Resumen

Este trabajo tiene como objetivo conocer las dimensiones cuantitativas del acceso universal a la educación preescolar en Belo Horizonte. Con el reconocimiento de la educación infantil como primera etapa de la educación básica y la universalización obligatoria de su acceso hasta 2016, se ha vuelto de suma relevancia conocer cómo el Estado se cumplió con estas obligaciones legales. Tal responsabilidad recae, constitucionalmente, en los municipios, los cuales deben implementar las estrategias necesarias para satisfacer las demandas de acceso a la educación infantil. En este trabajo se realizó un estudio cuantitativo con datos del Censo Escolar, entre 2012 y 2022. Como resultado, observamos que la expansión de la atención preescolar se dio básicamente en las unidades municipales a medida que las guarderías fueron absorbidas por convenios con colegios privados. Estas estrategias, aunque contribuyen a lograr el primer objetivo del PNE, pueden no garantizar las mismas oportunidades educativas para todos.

Palabras clave: Acceso. Derecho a la educación. Educación Infantil.

Introduction

The provision of early childhood education in Brazil has evolved over the years, with different social purposes attributed to it. Most institutions that served children aged 0 to 6 years were created as a social mechanism to support children from low-income working-class families, especially the children of working mothers facing various circumstances of poverty and/or vulnerability, who needed support for their subsistence. In this context, early childhood education had a welfare-based origin, aiming to reduce poverty and the high child mortality rates of that time (SILVA; SOARES, 2017). This recognized purpose, combined with the lack of public investment in education over many years, justified a precarious provision of services driven by a welfare perspective. According to Cerisara (1999), from the study of these facts, the understanding of educating and caring, as inseparable goals of early childhood education, emerged.

The work carried out in daycare centers and preschools until the 1990s was distinguished by two perspectives: institutions that provided what was called "welfare" work, and those that offered "educational" work. In essence, according to Cerisara (1999), both had an educational character. However, some were oriented towards welfare-based education for poor children, while others focused on school-like education for less poor children.

Early childhood education in Brazil only began to be viewed, in terms of public policy formulation, after the 1988 Federal Constitution (CF/88) (BRAZIL, 1988), which established the provision of this stage of education for children aged 0 to 6 years as part of the right to education. Since then, early childhood education was defined as a priority responsibility of municipalities, which were also responsible for offering elementary education, in collaboration with the states. Later, with the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB) (BRAZIL, 1996), early childhood education was defined as the first stage of basic education, establishing the gratuity of services in daycare centers and preschools for children aged 0 to 6 years.

Ten years later, with the promulgation of Constitutional Amendments No. 53/2006 (BRAZIL, 2006) and No. 59/2009 (BRAZIL, 2009), early childhood education, offered in daycare centers and preschools, was extended to children up to 5 years old, sending children aged 6 to elementary school. Following this, the compulsory attendance of preschool for children aged 4 and 5 years was established, and the provision of daycare services for children aged 0 to 3 years was made mandatory.

Early childhood education in the country can be provided by institutions referred to as daycare centers, preschools, early childhood education centers, or educational nuclei, and it can also be offered in rooms annexed to elementary schools. All early childhood education institutions located in a

municipality, whether public or private, are part of the corresponding education system (municipal or state). Private institutions can be either for-profit or non-profit and fall into one of the following categories: private, community, religious, or philanthropic (BRAZIL, 1996).

Although the 1988 Federal Constitution (CF/88) defined early childhood education as the responsibility of municipalities, historically, its provision has involved private educational institutions. Furthermore, even before it became mandatory, in many cases, municipalities, in addition to relying on enrollments in private schools, already used agreements and partnerships with different categories of private institutions to fulfill their constitutional duty.

After the amendment of the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB) (BRAZIL, 2013), the National Education Plan (PNE) (BRAZIL, 2014) was enacted in 2014. The PNE, arising from Article 214 of the CF/88, replaced the PNE of 2001 and maintains universalization goals for education that required federative units to create and implement strategies for their fulfillment.

According to the Continuous National Household Sample Survey (PNADC) conducted in 2022, 97.7% of children aged 4 and 5 years and 47% of children aged 0 to 3 years in Belo Horizonte were enrolled in daycare centers or schools. In other words, six years after the deadline for the universalization of services for 4 and 5-year-olds, the municipality had still not complied with the legislation.

In this context, this study aims to investigate, in a descriptive manner, how the municipality of Belo Horizonte has been acting to meet the demand for early childhood education in accordance with current legislation. By examining the strategies implemented through empirical evidence using quantitative methods, we provide important insights for the evaluation of the policy and the improvement of educational offerings.

To achieve the objective of this study, the writing is organized into five parts, in addition to this brief introduction. In the first part, we discuss the importance of early childhood education for the continuity of basic education as a whole. In the second part, we address the National, State, and Municipal Education Plans, with a focus on the Municipality of Belo Horizonte. In the third part, we cover important aspects of the universalization of early childhood education. In the fourth part, we present data describing the implementation of the policy in the municipality of Belo Horizonte, and

Universalization of early childhood education in Belo Horizonte/MG and the end of term of the PNE 2014-2024 finally, in the Conclusion, we discuss how the adopted strategies have contributed to expanding the provision and promoting educational opportunities, as well as the need for further studies to improve this important policy.

The Importance of Early Childhood Education

Studies in the fields of economics and social sciences, such as Heckman (2006), Curi and Menezes-Filho (2009), Falciano, Nunes, and Santos (2019), and researchers from the Scientific Committee of the Science for Childhood Network (2020), show that investing in early childhood development can be more effective than investing in policies implemented after childhood to address learning gaps. According to Heckman (2006, p.6), "early disadvantaged environments are powerful predictors of adult failure across a range of social and economic measures." In this regard, the return on investment for society is much higher when investing in early childhood education, especially when it concerns socioeconomically disadvantaged children.

