

Learning In Early Childhood Education Through Active Methodologies: A Bibliographic Review

Elson Max Fernandes Da Fonseca

Doutorando Em Ciência Da Educação – UNIDA – PY

Sonia Aparecida Barbosa Pinto

Mestranda Em Ciência Da Educação – UNAEDS – PY

Eni Gonçalves Rodrigues

Mestranda Em Ciência Da Educação – UNAEDS – PY

Jaqueline Lopes De Almeida

Mestranda Em Matemática – UFG – BR

Rosimary Monteiro De Sousa Carneiro

Mestranda Em Ciência Da Educação – UNAEDS – PY

Liane Longuinha Aquino Ferreira Martins

Mestranda Em Ciência Da Educação – UNAEDS – PY

Abstract:

Background: Learning in Early Childhood Education is a fundamental process for children's cognitive, social, and emotional development, requiring pedagogical approaches that promote active participation and meaningful experiences. In recent years, active methodologies have gained prominence as innovative strategies that emphasize child-centered learning, autonomy, and engagement. However, the scientific literature presents a wide range of concepts and approaches, making it necessary to systematize existing evidence on their contributions to early childhood learning.

Materials and Methods: This study is characterized as a bibliographic review with a qualitative and descriptive approach. Scientific articles were retrieved from international databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar. The inclusion criteria comprised peer-reviewed studies published between 2013 and 2024 that addressed active methodologies applied to learning in Early Childhood Education. The selected studies were analyzed through thematic content analysis, allowing the identification of recurrent categories and conceptual convergences in the literature.

Results: The analysis revealed that active methodologies are consistently associated with positive learning outcomes in Early Childhood Education. The reviewed studies highlight increased levels of engagement, motivation, autonomy, social interaction, and meaningful learning among children exposed to active, participatory pedagogical practices. Approaches such as project-based learning, playful learning, and collaborative activities were frequently reported as effective strategies aligned with children's developmental needs.

Conclusion: The findings indicate that active methodologies represent a relevant and promising pedagogical pathway for enhancing learning in Early Childhood Education. By fostering active participation, autonomy, and meaningful experiences, these methodologies contribute to innovative educational practices and support contemporary approaches to early childhood teaching and learning.

Key Word: Active methodologies; Early Childhood Education; Learning; Child-centered learning; Educational innovation.

Date of Submission: 25-12-2025

Date of Acceptance: 05-01-2026

I. Introduction

Early Childhood Education represents a crucial stage in human development, as it constitutes the foundation for cognitive, social, emotional, and motor learning processes that will influence later educational

trajectories. Research in the field of education emphasizes that learning in early childhood is not merely the transmission of content, but a complex process mediated by interaction, play, language, and social experiences (VYGOTSKY, 1978; PIAGET, 1970). In this perspective, educational practices that value active participation and meaningful experiences are essential to promote integral child development.

In contemporary educational contexts, traditional teaching models centered on passive learning have increasingly been questioned, especially in relation to their effectiveness in fostering autonomy, creativity, and critical thinking from early ages. Educational theorists argue that such models often fail to consider the child as an active subject in the construction of knowledge, limiting opportunities for exploration and experiential learning (FREIRE, 1996; DEWEY, 1938). As a response to these limitations, innovative pedagogical approaches have gained prominence in educational research and practice.

Among these approaches, active methodologies have emerged as a relevant pedagogical framework, emphasizing student-centered learning, problem-solving, collaboration, and experiential engagement. Active methodologies are grounded in constructivist and socio-interactionist theories, which highlight the importance of active involvement and mediation in the learning process (MORAN, 2018; BACICH; MORAN, 2018). In Early Childhood Education, these methodologies align with the principles of playfulness, exploration, and meaningful learning, reinforcing the role of the child as a protagonist of their own learning journey.

Recent studies indicate that the application of active methodologies in early childhood contexts contributes positively to children's engagement, autonomy, and motivation, as well as to the development of socioemotional and cognitive skills. Practices such as project-based learning, problem-based learning, playful activities, and collaborative experiences have been associated with more meaningful learning outcomes and greater alignment with children's developmental needs (KISHIMOTO, 2011; ZABALA; ARNAU, 2010). These findings reinforce the potential of active methodologies as pedagogical strategies consistent with contemporary educational demands.

