Public libraries and school libraries: Major differences

Bibliotecas públicas e bibliotecas escolares:
distinções fundamentais

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Abstract

Public and school libraries in Brazil have not yet been universalized. Many are in a precarious state, and their functions are often confused. In order to demonstrate that such reality persists, some projects that were submitted to an Official Announcement (call for proposals), called "*Construindo uma Minas Leitora*" (Building an active reading *Minas* State), issued by the state of *Minas Gerais*, Brazil, for the establishment of public libraries, were selected and analyzed. Most of the projects evaluated showed that the function, target public, collection, and services offered by public and school libraries are often confused. Based on the literature and basic documents used in the formulation of the concepts of public and school libraries, it was found that the lack of public policies related to these two types of libraries leads to a vicious circle of lack of experience and knowledge in these libraries. Thus, the same precarious and inadequately structured existing models are used. Such situation, which results from the lack of public policies since the birth of the Brazilian nation, have persisted into the 21st century.

Keywords: Government policy. *Minas Gerais*. Public libraries. School libraries.

Resumo

As bibliotecas públicas e as bibliotecas escolares no Brasil ainda não foram universalizadas, muitas existem precariamente, e é comum que suas funções sejam confundidas. Com o objetivo de demonstrar como essa realidade persiste, foram analisados os projetos selecionados no edital "Construindo uma Minas Leitora", do governo mineiro para criação de bibliotecas públicas. Verificou-se, por meio dos documentos, que em grande parte dos projetos submetidos existe uma confusão entre a função, público, acervo e serviços de bibliotecas públicas e escolares. Partindo da literatura e de documentos basilares para a concepção dessas duas bibliotecas, demonstrou-se finalmente que a falta de políticas públicas relacionadas a esses dois tipos de bibliotecas gera um círculo vicioso em que a falta da experiência e conhecimento das bibliotecas reproduz, nas demandas, os mesmos modelos precários e indefinidos existentes. Tal situação, decorrente da falta de política pública desde os primórdios da nação brasileira, persiste até o século XXI.

Palavras-chave: *Política pública. Minas Gerais. Bibliotecas públicas. Bibliotecas escolares.*

Introduction

Public libraries and school libraries should be universal in countries with advanced education system and culture. From the information policy point of view, school libraries are included in the concept of infrastructural policies defined by Rowlands (1996), i.e., the policies that apply across society setting the economic social and context for information behavior. On the other hand, public libraries are inserted in horizontal policies, which apply across the entire information sector. However, in Brazil, on the one side, the data from the *Sistema Nacional de Bibliotecas Públicas* (SNBP, National Public Library System), and on the other side, the data from the *Ministério da Educação* (MEC, Brazilian Ministry of Education) demonstrate that these libraries cannot yet be found in all Brazilian municipalities and schools. Moreover, when they are found, in general they do not get good evaluations (Campello *et al.*, 2012). Paiva (2008, p. 17) highlighted that in Brazil:

> […] investments are often made in specialized and university libraries, but no corresponding investment is made in school and public libraries, which are vital for the training of competent readers. These readers will be the future professionals and academics who will use these libraries and who will ultimately be the citizens of an effective Information Society.

According to SNBP data, in April 2015, there were 6,102 community, municipal, state, and federal public libraries in Brazil distributed into the 5,570 municipalities within the 26 states and the Brazilian Federal District (Sistema Nacional de Bibliotecas Públicas, 20--). Nevertheless, these libraries' basic data are subject to frequent variations. They are institutions that depend largely on the recognition and support of administrators, and since there is still no law that requires their creation or that requires administrators to keep them open, their establishment and maintenance rely on the actions of mayors and governors. Therefore, Brazilian public libraries are often established and closed thus generating close-to-reality official data but not accurate data (Ferraz, 2015). The Catalan Library System Law (Barcelona, 2003), for example, stipulates that municipalities with more than five thousand inhabitants must have public libraries.

With regard to school libraries, according to the Qedu Portal (a portal that provides users with information on the education quality in Brazil), which contains 2015 School Census data of the *Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira* (INEP, National Institute for Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira), only 36.7% of public and private schools have a school library (QEDu, 20--). On the other hand, data from the *Anuário Brasileiro da Educação Básica de 2016* (2016 Brazilian Yearbook for Basic Education) (Cruz; Monteiro, 2016), which is based on information provided by the primary sources represented by the Demographic Census and the *Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios* (PNAD, National Household Sample Survey), show that: 14.0% of daycare centers and 12.3% of preschools have a Reading Room; 43.7% of Elementary and Middle schools have a Library and/or a Reading Room; and 87.7% of High schools have a Library and/or a Reading Room. It is worth emphasizing that although there is a distinction between library and reading room, educational reports do not normally distinguish one from the other, not to mention that having a school library may only mean that the school has a room full of books and other materials (Paiva, 2016).