Curi and Menezes-Filho (2009) aimed to analyze the importance of early childhood education in individual development and concluded that education for children aged 0 to 6 is positively correlated with the completion of school cycles. Children who attended daycare centers had a higher chance of completing basic education and higher education compared to those who did not attend. Attendance in preschool also showed a positive and significant relationship with the completion of elementary school, high school, and higher education, even after controlling for the parents' level of education. Additionally, the study investigated the relationship between preschool attendance and performance in subsequent school stages, highlighting an improvement in students' proficiency⁴ in standardized tests by 7.5%, 3%, and 1% in grades that would currently correspond to the 5th and 9th years of elementary school and the 3rd year of high school, respectively.

Although the results regarding the importance of early childhood education have been demonstrated, there is no consensus among researchers regarding the provision of this stage of education. Conceptually, some researchers recognize the importance of meeting the demand by expanding partnerships with private institutions (TRIPODI, 2017; ARAÚJO, 2015; REIS, 2012) to ensure access. Others disagree, arguing that these partnerships are a way of transferring responsibilities from the government to private institutions (SOUSA; PIMENTA, 2019; MOSCON et al., 2019; SILVA, 2018; SOUZA, 2018; CAMPOS; BARBOSA, 2017). Finally, there are studies

⁴ Collected from data from the Basic Education Assessment System – Saeb, applied biennially at the national level and coordinated by the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira – Inep.

that analyze the structure of networks and education systems, evaluating them in terms of their capacity to implement expansion, as a step prior to increasing vacancies (VIEIRA; CASTRO; ALVES, 2017), and there are scholars who, on the contrary, fear the early schooling of children with such a policy.

In this context, the way in which this education provision has been carried out is a central dimension of this study. Regardless of the local capacity or financial flow of each federative entity, the Education Plans required the fulfillment of attendance targets within a relatively short period.

National, State, and Municipal Education Plans

As a way to monitor the guarantee of the constitutional right to education and promote the implementation of policies aimed at providing quality and equitable education, as established by Articles 206 and 214 of the 1988 Federal Constitution (CF/88), the National Education Plan (PNE) was established. This, in turn, was broken down into State Education Plans (PEE) and Municipal Education Plans (PME), with the force of law. These Plans have a ten-year validity and consist of a set of guidelines, objectives, goals, and implementation strategies to ensure the maintenance and development of education at its various levels, stages, and modalities (LOPES, 2021).

The current National Education Plan (PNE) (Law No. 13.005/2014) establishes, in its first goal, the universalization of preschool education for children aged 4 to 5 by 2016. As part of this law, states and municipalities were given one year to develop their respective education plans — that is, by 2015 — in order to fulfill the nationally established goals. To achieve this, they relied on the collaboration of the executive branch and extensive dialogues with society at large for validation and subsequent publication.

It is important to highlight that, although the goal⁵ of universalizing access to preschool for 4- and 5-year-olds was carried over from the 2001 PNE, the fact that by 2015, 90.5% of the Brazilian population in this age group attended preschool in Brazil⁶, presented municipalities with a huge challenge: meeting this goal within just one year after the publication of the Municipal Education Plan (PME).

⁵ Goal 1: To universalize, by 2016, preschool education for children aged 4 to 5 years and to expand the provision of early childhood education in daycare centers so as to serve at least 50% of children aged 0 to 3 years by the end of the validity of this PNE.

⁶ Data from the PNE Observatory portal, <https://observatoriodopne.org.br/meta/educacao-infantil>, accessed on June 17, 2022.

According to data from the Continuous National Household Sample Survey (PNADC), in order to achieve this universalization, it would be necessary to offer 513,000 new spots in just one year. Furthermore, it is important to highlight that a significant portion of the children attending school were enrolled in private institutions. Data from the School Census indicate that, in 2015, 25% of Brazilian children enrolled in preschool attended private schools, meaning that the right to public education had not yet been fully realized.

Each municipality, in its pursuit of offering quality education, was required to outline in its Municipal Education Plans (PMEs) a set of strategies deemed necessary and feasible within their respective contexts to achieve the aforementioned Goal 1 of the PNE. In this context, the Municipal Education Plan of Belo Horizonte (PME/BH) was established by Law 10.917, approved on March 13, 2016 (BELO HORIZONTE, 2016). The PME/BH emphasizes collaboration among federative entities to achieve the results and includes the strategies to be adopted for achieving each goal in its annex, in accordance with national guidelines.

In Goal 1, which is the subject of this analysis, we observe that the municipality maintained the wording present in the PNE:

Goal 1: To universalize, by 2016, preschool education for children aged 4 to 5 years and to expand the provision of early childhood education in daycare centers, so as to serve at least 50% of children aged 0 to 3 years by the end of the validity of the PNE (BELO HORIZONTE, 2016).

A total of 25 strategies were listed to achieve the goal - eight more than those included in the national plan. We observe that the strategies outlined in the PME/BH are not a simple repetition of those listed in the PNE, as they align with the municipality's specificities.

Regarding the provision of services to children in early childhood education itself, we identified four strategies that address the organization of service provision in the municipality:

- 1.5) Continue the partnership with the federal government to ensure the achievement of the goals for expanding access to early childhood education services;
- 1.6) Intensify, by the final year of this PME, the execution of projects for the adaptation, renovation, and expansion of existing buildings, considering the specificities of early childhood education and accessibility needs, in accordance with current technical and legal standards, with the goal of improving the physical infrastructure of public early childhood schools;
- 1.12) Periodically conduct public calls for the inclusion of new community-based, philanthropic, or religious private institutions to provide early childhood education services;

1.13) Expand early childhood education services within the Municipality's own network to ensure the fulfillment of Goal 1 of the PNE and this PME (BELO HORIZONTE, 2016).

In general, the strategies adopted focus on expanding the network itself through partnerships with the Federal Government, the adaptation, renovation, and expansion of existing units, and the execution of public calls for the inclusion of new community-based, philanthropic, or religious private institutions through agreements.