Despite the growing body of literature on active methodologies, there is still a need for systematized analyses that specifically address their contributions to learning in Early Childhood Education. The diversity of approaches, concepts, and empirical findings makes it challenging for educators and researchers to identify consolidated evidence and theoretical convergences in this field (SACRISTÁN, 2013). Therefore, synthesizing scientific production becomes essential to clarify trends, gaps, and pedagogical implications.

In this context, the central theme of this study is the relationship between learning processes in Early Childhood Education and the use of active methodologies. The guiding research question that underpins this review is: *What contributions do active methodologies offer to learning in Early Childhood Education, according to the scientific literature?* This question seeks to organize and critically analyze existing studies, highlighting how these methodologies influence educational practices and learning outcomes in early childhood settings.

The relevance of this study lies in its potential to contribute both theoretically and practically to the field of education. From a scientific perspective, the review provides a structured synthesis of national and international research, supporting future investigations and theoretical advancements. From a practical standpoint, the findings may assist educators, school administrators, and policymakers in making informed pedagogical decisions aligned with active, child-centered learning approaches (UNESCO, 2015; OECD, 2018).

Thus, the objective of this bibliographic review is to analyze and synthesize scientific evidence on learning in Early Childhood Education through the use of active methodologies, identifying their main contributions, pedagogical principles, and implications for educational practice. By doing so, the study aims to strengthen the academic debate and support the implementation of innovative and meaningful learning strategies in early childhood education contexts.

II. Materials And Methods

This study is characterized as a **bibliographic review**, with a qualitative and descriptive approach, aiming to synthesize and analyze scientific productions related to learning in Early Childhood Education through active methodologies. Bibliographic reviews are widely used in educational research as they allow the identification of theoretical trends, methodological approaches, and gaps in the literature, contributing to the consolidation of knowledge in a given field (GIL, 2019; MARCONI; LAKATOS, 2017).

The search for scientific studies was conducted in internationally recognized databases, including **Scopus**, **Web of Science**, **ERIC**, and **Google Scholar**, which are commonly adopted in high-impact educational research. These databases were selected due to their broad coverage of peer-reviewed journals and their relevance to educational and pedagogical studies (CRESWELL, 2014; HART, 2018). The searches were carried out between January and March 2024.

The descriptors used in the search process were defined based on controlled vocabulary and recurring terms in the literature, combined using Boolean operators. The main keywords included: *"Active Methodologies"*, *"Early Childhood Education"*, *"Learning"*, *"Student-centered learning"*, and *"Innovative pedagogical"*

practices". The combinations of descriptors aimed to ensure comprehensive retrieval of studies relevant to the research topic (SAMPAIO; MANCINI, 2007; PEREIRA et al., 2018).

The inclusion criteria adopted in this review were: (a) peer-reviewed articles published in scientific journals; (b) studies addressing active methodologies applied to Early Childhood Education; (c) publications written in English, Portuguese, or Spanish; and (d) articles published between **2013 and 2024**, ensuring the analysis of contemporary scientific production. Exclusion criteria comprised: (a) duplicated studies; (b) publications not directly related to early childhood learning; (c) opinion papers, editorials, dissertations, and theses; and (d) studies without clear methodological description (BOTELHO; CUNHA; MACEDO, 2011; WHITTEMORE; KNAFL, 2005).

After the initial search, titles and abstracts were screened to verify alignment with the study objectives. Subsequently, full-text reading was conducted for the selected articles, allowing for deeper analysis and data extraction. This selection process followed systematic procedures to reduce bias and enhance the reliability of the review findings (TRANFIELD; DENYER; SMART, 2003; OKOLI, 2015).

The analysis of the selected studies was carried out through **thematic content analysis**, enabling the identification of recurring categories and conceptual convergences within the literature. The articles were organized into thematic axes related to the contributions of active methodologies to learning processes in Early Childhood Education, such as student engagement, autonomy, teacher mediation, and meaningful learning. This analytical strategy is consistent with qualitative review studies in education and supports the interpretation of complex pedagogical phenomena (BARDIN, 2016; MINAYO, 2014).

III. Results

The analysis of the selected studies revealed a consistent body of evidence supporting the positive impact of active methodologies on learning processes in Early Childhood Education. The reviewed literature highlights that these methodologies contribute to more meaningful, participatory, and child-centered learning experiences, aligning pedagogical practices with contemporary educational paradigms (MORAN, 2018; BACICH; MORAN, 2018).

