

The Processes of Assessment and Decision-Making in the Development and Learning of Infants in the Junta Nacional de Jardines Infantiles of the Metropolitan Region of Chile

Los procesos de evaluación y toma de decisiones en el desarrollo y aprendizaje de los párvulos en jardines infantiles de la Junta Nacional de Jardines Infantiles de la Región Metropolitana, Chile

Rosa Ibáñez

Universidad Mayor, Chile

Abstract

This paper presents the results of disciplinary research into the assessment processes in early childhood education and decision-making for continuous improvement in the development and learning of infants in the kindergartens of the Junta Nacional de Jardines Infantiles in the Metropolitan Region of Chile during the second semester of 2018. The methodology used was of a qualitative ethnographic type, with a multiple case study design. The findings reveal relevant aspects regarding the validity of the records that support the assessment processes conducted in early childhood education and the factors that shape them. The study concludes with the need to strengthen reflective instances related to evaluative practice in this context to enable better decision-making by educational teams.

Keywords: authentic evaluation, early childhood, education, observation record.

Post to:

Rosa del Carmen Ibáñez Muñoz
Manuel Montt 318, Santiago, Chile
rosa.ibanez@mayor.cl

Este estudio fue financiado con fondos institucionales para investigación asignados a la carrera de Pedagogía en Educación Parvularia y Educación Básica para primer ciclo de la Universidad Mayor de Chile.

Agradecemos a la Junta Nacional de Jardines Infantiles, JUNJI, por aceptar el proyecto y entregar las facilidades de acceso al campo de estudio, así como a las directoras, educadoras y técnicas que participaron de la investigación.

© 2020 PEL, <http://www.pensamientoeducativo.org> - <http://www.pel.cl>

ISSN:0719-0409 DDI:203.262, Santiago, Chile doi: 10.7764/PEL.57.1.2020.3

Resumen

El artículo presenta los resultados de una investigación disciplinar referida a los procesos de evaluación en educación infantil y la toma de decisiones para la mejora continua en el desarrollo y aprendizaje de los párvulos, en los jardines infantiles de la Junta Nacional de Jardines Infantiles de la Región Metropolitana, durante el segundo semestre de 2018. La metodología utilizada fue de tipo cualitativo de corte etnográfico, con un diseño de estudio de casos múltiples. Los hallazgos develan aspectos relevantes acerca de la validez de los registros que sustentan los procesos de evaluación que se realizan en educación parvularia y los factores que los configuran. El estudio concluye con la necesidad de fortalecer los espacios de reflexión relacionados con la práctica evaluativa en este contexto, para una mejor toma de decisiones por parte de los equipos educativos.

Palabras clave: educación, evaluación auténtica, primera infancia, registro de observación.

Introduction

Learning processes in pre-school education contain significant references that substantiate active and respectful methodologies of the approach to children's rights, as well as authentic techniques and instruments for assessment that highlight the observation and documentation of children's culture and its support. In this regard, the postulates made by Malaguzzi (2001), Hoyuelos and Riera (2015), and Peralta (2018) underline the learning and assessment processes as part of them. Therefore, their specificity and relevance are well documented; however, the evaluative aspect and how it is carried out by educators has been studied infrequently, raising important questions about how evaluative proposals are developed in contexts of preschool education.

This research is contextualized in the kindergartens of the National Board of Kindergartens (Junta Nacional de Jardines Infantiles, JUNJI), of the Metropolitan Region (Región Metropolitana) of Chile, and it responds to the concerns expressed by the Regional Sub-secretariat regarding the evaluative issues at its pre-school establishments. The research proposal described here was discussed and assessed by this body in May 2018 and was authorized by the National Directorate of JUNJI in June 2018.

In this regard, the institution intends to enable authentic assessment and the application of a qualitative methodology in its kindergartens through observation records, while the information available to this organization regarding this aspect of the curriculum is limited to reports from the advisers that visit these establishments. The work of these specialists is to guide pedagogical work based on the curricular references and technical provisions, which favor the protagonism of the children as rights-bearing subjects, as well as curricular flexibility and educational quality.

The main objective of the study was to understand the assessment processes seen in educational practices in early childhood education. As this is one of the first stages in human development, assessment processes for timely decision-making has great importance, in order to improve the development and learning of infants, meet their needs, and give them opportunities to develop in natural learning scenarios, which are carefully designed by an empowered and creative educator.

The expectation is, then, that this research, which specifically addresses this substantive aspect in the learning process of infants, will be a contribution to the construction of knowledge in preschool classrooms.

Literature review

There is little research related to assessment in preschool education. The references that can be mentioned include Rivera (2016), who conducted a documentary and reflective study in Colombia about practicing students, highlighting the influence of contextualized formative assessment in learning and development of competencies in preschool children. Another study was carried out in the city of Malaga, where Fernández and Soto (2019)—through tutoring of the *reflective practicum*—demonstrated how pedagogical and reflective documentation becomes an innovative tool for formative assessment to promote learning and improve assessment processes. The two studies concur on the formative aspect of assessment during the process to promote reflective practices in action.

This makes it evident that assessment processes in early childhood education are decisive, which is due to the accelerated growth and development of children between 0 and 6 years of age, when there is no time for mistakes. During this period—which is irrecoverable in terms of biology and neuronal receptivity—children acquire and develop knowledge, skills, and emotions that form the basis of future learning (Battro, 2011; Jensen, 2004; Hoyuelos & Riera, 2015). Likewise, early learning enriches later learning, so the success or failure of these experiences is projective for future learning (Heckman, 2004).

In the country, the *Curricular Bases for Early Childhood Education*, BCEP (Ministerio de Educación de Chile, Mineduc, 2018)—trialed in 2018 and applied recently in 2019—state that early learning influences brain structure and plasticity, affecting neural differentiation and function, so it offers the possibility of learning and unlearning permanently.

From this perspective, assessment is an essential part of development, as it constitutes a mechanism for orientation and reconstruction at all times, which enables the definition of appropriate strategies and adequate resources to act meaningfully, obstacles to be overcome, and the process continued. Therefore, by constantly reflecting on assessment and the processes involved, teachers can understand educational activity and its nature, in order to promote it in the classroom and at the educational establishment (Santos Guerra, 2004). Therefore, assessment at these levels should be understood as a research tool rather than one for selection, since it enables progressive adjustments to the needs and characteristics of the children, as well as allowing qualitative assessment of the proposed learning objectives and comprehension of the results of the educational intervention (Mir, Gómez, Carreras, Valentí, & Nadal, 2004).

Gervilla (2006) emphasizes this aspect when she points out that assessment does not consist of making value judgments regarding the work done, but in collecting the relevant information to observe and appropriately adjust the educational action. This aspect of the curriculum is an imperative in the intrinsic conception of the learning process, as it highlights that successful decision-making will depend, to a large extent, on a coherent, contextualized assessment designed for the achievement of objectives after reflecting on practice. Thus, reflective practice constitutes an effective way of improving in the classroom, predicting what is expected to happen with learning, in the light of relevant pedagogical ideas, as a product of constant and intentional observation that allows assessment and reflection to improve educational action (Elmore, 2010).