A significant difference, which goes almost unnoticed in the PME/BH, is that the set of strategies listed to achieve Goal 1 does not mention the expansion of full-time early childhood education services. However, the commitment to increasing full-time services is recorded in Resolution CME/BH N° 001/2015⁷ (BELO HORIZONTE, 2015), in Article 6, which outlines the municipality's duties regarding early childhood education. This may have been a way to address the perceived gap, even though it is regulated by a lower-level regulation.

For measuring the indicators that demonstrate the achievement of Goal 1, no current measures were found for the municipality of Belo Horizonte, either in the PNE⁸ Observatory environment, the PNE monitoring dashboard available on the Inep⁹, website, or in the last three annual action reports from the city of Belo Horizonte¹⁰ – from 2019 to 2022. In the 2022 report, there is a mention of the provision of services, but it does not cite population data, only data from a registry conducted by the municipal administration itself:

Expansion of spots in Early Childhood Education through partnerships: Sixteen daycare centers were accredited in 2022, increasing the total number of partner institutions to 235. The new accreditations led to the creation of 985 new spots in early childhood education, which, when combined with the 829 spots created through renovations, adaptations, and reorganizations, expanded the Partner Network by 1,814 spots. Enrollment attendance: In 2022, the Early Childhood Education Enrollment Registry was fully met for children aged 1 to 5 years. The enrollment of children aged 0 to 1 year was 80.98%, representing 1,153 children served out of a total of 1,425 whose families registered them, leaving a waiting list of 271 children aged 0 to 1 year. For the first time, the enrollment of 1-year-old children was fully attended, in addition to the age groups of 2 to 5 years, which had already been fully addressed in previous years (BELO HORIZONTE, 2022).

⁷ **Resolution CME/BH No. 001/2015:** establishes rules for the operation of early childhood education institutions within the Municipal Education System of Belo Horizonte (SME/BH).

⁸ The consultation was conducted through the link: <https://observatoriopne.org.br/meta/educacao-infantil>. Accessed on September 22, 2022.

⁹ The consultation was conducted through the link: <https://www.gov.br/inep/pt-br/acesso-a-informacao/dados-abertos/inep-data/painel-de-monitoramento-do-pne>. Accessed on September 24, 2023.

¹⁰ The consultation was conducted through the link: <https://prefeitura.pbh.gov.br/transparencia/contas-publicas/revistas-de-prestacoes-de-contas/relatorio-execucao>. Accessed on September 22, 2022.

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n the annual disclosure of educational information from the PNADC, in a supplementary survey covering all age groups, data is available for capitals and metropolitan regions of the states. Thus, considering that the municipality of this study is the capital of Minas Gerais, it was possible to use the information published by the survey and observe that 97.7% of children in Belo Horizonte aged 4 and 5 attended school in 2022, representing an attendance of about 56,666 children. Despite this, it is evident that, even six years after the deadline for the universalization of access to education for 4- and 5-year-old children (from 2016 to 2022), 2.3% of children were still out of school.

Universalization of Early Childhood Education

The concern about the expansion of mandatory school enrollment, Privately regarding a potential "early schooling" of children aged 4 and 5 years, is highlighted in the study by Flores (2015). The researcher emphasizes that other consequences of mandatory preschool enrollment could also impact the progress that has not yet been consolidated in providing services for children up to three years old, reducing the availability of spots for this age group, or even limiting the right to full-time attendance.

In their analysis of the expansion of early childhood education in Municipal Education Plans (PMEs) of municipalities in a state in the Southeast region of the country, with a focus on services for children aged 4 and older, Santos and Barros (2017) observe that, even in municipalities with similar population contexts and Gross Domestic Product (GDP), there are distinct school attendance outcomes. They question whether the legislation itself, by prioritizing the expansion of preschool enrollment, is hindering full access to daycare services. Regarding differences in services across municipalities, Falciano, Nunes, and Santos (2019) note that the expansion of networks has occurred in various ways, ranging from recommended initiatives, such as building new educational spaces for early childhood education, to more emergency-based, less favorable initiatives for comprehensive development, such as the use of alternative spaces: renting houses, commercial buildings, and using classrooms in elementary schools – which impacts the quality of the services offered.

In Brazil, as with elementary and high school education, the prioritization of universal access, followed by attention to quality, is now being focused on the first stage of basic education. Santos' (2017) study focused on the municipality of Itabuna, Bahia, and analyzed the strategy of expanding early childhood education vacancies through sharing spaces in elementary schools. This strategy is

PETRUS; OLIVEIRA; ALMEIDA recommended as long as the pedagogical approach addresses the specific needs of different age groups and the physical space is suitable for the development of educational activities for both stages. However, the research revealed that this was not the case in the municipality. According to the study, plastic tarps were even used to divide classrooms, creating the impression that "any space will do" for early childhood education. Another issue observed in the research was the absence of playground facilities for early childhood children, which even violated regulations that advocate for interactions, relationships, and daily practices for children.

Morgado (2017), concerned with the qualitative aspects of early childhood education, studied the municipality of Lapa, located in Paraná. In her study, she concludes that, quantitatively, the implementation of mandatory enrollment has been achieved, but with regard to quality, there was a reduction in full-time services, a lack of investment in exclusive early childhood education units, and the use of elementary schools to meet the demand. In these elementary schools, the author emphasizes that no new hiring processes have been conducted for early childhood educators, leaving it to elementary school teachers to perform these functions. Additionally, it was found that the services provided were more welfare-based than educational, which could undermine the desired quality related to the cognitive development of the children.

Another interesting point about educational services was observed by Meister (2018) regarding the distribution of enrollments in schools based on students' residential locations. In her study, after analyzing municipalities in the metropolitan region of Curitiba, she observes that:

[...] Depending on the interpretations of the municipal secretariats and the decisions made at the municipal level, the adopted educational policy - Privately when it comes to the distribution of enrollments - may be out of sync with the very purposes of education. The results indicate an association between models of school access policies and the unequal distribution of educational opportunities (MEISTER, 2018, p.104).