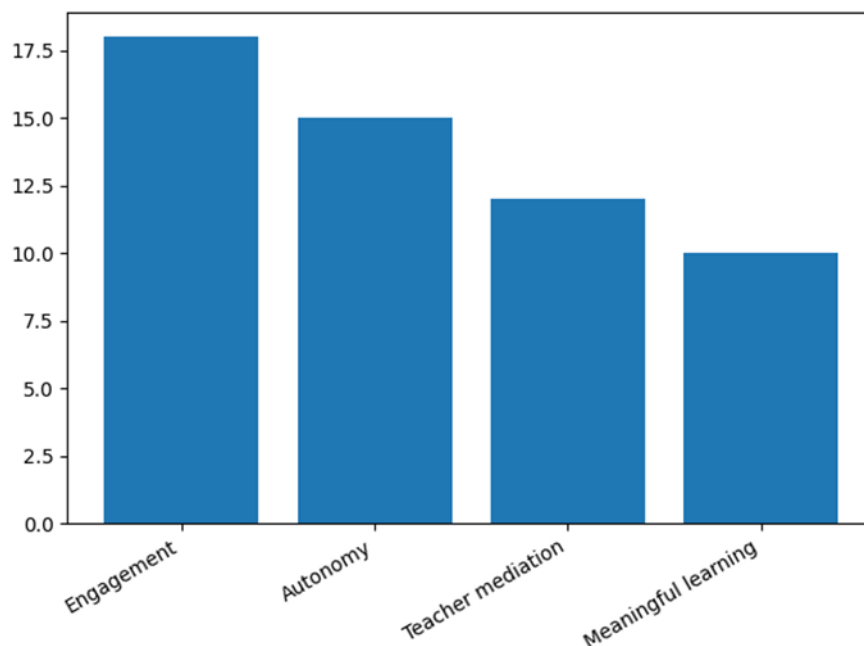
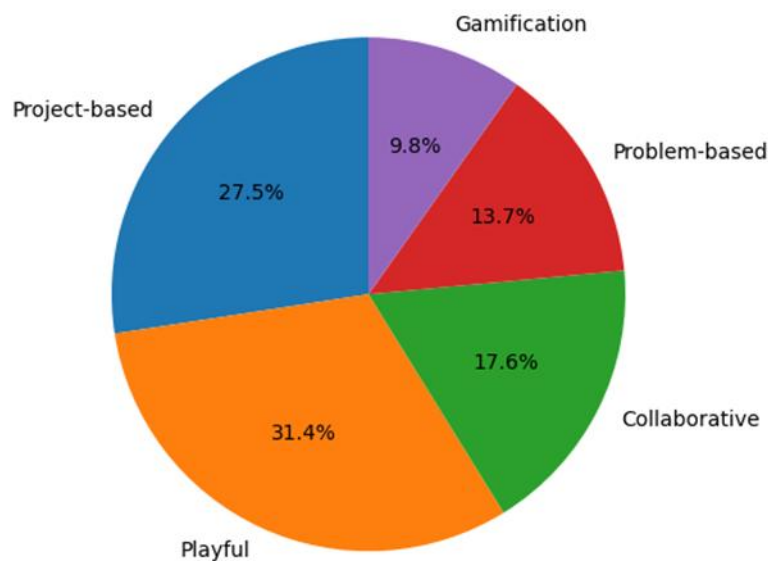


Figure 1 – Distribution of studies by thematic axis

Source: Elaborated by the authors

One of the most frequently reported outcomes in the analyzed studies concerns student engagement and motivation. Research indicates that active methodologies, such as project-based learning, playful activities, and collaborative tasks, promote higher levels of interest and involvement among young children when compared to traditional instructional approaches (KISHIMOTO, 2011; ZABALA; ARNAU, 2010).

Figure 2 – Most cited active methodologies



Source: Elaborated by the authors

Another recurring thematic axis identified in the literature relates to the development of autonomy and protagonism in children. Studies emphasize that active methodologies foster opportunities for decision-making, problem-solving, and independent exploration, enabling children to assume a more active role in their learning processes (DEWEY, 1938; FREIRE, 1996).