This integrative vision of reflection in and on practice is intrinsically associated with what is stated in the current BCEP, where the rights-based approach predominates as the articulating pillar of didactic action. This implies the participation of empowered educational leaders in a reflective practice of renewal that guarantees

the higher well-being of the children with critical and purposeful judgment in the classroom, and activities designed meticulously and professionally in each and every one of the contexts of early childhood education, and particularly those that are most vulnerable. In this respect, Peralta (2018) says:

They, more than others, need education of the best kind, that recognizes their diversities, that respects their growing autonomy, that promotes their construction of senses, and their wonderful childish nature that allows them to know and be amazed by the world that they see (p. 97).

This focus on early childhood education respects the children in their human essence, develops their autonomy, and prioritizes their well-being and harmony in learning environments where powerful interactions take place, in a diverse and inclusive children's culture. As a consequence, the assessment of the approach conforms to the principles of authentic assessment and responds with an assessment that dialogues with the significant learning centered on the process, rather than on teaching and the verification of results.

Condemarín and Medina (2000) state that the strength of this perspective of authentic assessment is sustained as an integral and natural part of the learning that takes place in the educational context, providing evidence-based information that allows timely decision-making. Meanwhile, Ahumada (2005) defines it as a way of conceiving of assessment strategies and procedures focused on processes rather than results, with the student taking a priority role as the manager of their learning.

Other authors such as Anijovich and González (2012) say that this type of assessment involves instruments that go beyond the declarative, that is, beyond demonstrating acquired concepts, involving evaluative aspects in contextualized observation in real and legitimate situations. It is at this point that the observations and records made by the preschool teachers¹ take on substantive relevance as the main evaluative input in the kindergartens studied.

In this regard, Hoyuelos and Riera (2015) state that observation in contexts of early childhood education must transcend the superficial and obvious, since it is a method of analyzing reality that uses attentive contemplation of dynamic actions and processes in habitual contexts of development. This is to understand and interpret them from the child's perspective and draw conclusions, without making classifying and homogenizing judgments that are generated based on frames of reference and hypotheses, so that the objective of observation is to understand the educational experience in order to make decisions and adapt interventions.

Meanwhile, Santos Guerra (2018) points out that recording is a complicated task in pre-school settings, due to constant attention and exclusive dedication to classroom activities, so certain references should be taken occasionally and then providing more information at the end of the task, without postponing it, in order to avoid the transience of the observed events.

Finally, regarding the implementation of the new BCEP and its educational approach, the specialized literature underscores the importance of making curricular changes and adaptations in strategic organizational periods that link the participation of educational contexts, which requires a training period prior to the implementation of new educational policies. The weaknesses in the processes of change and innovation in terms of redefinitions and orientations of the curriculum become cyclical processes, where each new definition seems to be inaugural, as an attempt to change everything in a short period of time (Gysling, 2007).

1. All of the teachers were female, as there were no male preschool teachers in the sample for this study.

Methodology

The research design was determined by the interpretive paradigm, focused on the processes of social interaction, which is characterized by individual and group reality. In this regard, learning from a deep understanding of the natural context puts the researcher where the event of interest occurs and its object of study, allowing them to collect data by natural means, such as via questions, visits, and observations; that is, to contemplate and interpret reality as it happens (Rodríguez, Gil, & García, 1999).

We used a qualitative methodology, through a multiple case study, focused on the deep and direct observation of the actors and the field of study. For this, we used techniques of an ethnographic type through documentation in written records and audiovisual elicitation of the reality studied (Flick, 2007).

Cases of interest in education are comprised of people and programs that are similar to one other, even though they are unique in their human essence and in the context in which they take place, where their purpose is not focused on understanding an abstract construct or phenomenon, but examining the intrinsic interest of the case (Stake, 2010). This research uses the multiple case typology developed by Yin (1993), which has a classification that emerges by crossing the criterion of the number of units of analysis (single or multiple) with that of the object of study—which, in this case, are 10 units of analysis, corresponding to the educators at five JUNJI kindergartens in the Metropolitan Region of the country—resulting in a common study: practices surrounding the assessment of learning of preschool children.

The question that guided the study was: How are the learning assessment processes carried out and demonstrated in the practices of the educators studied, and in what way are the results of the assessments considered for decision-making and continuous improvement in the infants' learning? To answer that question, we formulated the general objective of analyzing the assessment processes and decision-making for the continuous improvement of the learning of the children at the JUNJI establishments, while the following were defined as specific objectives:

- Identify the assessment procedures and instruments present in the practices of the educators.
- Analyze the instances of assessment and their systematization in the practices of the educators.
- Determine how decision-making is carried out based on the results of the assessment processes established to improve learning for infants.

Access to the field and instruments

The concern to develop a disciplinary line of research was agreed between the Directorate of the Pedagogy degree course career in Early Childhood Education and Basic Education for the first cycle at Universidad Mayor and the JUNJI Regional Sub-directorate. From a critical viewpoint and adhering to reality, a sample of five kindergartens in the Metropolitan Region was used, one for each of the following districts: Estación Central, La Granja, Las Condes, Talagante, and Huechuraba. All the kindergartens were chosen by JUNJI based on criteria of representativeness, trajectory, and willingness of the educational teams to carry out the research.

The JUNJI kindergartens included in the study serve and prioritize families with high socioeconomic vulnerability in multicultural contexts, as stated by their institutional mission². Two classrooms were studied in each kindergarten, making a total of four nursery-level classrooms and six mid-level classrooms. Each classroom had an educational team formed by one educator and two technical staff at the mid level and three to four technical staff at the

2. This information is available at the following link: <https://www.junji.gob.cl/>

nursery level, while the ages of the team members varied between 30 and 50. In order to ensure ethical procedures in the research, the names of the kindergartens and the people who participated in the study were omitted, and informed consent was obtained from the educators in each classroom studied.

The information was collected using qualitative techniques and instruments, making use of observation records, in-depth interviews, and elicitation of videos and photographs.

The observation records were taken using written and audiovisual documentation through 32 visits to classrooms, divided into six or seven per kindergarten, during full or half-day sessions.

Meanwhile, in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 educators after the second attendance period, as suggested by Taylor and Bogman (1992) in their research. Thus, in order to establish a thorough report, it was necessary to maintain prolonged contacts over time, which developed a detailed and informed understanding of the experiences and perspectives discussed in depth, with this being supplemented by two interviews with each professional.

The photo and video elicitation was carried out at the end of the visiting process in order to appeal to the pedagogical reflection of the educators regarding what was observed in the records on their practice. This qualitative research technique is a tool for teaching reflection in educational contexts, which uses the experiential image as a mental representation of the events experienced, which constitute valuable instances that provide an invaluable contribution to the constant training of teachers (García-Vera Bautista, 2017).

