

**BETWEEN RIGHTS AND SILENCES: A HISTORICAL-CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN TOCANTINS**

**ENTRE DIREITOS E SILENCIAMENTOS: UMA ANÁLISE HISTÓRICO-CRÍTICA DO CURRÍCULO DA EDUCAÇÃO INFANTIL NO TOCANTINS**

**ENTRE DERECHOS Y SILENCIOS: UN ANÁLISIS HISTÓRICO-CRÍTICO DEL CURRÍCULO DE EDUCACIÓN INFANTIL EN TOCANTINS**

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**ABSTRACT**

Considering that curricular documents are not neutral, but historical productions shaped by societal projects and ideological disputes, this article problematizes the Tocantins Curricular Document – Early Childhood Education and the documents that guide Early Childhood Education in the municipality of Palmas-TO, in light of Historical-Dialectical Materialism, Historical-Critical Pedagogy, and Cultural-Historical Theory. It aims to analyze the pedagogical and curricular conceptions present in these documents, identifying foundations, limits, and contradictions related to the social function of Early Childhood Education and the role of teacher mediation. To this end, qualitative documentary research is conducted, using as corpus the Tocantins Curricular Document – Early Childhood Education, approved in 2019, and municipal regulations that govern the curricular and pedagogical organization of Early Childhood Education in Palmas. In this way, it is observed that the analyzed documents, although they recognize the child as a subject rights and value play, interaction, and experiences, maintain alignment with the National Common Curricular Base, prioritizing lived experiences, children's protagonism, and learning rights over systematic teaching, cultural transmission, and the teacher's intentional mediation. This allows us to conclude that such curricular guidelines have structural limitations, as they remain silent on the concrete material conditions of childhoods in Tocantins, reinforce neo-schoolist concepts, and weaken the school's social function as a space for the socialization of historically produced knowledge, indicating the need for a curriculum reorganization based on critical, historical-dialectical, and emancipatory perspectives for public Early Childhood Education, in the context of contemporary Brazilian educational policies.

**Keywords:** Early Childhood Education. Curriculum. Palmas.

**RESUMO**

Considerando que os documentos curriculares não são neutros, mas produções históricas atravessadas por projetos societários e disputas ideológicas, este artigo problematiza o Documento Curricular Tocantins – Educação Infantil e os documentos que orientam a Educação Infantil no município de Palmas-TO, à luz do Materialismo Histórico-Dialético, da Pedagogia Histórico-Crítica e da Teoria Histórico-Cultural. Objetiva-se analisar as concepções pedagógicas e curriculares presentes nesses documentos, identificando

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fundamentos, limites e contradições relativos à função social da Educação Infantil e ao papel da mediação docente. Para tanto, procede-se a uma pesquisa qualitativa, de natureza documental, tendo como corpus o Documento Curricular Tocantins – Educação Infantil, homologado em 2019, e normativas municipais que regulamentam a organização curricular e pedagógica da Educação Infantil em Palmas. Desse modo, observa-se que os documentos analisados, embora reconheçam a criança como sujeito de direitos e valorizem o brincar, a interação e as experiências, mantêm alinhamento à Base Nacional Comum Curricular, priorizando vivências, protagonismo infantil e direitos de aprendizagem em detrimento do ensino sistematizado, da transmissão cultural e da mediação intencional do professor. O que permite concluir que tais orientações curriculares apresentam limites estruturais, ao silenciarem sobre as condições materiais concretas das infâncias, reforçarem concepções neoescolanovistas e fragilizarem a função social da escola como espaço de socialização dos conhecimentos historicamente produzidos, indicando a necessidade de reorganização curricular fundamentada em perspectivas críticas e emancipadoras para a Educação Infantil pública, no contexto das políticas educacionais contemporâneas brasileiras.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação Infantil. Currículo. Palmas.