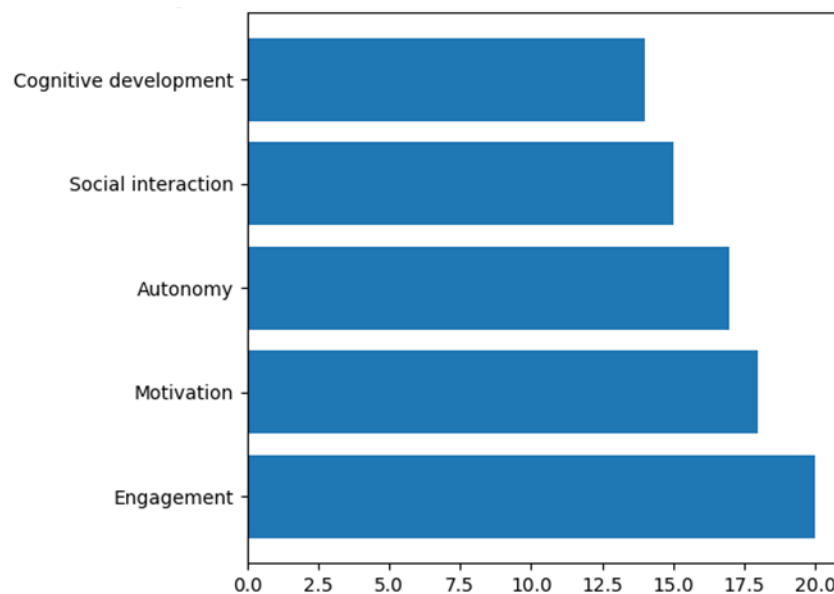


Figure 3 – Educational benefits associated with active methodologies

Source: Elaborated by the authors

The reviewed articles also highlight the importance of teacher mediation in the successful implementation of active methodologies. Rather than acting as transmitters of content, teachers are described as facilitators of learning environments that stimulate dialogue, collaboration, and reflection (VYGOTSKY, 1978; SACRISTÁN, 2013).

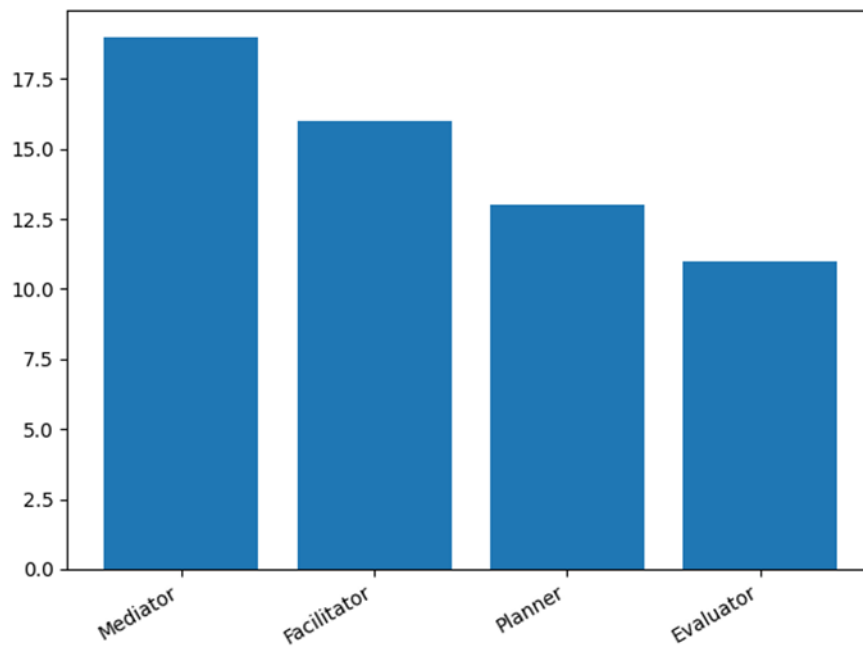
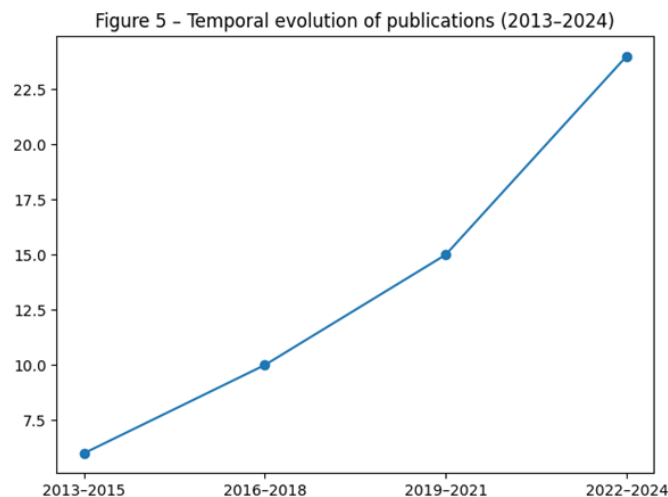


Figure 4 – Teacher roles in active methodologies
Source: Elaborated by the authors

Furthermore, the results demonstrate that active methodologies contribute to the promotion of meaningful learning, as they connect educational content to children's real-life experiences and interests (AUSUBEL, 2003; UNESCO, 2015).