Processing and analysis

The information was processed by adopting the general scheme of Miles and Huberman (1994) to carry out the tasks of data reduction, presentation, extraction, and verification of conclusions through an intellectual process of analysis and interpretation of transcripts of records, observation, interviews, and video and photo elicitation. The work was supported by the qualitative data processor ATLAS.ti 8 (2017). We analyzed the discourse by coding citations that responded to the stated objectives, and then we determined the families of codes that made up the major categories. In this respect, the discourse analysis clearly guides the discursive representations provided by the data collected with the techniques and instruments used, for which it focuses on categories that respond to the conflict studied, based on cultural, economic, and ecological facts and aspects that represent the social actors studied (Sayago, 2014). Thus, an intensive and profound treatment of the data was developed, culminating with the three categories that are addressed in the following section.

Results

Background

In order to contextualize the results, it is first necessary to clarify that the accounts of the educators studied regarding the technical orientations of the institution are intended to renew evaluative practices focused on measuring achievement using checklists or scales of assessment, in order to shift towards a new evaluative approach that prioritizes authentic assessment through constant records of observation that feed decision-making in the analyses of the educational teams. This is expected to support advances in comprehensive planning that has a timely design of experiences and environments that promote the development of infants. This information involves curricular and evaluative concepts that are not always clear in the knowledge of the professionals who lead the teams (Gysling, 2007), so an opportunity therefore emerges for the improvements outlined by the study.

The results of the analysis are grouped into three categories: the validity of the records, evidence of the educational approach, and obstacles to apply the new evaluative approach. Firstly, a vision of the categories based on the codes that support them is presented in graphic form—produced by the ATLAS.ti 8 processor (2017)—before each of them is then developed and analyzed.

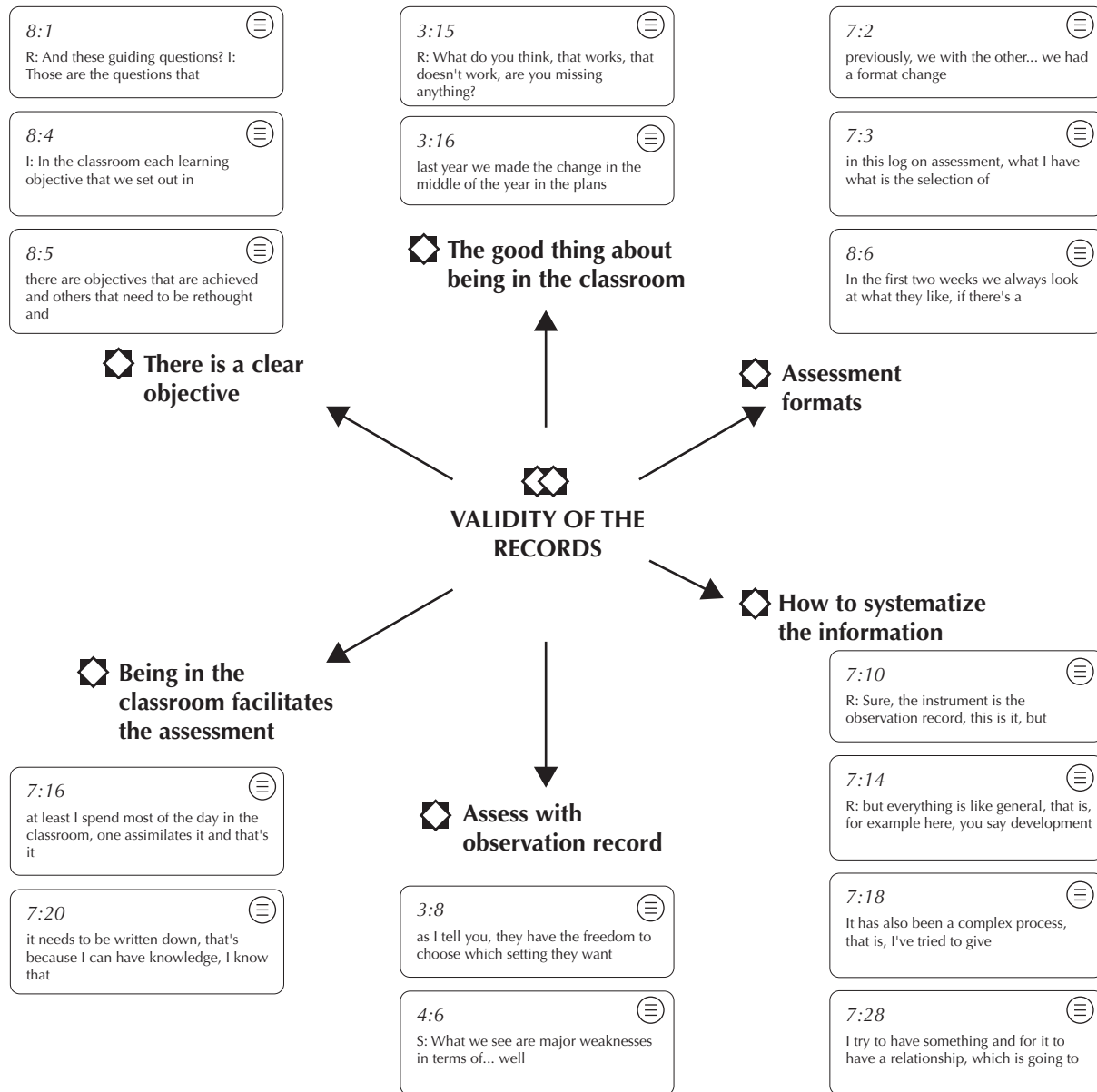


Figure 1. Category 1: Validity of the records.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

