Standards for Brazilian school libraries: Development foundations

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Abstract
The article describes the process of developing standards for Brazilian school libraries. It presents the principles, theoretical framework and criteria upon which such standards were based. The main goal of the standards is to help schools implement the Law 12244/2010, which determines that, as of 2020, each Brazilian school must have its own library. More broadly, the standards allow comparative studies that may support public policies aimed at improving the quality of education. The standards may contribute to the creation of quality libraries in every school in the country, or in other words, towards each school having a true library.

Introduction
In Brazil, government authorities in charge of basic education recognize the importance of the school libraries and public policy documents in the field of education themselves often emphasize the need for them, especially

to support students reading skills. The National Curricular Parameters - PCN[1], for instance, view the school library as being the first among the conditions that favor the formation of good readers (Campello & Silva, 2000), considering libraries "fundamental" for reading activities in schools (BRASIL, 1997). The National Book and Reading Plan - PNLL[2], in turn, used the expression "cultural dynamo" to describe the ideal library as:

> A dynamic information and culture diffusion site, a center of continued education, space of leisure and entertainment, stimulating the creation and fruition of the most varied cultural and artistic assets […] promoting maximum integration between books and this universe that seduces the current generations (BRASIL, 2006, p.22).

The National School Library Program - PNBE[3] evaluation document, produced in 2005, referred to the library as a "power for knowledge generation, [...] source of development of autonomy of thought and creativity, […] indispensable instrument in the formation of people's identities of the in the school and in the community" (Paiva & Berenblum, 2009, p.185).

Despite the recognition of its value in theory, the real situation of the school library in Brazil remains poor. This fact has even been recognized in government documents. In quantitative terms, a study about the infrastructure of the Brazilian primary schools published in 2007 by the Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA) showed that, according to the school census of 2005, only 63.72% of the schools had libraries or reading rooms. There were 108,500 schools that lacked these facilities, for a total of 13,165,377 primary school students without access to a library or reading room (Sátyro & Soares, 2007).

Regarding the already existing libraries, the PNBE evaluation document showed that, in a large portion of the schools, what was called a library was in fact only a reading room or a small corner with some books. Libraries considered in school architectural projects were rare; every time the school needed to increase the number of enrolments, the library space was the first to be reassigned as a classroom. A lot of the libraries resembled book depositories with no organization, not even catalogues that made it possible to know which books the library possessed. Books still wrapped in their original packaging or kept locked in bookcases were found, unavailable for consultation by students or teachers (Paiva & Berenblum, 2009).

The assumption that the positive discourse about the school library never got off the ground, therefore, is confirmed, revealing that the school library is not, in practice, recognized as an important tool in the learning process.

Professional librarians have been striving to demonstrate the value of the library in improving education. In 2008, the Federal Council of Librarianship – CFB, in conjunction with the Regional Councils[4], launched the *School Library Project: building an information network for public education,* aimed at mobilizing society and government leaders around the need to create libraries in all Brazilian schools (Conselho Federal de Biblioteconomia, 2008).

One of the results of this action was the promulgation, on May 24th 2010, of Law 12.244, which addresses the universal presence of libraries in the country's educational institutions. The law determines that schools must

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[1] *Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais (PCN)* (National Curricular Parameters) established by the Brazilian Ministry of Education provides guidelines for curricular development in primary schools in the country.

[2] *Plano Nacional do Livro e Leitura (PNLL) (*National Book and Reading Plan) (http://www.pnll.gov.br/) is a set of projects, programs, activities and events related to books, reading, literature and libraries, undertaken by the government at the federal, state and municipal levels.The priority of the NBRP is to improve literacy, transforming reading into an everyday activity for the population.

[3] *Programa Nacional Biblioteca na Escola (PNBE) (*National School Library Program) (http://www.jusbrasil.com.br/legislacao/821233/decreto-7084-10) despite its broad denomination, is an annual project which aims to provide public schools with literary and reference books and other library materials. The selection of the books is undertaken by public institutions of higher education, according to guidelines and criteria established by the Ministry of Education.

4 *Conselho Federal de Biblioteconomia (CFB)* (Federal Council of Librarianship) (http://www.cfb.org.br/) and its member institutions ─ the Regional or State Councils ─ are federal authorities, administered by elected librarians, with the role to monitor the compliance with the law demanding that every library in the country be managed by a professional librarian. The Council is also responsible for monitoring the compliance with the Librarians' Code of Professional Ethics.

maintain a collection of books of, at least, one title per student enrolled. The institutions are responsible for expanding their collections according to their own realities and for complying with the school library maintenance, preservation, organization and operation directives. The law establishes a 10-year deadline for its implementation and recommends that the Librarian profession, governed by Laws 4.084, of June 30th of 1962, and 9.674, of June 25th of 1998, be respected.

Another action within the scope of the CFB School Library Project is the search for partnerships to achieve the proposed goals, which resulted in a collaboration agreement with the School Library Research Group based at the School of Information Science of the Federal University of Minas Gerais[5] that was involved in the development of parameters for the creation and evaluation of school libraries. This initiative was based on the fact that, although the relevance of the library in schools is recognized, there is a generalized ignorance in the country of the characteristics that define a real school library. Therefore, the work began based on the principle that the best way to demonstrate what a real school library is would be to define standards that provided interested parties with a starting point for creating libraries in schools that did not yet have them, and to evaluate and improve the already existing ones.