## RESUMEN

Considerando que los documentos curriculares no son neutrales, sino producciones históricas atravesadas por proyectos sociales y disputas ideológicas, este artículo problematiza el Documento Curricular Tocantins – Educación Infantil y los documentos que orientan la Educación Infantil en el municipio de Palmas-TO, a la luz del Materialismo Histórico-Dialéctico, la Pedagogía Histórico-Crítica y la Teoría Histórico-Cultural. Se objetiva analizar las concepciones pedagógicas y curriculares presentes en estos documentos, identificando fundamentos, límites y contradicciones relativos a la función social de la Educación Infantil y al papel de la mediación docente. Para ello, se procede a una investigación cualitativa, de naturaleza documental, teniendo como corpus el Documento Curricular Tocantins – Educación Infantil, homologado en 2019, y las normativas municipales que regulan la organización curricular y pedagógica de la Educación Infantil en Palmas. De este modo, se observa que los documentos analizados, aunque reconocen al niño como sujeto de derechos y valoren el juego, la interacción y las experiencias, mantienen alineación con la Base Nacional Común Curricular, priorizando vivencias, protagonismo infantil y derechos de aprendizaje en detrimento de la enseñanza sistematizada, de la transmisión cultural y de la mediación intencional del docente. Lo que permite concluir que tales orientaciones curriculares presentan límites estructurales al silenciar sobre las condiciones materiales concretas de las infancias tocantinenses, reforzar concepciones neoescolanovistas y debilitar la función social de la escuela como espacio de socialización de los conocimientos históricamente producidos, indicando la necesidad de una reorganización curricular fundamentada en perspectivas críticas, histórico-dialécticas y emancipadoras para la Educación Infantil pública, en el contexto de las políticas educativas contemporáneas brasileñas.

**Palabras clave:** Educación Infantil. Currículo. Palmas.



## 1 INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, Early Childhood Education has come to occupy a central place in the Brazilian educational debate, especially due to the expansion of legal and normative frameworks that have redefined its role in the scope of Basic Education. The consolidation of this stage as a right of children and a duty of the State brought with it the need for curricular reorganization, redefinition of pedagogical practices and the production of guiding documents that standardize educational work in public school networks. In this scenario, curriculum documents assume a strategic role, as they guide the organization of the curriculum, the training of professionals and the pedagogical practices developed in educational institutions.

However, from the perspective of Historical-Dialectical Materialism, it is understood that such documents are not neutral or merely technical instruments. On the contrary, they are historically situated productions, crossed by ideological disputes, pedagogical conceptions and societal projects in tension. Thus, the analysis of a curricular proposal requires going beyond the normative reading of its statements, seeking to apprehend the conceptions of childhood, education and society that sustain it, as well as the silencing related to the concrete material conditions of children, the teaching work and the social function of the school.

It is in this context that the Tocantins Curriculum Document – Early Childhood Education (DCT-EI) is inserted, approved in 2019 and instituted as an official reference to guide the state's municipal education systems, including the municipality of Palmas. Prepared in collaboration with the 139 municipalities of Tocantins, the DCT-EI is based on the National Common Curricular Base, organizing the curriculum based on learning rights and fields of experience. Although this orientation is presented as an advance in the recognition of the child as a subject of rights, it raises relevant problematizations regarding its limits to ensure intentional teacher mediation and the socialization of historically produced knowledge.

The direct link between the DCT-EI and the BNCC inserts the state curriculum policy in the set of contemporary educational reforms, marked by the centrality of experiences, child protagonism and meaningful learning. From the perspective of Historical-Critical Pedagogy and Historical-Cultural Theory, such conceptions tend to displace the centrality of teaching and weaken the role of the teacher as a mediator of the educational process, reducing the formative power of the school and obscuring its social function of access to

systematized knowledge.

At the municipal level, these guidelines are materialized through specific normative documents that regulate the curricular and pedagogical organization of Early Childhood Education in Palmas. The articulated analysis between state and municipal documents becomes, therefore, fundamental to understand how these orientations are appropriated, reaffirmed or tensioned in the local context, considering the territorial specificities and the concrete conditions of the childhoods served by the municipal public network.

In view of this, the following research question emerges: what pedagogical and curricular conceptions guide the Tocantins Curriculum Document – Early Childhood Education and the normative documents of Early Childhood Education in the municipality of Palmas, and what are their limits and contradictions in the light of Historical-Critical Pedagogy? The relevance of this study is justified by the need to deepen the critical understanding of the curricular policies that focus on Early Childhood Education, a fundamental stage in the process of human formation, contributing to the academic debate and to the reflection on pedagogical practices committed to teacher mediation, systematized teaching and the omnilateral formation of children.

Thus, this article aims to critically analyze the Tocantins Curriculum Document – Early Childhood Education and the documents that guide Early Childhood Education in the municipality of Palmas, in the light of Historical-Critical Pedagogy and Historical-Dialectical Materialism, identifying the conceptions of childhood, curriculum and teaching that underlie them, as well as the limits and contradictions of these proposals with regard to teacher mediation, to the curricular organization and the social function of the school in the socialization of historically produced knowledge.