The absence of these two types of libraries, which started in the beginning of the republic and has persisted into the twenty-first century, has brought to the society and academic circles the idea that if we do not have both types, we should have at least one of them with combined functions. In a national librarianship conference in 1959, Etelvina Lima argued that in the absence of school libraries in the country, public library services should serve the needs of first and second graders (Fonseca, 1983). However, the apparent solution brings a conceptual error that was pointed out by Fonseca (1983), who said that of all types of libraries, public library is the one that does not have a clearly differentiated user profile. On the other hand, nothing could be more diverse in a school library, which is very specialized and is closely related to educational purposes and school users. Public libraries started to effectively assist students from the 1970s onwards due to an educational policy that implemented the "*pesquisa*

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escolar" (school research project) as a new school practice in the educational reform of 1971³, without, however, creating a library structure in schools. Analyzing these changes, Paiva (2008, p. 36) concluded that:

> The major problem of having public libraries fulfilling the role and purpose of school library is that it causes a 'route deviation'. When targeting the school public, public libraries shift the focus from the continued support to education – the so-called lifelong learning – which should provide services for ordinary citizen or individuals of all ages, who no longer attend school. Due to this 'route deviation', school libraries and public libraries services have not evolved as expected. They are not focused on their potential users, i.e., citizens in general.

The idea of opening the access of school libraries to the community surrounding the school has also become increasingly widespread, once more disregarding the differences between these two types of libraries, the complexity of school organization and functioning, and the problems it could cause.

Investigating the activities of children's libraries in *São Paulo*, Wada (1985) concluded that the way in which these libraries worked, [at that time] they were actually a simple extension of the classroom. In other words, they (ineffectively) played the role of School Libraries, which were practically nonexistent in the country and inadequately served their public, composed mainly of children and young people who seek libraries for school research projects and other assignments.

Put another way, by serving students instead of functioning as a school library, these public libraries fail to serve their intended purpose. As for the use of libraries, the author strongly argued that the time availability (do families have time to take children to public libraries?) and physical accessibility (location) affect the "interest" of using a library. Such interest is thus seen more as real opportunities than an as an option. The author also points out how some factors related to the libraries can select users despite the discourse that public library is for everyone. According to the author, library "location" and "opening hours" are two examples of selectivity factors related to library access. Some examples of selectivity factors related to library use include "lack of staff", lack of material resources (including the library collection); "physical facilities"; "rules and norms"; staff's "prejudice", and organizational structure.

When referring to the *Plano de Assistência às Bibliotecas Escolares* (Work Plan for Assistance to School Libraries), which was developed to be implemented by the *Divisão de Extensão da Biblioteca Pública de Minas Gerais* (Extension Division of the Public Library *Minas Gerais* of Tito, 1961), Campello (2007) highlighted the level of idealism of the proposal to bring together two institutions in precarious situations for such period of time. The author acknowledged that the plan could seriously affect public libraries, which often struggle to survive due to inadequate funding or support and shortage of staff.

In an important study carried out in 1978, Ferreira also addressed public and school libraries, reinforcing that the conceptual issue must precede the search for pragmatic solutions. The author first pointed out that the objectives and purpose of these two institutions should be clearly stated. Accordingly, she defined public library based on the Unesco Public Library Manifesto (1968) and summarized their objectives as follows:

> Stimulate education, provide information, promote culture, and provide access to leisure to every member of the community, without distinction of race, color, nationality, age, sex, religion, language, social status, or level of education so that they can enjoy it *freely and equally* (Ferreira, 1978, p.11, emphasis added).

The author then lists the responsibilities of school libraries based on the American Association of School Libraries (AASL), which has a:

> […] broad view of school library, which does not impose restrictions or limits on the use of print material resources and makes use of all kinds of instructional resources as basic tools to support teaching and learning, [which, however,] is not yet sufficiently implemented in our educational system (Ferreira, 1978, p.11).

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³ Brasil. Law nº 5.692 – August 11th, 1971.