The objective of this article is then to describe the process of developing standards for Brazilian school libraries, presenting the principles, theoretical framework and criteria upon which the standards were developed.

Principles for the development of standards

Knowledge from the fields of Librarianship and Information Science, in its current stage, provides scientific evidence that attests to the positive influence of the library on learning. This was one of the aspects taken into consideration in the development of the standards. Countless studies, mostly carried out in the USA, such as, those in the states of Colorado (Lance, Rodney & Hamilton-Pennell, 2000), Texas (Smith, 2001) and New York (Small, Snanahan & Stasak, 2010) have revealed the impact of the school library on test results, thereby supporting the assumption that a good library is indispensable in students' education.

In Brazil, such evidence is not strong, but results from the National Assessment System for Basic Education (SAEB)[6] indicated in 2003 that the library had a positive influence on the development of reading skills, showing that:

> The existence and effective use of the library […] makes a difference. According to results from SAEB 2003, for the 4th grade, in Reading, when up to 25% of the students use the library, the average proficiency score is 168 points. When more than 75% of the students use the library regularly, the average score rises to 181 points. When no such resource is available to the students, the performance results are 153 points. Furthermore, results show that when somebody is in charge of the library, the average increases and that when teachers conduct focused activities in this environment, there are important and meaningful gains in learning (Informativo Inep, 2004, p. 62).

Therefore, metaphors such as "the library is the soul of the school" or "it is an infinity of windows open to the world"[7], or even " the library is the heart of the school"[8], commonly used in attempts to demonstrate the importance of the library in the education can now be replaced with evidence from scientific studies.

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5 The School Library Research Group (http://gebe.eci.ufmg.br/), based at the School of Information Science at the Federal University of Minas Gerais brings together researchers and students focused on learning and research activities related to school libraries.

6 Coordinated by the National Institute of Educational Studies (INEP) (http://www.inep.gov.br/), a federal agency under the Ministry of Education, the National Assessment System for Basic Education - SAEB (http://www.inep.gov.br/basica/saeb/caracteristicas.htm) collects data about, and assesses the internal and external conditions that interfere with teaching and learning in Brazilian schools.

7 Sanches Neto, M. Desordenar uma biblioteca: comércio & indústria da leitura na escola. Leitura: teoria & pratica, Campinas, 14(26), 31-34, dez. 1995.

8 Antunes, W. A. Biblioteca e sistema de ensino. Boletim ABDF. Nova Série, Brasília, 9(2), 121-125, abr./jun. 1986.

Theoretical framework

The process of standards development was based on the notion of the *library as a space of learning*, as it has been conceived in Library and Information Science (LIS) since the 1960s. Indeed, the idea of the school library as a *space of learning* is not new and can be better understood by looking at its evolution in the context of school librarianship in the United States. Already in the early 1950s, there was, in that country, an awareness that the library had the responsibility to instruct readers in the use of the collection, teaching them to handle information sources used in the learning of curriculum topics. In the following decade, the educational function of the school library was expanded, when it was realized that teaching regarding the use of sources should be conducted in the context of curricular contents.

The function of the library continued to be to assist students in effectively use information resources, but the idea that the librarian should play an active role in the teaching of information skills and that the latter should be integrated into the curriculum emerged (Craver, 1986).

From the 1980s onwards, the educational role was strengthened as a consequence of scientific research, especially by Carol Kuhlthau (2004), which deepened the knowledge of how students learn from information and of the role of the library in this process. Kuhlthau's studies were followed by research (Jones & Dotson, 2010; Gordon, 2010, Crow, 2009; Harada, 2005; Filipenko, 2004) that has considerably expanded the knowledge of the pedagogic dimension of the library. The evidence provided by these studies provides a solid foundation for the educational work of librarians, which occurs whenever they mobilize the variety of resources of the library to collaborate with teachers in information literacy programs. These notions are familiar to Brazilian librarians who have been implementing actions, albeit incipient ones, in an effort to integrate the library into the learning process (Campello, 2009).

The idea of the library as a learning space becomes more complex if reviewed today, based on the foucauldian concept of *device* (Revel, 2002). Peraya (1999, p. 153) defines the device as "…an instance, a social place of interaction and cooperation, with its intents, its symbolic and material functioning, in other words, its own modes of interaction". According to such author:

> The economy of a device – its functioning – determined by its intents, rests on the structured organization of the material, technological, symbolic and relational means that shape, from their own characteristics, the behaviors and the social, cognitive and communicative conduct (affective and relational) of the subjects (Peraya, 1999, p.153).

Wilke and Jardim (2006), in turn, place the information *device* within the scope of the foulcauldian concept, as it fulfills a strategic role nowadays, encompassing a variety of discourses; of scientific, philosophical, moral and philanthropic enunciations; of institutions; of architectonic organizations; and of regulating decisions, laws, administrative measures, in which the authors perceive a legal dimension.