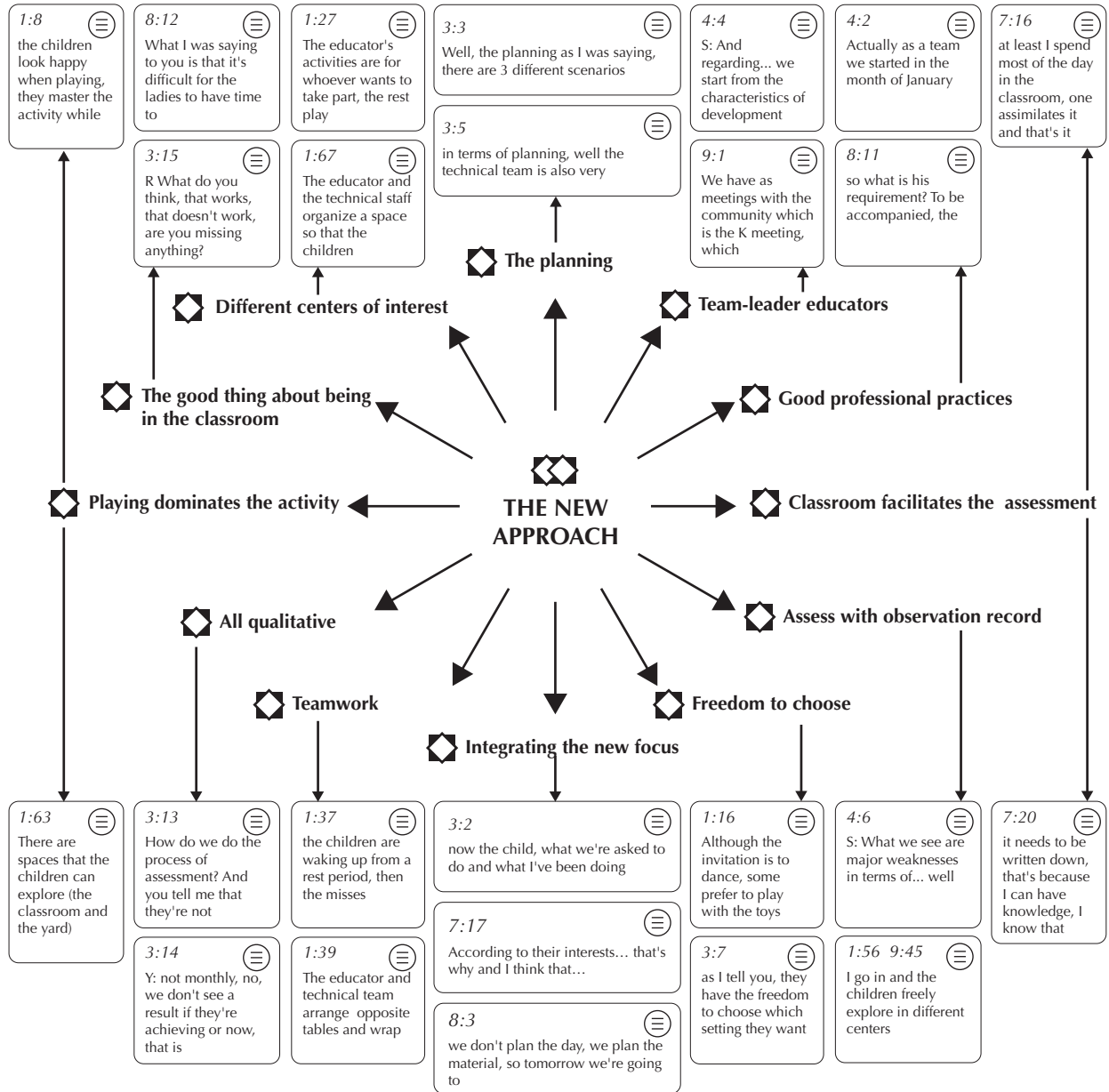


Figure 2. Category 2: Evidence of the educational approach.
Source: Prepared by the authors.

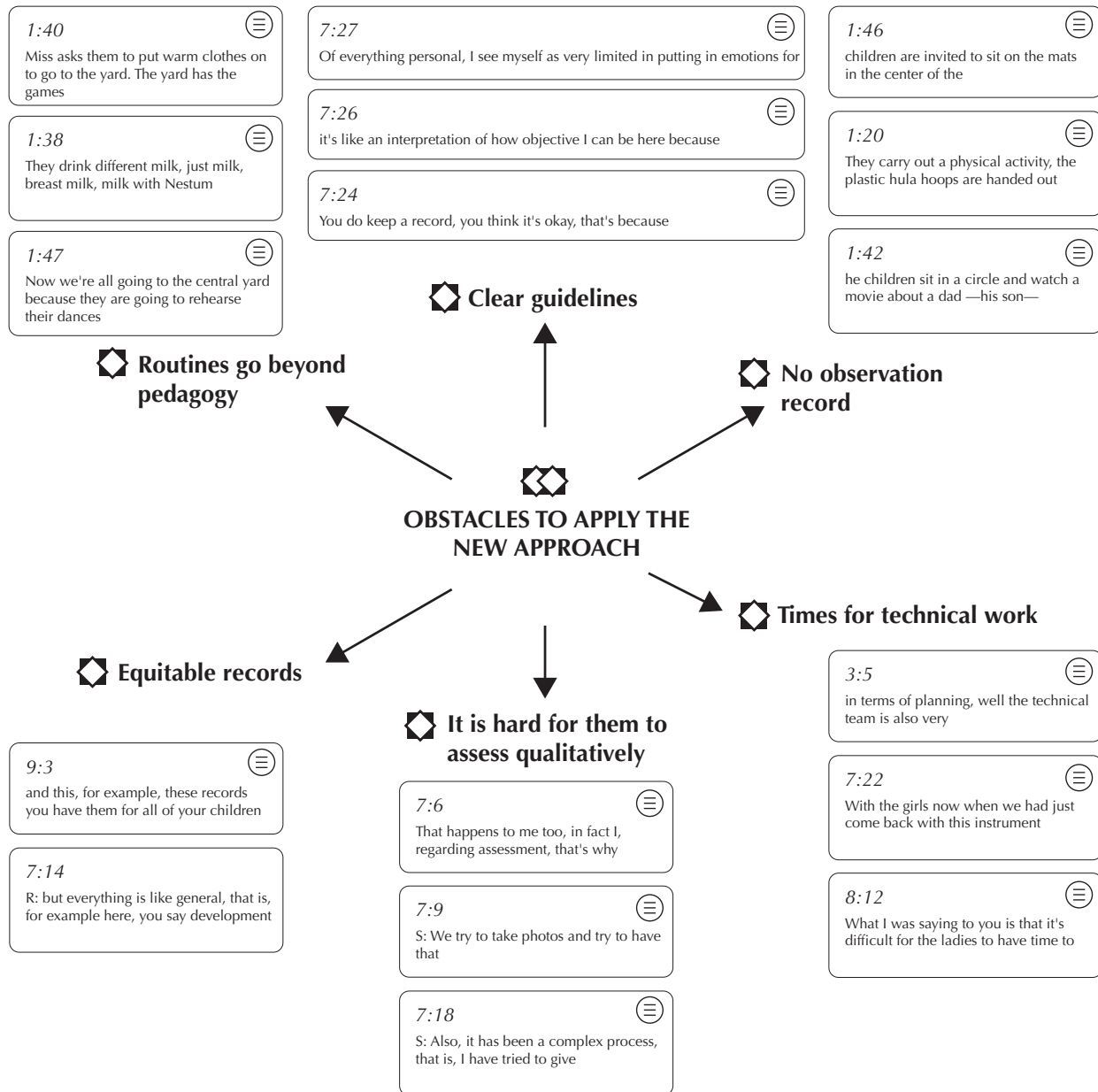


Figure 3. Category 3: Obstacles to apply the new evaluative model.
Source: Prepared by the authors.