Moreover, the author describes the objectives of the American Library Association (ALA), summarizing them as an essential requirement: the school library must be integrated into the curriculum of the school it serves (Ferreira, 1978). Ferreira concludes that although public and school libraries are different and have different objectives, proposals concerning the substitution of one for another are common. Referring to the study carried out by Lima (1959), Ferreira describes the failed attempts to combine these two libraries at the beginning of the twentieth century in the United States. The result was that the objectives of these two types of libraries could not be achieved (Ferreira, 1978). The reason is that the "staff", the "location", and the "collections" of the combined libraries were not able to serve their two different target groups. Furthermore, the common barriers faced by developing countries, which hinder the development of these libraries (Ferreira, 1978) have been compounded by even greater obstacles. The author emphasizes that the evaluation of a library must be made based on its objectives, which are different in the case of these two types of libraries. Additionally, some factors must be considered for the accomplishment of the objectives and purposes of these libraries: substantial and adequate "collection"; "ease access" to their materials; properly trained "staff"; and adequate adaptation of their "facilities" (Ferreira, 1978).

In a study published in 2005, Macedo shared the views of Belluzzo, one of the collaborators of the work, on public libraries serving the purposes of school libraries:

> Whether or not a public library should serve students supporting the learning process is a very controversial issue, which has led to favorable and contrary opinions. One question remains unanswered: if there are not school libraries available, where can students get support regarding their research projects and develop a taste for reading and where can they have access to information from traditional information sources other than just the Internet? [...]. However, there is a critical issue to be considered, i.e., the fact that public libraries are transformed into providers of service to support students and educators – furthermore, this leads to other misunderstandings, such as the traditionally accepted conception that having some material resources is enough for the developing a taste for reading (Macedo, 2005, p.340).

Ferreira (1978) reported a rare case in Hawaii, where a unique type of library was established, not because of the precariousness of public and school libraries, but aiming at using a single collection more effectively and provide more efficient and comprehensive services in order to include out-of-towners. In this case, the requirements of the two libraries were met through a single multi-purpose library, serving both communities, school and surrounding communities. The criteria for establishing these libraries were very specific: small rural communities with projections of low population growth; easily accessible location for students and community members; located within easy access to the school; serve communities in need for this new type of library; possibility of providing a bookmobile or other types of mobile services; communities committed to effectively collaborate with the project of this unique library and with minimum conditions for hiring and maintaining specialized staff; and communities where teachers and administrators would effectively support and cooperate with the local library. In other words, there were several conditions and demanding commitments of those involved; it was not a precarious and provisional arrangement that would become permanent.

In 1999, Macedo, published an exploratory study based on answers to the questionnaire of the Public Library System of *São Paulo*, emphasizing the coincidence or confusion between the purposes or aims of public and school libraries. The author clearly discusses the problems faced by public libraries in small municipalities, which do not have formal structure and recognition. However, the main issue addressed was the use of the public library. She argues that the major reason for seeking any type library, adult libraries, children libraries, or libraries in general, is for conducting research projects, given the lack of municipal libraries (Macedo, 1999). The author added that that there was no relationship or integration between public and school libraries in the municipalities, i.e., she observed public libraries providing services that should be provided by school libraries. Finally, among the many other challenges faced by public libraries, Macedo (1999) highlighted the challenge of defining the target audience of public libraries and, at the same time, finding ways to effectively serve students.

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In the aforementioned study conducted by Campello (2007), the author summarizes the problems related to the proposal to replace school libraries with the public libraries and vice versa:

> […] of proposing solutions based on deficiencies or inadequacies is clear; it weakens both institutions (public and school libraries), and does not solve the problem. Another issue […] is the ineffectiveness of generic proposals since the diverse conditions of libraries in Brazilian municipalities make prescriptive proposals irrelevant, without a consistent theoretical foundation and based only on personal opinions and idealism. Proposing that public libraries play the role of serving students in addition to coordinating the municipal school library system only makes sense under certain circumstances peculiar to that specific municipality. Finally, it can be said that the pedagogical mediation problem is not solved by a simplistic solution of having staff working in the reference sector of public libraries to help students with their assignments. We are talking about a meaningful learning process that involves knowledge production and acquisition informational skills, which occurs during the school years and require frequent, regular, and adequately mediated use of a variety of information sources. Thus, the school library is the place for this to happen. It is within easy reach of students, who can access library resources at *any time*, meeting their specific and peculiar learning needs (Campello, 2007, p. 5).