## **2 THE TOCANTINS CURRICULUM DOCUMENT – EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (DCT-EI) IN THE LIGHT OF DIALECTICAL HISTORICAL MATERIALISM**

The present analysis seeks to understand the Tocantins Curriculum Document – Early Childhood Education DCT-IE (TOCANTINS, 2019) in the light of Historical-Dialectical Materialism. This theoretical approach is a method of interpreting and analyzing reality starting from the material and real (concrete) conditions of society, as well as the historical relations of production that constitute it. In this way, it is not seen as a neutral document, built as a mere technical or pedagogical tool. Like all human construction, given in a given historical and social context, it is the result of a historically and socially determined production, expressing interests, disputes and contradictions typical of class societies.

That said, the document is not analyzed only from the point of view of its explicit content. The main focus will be on what he demonstrates and also silences about social relations, the living conditions of children, the forms of organization of educational work and the project of society that sustains it.

The analysis of a curriculum document requires more than a simple examination of its guidelines or the internal coherence of its chapters. It requires, above all, recognizing that no document is born neutral, nor does it hover above the historical and social conditions that cross it. As highlighted in the previous text, it is understood that a curricular proposal is always an expression of a time, of a societal project and of the disputes that constitute it. It is in this critical, historical and profoundly human perspective that we seek to develop this analysis.

The document itself states that it was produced "in collaboration with the 139 municipalities of Tocantins", respecting "their regionality, their culture and various artistic expressions" (TOCANTINS, 2019, p. 11). It also states that it seeks to strengthen cultural identity and promote "meaningful and playful actions for all children" (TOCANTINS, 2019, p. 15). These statements demonstrate, at first, an important effort to recognize that Early Childhood Education cannot be conceived detached from the territory and the childhoods that compose it.

However, when we look at the document as a whole and situate it in the totality of national education policies, we perceive significant tensions that deserve to be discussed. As the DCT-EI itself announces, its "guiding thread was the national curriculum policies aimed at Basic Education that today materialize through the National Common Curriculum Base – BNCC, a guideline that underpins the framework presented here" (TOCANTINS, 2019, p. 9). This direct link to the BNCC is not secondary, as it carries with it all the logic that structured the educational reforms of the last decades, marked by standardization, control and curricular narrowing.

From the PHC, this alignment reveals a fundamental limit: by assuming as a foundation a curricular policy of a national and generalizing character, the document ends up reducing the strength of local singularities and silencing the concrete conditions of children in Tocantins and, specifically, in the municipality of Palmas. Saviani (2011) reminds us that the starting point of the educational process is the initial social practice, and not a set of previously defined competencies. However, in the DCT-EI, there is no analysis of the

real conditions of the Early Childhood Education units, the inequalities between the capital and the countryside or the precariousness that mark a good part of the schools.

When dealing with the child, the document adopts a conception centered on protagonism. It states that Early Childhood Education should "conceive the child as the protagonist of their development and learning processes" (TOCANTINS, 2019, p. 15). It also advises that the teacher must ensure that the student is "centrality of teaching and learning" (TOCANTINS, 2019, p. 9). Although these expressions may sound welcoming, they carry a pedagogical conception that approaches spontaneism and moves away from the principle of intentional mediation, which is fundamental in PHC. Duarte (2011) problematizes the discourse of protagonism by recalling that the emphasis on the child's autonomy, when unaccompanied by the transmission of systematized knowledge, reinforces a naturalized conception of child development.

The DCT-EI reinforces the centrality of the experience by stating that Early Childhood Education should provide "meaningful experiences and experiences in the lives of children" (TOCANTINS, 2019, p. 15). Play, described as "the most important experience in the lives of a man and a woman" (TOCANTINS, 2019, p. 16), appears as a structuring element of pedagogical work. However, the document establishes that playing "should not be conceived as a teaching strategy" (TOCANTINS, 2019, p. 23), emptying its pedagogical character, precisely where PHC and Historical-Cultural Theory locate one of the most powerful activities for the development of higher psychic functions.

The selection of the materials analyzed was not limited to the DCT-EI (2019), but also covered the documents that guide Early Childhood Education in the municipality of Palmas, considering that the municipal curriculum policy materializes, tensions, adapts or reaffirms state and national guidelines. Thus, understanding how the municipality interprets and implements such guidelines is a fundamental part of the analytical process, especially when it seeks to capture continuities, ruptures and silencing between different scales of educational policy.

The documentary analysis carried out included, therefore, three other documents that regulate the teaching performance in the Municipal Education Network of Palmas, in Early Childhood Education: the School Regiment of Early Childhood Education, curricular structure for partial early childhood education, curricular structure for integral urban and rural early childhood education. The set of these materials allows us to observe not only



what is prescribed, but also what is reiterated, omitted or stressed between the different curricular versions.