Category 1: Validity of the records

For the educators being studied, it has not been an easy process to assimilate the new BCEP or the renewed institutional guidelines for assessment. In this regard, clear aspects are revealed in the various ways that are understood and carried out in authentic assessments and observation records, which means the quality and validity of these vary, as a minimum requirement of any assessment.



*Figure 4. Seeking formats for recording observations.
Source: Prepared by the authors.*

Validity implies consistency between the record of observation made with the objective to be assessed, so that valid and relevant information is collected. This principle is a priority in evaluative processes, because, as stated by Förster and Rojas-Barahona (2018), “the first element to consider in the quality of an assessment is the validity of the information collected with an instrument or in an evaluative situation” (p. 286), although the authors clarify that the concept of validity in classrooms differs significantly from that produced by measurements of the psychometric approach. Therefore, the point of analysis lies in the validity that can be found in the main assessment instrument used by educators at present: observation records. In this context, validity is understood as being the congruence between the information provided by the record and the objectives proposed in integrated planning.

Some of the responses from the educators regarding the information provided by these records were as follows :

When reading the structure of a record, there are questions such as: What did the boy or girl do? How... with what did he/she do it? With whom did he/she do it? In this respect: does this have an objective? because I see objectives here (Researcher)

The thing is, no, there isn't a clear one, that's why these records were made... of experiences that were seen during the day, so... we discussed it with the ladies, there were lots of records that we made that didn't point to a anything specifically.

There is no objective, but they are relevant events that the children did during the day, which attracted our attention and were recorded, but I had framed it with questions so that it would make sense to the ladies. (Educator 1)

In this case, the educator conducts a search to find ways to carry out organized work and adhere to the new requirements, but loses the focus of a valid assessment that allows pertinent decisions to be made during the process. The records are disaggregated, they do not report relevant information that allows systematization and

response to the stated objectives, which indicates that the professional perceives that this recording method is effective in avoiding having to use isolated memories for assessment, but has not yet been able to systematize and perfect the practice of this technique.

As already mentioned, the concept of assessment goes beyond the verification of content, but corresponds to a constant process of understanding and reflection on practice. This aspect stands out, because although there are difficulties in making timely and systematic records of all the children, there is constant reflection on the perceptions of the team's daily activities, which allows them to assess and rethink the planning according to the interest of the infants. This evaluative activity is still incipient—the educators recognize that it is in the process of improvement—and is based on perceptions and records that do not measure up to the validity of a deliberate and designed assessment process.

Supposedly with this type of registration it should now be much more noticeable... the same supervisor makes that suggestion: “ladies, they’re making life difficult by recording afterwards,” because one doesn’t recall the same as at the time, so supposedly now, with what we have done we can visualize more where we’re at, and that, because before we were also scattered... and ended up recording any other thing, so it didn’t give me an input to assess my planning for the month. (Educator 1).

Some educators delegate this task to the technical team, so the records become an accumulation of notes that report information on achievements based on previous perceptions and on the progress of the child’s natural development, without pedagogical objectives to support them.

We have an observation notebook that is handled by the technical staff and all non-repetitive actions are recorded every day in that observation notebook... or that was done on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and today they did something else: “Hello, Miss”, «[he/she] didn’t speak», «[he/she] did pouring», «today [he/she] painted and [he/she] never paints». (Educator 2).

Questions arise in the observation and analysis as to the form and circumstances in which these records are made: what pedagogical decisions originate from them? How are they systematized and analyzed? To what extent do they contribute to decision-making? How do they record all the children? Do the records serve to determine key aspects of the curricular design, progress in the development stage of the different areas, the significance of the experiences considering the children’s interests? Assessment is certainly a multi-dimensional aspect that involves a reflective activity that must be pedagogically intended, articulated, and anticipated in order to promote the integral development and well-being of the infants.

In other cases we observe that the records are made “when possible”, so they are not considered when taking decisions and taking into account the next planning, due to their absence or inconsistency.

How do you know to what extent that objective was achieved and how? Who achieved it and how did they do it? Or do you use your perception? (Researcher)

Yes, lets see... I also use my perception and my observation and I try to see the portfolios if the ladies managed to recall some of the planning this month. (Educator 3)

In other cases, it is clear what should be done and how to do it, but often the intentions remain in the theory and the daily routines and time management eventually do not allow them to be carried out, leaving the educators to resort to experience and memory.

And these guiding questions? (Researcher)

Those are the questions that the [educators] have to ask themselves when they're going to make records, which have to be filled out... There is the objective and there is the question and so, for example, we wanted to see "Express their preferences for some situations, objects, or games"... how do you express their preferences? What are those preferences, and what action does [he/she] perform?

Look, the thing for us is that, suddenly, last week I see the panel and it's blank, "ladies, the records"... and they start saying things like: "Do you remember when I did...? We played the bottle tops game and I don't know who threw it, ah yes, I told you that one. But what happens, which is the good thing, when I see a child's learning, I say it, "ladies, did you see that whoever is walking?", so it's internalized by everyone, suddenly I'm still writing down my things... So, often, when I go to fill this out, I know, so you make the comment almost blindly and that's it.

It should be more constant, but it's difficult, well that's the difficulty, sometimes the last week comes and we're just doing the records. (Educator 4).

In this case, the educator explains how they carry out the process of making the records with objectives and guiding questions, but acknowledges that it does not always happen, that is, the practice is not systematic. The analysis reveals an organization and clarity of the assessment process, but this does not take place in practice.

There are various realities, but there are focal points in the observations made. One of them is the assessment by the educators in relation to the greater time spent in the classroom that comes with the new approach, and they recognize that they need to refine and systematize how to carry out the qualitative assessment process.

And about the new approach, what do you think? What criticism would you make? (Researcher)

Improvement of course; I think that it's still better than before; it's necessary to complement it because what you tell me about putting the objectives in the folders is a very good idea. Maybe it's more about decision-making, value judgment, I don't know. I think that part needs to be complemented more... and, as I say, it gives us much more time to be in the classroom, to observe... to share with them, talk with the team. (Educator 1)

Yes, I suddenly lose focus too. (Educator 5)

What do you find most difficult? (Researcher)

Describing something, I find it very difficult. I'm more numerical, so this has cost me a of work, but even so... by working in this way we write down the action itself... there you can see that better than with a number, how, in process of achievement, in achievement, not achieved. (Educator 5)

The styles and the ways in which this new information is processed are varied, depending on disciplinary and curricular knowledge, and own experience. However, the questions and reflection about the process can be observed in all the educators and how they identify critical points and ways to improve it.

Similarly, the educators look for ways to make the records—with a greater or lesser level of systematicity—on the road towards overcoming the focus on achievement, so they must learn to identify the what, how, and why in the record, as well as deal with the circumstantial factors, lack of time, or shortfalls in the technical team, for which they resort to recollections of the day or the week, which implies that it is a superficial assessment that is not focused on the process and significance for better learning.