Campello (2007) last discussed a crucial issue that is valid only for public libraries that have already reached a level of quality enabling them to reach their specific goals: how can these public libraries support school libraries interested in improving their didactic strategies based on the use of information?

Unfortunately, even public administrators have limited vision due to the lack of experience with these two types of libraries. The same will happen to the school children and the community of these municipalities, confirming the unfortunate experience of the architect and urbanist, Lúcio Costa, who, when questioned about the reason why *Brasília* would not have a library, said that he had not included a library in his project because he had never seen libraries actually working in Brazil (Fonseca, 2007).

The consequences of this conceptual confusion and notable lack of both libraries can be faced today through the analysis of projects submitted to the official announcement issued by the *Minas Gerais* (MG) government for the establishment of municipal public libraries. This issue will be discussed based on this analysis and on the definitions and missions of public and school libraries provided below.

Public libraries

The Unesco Public Library Manifesto (1994) established twelve missions of public libraries, according to the new reality of the late twentieth century:

– Creating and strengthening reading habits in children from an early age.

– Supporting both individual and self-conducted education as well as formal education at all levels.

– Providing opportunities for personal creative development.

– Stimulating the imagination and creativity of children and young people.

– Promoting awareness of cultural heritage, appreciation of the arts, scientific achievements and innovations.

– Providing access to cultural expressions of all performing arts.

– Fostering inter-cultural dialogue and favoring cultural diversity.

– Supporting the oral tradition.

– Ensuring access for citizens to all sorts of community information.

– Providing adequate information services to local enterprises, associations and interest groups.

– Facilitating the development of information and computer literacy skills.

– Supporting and participating in literacy activities and programs for all age groups, and initiating such activities if necessary (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1994).

It can be seen that the support to formal and informal education is only one of the pillars of public libraries. Besides this, many other missions are defined that include the support to local culture, to the dissemination of useful information to the community, to making new technologies available and enable their use, and to promoting reading habits.

This document also contains the characteristics and purposes of these libraries.

> The Public Library is the local center of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users. The services of the public library are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status. Specific services and materials must be provided for those who cannot, for whatever reason, use the regular services and materials [...]. All age groups must find material relevant to their needs. Collections and services have to include all types of appropriate media and modern technologies as well as traditional materials. High quality and relevance to local needs and conditions are fundamental. Material must reflect current trends and the evolution of society, as well as the memory of human endeavor and imagination. Collections and services should not be subject to any form of ideological, political or religious censorship, nor commercial pressure (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1994, *online*).

In the 1990s, the topic of public libraries was strongly recurrent, according to Cesarino (2007, p.42).

> Governments were being pressured to discuss the design of a new global society in world forums: Information Society, which brings to the fore the issues of new information technologies, social inclusion, informational competence, functional illiteracy, and the role of librarians as a strategy for the development of educated and informed communities.

In 2010, the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) published the second edition of the Ifla Public Library Service Guidelines, reaffirming the guidelines of the 1994 Manifesto and highlighting the different characteristics of the public and collections of public libraries and acknowledging their importance for maintenance of a democratic society by providing:

> [...] resources and services in a variety of means to meet the needs of individual and groups for educational, information, and personal development including recreational and leisure. They have an important role in the development and maintenance of a democratic society by giving the individual access to a wide and varied range or knowledge, ideas and opinions (International Federation of Library Association, 2010, p.2).

The idea of lifelong education can be strengthened by introducing some concepts such as people empowerment through public libraries since,

> [...] learning does not end with the completion of formal education but is, for most of us, a lifelong activity. In an increasingly complex society people will need to acquire new skills at various stages of their life. The public library has an important role in assisting this process (International Federation of Library Association, 2010, p.2).

School Libraries

There are two documents that are vital to the broad understanding of school libraries. They were published jointly by the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco), they are the Manifesto for School Library, 1999 and the School Library Guidelines, 2002. In the first document, the mission of the school library is described as to offer "learning services,

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books and resources that enable all members of the school community to become critical thinkers and effective users of information in all formats and media" (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization 1999, p.1). The goals of the school library, which are integral with the educational process, are as follows:

– Supporting and enhancing educational goals as outlined in the school's mission and curriculum.

– Developing and sustaining in children the habit and enjoyment of reading and learning, and the use of libraries throughout their lives.

– Offering opportunities for experiences in creating and using information for knowledge, understanding, imagination and enjoyment.

– Supporting all students in learning and practicing skills for evaluating and using information, regardless of form, format or medium, including sensitivity to the modes of communication within the community.

