CADERNOS
GESTÃO PÚBLICA
E CIDADANIA

CALL FOR PAPERS

FROM THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK TO BRAZIL'S NATIONAL INTEGRATED EARLY CHILDHOOD POLICY: TRAJECTORIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE BRAZILIAN STATE

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Papers must be submitted by February 28, 2027

OVERVIEW

The consolidation of early childhood as a core policy agenda of the Brazilian state is one of the most significant developments in contemporary social policy. The enactment of the Legal Framework for Early Childhood (Law No. 13,257/2016) represented the normative institutionalization of a new framing of the policy problem, grounded in the centrality of holistic child development, intersectoral action, and shared responsibilities across levels of government. In 2025, the establishment of the National Integrated Early Childhood Policy (Política Nacional Integrada da Primeira Infância - PNIPI) marked a transition from a legal framework toward a more structured architecture for integrated public policy, supported by dedicated policy instruments, institutional arrangements, and coordination and governance mechanisms.

This trajectory unfolded against a backdrop of considerable political and institutional turbulence. Between 2019 and 2022, Brazil experienced a period of democratic weakening and policy deinstitutionalization, particularly in the social policy domain. Administrative reforms, budgetary retrenchment, and shifts in policy discourse affected several previously consolidated policy agendas. Nevertheless, early childhood remained present in both the normative framework and public debate, sustained by political and institutional coalitions of different kinds involving organized civil society, legislators, public officials, international organizations, and epistemic communities.

Viewed through the lenses of agenda-setting theories (Kingdon), the Advocacy Coalition Framework (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith), and scholarship on institutionalization and path dependence, this trajectory raises a number of important questions. What mechanisms account for the relative resilience of the early childhood agenda at a time when other social policies were being rolled back? Does this agenda possess a distinctive form of "institutional strength," derived from the combination of scientific

evidence, social mobilization, and robust normative foundations? To what extent does its stability reflect the consolidation of a policy community capable of sustaining continuity across different government administrations?

The creation of the federal Subsecretariat for the National Integrated Early Childhood Policy in 2025 further reinforces this process. Tasked with articulating and coordinating federal government bodies and providing technical assistance to different federal agencies and subnational governments, this institutional structure seeks to consolidate policy instruments, strengthen implementation arrangements, and ensure the strategic and budgetary sustainability of the PNIPI. From the perspective developed by Lascoumes and Le Galès, public policies can be understood as systems of instruments - regulatory, financial, organizational, and informational - whose effects depend on their internal coherence, the capacity for coordination among actors, and their fit with the institutional contexts in which they operate.

Implementing the PNIPI, however, requires particularly sophisticated implementation arrangements. Intersectoral action - across education, health, social assistance, child protection, and other policy sectors - substantially increases organizational complexity and requires strong and multifaceted state capacities. These extend beyond technical and administrative capacities to include political-relational capacities, interorganizational coordination, conflict management, and the integrated production and use of information. Effective intersectoral arrangements depend on professionalized bureaucracies, stable coordination structures, shared monitoring systems, and institutional mechanisms capable of sustaining cooperation across policy sectors over time. The uneven distribution of these capacities, particularly at the municipal level, represents one of the main challenges to policy consolidation.

From a federalism perspective, early childhood policy also highlights structural tensions among collaboration, cooperation, and competition. Brazilian federalism combines shared responsibilities with significant fiscal and administrative asymmetries. Consolidating the PNIPI requires federal mechanisms for policy steering, technical assistance, and resource redistribution by the federal and state governments, while also preserving municipal autonomy and capacity for local adaptation. Scholarship on multilevel governance (Hooghe & Marks) and cooperative federalism suggests that effective coordination requires institutional arenas for intergovernmental negotiation, appropriate incentives, and intergovernmental trust. At the same time, competition over resources, political visibility, and budget priorities may undermine collaborative efforts, revealing the structural ambivalence of Brazilian federalism.

The intersection between early childhood policies and other public policies and strategic programs also calls for an understanding of government action as a dynamic and relational field in which policymakers must address potential overlaps, conflicts, and ambiguities arising at the interface between policies and throughout intersectoral implementation. For example, interactions between integrated early childhood policies and the National Care Policy, the National Urban Development Policy, the National Policy to Combat Violence against Women, and the National Policy on Climate Change remain underexplored in the literature and warrant more systematic empirical and analytical investigation,

particularly regarding coordination across policy agendas, the alignment of policy instruments, and the production of synergistic or contradictory effects in government action.