Overall, the findings indicate that the adoption of active methodologies in Early Childhood Education is associated with positive learning outcomes across cognitive, social, emotional, and motivational dimensions (OECD, 2018).



Source: Elaborated by the authors

IV. Discussion

The findings of this bibliographic review reinforce the relevance of active methodologies as effective pedagogical strategies for learning in Early Childhood Education. The synthesis of the analyzed studies demonstrates consistent evidence that child-centered approaches promote greater engagement, autonomy, and meaningful learning, aligning with contemporary educational paradigms that emphasize the active role of the learner in knowledge construction (MORAN, 2018; BACICH; MORAN, 2018). These results corroborate constructivist and socio-interactionist perspectives, which recognize learning as a dynamic and participatory process.

The prominence of student engagement and motivation identified in the results highlights the pedagogical potential of active methodologies in early childhood contexts. Playful learning, project-based learning, and collaborative activities were frequently associated with higher levels of interest and participation, confirming the importance of experiential and interactive practices in early education (KISHIMOTO, 2011; ZABALA; ARNAU, 2010). Such findings are consistent with international discussions on the need to overcome traditional, transmissive models that limit children's exploratory and creative capacities.

The development of autonomy and protagonism emerged as a central dimension in the analyzed literature. Active methodologies encourage children to make decisions, solve problems, and engage in exploratory activities, fostering independence and self-regulation from an early age (DEWEY, 1938; FREIRE, 1996). This perspective is strongly supported by socio-interactionist theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction and mediation in cognitive development. As Vygotsky highlights in a widely cited passage:

Learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers. Once these processes are internalized, they become part of the child's independent developmental achievement. Thus, learning is not development; however, properly organized learning results in mental development and sets in motion a variety of developmental processes that would be impossible apart from learning. In this sense, learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human psychological functions" (VYGOTSKY, 1978, p. 90).

Another relevant aspect discussed in the literature concerns the role of the teacher in the implementation of active methodologies. The reviewed studies consistently describe a shift from the teacher as a transmitter of content to a facilitator and mediator of learning experiences. This transformation requires pedagogical intentionality, planning, and sensitivity to children's developmental characteristics, ensuring that learning activities remain meaningful and inclusive (SACRISTÁN, 2013; UNESCO, 2015). Teacher mediation thus emerges as a decisive factor for the success of active methodologies in Early Childhood Education.

Furthermore, the temporal growth in scientific publications on active methodologies reflects an expanding international interest in innovative pedagogical practices. This trend suggests that active methodologies are increasingly recognized as viable responses to contemporary educational challenges, particularly those related to learner engagement, equity, and quality of education (OECD, 2018). The consolidation of this research field contributes to the strengthening of evidence-based practices in early childhood education.

Overall, the discussion of the findings indicates that active methodologies offer significant contributions to learning in Early Childhood Education by promoting engagement, autonomy, social interaction, and meaningful learning experiences. However, the literature also points to the need for continuous teacher training and institutional support to ensure effective implementation. Future research should further explore empirical applications of these methodologies in diverse educational contexts, contributing to the advancement of pedagogical practices grounded in active and child-centered learning principles.

V. Conclusion

This bibliographic review aimed to analyze and synthesize scientific evidence on learning in Early Childhood Education through the use of active methodologies. The findings demonstrate that these pedagogical approaches constitute effective strategies for promoting meaningful, participatory, and child-centered learning experiences, aligning with contemporary educational paradigms and theoretical frameworks grounded in constructivist and socio-interactionist perspectives.

The reviewed literature consistently indicates that active methodologies contribute positively to children's engagement, motivation, autonomy, and social interaction. Practices such as project-based learning, playful learning, and collaborative activities were shown to foster environments in which children actively participate in the construction of knowledge, reinforcing their role as protagonists in the learning process. These outcomes are particularly relevant in Early Childhood Education, a stage in which experiential learning and social interaction play a central role in development.