– Providing access to local, regional, national and global resources and opportunities that expose learners to diverse ideas, experiences and opinions.

– Organizing activities that encourage cultural and social awareness and sensitivity.

– Working with students, teachers, administrators and parents to achieve the mission of the school.

– Proclaiming the concept that intellectual freedom and access to information are essential to effective and responsible citizenship and participation in a democracy.

– Promoting reading and the resources and services of the school library to the whole school community and beyond.

On the other hand, the 2002 Guidelines were produced "to give support and guidance to the library community" (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2002, p.3) and are divided into 5 very detailed sections: mission and policy, resources, staff, programs and activities, and promotion of library services.

In addition to these two international documents, in Brazil, seeking to minimize the flaws of the school library conception, the *Grupo de Estudos em Biblioteca Escolar (Gebe) da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais* (UFMG) (Gebe, The Institute of Studies on School Librarianship at the Federal University of *Minas Gerais* (UFMG)) have produced the Parâmetros do Gebe para bibliotecas escolares (Gebe School Library Parameters), which are described as follows:

> A physical and exclusive space that sufficiently accommodates a collection, space for user services and activities and for technical and administrative services; a variety of information materials that meet the interests and needs of its users; collection organized according to bibliographic standards, in which materials can be easily found and retrieved; access to digital information (internet); space for learning; administered by a qualified librarian with adequate (in quantity and qualification) assistant personnel to provide services to the school community (Grupo de Estudos em Biblioteca Escolar, 2010, p.9).

These parameters are very important to establish minimum standards for school libraries in Brazil.

Methodological procedures

This study includes a set of projects that were submitted to the official announcement, called "*Construindo uma Minas Leitora*" (Building an Active *Minas* state), which was issued by the state government in December 2014. This is a documentary research based on projects (documents) submitted to this official announcement.

Minas Gerais Municipal Public Library System and the Official announcement

The *Sistema Estadual de Bibliotecas Públicas Municipais* (SEBPM, MG Municipal Public Library System), created in 1984, is part of the *Superintendência de Bibliotecas Públicas e Suplemento Literário* (SUBSL, Bureau of Public Libraries and Literary Supplement), of the *Secretaria de Estado de Cultura de Minas Gerais* (SEC/MG, MG State Secretariat for Culture). This bureau aims to implement public library policies in the State of *Minas Gerais*, in accordance with the principles of preservation, disclosure, and access to bibliographic records, based on Article 21 of Decree 45787, December 1, 2011 (Minas Gerais, 2011). The SEBPM responsibilities, according to Article 25, included encouraging the establishment, expansion, and maintenance of public libraries in the State.

The SEBPM promotes actions and projects aimed at establishing public libraries in municipalities lacking them and modernizing existing libraries. Some examples are donation of collections, technical advisory services, and training of personnel. However, influenced by municipal political interests, lack of institutionalization, and administrative or political conveniences, many municipal public libraries are closed every year, especially due to change of government. Even some libraries that had been established with state government encouragement are closed, disregarding formal agreements between mayors and the SEC/MG.

In order to select the municipalities that had real interest and compromised to establishing and maintaining public libraries, the SEBPM launched in December 2014 the official announcement called "*Construindo uma Minas Leitora*": aiming at the establishment of municipal public libraries (Minas Gerais, 2014). Ten proposals for the establishment of municipal public libraries, submitted to this program, were selected considering priority for municipalities that did not have a library. However, those who were interested in setting up a branch in districts or in the rural area could also participate.

Proposal selection

A five-member committee was formed: three members from the SUBSL and two civil society members. The SUBSL members analyzed the proposals and excluded those lacking documents and those that were not related to the official announcement subject. Twenty-nine municipalities in the state participated by submitting proposals to the government-initiated program. Six were immediately eliminated: two due to lack of documents, and the other four because they did not meet the program's major goal. Two of these four eliminated proposals cleared addressed the establishment of a school library, according to the description of equipment, typical pedagogical activities, library location, or the description of users. The committee analyzed the remaining twenty-three projects, which were then evaluated in the present study.

Of these twenty-three projects initially selected, thirteen were eliminated after thorough analysis. Although their initial proposal mentioned public libraries, in eight of them the description of public and functions characterized school libraries. Furthermore, some of them clearly focused on a school context.

Although focused on public libraries, the ten projects finally selected indirectly targeted students and teachers, expressing great concern about students' free time during the out-of-school hours. Their descriptions indicated lack of cultural and leisure options during school recess and mentioned the library as an attractive alternative option for children, young people, or for retired or unemployed adults.