Budgeting and financing constitute another central dimension of this agenda. The integration of public policies for early childhood faces the challenge of overcoming the sectoral fragmentation of the budget cycle. Although intersectorality has become a widely embraced policy principle, planning, resource allocation, and budget execution remain largely organized according to sector-specific logics. Consolidating the PNIPI requires coordination across multiyear plans, annual budget laws, earmarked funds, and intergovernmental transfers, as well as mechanisms for tracking and integrating expenditures dispersed across different policy areas. Moreover, in a context of fiscal constraints and distributive conflicts, the financial sustainability of the policy depends on the capacity to stabilize funding sources, align intergovernmental incentives, and reduce budget volatility.

Against this backdrop, Cadernos Gestão Pública e Cidadania (CGPC) invites researchers to submit scholarly articles that examine, from diverse theoretical and methodological perspectives, the challenges facing the Brazilian state in consolidating early childhood public policies. The special issue welcomes qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research, including case studies and teaching cases.

The special issue particularly seeks contributions that engage with theories of public action and public policy, as well as scholarship on governance, state capacity, federalism, and policy integration. Submissions should provide analytically rigorous accounts of the formulation, institutionalization, implementation, financing, and evaluation of the PNIPI.

TOPICS OF INTEREST

The following non-exhaustive list outlines possible topics for submission:

1. Agenda Formation, Stability, and Resilience

- The inclusion of early childhood on federal and subnational government agendas;
- Advocacy coalitions, epistemic communities, and narrative strategies;
- Policy agenda resilience in a context of democratic weakening (2019-2022);
- Institutionalization processes and the normative "strength" of early childhood policy;
- Mechanisms linking problem, policy, and politics streams in the early childhood agenda.

2. Early Childhood Policy in the Transnational Policy Arena

- Early childhood policy in the international circulation of public policies;
- Processes of policy diffusion, policy transfer, and policy translation;
- The role of multilateral organizations and non-governmental philanthropic foundations in shaping the early childhood policy agenda;
- Advocacy coalitions, epistemic communities, and narrative strategies from a transnational perspective;

- Comparative studies of different models and pathways for implementing early childhood public policies worldwide.

3. Multilevel Governance and Federalism

- Intergovernmental coordination and collaborative federal arrangements;
- Intergovernmental arrangements and federal policy-steering mechanisms;
- The role of federal and state governments in providing technical and financial support to municipalities;
- Territorial inequalities and variation in state capacities;
- Relationships among decentralization, recentralization, and capacities for intergovernmental coordination.

4. Network Governance and Intersectoral Action

- Intersectoral arrangements across education, health, social assistance, and child protection;
- Organizational barriers to policy integration;
- Public leadership, bureaucracies, and interorganizational coordination;
- Formal and informal networks of cooperation;
- Instruments for intersectoral coordination and mechanisms for policy integration.

5. State Capacity and Implementation Arrangements

- Technical-administrative, political-relational, and fiscal capacities;
- Organizational structures and institutional sustainability;
- Variation in PNIPI implementation across different subnational contexts;
- Capacities for coordination, monitoring, and adaptation in intersectoral policies.

6. Budgeting, Financing, and Sustainability

- Financing instruments for early childhood policies;
- Challenges of intersectoral budget integration;
- Strategic and fiscal sustainability;
- Relationships between the budget cycle and integrated governance;
- Mechanisms for expenditure tracking and alignment, including budget tagging and integrated budgeting.

7. Integrated Early Childhood Policies at the Interface with Other Public Policies and Programs

- Networked government action and the integration of early childhood policies with sectoral policies and programs;
- Challenges, enabling conditions, and effects arising from the coexistence of integrated early childhood policy with other public policies and programs;
- Policy interactions and policy mixes, including overlaps, complementarities, and conflicts among policy instruments;

- Coordination or fragmentation effects resulting from the coexistence of multiple government agendas.

8. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Evidence

- Indicator systems and intersectoral data infrastructures;
- The use of evidence in policy formulation and implementation;
- Accountability, transparency, and institutional learning;
- Challenges in measuring outcomes in intersectoral and long-term public policies.

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SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Theoretical or theoretical-empirical articles will be accepted in Portuguese, English, or Spanish, provided they comply with the general formatting requirements and the guidelines described under the "Articles" section of the Author Guidelines, available at Author Guidelines.

Submitted manuscripts must not have been previously published, accepted for publication, or be under consideration by another journal. Suitable submissions will undergo the journal's peer-review process.

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