In the following quote, we can see an assessment process that is based on disaggregated recollections that are not valid, consistent, or reliable, as they are subject to the memory of the team.

We invite the team to assess even so, but it's like they're scared... we speak about it to them... there with them, so we see who has the greatest autonomy when it comes to hygiene, consumption, who says their name, who recognizes parts of their body. (Educator 6)

And they don't have a date? (Researcher)

No, they're doing it like that because sometimes we don't see the achievements in the month for a child, so we see it later [shows several records with few entries and others empty]. (Educator 6).

In this regard, the teams are often not prepared to carry out valid and pertinent assessment processes—in addition to curricular knowledge—stereotyping the children in minimal functions such as the development of autonomy, when in reality it is a relevant concept that goes beyond the acquisition of everyday actions related to the maturity of the child. Specifically, we observe that the concept of autonomy should be clearly understood, but it is not. Educators refer to the development of this ability, understood as washing hands, eating, or putting materials away. The following observation record shows this.

Put everything away! (15:50) I hear: Wow-wow! The children repeat expressions that they usually hear from the responsible adults... Put things away because the milk is coming! The educator is sitting down, she stands up and helps the children put the materials away; she also asks who is going to help with the placemats. I see that a boy puts the sheets away. I ask the educator if they always do this, and she answers: «Yes, we give them lots of autonomy». (Observation record)

In addition, during one of the interviews it was possible to identify the following:

In other words, in the sense that before it was about 9 o'clock that everyone went to the bathroom, not now. If the child feels the need to go to the bathroom, they can go to the bathroom; if he wants to drink water they can go to drink water, that's the flexibility and autonomy that allows them to develop in the classroom. I think that we have achieved something so far. (Educator)

Therefore, the referential indicators to assess autonomy are focused on instructional actions that respond to criteria that are somewhat removed from the theory to which constructivism refers, forming a critical point about which has to be reflected upon and resolved.

Another educator reflects on the assessment process, admitting that this system generates valuable information from infants, but she also recognizes that it does so insofar as they can do it and that it has been hard work to establish and systematize it as daily practice. She states that the learning trajectories can be completed with the inputs, but there are difficulties in having a particular and overall view of the level during the process, which leads to making decisions based on general perceptions, once again.

And this way of making records in the form, did you devise that? (Researcher)

Yes, we did.

Before we had a notebook... so we've been looking for the way that we can... make records... so in the end we decided to make pages and put the name of each child on them and if someone sees that they did something or improved an action... they noted it down and so it's also easier, because later I take them, read them, and I start with little points, I read, I read, I read, it's already along in the same vein and so I do an analysis, take a decision on how to work with those who are a little further back, so that they can achieve the ability that the others have, and also improve the others. (Educator 7)

And these records for September, did you do them? And where are they systematized? Or haven't they been systematized yet? (Researcher)

Not yet, it's because it's been very difficult for us, that's the truth... I've talked a lot with my colleagues, but the issue of assessment is hard; first because of the time we have, there's a lack of these periods where we can talk about what we seen on a daily basis. (Educator 7)

We can conclude from these examples that although the teams make observation records, they need to be guided and systematized to achieve the purpose for which they were established within the authentic assessment, despite the clear perception of the importance of demonstrating the progress of the children and respecting the right approach. Therefore, we can see that the inconsistencies are generated in the ignorance of the meaning of the authentic assessment, rather than the observation record as a synonym of this, but as a way of prioritizing the process over the achievement. The difficulties in making records are likewise related to systematicity and validity, which do not contribute to planning but, on the contrary, they lead to decisions being made based on perceptions and recollections of the successes or failures in practice.

Category 2: Evidence of the educational approach

When analyzing the records, various quotes emerge that are interpreted in codes, which include: freedom to choose, the game dominates the environment, all qualitative, different centers of interest, teamwork, and integrating the new approach. These codes can be interpreted as the existence of a vision of the child as a rights-bearing subject whose best interests are respected, with an adult mediator in the construction of learning, and although progress is observed in this perspective, there are still vestiges of the previous assistance-oriented approach, with an adult protagonist.

A first aspect of analysis is the organization of the spaces and materials for exploration. At all the levels observed, the materials provided by the institution are used, with a lesser or greater pedagogical initiative. The details and ways in which they are presented make it possible to improve the environments to encourage the curiosity of the children at each level.



*Figure 5. Photographic records of the areas.
Source: Prepared by the authors.*

These areas, organized and designed with the interests of the children in mind, have a positive impact on the experiences observed in practice. Coincidentally, these levels do not show difficulties with coexistence, since the infants are calm and interested in the dynamics provided.

In the educators' account of their perception of the new approach, we can see that it is clearly being consolidated, even though some educational teams experience it more than others, so constant adjustments have to be made for the well-being of the infants.

Although it has been difficult because it has been a process... because it's not an integrated plan that means the child is free of their experiences, no, there also has to be a focus for analysis, to see the achievement of their indicators... for example, if I see that... in this case one of the children is more deficient in the area of language, I try to find more experiences with him for language. (Educator 8)

We try to mediate a lot, there are lots of things that we lack... we question ourselves, every day there are things that, although we like them, I also question myself because I try to take each experience and take it like the day-to-day that they are going to have later. (Educator 9).

The path to the new approach is shaped in all the kindergartens observed. There are empowered pedagogical teams with initiative that carry out reflective practice to promote and enhance integral development in their classrooms, but they have not yet overcome the focus on achievement to the detriment of the process, as shown in the following examples:

The topic of handling more objects, the pencil, taking clips, brushes... was a weakness in the previous planning.

They didn't have that coordination very well developed so we worked on it too... to handle other instruments... so we had to prepare the space with materials. (Educator 7)

Is that why you have those strips on the shelves? (Researcher)

Trays, we have trays... last year we read a... because of the issue of preparing the spaces, I really liked it... Montessori-type and I felt that what we were working with had a lot to do with it, because I needed autonomous children in this classroom, who would be able to take out, tidy up [the materials] and that also favored that, the fact that they took out the tray of materials and took responsibility for that material, that they then kept it with their classmates, because it allows individual and collective work... so we decided and opted for that; it seemed good to all three of us, not just to me. I presented the idea, but to all three it made a lot of sense. (Educator 1)

We conclude that the educators and their teams that participated in the research carry out professional work oriented toward well-being, with respectful treatment of infants, which becomes a value in the practice of the kindergartens studied. Similarly, these kindergartens involve the approach, the role of the adult as a mediator of activity in the classroom, as well as the interests and rights of the children.

Category 3: Obstacles to apply the new evaluative model

This category includes codes that are related to manifest and observed impediments in the field of study, which are intertwined with the previous categories. For example, difficulties are seen with the type of records, the routines that cover assistance needs, organization of time, and the lack of knowledge regarding qualitative assessment in authentic learning scenarios.