In order to systematize the materials that make up this stage of the investigation, a summary table of the municipal documents used in the analysis is presented below.

**Table 1**

*Municipal Documents of the Palmas Network Used in the Documentary Study*

Document	Object / Relevance	Link
<b>School Regiment of Early Childhood Education – Municipal Education Network of Palmas-TO</b>	Regulates the administrative, pedagogical and disciplinary organization of the CMEIs. It defines institutional principles, management, evaluation, routines and functioning of Early Childhood Education.	<a href="https://www.palmas.to.gov.br/media/documentos/17_12_2019_9_5_0_58.pdf">https://www.palmas.to.gov.br/media/documentos/17_12_2019_9_5_0_58.pdf</a>
<b>Curriculum Document for Early Childhood Education – Municipal Education Network of Palmas-TO</b>	It establishes curricular and pedagogical guidelines for work in the CMEIs, organizing objectives, fields of experience, planning and pedagogical foundations.	<a href="https://educacao.palmas.to.gov.br/files/ugd/dd59cb_4109379a33b5495aa401d854d0ec8c28.pdf">https://educacao.palmas.to.gov.br/files/ugd/dd59cb_4109379a33b5495aa401d854d0ec8c28.pdf</a>
<b>Curriculum Document of the Territory of Tocantins – DCT</b>	State reference adopted as a basis for the elaboration of the municipal curriculum, articulated with the BNCC and the territorial, cultural and educational specificities of Tocantins.	<a href="https://central3.tocantins.gov.br/arquivo/478046/">https://central3.tocantins.gov.br/arquivo/478046/</a>
<b>Guiding Document for Early Childhood Education – Municipal Education Network of Palmas-TO</b>	It presents pedagogical guidelines, formative principles and operational guidelines that complement the curriculum and the school regulations of Early Childhood Education.	<a href="https://educacao.palmas.to.gov.br/files/ugd/dd59cb_cd8f658f01784dedb74be765aacc778b.pdf">https://educacao.palmas.to.gov.br/files/ugd/dd59cb_cd8f658f01784dedb74be765aacc778b.pdf</a>

Source: Prepared by the author based on official documents from the Municipal Education Network of Palmas-TO (2019–2024).

The curricular organization by "Learning and Development Rights" — to live together, play, participate, explore, express and get to know each other — reinforces the emphasis on individual experiences. Chapter V describes these rights in detail, stating that children must "participate in everyday situations", "express needs and feelings" and "explore environments and situations" (TOCANTINS, 2019, p. 54). Such formulations, although important, are not sufficient as a formative matrix, as they do not present essential contents, do not explain conceptual progression and do not situate the school as a mediator of culture.

It is at this point in the analysis, when we observe the emphasis given to experiences, child protagonism and the centrality of experiences, that it becomes necessary to broaden our view to a dimension that crosses the document without being made explicit: the marks of a New New School perspective that permeate the curriculum presented. This presence does not occur in a declared way, but appears in the way the curriculum assigns to the child



the conduction of his own processes and to the teacher the function of monitoring, observing and ensuring "sensitive listening".

It is a conception that, although wrapped in a welcoming and valuing discourse of childhood, takes up principles of traditional renewing pedagogies — now coated by the contemporary language of competencies and meaningful learning. Thus, by affirming that the child is "the protagonist of his or her own development processes" and by organizing the pedagogical work around subjective experiences, the regulation under study updates a pedagogical matrix that shifts the centrality of knowledge to children's spontaneity, which, as the authors of the PHC problematize, tends to weaken teacher mediation and reduce the formative power of the school. To identify these links is not to construct a deserving critique, but to understand that the document also expresses the movement of current educational policies, marked by disputes and tensions that do not always harmonize with the historical-critical perspective.

Thus, by recognizing this neo-new school presence, it becomes even more evident that the curricular organization by rights and fields of experiences, although it brings important contributions, remains limited when it does not dialogue with the structuring contents and with the concrete material conditions of the children of Tocantins.

In this sense, in order to understand more deeply how these conceptions materialize in the daily life of the municipal network, it is necessary to triangulate them with the curricular documents prepared by the Municipal Department of Education of Palmas itself. This comparison is fundamental because it reveals how the municipality interprets, adheres to or tensions such guidelines — and, above all, what continuities are observed between the documents.