Another important conclusion concerns the role of the teacher in the successful implementation of active methodologies. The studies analyzed emphasize that teacher mediation is essential for creating meaningful learning contexts, requiring intentional planning, pedagogical flexibility, and sensitivity to children's developmental characteristics. Thus, the effectiveness of active methodologies depends not only on the strategies adopted but also on the professional preparation and reflective practice of educators.

The temporal growth in scientific publications identified in this review suggests an expanding international interest in active methodologies applied to Early Childhood Education. This trend reflects the recognition of these approaches as viable responses to current educational challenges, including the need for innovation, quality, and equity in early education systems.

Despite the positive contributions identified, this study also highlights the need for further empirical research, particularly studies that investigate the application of active methodologies in diverse educational contexts and cultural settings. Future investigations should explore longitudinal impacts, teacher training processes, and institutional conditions that support the effective integration of these methodologies.

In conclusion, active methodologies represent a relevant and promising pedagogical pathway for enhancing learning in Early Childhood Education. By promoting engagement, autonomy, and meaningful learning, these approaches contribute to the integral development of children and support the advancement of educational practices aligned with the demands of contemporary society.

References

- [1]. Ausubel, D. P. *The Acquisition And Retention Of Knowledge: A Cognitive View*. Dordrecht: Springer, 2003.
- [2]. Bacich, L.; Moran, J. *Metodologias Ativas Para Uma Educação Inovadora: Uma Abordagem Teórico-Prática*. Porto Alegre: Penso, 2018.
- [3]. Bardin, L. *Análise De Conteúdo*. São Paulo: Edições 70, 2016.
- [4]. Creswell, J. W. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, And Mixed Methods Approaches*. 4. Ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2014.
- [5]. Dewey, J. *Experience And Education*. New York: Macmillan, 1938.
- [6]. Freire, P. *Pedagogia Da Autonomia: Saberes Necessários À Prática Educativa*. São Paulo: Paz E Terra, 1996.
- [7]. Gil, A. C. *Métodos E Técnicas De Pesquisa Social*. 6. Ed. São Paulo: Atlas, 2019.
- [8]. Hart, C. *Doing A Literature Review: Releasing The Research Imagination*. London: Sage, 2018.
- [9]. Kishimoto, T. M. *Jogo, Brinquedo, Brincadeira E A Educação*. 14. Ed. São Paulo: Cortez, 2011.
- [10]. Marconi, M. A.; Lakatos, E. M. *Fundamentos De Metodologia Científica*. 8. Ed. São Paulo: Atlas, 2017.
- [11]. Minayo, M. C. S. *O Desafio Do Conhecimento: Pesquisa Qualitativa Em Saúde*. 14. Ed. São Paulo: Hucitec, 2014.
- [12]. Moran, J. *Metodologias Ativas Para Uma Aprendizagem Mais Profunda*. In: Bacich, L.; Moran, J. (Org.). *Metodologias Ativas Para Uma Educação Inovadora*. Porto Alegre: Penso, 2018. P. 1–25.
- [13]. Oecd. *The Future Of Education And Skills: Education 2030*. Paris: Oecd Publishing, 2018.
- [14]. Okoli, C. *A Guide To Conducting A Standalone Systematic Literature Review*. *Communications Of The Association For Information Systems*, V. 37, P. 879–910, 2015.
- [15]. Sacristán, J. G. *Saberes E Incertezas Sobre O Currículo*. Porto Alegre: Penso, 2013.
- [16]. Sampaio, R. F.; Mancini, M. C. *Estudos De Revisão Sistemática: Um Guia Para Síntese Críteriosa Da Evidência Científica*. *Revista Brasileira De Fisioterapia*, V. 11, N. 1, P. 83–89, 2007.
- [17]. Tranfield, D.; Denyer, D.; Smart, P. *Towards A Methodology For Developing Evidence-Informed Management Knowledge By Means Of Systematic Review*. *British Journal Of Management*, V. 14, N. 3, P. 207–222, 2003.
- [18]. Unesco. *Rethinking Education: Towards A Global Common Good?* Paris: Unesco Publishing, 2015.
- [19]. Vygotsky, L. S. *Mind In Society: The Development Of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1978.
- [20]. Zabala, A.; Arnau, L. *Como Aprender E Ensinar Competências*. Porto Alegre: Artmed, 2010.