In this case, the types of records are a constant difficulty and, if they are done, they are not systematized and often do not respond to the planned objectives. In addition to this, they do not report the learning or progress in development of each and every one of the children at the level, so the individual trajectories are largely completed based on the perceptions of the educator and the technical team. One of the educators reflects when reviewing the videos of her level:

I can say that, as regards the didactics established in my classroom, the protagonism of the children has been favored, which has allowed them gradually acquire learning that is meaningful and lasting over time through play and their interests. But I also consider that, as regards the qualitative aspect, there is still no clear organization that allows the systematization of the objectives and progress made by the children that provides me with individual and general information about the group according to the objectives worked on. (Video-elicitation, Educator 1).

In didactic terms, progress in the game is recognized as promoting learning, although assessment is perceived as a weakness. This implies and explains the differences in the opportunities and quality of learning for the infants, a key aspect that remains to be developed in practice, as shown by one educator:

The photographs presented, seen from a different perspective, helped me to realize that I have to change certain methodologies in the educational experience to achieve the objectives stated. I can also point out that my processes are still deficient; I can improve some aspects in terms of qualitative processes. (Photo-elicitation, Educator 2).

This activity involving photo-elicitation was significant for educators as an instance for reflection and feedback on their practice (García-Vera Bautista, 2017), which provides an opportunity for improvement with this technique that can habitually be extrapolated to meetings of educational teams to strengthen them and the reflective pedagogical documentation. (Fernández & Soto, 2019)

Another educator mentions the weaknesses that are observed in the evaluative practice related to the times and coverage of the records of each of the children.

You have a record on August 23, you have a record on August 16 and nothing else. (Researcher)

Yes, that's why... the thing is that there are others that done and others that aren't... They have directly ignored the format... because this is new, we've tried to incorporate it now with post-its, to clean up some that we had, but it has been a difficult process to incorporate the records. (Educator 1)

Yes, because... from August 16 to October 19, where we are now. (Researcher)

It's as if that child hadn't done anything. (Educator 1)

The coverage and monitoring of the records for each child is one of the educational teams' biggest weaknesses, because there is no evidence of valid records for all the children. In general, the records correspond to the infants who participate or show progress in their development, while the rest go unnoticed. This is an aspect that affects decision-making, since there is not a complete report of the assessment, which means that there are children not seen in the classroom, which should make the pedagogical team reflect.

Another aspect to improve is the weakness of the disciplinary and pedagogical competencies of the educators. Even though the institution carries out constant updates and training, this does not cover the universe of kindergartens. There is awareness of this reality, which has to be assumed by educators and other agents that promote professional teacher development.

Is it difficult to carry out the monitoring? (Researcher)

Yes... the issue of the assessment is complicated to me, it's like a weakness I think, I still find it difficult, the indicators are hard, to carry them out, it's very difficult for me to make the records... I always put it as a weakness in my self-assessment, because that's what I find hard. (Educator 6)

To conclude this category, we can also mention the existence of obstacles in the application of the authentic assessment determined by challenges in terms of professional teacher development, the technical consistency of the teams, and the quality and coverage of records during the process.

Discussion and Conclusions

After reviewing the results, we can state that the educators and technical teams studied attend to and respect the support and educational needs of infants in varied learning environments in accordance with the available resources and constantly seeking the well-being of the child. However, there are differences in the curricular styles and competencies of each educational team, which is observed in the gradual assumption of the new approach of the current BCEP.

To answer the research question, we conclude that the authentic assessment guided by the institution is in the process of being implemented, observing evidence of the work carried out by the educational teams, with different degrees of effectiveness, which depends on specific factors that it is possible to improve and which are linked to:

- Technical competencies in terms of assessment. There are challenges for the teams to fully understand the scope of the assessment process and resignify the culture of childhood to guide empowering, relevant, and meaningful pedagogical decisions. This aspect can be resolved with self-management initiatives regarding the knowledge of the educational teams within the kindergartens and from the institution that directs them, in terms of curricular renewal and training actions designed for educational improvement.
- The collaborative work of the teams should be promoted through spaces and times that are safeguarded for this activity, which implies improving time management, with the aim of promoting pedagogical action that responds to the needs and contexts of the infants.
- The empowerment of the educational approach that replaces the adult-centric vision of the old paradigm with the focus on the rights of the child and their greater good is still an aspect in the process of being improved. This is demonstrated in the data analyzed, where the participation of infants is relegated to the guidelines of the adults, to the detriment of free exploration and discovery in diverse settings.
- The quality, systematicity and permanence of the pedagogical reflection processes of the educational teams are aspects that require organization subject to constant assessment and monitoring criteria by the same teams and supervisors.
- The mechanisms of systematization and validity of the records that consider each and every one of the infants is one of the most important challenges facing the educational teams, since this directly affects the children by concealing the needs they show in their stages of individual development.

Meanwhile, in response to the objectives of identifying the assessment procedures and instruments and analyzing the instances and systematization in practice, the results suggest that there are aspects to improve in the coverage and quality of the information collected with the observation records, as the main instrument used by the educators to assess the children. These records do not always meet the validity criteria that enable feedback on the planning carried out, but only disaggregated records are made that cannot systematize the experience. For this reason, the evaluative aspect is relegated to perceptions and recollections of the infants' achievements regarding their stage of development, which is far from consistently favoring individual progress, so the educators do not move past superficial aspects of focused observation in achievements rather than the process (Hoyuellos & Riera, 2015)

On the other hand, an authentic assessment of the objectives during the learning process is an aspect that is not observed in practice, but rather it is specified at the end of the unit or even at the end of the semester, which reduces the possibilities of improving learning with timely records, avoiding the transience of time (Santos Guerra, 2018) Regarding this point, the leadership of the educator is significant, as well as their presence in the classroom and the guidelines they provide with their educational team to achieve a reflective and shared perspective during the pedagogical action in the process. The contributions by Rivera (2016) and Fernández and Soto (2019) on formative assessment and the pedagogical documentation to strengthen assessment processes in early childhood education shed light on how to improve and improve the observation and recording techniques with clear guidelines on what to observe and how to achieve that in practice. This aspect can be self-managed within the kindergartens by means of constant and reflective work on the practices themselves by means of support strategies and mentoring, analysis of images and videos of experiences in the classroom, and, finally, with collaborative work that favors pedagogical action that is respectful of early childhood, considered and designed to respond to the interests and needs of children and which facilitates infants' learning and development through exploration, curiosity, and their own play.

Meanwhile, when determining how decision-making is carried out, reflection about practice has a key role in the teams studied, recovering its importance in educational action (Elmore, 2010) In early care contexts, it is essential to look carefully at the process, due to the accelerated changes that take place at this stage of life (Hoyuelos & Riera, 2015) Focusing on these foundations, it is essential to strengthen the spaces for reflection

referring to the evaluative practice for decision-making in the planning of the educational teams in a systematic manner, with protected schedules and spaces for this activity, thus avoiding informality. Likewise, reflection should be part of the process to achieve an impact on the improvement and development of learning for infants.