In summary, the author advocates for the relevance of the policy under the condition that all schools provide the same quality of education - which is not the case in all locations (PETRUS; OLIVEIRA, 2023). Moving on to elements related to the quality of service provision in the process of universalizing education in Brazilian cities, the next section describes the provision of early childhood education in the municipality of Belo Horizonte.

Provision of Early Childhood Education in Belo Horizonte

The characterization of the educational provision in the municipality of Belo Horizonte was based on data available from the School Census of Basic Education, which is a census-based data collection for education produced annually by the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (Inep), linked to the Ministry of Education (MEC), in collaboration with states and municipalities. From this data collection, microdata is produced and statistical summaries are made available, mainly consisting of summary tables, broken down by municipality, Federal Units, regions, and Brazil as a whole. Using this data from 2012 to 2022, we selected the information related to the municipality of Belo Horizonte for further analysis.

It is important to highlight that, in the analyses, we use the term "typology" of the school, which combines information about the administrative dependency of the school municipal, federal, state, or private with the category of private schools (private, community, religious, or philanthropic). This combination provides seven possibilities: state, federal, municipal, private, community, religious, and philanthropic. Given that the focus is on the provision of early childhood education which is the responsibility of municipalities in Belo Horizonte, the state and federal typologies will not be considered.

In general, considering all typologies, we can observe a 19% increase in the number of units offering early childhood education rising from 761 schools to 905 between 2012 and 2022. During the same period, the municipal network and philanthropic schools showed a significant increase in the number of units. While municipal units increased from 89 to 240 (an increase of 151 schools), philanthropic units increased from 136 to 192 schools (an increase of 56 schools). In contrast, we found a decrease in the private network, with 45 fewer schools offering early childhood education, religious schools with a reduction of 10 units, and community schools with a reduction of 8 units.

Table 1 - Number of Educational Units Offering Early Childhood Education in Belo Horizonte by School Typology, 2012-2022

Tipology	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Municipal	89	91	98	131	154	157	186	194	203	229	240
Private	445	458	442	360	434	428	456	539	463	393	400
Community	74	68	71	68	69	68	73	63	66	63	66
Religious	17	15	13	11	9	9	7	11	10	8	7
Philanthropic	136	145	141	145	157	155	151	166	174	176	192
Total	761	777	765	715	823	817	873	973	916	869	905

Source: Prepared by the author based on microdata from the School Census, Inep/MEC, 2012 to 2022

In general, early childhood education in the municipality has historically been provided in schools with two types of profiles: those offering "daycare and preschool" (i.e., only early childhood education) and those offering "daycare, preschool, and elementary education" together (i.e., early childhood education and elementary education).

Although they have decreased over the years, the units offering only early childhood education ("daycare and preschool" together) were predominantly private and philanthropic. Between 2012 and 2022, philanthropic institutions decreased from 123 to 84 schools, while private institutions decreased from 400 to 147. Along with the reductions in private and philanthropic schools, there was a significant growth of municipal schools in this profile, between 2012 and 2016, which remained relatively stable until 2022.

Units that offered "daycare, preschool, and elementary education" together were predominantly private. In terms of quantity, they increased between 2012 and 2019 and experienced a reduction between 2020 and 2021, with growth resuming afterward. This reduction observed between 2020 and 2021 seems to be directly related to the pandemic period, during which many educational institutions, especially those offering early childhood education, closed their doors.

Since 2018, there has been an increase in the number of units offering "only daycare" and "preschool and elementary education" together. The increase in the number of schools with the "only daycare" profile was most significant in philanthropic institutions, which had 4 units in 2012 and 82 in 2022. The "preschool and elementary education" profile saw growth driven by both private and municipal networks.

In other words, the organization of educational provision in the municipality has changed in recent years. Daycare services, separate from preschool, are now the responsibility of community and philanthropic units. The number of schools offering both daycare and preschool together decreased from 656 to 395 units during the analyzed period. Preschool services in elementary schools are offered by both municipal and private units, but in smaller numbers compared to the more comprehensive

Universalization of early childhood education in Belo Horizonte/MG and the end of term of the PNE 2014-2024 profile, which includes both early childhood education and elementary education ("Daycare, Preschool, and Elementary Education"). This more comprehensive service profile grew from 37 to 300 schools during the period and is almost entirely practiced by municipal and private schools in the capital.

Table 2 - Number of Educational Units Offering Early Childhood Education in Belo Horizonte by School Typology and Service Profile, 2012-2022

Offer / Typology	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Only Daycare	13	14	14	10	15	27	42	83	114	117	143
Municipal						1	2	2	2	2	3
Private	7	6	6	2	6	12	11	22	17	14	8
Community	2	1	2	4	5	7	13	21	35	33	45
Religious							1	1	3	4	5
Philanthropic	4	7	6	4	4	7	15	37	57	64	82
Only Preschool	53	9	11	8	9	7	5	6	6	16	6
Municipal	11				1				1		1
Private	30	4	7	6	2	2	4	5	5	16	5
Community	1										
Religious	3										
Philanthropic	8	5	4	2	6	5	1	1			
Daycare and Preschool Only	656	379	383	430	522	518	525	555	460	397	395
Municipal	48	13	13	115	139	143	142	143	142	143	141
Private	400	184	186	130	192	191	208	260	191	135	147
Community	71	67	69	64	64	61	60	42	31	30	21
Religious	14	6	5	5	5	6	5	7	4	2	2
Philanthropic	123	109	110	116	122	117	110	103	92	87	84
Daycare and Elementary Education Only		3					1	1			3
Private		3					1	1			3
Preschool and Elementary Education Only	2	36	26	27	31	25	35	41	53	113	58
Municipal	2	15	7	9	6	9	13	20	28	37	22
Private		17	16	15	22	13	19	18	23	71	33
Religious		1	1	1	1	1	1	1			
Philanthropic		3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	5	3
Daycare, Preschool, and Elementary Education	37	336	331	240	246	240	265	287	283	226	300
Municipal	28	63	78	7	8	4	29	29	30	47	73
Private	8	244	227	207	212	210	213	233	227	157	204
Religious		8	7	5	3	2		2	3	2	
Philanthropic	1	21	19	21	23	24	23	23	23	20	23
Total	761	777	765	715	823	817	873	973	916	869	905