The "Curricular Structure for Early Childhood Education – Partial" determines that the pedagogical work is organized by the "five Fields of Experience" and by the "06 Rights of Learning and Development: Living together, playing, participating, exploring, expressing and getting to know oneself", reinforcing that cultural practices involving reading and writing "should not be understood as a literacy process". This formulation corroborates what is prescribed by the guidelines by reaffirming the centrality of experiences and avoiding the systematization of written knowledge, reproducing the same adherence to the BNCC.

The "Curricular Structure for Early Childhood Education – Integral, Urban and Rural" deepens this logic by reiterating the six rights on a daily basis and stating again that "this is not the time to systematize literacy". The proposal for rural schools adopts the alternation

regime, where domestic and community activities are conceived as "research activities related to the thematic axes, under the guidance of the teacher". Although it recognizes territories and identities, this orientation risks naturalizing inequalities by treating domestic experiences as equivalent to school pedagogical work — a central critique of PHC.

The previous document from 2019 reinforces the same orientation by stating that Early Childhood Education should be organized "in everyday experiences, in the expression of feelings and in the freedom to explore environments and situations", reaffirming, like the DCT-EI (TOCANTINS, 2019), a matrix centered on experiences and subjectivity, without making explicit conceptual progression or structuring contents.

Thus, the three municipal documents confirm and deepen the analyses made: all fully adhere to the BNCC matrix (BRASIL, 2017); all of them shift the centrality of knowledge to experiences and sensibilities; all prioritize subjective rights over objects of knowledge; everyone is silent about structural inequalities and the real material conditions of children.

In the field of diversity, the document recognizes indigenous, quilombola, riverside and rural childhoods, stating that indigenous children are "free, respected in their ways of being, living, playing and producing" (TOCANTINS, 2019, p. 27). However, the approach remains descriptive, not reaching the broader social determinations that constitute these childhoods. As Martins (2019) reminds us, an approach that only describes differences, but does not analyze their insertion in the set of social relations, runs the risk of reinforcing inequalities instead of overcoming them.

Thus, it is understood that the DCT-EI and the Palmas documents reveal, simultaneously, discursive advances and structural limits. They advance by recognizing the plurality of Tocantins childhoods, but they are limited when they assume a curricular matrix that prioritizes experiences, protagonism and subjective rights to the detriment of teacher mediation and the appropriation of systematized knowledge.

By presenting themselves as progressive documents, but maintaining a curricular organization centered on experiences and skills, Palmas' proposals express — as the historical-dialectical perspective would say — the contradictions typical of a historical time in which education is crossed by distinct and often irreconcilable interests.

Thus, this analysis, inspired by the commitment to understand the determinations presented in the concreteness of its determinations, reveals that its proposal — as well as those adopted in the municipality — although it announces integral education, does not

mobilize categories that allow the school to fulfill its social function of socializing historically produced knowledge.

### 3 CONCLUSION

The analysis developed throughout this article allowed us to understand that the Tocantins Curriculum Document – Early Childhood Education (DCT-EI), as well as the normative documents that guide Early Childhood Education in the municipality of Palmas, express the contradictions inherent to contemporary educational policies, situated in a historical context marked by disputes between different conceptions of education, childhood and curriculum. In the light of Historical-Dialectical Materialism, Historical-Critical Pedagogy and Historical-Cultural Theory, it was evident that such documents are not configured as neutral productions, but as provisional syntheses of societal projects in tension.

The results of the analysis indicate that, although the documents advance in the recognition of the child as a subject of rights and value elements such as play, interaction and the diversity of childhoods, they maintain a strong alignment with the National Common Curricular Base, prioritizing experiences, experiences and child protagonism. This curricular orientation, marked by neo-escolanovist traits, displaces the centrality of teaching and weakens intentional teacher mediation, emptying the role of the school as a privileged space for the socialization of scientific, artistic and cultural knowledge historically produced.

It was also observed that both the DCT-EI and the municipal documents of Palmas are silent about the concrete material conditions of children and educational institutions, as well as about the structural inequalities that cross the childhoods of Tocantins. By treating diversity in a predominantly descriptive way and by equating everyday experiences with systematized pedagogical work, the proposals analyzed run the risk of naturalizing inequalities, instead of facing them critically.

Thus, it is concluded that the curricular organization of Early Childhood Education in Palmas has structural limits that compromise the effectiveness of an integral education guided by human emancipation. Overcoming these limits requires the incorporation of critical theoretical foundations, the strengthening of teacher mediation and the curricular reorganization based on the centrality of teaching and systematized knowledge. It is hoped that this analysis will contribute to the academic debate and to the critical reflection on the curricular policies of Early Childhood Education, especially in the context of public



education, reaffirming the commitment to a socially referenced school and to the full human formation of children.

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