In terms of the limitations of this study, we can also mention the geographical dispersal of the kindergartens and the travel times involved in the process. Despite this, the in-depth research was possible due to the opportunities provided by the university, which enabled the report on the results to be delivered to JUNJI in January 2019.

The results of this research were presented and validated at a technical conference held on June 18, 2019 with the JUNJI regional headquarters, along with the entire team of pedagogical advisers in the Metropolitan Region.

The research presented here considered a second part to analyze in the field the impact of the regional training carried out by the team of the course in Pedagogy in Early Childhood Education and Basic Education in May, June, and July 2019, which involved the participation of 350 people, including advisers, educators, and technical teams of the kindergartens of the Metropolitan Region.

There is undoubtedly still a lot of learning to be built with the educators, directors, and technical teams, which also recalls aspects of initial training that need to be considered once again in order to continue advancing with the line of research presented here.

The original article was received on June 28th, 2019
 The revised article was received on March 10th, 2020
 The article was accepted on March 26th, 2020

References

- Ahumada, P. (2005). La evaluación auténtica: un sistema para la obtención de evidencias y vivencias de los aprendizajes. *Revista Perspectiva Educacional, Formación de Profesores*, 45, 11-24. Retrieved from <http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=333329100002>
- Anijovich, R. & González, C. (2012). *Evaluar para aprender. Conceptos e instrumentos*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Aique.
- Battro, A. M. (2011). Neuroeducación: el cerebro en la escuela. In S. Lipina y M. Sigman (Eds.), *La Pizarra de Babel. Puentes entre las neurociencias, psicología y educación* (pp. 25-70). Buenos Aires: Libros del Zorzal.
- Condemarin, M. & Medina, A. (2000). *Evaluación de los aprendizajes. Un medio para mejorar las competencias lingüísticas y comunicativas*. Retrieved from http://www.rmm.cl/sites/default/files/usuarios/mcocha/doc/201011141500430.libro_mabel_condemarin_evaluacion_aprendizajes.pdf
- Elmore, R. (2010). *Mejorando la escuela desde la sala de clases*. Santiago de Chile: Área de Educación Fundación Chile. Retrieved from https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mgIIA4wr_8ljAlsURV-MLJLxPVMtJZdP/edit
- Fernández, I. & Soto, E. (2019). Documentación pedagógica: más allá del estándar. Imágenes de infancia en devenir. *Infancia, Educación y Aprendizaje (IEYA)*, 5(2) (edición especial), 330-334. <https://doi.org/10.22370/ieya.2019.5.2.1734>
- Flick, U. (2007). *Introducción a la investigación cualitativa*. Madrid: Morata.
- Förster, C. & Rojas-Barahona, C. (2008). Evaluación al interior del aula: una mirada desde la validez, confiabilidad y objetividad. *Pensamiento Educativo. Revista de Investigación Educativa Latinoamericana*, 43(2), 285-305. Retrieved from <http://pensamientoeducativo.uc.cl/files/journals/2/articles/443/public/443-987-1-PB.pdf>
- García-Vera Bautista, A. (2017). La foto-elicitación en la formación permanente de maestros de educación primaria. *Alteridad*, 12(2), 202-214. Retrieved from <https://alteridad.ups.edu.ec/index.php/alteridad/article/view/2.2017.06/1448>
- Gervilla, A. (2006). *El currículo de educación infantil*. Madrid: Narcea Ediciones.

- Gysling, J. (2007). Currículum nacional: desafíos múltiples. *Pensamiento Educativo, Revista de Investigación Educativa Latinoamericana*, 40(1), 335-350. Retrieved from <http://pensamientoeducativo.uc.cl/index.php/pel/article/view/410/839>
- Heckman, J. (2004). *Invertir en la infancia. Importancia del desarrollo de la primera infancia*. Retrieved from <http://www.encyclopedia-infantes.com/sites/default/files/textes-experts/es/2538/invertir-en-la-primera-infancia.pdf>
- Hoyuelos, A. & Riera M. (2015). *Complejidad y relaciones en educación infantil*. Barcelona: Ediciones Octaedro.
- Jensen, E. (2004). *Cerebro y aprendizaje. Competencias e implicaciones educativas*. Madrid: Narcea Ediciones.
- Malaguzzi, L. (2001). *La educación infantil en Reggio Emilia*. Barcelona: Ediciones Octaedro.
- Ministerio de Educación de Chile, Mineduc (2018). *Bases curriculares para educación parvularia*. Retrieved from https://parvularia.mineduc.cl/wp-content/uploads/sites/34/2018/03/Bases_Curriculares_Ed_Parvularia_2018.pdf
- Miles, M. & Huberman, A. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Mir, V., Gómez, M., Carreras, L., Valentí, M., & Nadal, A. (2004). *Evaluación y post evaluación en Educación Infantil*. Madrid: Ediciones Narcea.
- Peralta, M. (2018). Repensando el jardín maternal en épocas de posmodernidad. In L. Pitluk (Coord.), *Ideas y reflexiones de grandes maestros* (pp. 75-99). Rosario: Homo Sapiens Ediciones.
- Rivera, A. (2016). La evaluación para el aprendizaje en la educación infantil o parvularia. *Infancia, Educación y Aprendizaje (IEYA)*, 2(2), 106-117. <https://doi.org/10.22370/ieya.2016.2.2.596>
- Rodríguez, G., Gil, J., & García, E. (1999). *Metodología de la investigación cualitativa*. Málaga: Ediciones Aljibe.
- Santos Guerra, M. (2004). *Evaluación educativa 2. Un enfoque práctico de la evaluación de alumnos, profesores, centros educativos y materiales didácticos*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Magisterio del Río de la Plata.
- Santos Guerra, M. (2018). Evaluar es reflexionar con el corazón. In L. Pitluk (Coord.), *Ideas y reflexiones de grandes maestros* (pp. 101-133). Rosario: Homo Sapiens Ediciones.
- Sayago, S. (2014). El análisis del discurso como técnica de investigación cualitativa y cuantitativa en las ciencias sociales. *Cinta de Moebio*, 49, 1-10. Retrieved from <https://www.moebio.uchile.cl/49/sayago.html>
- Scientific Software Development GmbH. (2017). ATLAS.ti (versión 8.1) [software]. Scientific Software Development GmbH. 2017. Retrieved from <https://atlasti.com/product/v8-windows/>
- Stake, R. (2010). *Investigación con estudio de casos*. Madrid: Ediciones Morata.
- Taylor, S. J. & Bogdan, R. (1992). *Introducción a los métodos cualitativos en investigación. La búsqueda de los significados*. Madrid: Paidós.
- Yin, R. K. (1993). *Applications of case study research*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.