Source: Prepared by the author based on microdata from the School Census, Inep/MEC, 2012 to 2022

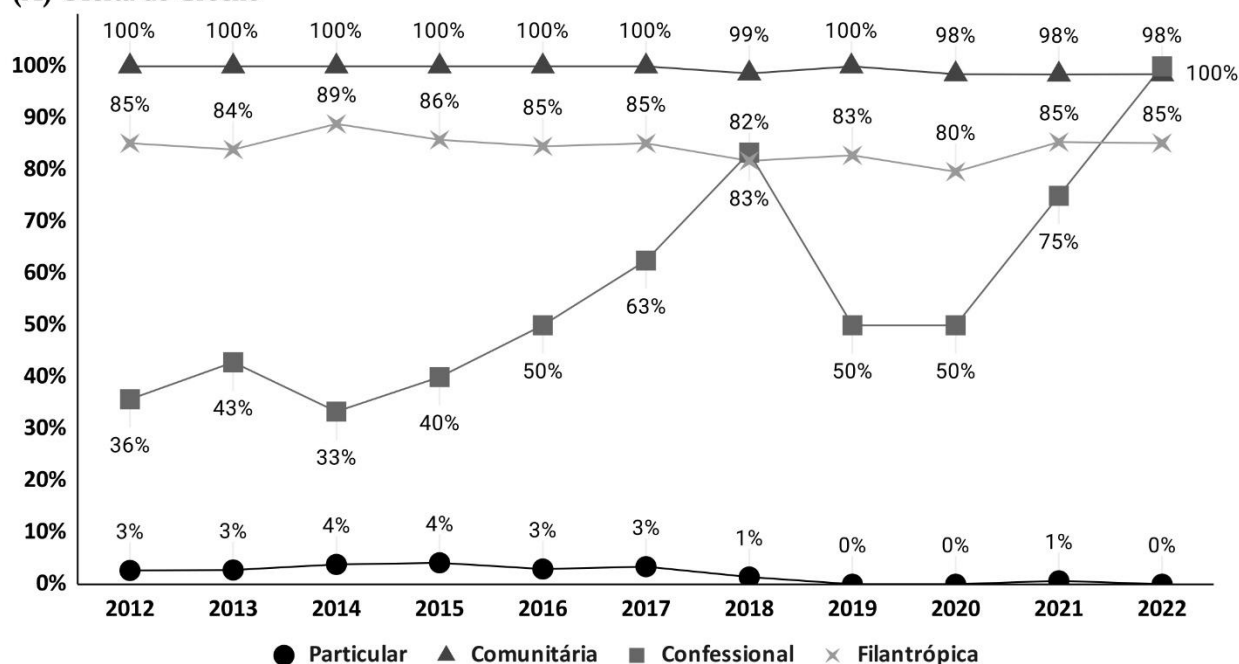
With the exception of the Private category, the other types can establish partnerships with the municipal network and assist in providing public services to children, as outlined in strategy 1.12 of the PME/BH. These partnerships expand the municipality's provision of services and contribute to achieving the goal of universalizing early childhood education, quantitatively.

We observed from the school census data that all Community schools and almost all Philanthropic schools offering early childhood education had partnerships with the public authorities. Regarding Religious schools, the percentage of institutions with public partnerships showed a

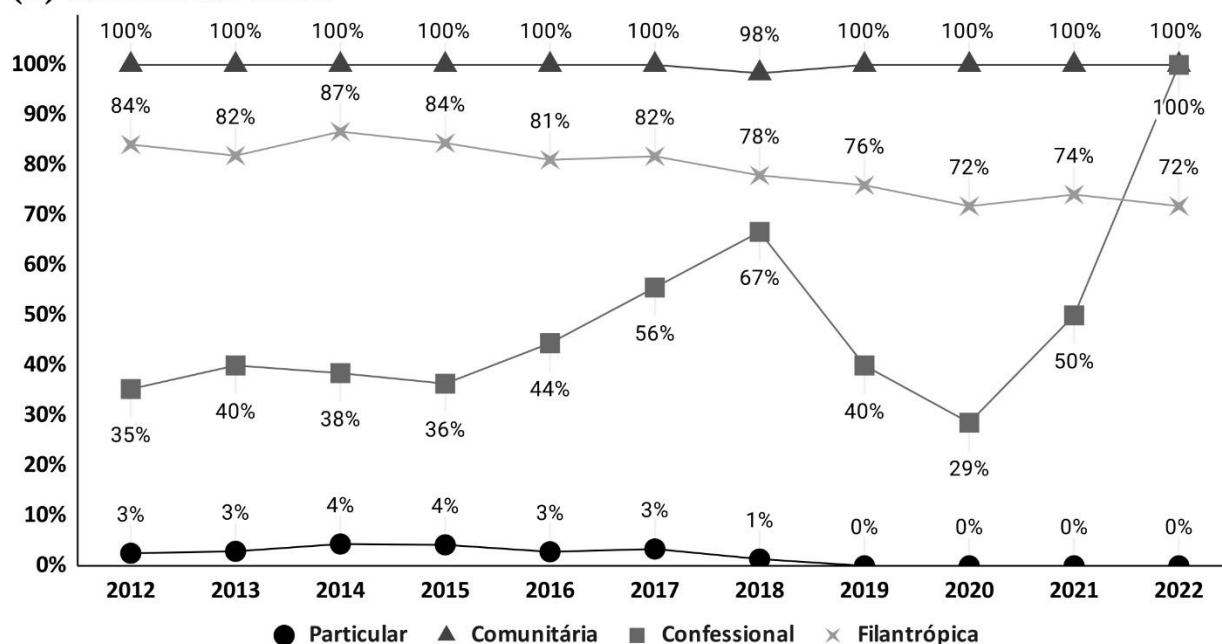
significant increase starting in 2020, reaching 100% in 2022 — meaning that all Religious schools offering early childhood education in Belo Horizonte have partnerships with the municipal public authorities.