The next section discusses how the conceptual confusion or lack of distinction between public and school libraries was evidenced in those projects. Aiming at a better understanding, the data were categorized distinguishing the dimensions and facets of each type of library according to their public, collection, services, facilities, and objectives and purposes.

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Results and Discussion

The projects' data are presented below, according to categories that clearly demonstrate the lack of distinction between public library (official announcement subject) and school library, in the social imaginary and in the proposals submitted by members of the municipal public administration. With regard to the objectives and purposes defined in the projects, the objective to establish a public library to serve the students and school staff or the lack of clarity concerning the mission of the public library was clearly identified, as shown below:

Municipality A: Establishment of a public library to serve the municipal school [...] and the entire community, about 500 residents.

Municipality B: A library complements learning; it contributes positively and helps students to broaden their knowledge and increase their imagination, generating and strengthening ideas.

Municipality D: Now, let us aim at a dynamic space, seeking to promote the use of the library with creative, innovative, and captivating attractions to promote the development of a taste for reading and the reading habit, according to the reality of each school.

Municipality E: Let the local school library be a place for multiple readings and discoveries, information, education, and cultural expression.

As for the services offered, as previously addressed in the theoretical discussion, it was clear that the public library fulfills the role and purpose of the school library, helping students with their research projects and assignments.

Municipality A: It facilitates student research.

Municipality C: The 'Reading in schools' project is a project to be implemented in municipal schools to encourage the development of reading habits for personal and professional growth and development.

Municipality C: Partnership with the municipal schools for promoting 'morning/afternoon in the library' and writing a summary of the book chosen.

The expansion of Library facilities is another justification for effectively serving the school community, which seems to be a priority, overlooking the local population.

Municipality B: It was observed that there is adequate space and sufficient material to meet the demand of the school community and our city's citizens.

The school public is one of the most frequently mentioned items in the projects, and the objective of many municipalities seemed to be that public libraries should prioritize serving the needs of students.

Municipality B: A library complements learning; it contributes positively and helps students to broaden their knowledge and increase their imagination, generating and strengthening ideas.

Municipality D: Since the students attending the municipal and state public schools in our municipality come from low income families, who have little access to reading and research, the importance of this project is to do something to contribute to the education of the less privileged students so that they can have educational opportunities equal to those of students with higher socioeconomic status, who go to schools and neighboring municipalities and have more opportunities to read in school libraries with greater collection.

Municipality E: Serve the school community and also the community surrounding the school, meeting their information, reading, and culture demands.

When mentioning the library collection in their projects, the municipal governments' intention to use the official announcement that was intended to establish public libraries for establishing a school library was clear.

Municipality A: The library located in the neighborhood will help students with their research projects because they will have access to the entire collection without the need to go to and fro.

Municipality F: The existing collection in schools is small, old, outdated, and insufficient; the modernization of the collection would offer new sources of research and information to the school community.

The projects analyzed show a clear confusion between these two types of libraries. This probably results from the notable lack of relevant experience with these libraries, leading to a vicious circle: due to the absence of libraries or presence of precarious libraries, people do not recognize the differences between them and therefore reproduce such ignorance in their proposals for establishing new libraries. This is clearly evidenced in the projects submitted to the official announcement issued by the *Minas Gerais* state, and it appears tangentially even among the approved projects.

Conclusion

Due to the lack of universalization of school and public libraries, since the second decade of the twenty-first century in Brazil, even in the so-called Information Age, many municipalities do not have basic knowledge to distinguish between these two types of libraries to properly submit a project to a government-initiated program. The present study clearly demonstrated that this lack of information persists since the vast majority of the projects submitted had at least one item evidencing confusion between these two types of libraries.

The lack of effective public policies targeting each one of these libraries leads to their precariousness and creates the false impression that one library is substitute for the other, or that they are the same thing. The projects evaluated clearly show the lack of knowledge about public libraries and the absence of school libraries.

Therefore, there is an urgent need for investments in public and school libraries since even the municipality's elected or appointed officials do not have a distinct conception of these libraries. Moreover, the absence and precariousness of these libraries have prevented all citizens, from young students to administrators, from enjoying the resources and services offered by these libraries, which, as already demonstrated by other countries, are essential to foster educational attainment and cultural development.

Contributors

All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of this study and to data analysis, manuscript writing, and revision of the final version.

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