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Summary

The development of evaluation tools for assessing the quality of early education institutions

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This paper shows the genesis of the evaluation tools for assessing the quality of early education institutions, including the period up to the 1980s during which this form of exploration was neglected due to the prevalence of positivistically-oriented research, the analytical and correlative-quantitative assessment of the quality of institutions in the 1990s, and the contemporary holistic-interpretive qualitative research.

The reluctance of researchers to deal with this issue was confronted by working parents interested in the quality of their child's education in institutional contexts. This coincided with the time of the 'quiet revolution' in developmental psychology, when the shift in the scientific paradigm influenced the view of the child as a social and cultural being.

The development of evaluation tools for assessing the quality of institutions in the 1980s identified the analytical, structural and static quality indicators (environment, equipment, materials and toys, number of children per teacher, size and age profile of educational groups, teacher education, consistent presence of a teacher in an educational group and professional experience of teachers and headmasters) and correlated them with the developmental achievements of children. Following these correlative-quantitative assessments, the 1990s saw a development of inclusive evaluation tools for global institutional assessment, including the well-known Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) and Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS). These and other tools were initially used for evaluation purposes, increasingly becoming instruments of education, reflexion and self-evaluation for early education institutions in interpretive-qualitative research. This paper further discusses the (im)possibility of defining the quality of an early education institution as seen from multiple perspectives and, in relation to this issue, the application of the tools in different research models for assessing the quality of early education institutions.

Keywords: quality of early education institutions, tools for assessing the quality of early education institutions, Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale, correlative-quantitative assessments, interpretive-qualitative research.