Figure 1 - Percentage of Units with Public Partnerships by School Typology, 2012-2022

(A) Oferta de Creche



(B) Oferta de Pré-escola

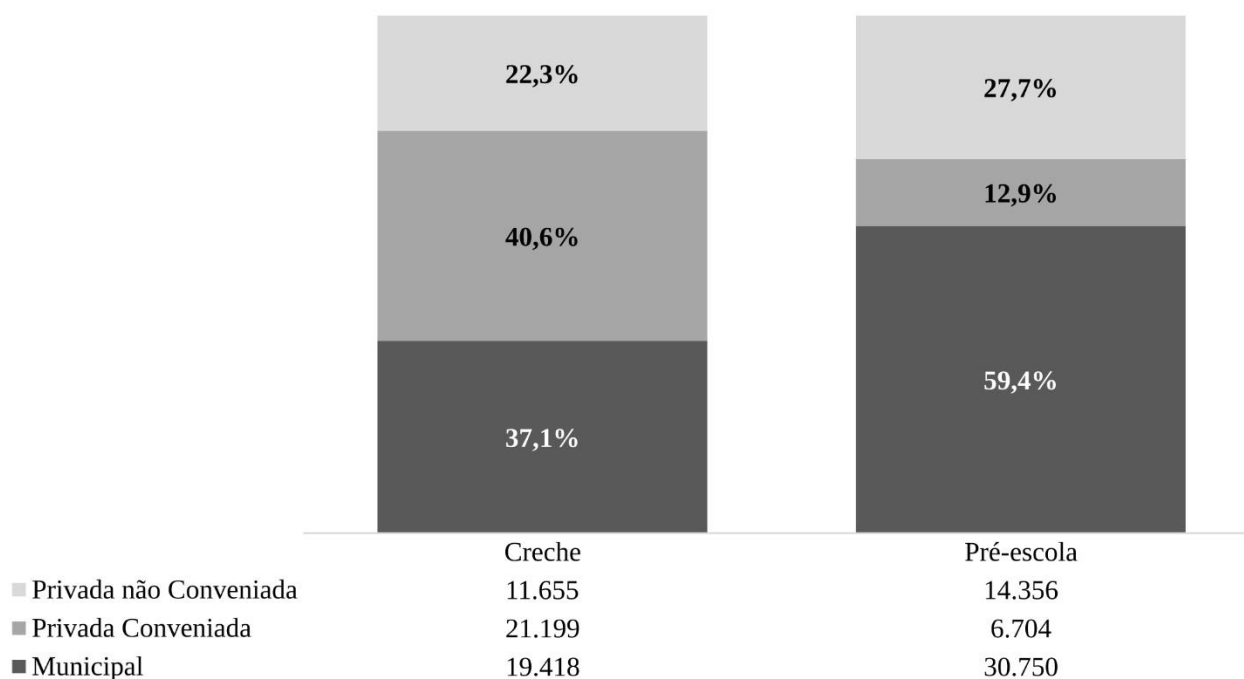


Source: Prepared by the author based on microdata from the School Census, Inep/MEC, 2012 to 2022

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When a school establishes a partnership with the municipal government of Belo Horizonte to offer early childhood education, it is possible for the school to reach up to 100% of its enrollment capacity through this partnership. In other words, there is no restriction on offering other types of enrollment (e.g., with a tuition fee) within the same institution. Since there is no public information on the number of enrollments that are or are not part of the partnership, this study assumes that once a school is partnered for the provision of early childhood education, all enrollments at this educational stage are also covered by the partnership. Thus, in 2022, 40.6% of daycare enrollments and 12.9% of preschool enrollments were offered by private schools partnered with the public authorities.

Figure 2 - Distribution of Daycare and Preschool Enrollments by Administrative Dependency and Partnership, 2022



Source: Prepared by the author based on microdata from the School Census, Inep/MEC, 2022

In 2022, all 474 enrollments in religious daycare centers (Confessionals) were offered by partnered units. In philanthropic schools (Philanthropics), out of the 16,461 daycare enrollments, 15,050 (91.4%) were in partnered units. In total, of the 32,854 daycare enrollments recorded in private schools (Community, Confessionals, Philanthropics, and Privates), 21,199 (64.5%) were through partnerships, and 10,215 (31.1%) were served by private institutions¹¹ (in schools without public

¹¹ It is important to note that the private network is part of the private category, which, in addition to private schools, includes philanthropic, community, and religious institution.

partnerships). The remaining 1,440 enrollments were served, without partnerships, by schools in the Philanthropic and Community networks. In this regard, of the 52,272 daycare enrollments recorded in schools in the municipality of Belo Horizonte, 40,617 (77.7%) were in municipal schools or private schools with partnerships. Considering only the distribution between municipal and partnered schools, 52.2% of daycare enrollments are served by partnered institutions.

Regarding the provision of preschool education, the scenario is somewhat different. In 2022, all 128 preschool enrollments were in partnered religious units (Confessionals). In philanthropic schools (Philanthropics), out of the 8,041 preschool enrollments, 5,278 (32.1%) were in schools partnered with the public authorities. In the same year, of the 21,060 preschool enrollments recorded in private institutions (Community, Confessionals, Philanthropics, and Privates), 6,704 (31.8%) were in partnered units, and 11,593 (55.0%) were served by private networks. Thus, of the 51,810 preschool enrollments registered in the municipality of Belo Horizonte, 37,454 (72.3%) were in municipal schools or private schools with partnerships (Table 3). Now, considering only the distribution between municipal and partnered schools, 17.9% of preschool enrollments are served by partnered networks.

