

IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO SURVIVE: THE RIGHT TO WELL-BEING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

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Theme

- Measurement issues related to child well-being and understanding children's lives

Subtheme

- Subjective well-being

Theme: Indicators are of the greatest importance in assisting the formulation of public policies to promote full development especially when it is possible to compare long term data showing in what areas the conditions of young lives is improving and where issues need to be prioritized. Such social data are especially important in a country like Brazil where very different social classes and different ethnic groups, religions and beliefs co-exist in the same territory, a coexistence which is characterized by extreme social inequality. In Brazil child indicators tend to be concentrated in issues of survival, and access to critical services such as health, education, and social assistance. This paper examines the importance of advancing other constructs which delve into other dimensions of the lives of young children such as play, culture, the environment and well-being. This theme fits in with the Conference themes especially the discussion of the development of social indicators and social policy connected to well-being.

Objectives: Analyze the problems related to the assessment and measurement of well-being in early childhood in Brazil.

Method: While set in the context of social indicators, this paper concentrates on qualitative issues which examines from a theoretical and historical perspective the problems related to the assessment and measurement of child well-being in Brazil. We analyze statistical data from the Brazilian Census Bureau, and qualitative and quantitative data from such other sources as the Observatory of the First Law on Early childhood, and CIESPI. From CIESPI we rely on forums of young children who use pictorial means to describe their lives in the city We also use a community project that trained six young people to interact with, listen to and play with young children, and interviews with parents, child care providers and key informants in low-income communities. Information also comes from various analyses of the Brazilian Network on Early Childhood, an association with over 200 institutional members, including the details of official municipal early childhood plans in sixty cities.

Results: Despite the recent attention paid to early childhood in Brazil and the construction of a new framework for looking at the details of the lives of small children, it was a long path toward children being considered the subject of rights. Social indicators are an instrument of power with the possibility of promoting the exercise of control. Child well-being is understood within a multicultural and multi-disciplinary framework encompassing a wide range of approaches and contexts.