Table 3 - Number of Enrollments in Daycares and Preschools by School Typology and Partnership with Public Authorities in 2022

School Typology	Daycare Enrollments				Preschool Enrollments			
	With public partnership			Total Daycare	With public partnership			Total Preschool
	No	Yes	Does not apply		No	Yes	Does not apply	
Municipal	-	-	19.418	19.418	-	-	30.750	30.750
Community	29	5.675	-	5.704	0	1.298	-	1.298
Religious	0	474	-	474	0	128	-	128
Philanthropic	1.411	15.050	-	16.461	2.763	5.278	-	8.041
Private	10.215	0	-	10.215	11.593	0	-	11.593
Grand Total	11.655	21.199	19.418	52.272	14.356	6.704	30.750	51.810

Source: Prepared by the author based on microdata from the School Census, Inep/MEC, 2022

Based on the combined analysis of educational units and enrollment distribution, we can affirm that the provision of early childhood education through partnerships with Philanthropic schools was

Universalization of early childhood education in Belo Horizonte/MG and the end of term of the PNE 2014-2024 more prominent in daycare compared to preschool. Additionally, all daycare provision in Community and Religious schools is through public sector partnerships. In other words, the service for the population in the age range of 0 to 3 years has largely been operated through partnerships with the public network, while preschool provision is mostly divided between municipal and private schools, in a ratio of 2 to 1, respectively.

The efforts of the municipal public network to expand educational provision are clearly reflected in the school census data. The increase in the number of municipal units offering preschool education between 2012 and 2022, from 89 units to 237 (Table 2), is the result of two movements: the provision of education in new units and the expansion in units that already offered elementary education.

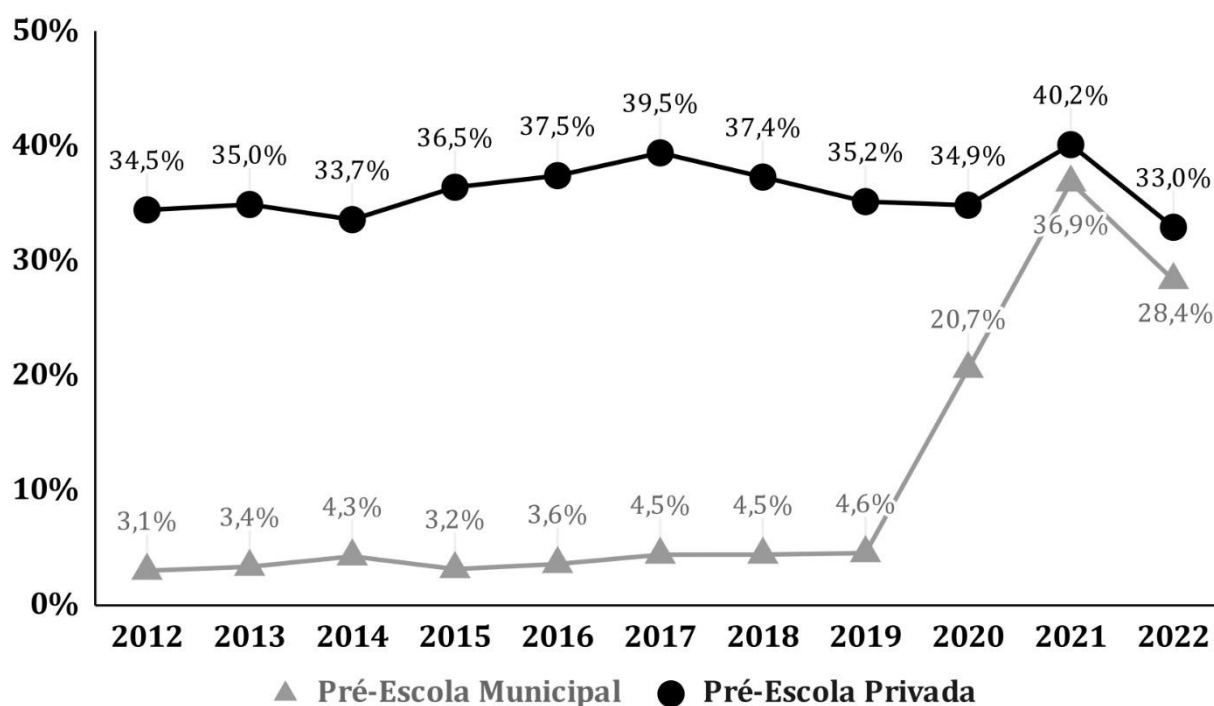
As seen in Table 2, until 2014, preschool education was predominantly offered in units that already provided elementary education. Between 2014 and 2016, there was an expansion in the number of municipal education units, providing preschool education in units exclusively dedicated to early childhood education, rising from 13 establishments to 140 — a number that increased by 3 units in the following year and remained stable until 2022. From 2017 onwards, the expansion of provision once again utilized spaces in educational units that also offered elementary education.

Additionally, it is important to highlight the effort made in 2022 to increase the number of full-day preschool enrollments (evidenced by the ratio between full-day preschool enrollments and total preschool enrollments: both partial and full-day) within a specific administrative dependency, even though this strategy was not explicitly mentioned in the PME/BH.

The percentage of full-day preschool enrollments in the municipal network was measured at 3.1% in 2012, and remained relatively stable with small variations until 2019. However, in 2020, it was measured at 20.7%, reaching 36.9% in 2021¹² and 28.4% in 2022, coming close to the full-day enrollment provision in the private network, which was 33.0%.

¹² It is important to highlight that on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of a respiratory illness caused by the coronavirus a pandemic. Since then, countries and their political divisions have adopted measures to control the transmission of the disease. The most common measure adopted worldwide to control the disease was social isolation. In this context, it became necessary to suspend in-person classes. In Brazil, since each federative entity had autonomy to control the disease in its jurisdiction, various regions, depending on the education network, offered remote learning as an emergency measure. In the municipal network of Belo Horizonte, the suspension of in-person classes occurred in mid-March, and no alternative learning offer was instituted. All children attending public schools were unable to attend classes for a period of two years. In this sense, the reports of full-time education in 2020 are particularly striking, as all municipal schools ceased to even offer remote learning to the children.

Figure 3 - Percentage of Full-Day Preschool Enrollments in Belo Horizonte, 2012 to 2022, by Administrative Dependency



Source: Prepared by the author based on the Statistical Synopses, School Census, Inep/MEC, 2012 to 2021

Although early childhood education has been mandatory since 2009, significant increases in preschool enrollments in Belo Horizonte were only observed after the deadline established by Constitutional Amendment No. 59 and its reinforcement in the PNE. However, this increase appears to have occurred as daycare services were increasingly provided through partnerships with private schools.

It is important to highlight that enrollment data alone allows us to study only the number of children being served but does not enable us to infer the percentage of children who, on the other hand, are not being served in the municipality, meaning their educational rights are being curtailed.

To evaluate whether the group being served truly represents the entire population of children in the relevant age group requiring service, it would be necessary to have population estimates by age group for each municipality. In Brazil, the surveys capable of providing this information at the municipal level are the Demographic Census (conducted every ten years) and the PNADC (conducted annually). However, the most recent Demographic Census took place in 2022, and as of the writing of this study, its data had not yet been released. While the PNADC includes education variables in its

Universalization of early childhood education in Belo Horizonte/MG and the end of term of the PNE 2014-2024 annual survey which covers individuals of all ages and could provide relevant data it is not representative at the municipal level, which greatly complicates monitoring the achievement of Goal 1 of the PME in Brazilian cities.

Nevertheless, the PNADC provides representative data for capitals and metropolitan regions, and the municipality in this study is the capital of Minas Gerais. In this context, it was possible to use the most recent data released by the survey, with the latest available figures from 2022. According to this data, 97.7% of children aged 4 and 5 years and 47.0% of children aged 0 to 3 years residing in the municipality were enrolled in educational institutions. In general terms, these figures indicate that the municipality is close to achieving Goal 1 of the PME/BH and the PNE, which aim to universalize attendance for children aged 4 and 5 and provide services to at least 50% of children aged 0 to 3.

The Belo Horizonte PME includes a provision for censuses to count and record the demand for school services in daycare centers and preschools. Despite information regarding waiting lists for daycare spots being available on the city's official online platforms, the most recent data found during a 2023 search was dated March 2020, listing 3,345 children, all aged between 0 and 3 years. In other words, the mapping was limited to daycare services.

Final considerations

With the advances in legislation following the 1988 Federal Constitution, early childhood education encompassing children aged 0 to 5 became recognized as a universal and free educational right, to be offered primarily by municipalities in collaboration with their respective states and the federal government. Since then, municipalities have been held accountable for ensuring this right, particularly after the enactment of the PNE (2014) and PMEs from 2015 onwards.

In this context, it is observed that the municipality of Belo Horizonte has made efforts to guarantee universal access for children aged 4 and 5 and to achieve the goal of serving children aged 0 to 3. Conversely, this has seemingly been achieved by transferring enrollments of children aged 0 to 3 from the municipal network to partnered units (Community, confessional, and philanthropic schools). This phenomenon is not exclusive to Belo Horizonte. As noted, studies investigating other municipalities (FLORES, 2015; SANTOS & BARROS, 2017; SANTOS, 2017; MORGADO, 2017) also pointed out that daycare services, previously managed by municipal networks, were adjusted to enable the universalization of preschool education.

Additionally, the strategy of utilizing partnerships to provide early childhood education has been widely adopted alongside offering services in elementary schools. Daycare services have been primarily offered through philanthropic institutions, followed by community and confessional schools, often separately from preschool services. Preschools, in turn, have largely been offered by units that also provide elementary education, particularly private institutions.

An analysis of the PME/BH revealed that the expansion of full-time preschool education was not identified as a strategy for achieving Goal 1, even though it is included in the PNE's strategies. However, this commitment was reflected in Resolution CME/BH No. 001/2015. Although the proportion of full-time preschool enrollments has increased in recent years, the fact that it is established by resolution rather than law weakens its enforceability, as amending such a normative act is relatively easier than altering a law.

The lack of annually updated population data represents a significant gap that hinders the social accountability of this right, particularly in the post-pandemic period. Although legislation establishes the right to education for young children and imposes obligations to ensure its realization, monitoring its fulfillment is rendered impossible without data. The production of data, tracking of indicators, and conducting of research are critical for ensuring the actual realization of educational rights. In this sense, it is essential for the next PNE to include more effective mechanisms for monitoring goals, especially those reliant on population data. For capital cities, monitoring is facilitated by the PNADC, but the survey does not cover the other 5,543 Brazilian municipalities.

The strategies outlined in the PME/BH have been implemented and are aiding in achieving the stipulated goals, as evidenced by the 2022 PNADC data: 97.7% of children aged 4 and 5 residing in the municipality were enrolled in schools, and 47.0% of children aged 0 to 3 were also enrolled. The municipality is close to achieving Goal 1, which seeks to universalize education for children aged 4 and 5 and provide access to at least 50% of children aged 0 to 3.

As this study focused solely on access to education data, it is challenging to address issues related to the quality and equity of early childhood education in Belo Horizonte. However, considering the different configurations of service provision identified, it is crucial to develop studies examining these dimensions to determine whether the PME/BH strategies need to be refined to promote equity in educational opportunities. In other words, understanding whether different strategies provide distinct educational opportunities exposes a significant educational gap. While the

Universalization of early childhood education in Belo Horizonte/MG and the end of term of the PNE 2014-2024 state aims to achieve the universalization of quality education, it often implements strategies that may impose selectivity and inequality at the very beginning of basic education, as highlighted by the findings of Petrus and Oliveira (2023).

Given that the studied municipality, as a capital city, has better conditions to finance public education compared to its counterparts in the state, new financial contributions must be considered to support municipalities that lack similar investment levels. This would make the universalization of education, with quality and equity, a more feasible goal across the entire country.

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Recebido em: 07/11/2023
Aprovado em: 02/08/2024