School library standards are a component of this idea, specifically this last item (regulating decisions, laws, administrative measures), as they constitute directives for educational policies. Furthermore, the *device* is a type of formation that, at a certain historical moment, serves the main purpose of responding to an urgent situation. In other words, as Wilke and Jardim (2006) ascertain, there is a strategic dimension to the device and its emergence occurs as a response to the needs of a certain period of time. The development of the standards comes at a moment in which Brazilian society is demanding libraries in schools, leading the developers to embrace the concept of *device, a*lso present in the work of researcher Ivete Pieruccini who emphasizes the notion of intent, of action steered towards a goal to be achieved, characteristic of the concept. Thus Pieruccini (2004, p. 30) claims that:

> The children and youth library is a complex *device*, made up of heterogeneous elements: architecture and environment, techniques and technology, processes and products, rules and regulations, tangible and intangible contents, responsible for overlapping meanings onto the meanings guarded by it, constituting *elements of its nature*.

In this sense, the standards suggested for Brazilian libraries presuppose that each school community understands and accepts the library as a learning resource immersed in the culture of the school.

The theoretical framework described above pointed to the necessary conditions for a school library to function as a learning space. In summary, for a school library to be considered as such, it must meet the following requirements:

a) Function in an exclusive room
b) Have a classified collection
c) Have a catalogued collection
d) Provide an on-site consultation service
e) Provide a home loan service
f) Provide activities to promote reading
g) Offer a research-orientation service
h) Have an employee in-charge

Empirical framework

In order to support the decisions about the quantitative aspects of the standards, empirical data were collected in libraries located in all regions of the country.

From lists provided by the National Institute of Educational Studies (INEP)[9], an electronic questionnaire previously tested on four librarians, was sent to all the schools with an electronic address, totaling 45,719 schools. TABLE 1 allows for a comparison of the number of questionnaires mailed with the number of libraries in the region/regions.

Table 1 – Number of questionnaires mailed

Region	Number of questionnaires mailed	Number of libraries in the region (MEC/2004)	% of questionnaires mailed in relation to the number of libraries in the region
North	2 711	3 194	84.8
Northeast	9 792	12 286	79.7
South, Southeast and Central-West	32 676	37 452	87.2
Total	45 179	52 932	85.3

The questionnaires inquired about the following topics: physical space, collection, services, activities and personnel. They were mailed between August and October, 2010. The completed questionnaires were received over a period of one month after the last day on which the questionnaires were mailed out. The data collected were fed into the SPSS Software (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for statistical processing. The first operation was to exclude repeated questionnaires from respondents who had sent them twice. In this case, only the last one received was used. In addition, questionnaires in which the only questions answered were the ones relating to the identification of the school were excluded. Once these exclusions were concluded, the number of questionnaires totaled 685. In a second phase, the 685 questionnaires were filtered based on the conditions required for the unit in question to be considered a school library. The filters required that the school should have a library in regular operation that catered to pre-kindergarten to 12th grade (ages 4 to 18); in addition, the library should:

a) Function in an exclusively dedicated room, or in a room shared with multimedia resources, or in a room shared with a reading room;
b) Use a collection classification procedure, be it manual, automated, or both;
c) Have a collection cataloguing procedure, be it manual, automated, or both;
d) Provide an on-site consultation service;

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9 The National Institute of Educational Studies (INEP) (http://www.inep.gov.br/institucional/) is a federal agency under the Ministry of Education, whose mission is to promote studies, research and evaluations of the Brazilian educational system with the aim of supporting the formulation and implementation of public policies for education.

e) Provide a home loan service;
f) Have offered, in the last 12 months, storytelling and research orientation activities;
g) Have an employee in-charge.

The application of the filters resulted in a sample of 151 schools with libraries that met the previously defined requirements based on the theoretical criteria used. Analysis of the data from these libraries helped in the decision making process for several points in the standards. This analysis will not be presented here since the goal of this work is to describe the steps in the development of the standards.

Criteria upon which the development of the standards was based

The main goal of the standards is to help schools implement Law 12244. Considering that the aforementioned legislation addresses the concept of a school library in generic terms solely and that its only numeric prescription is the number of titles that must comprise the collection – one for each student enrolled – the standards aim towards complementing the law and assisting each academic community to solidly establish the profile of its school library.

More broadly, the standards allow for comparative studies that may support public policies aimed at improving the quality of education, a contemporary demand of Brazilian society (Dantas, 2010), since good school libraries are among the elements that positively influence basic education. The standards shall contribute to the quality of the process of making libraries an universal resource for schools in the country; in other words, contribute towards each school having a real library.

During the standards development process, a consensus that it would be impossible to address all the complex issues related to the functioning of a school library was formed. It was known that the directives should be objective and concise, which implied making choices regarding the points the final document would include. Therefore, only the following aspects were chosen to compose it: physical space, collection, computers with internet access, collection organization, services and activities and personnel. Indicators were included in the *basic* and *exemplary levels.* It is hoped that, in the basic level, indicators will serve as a starting point, orienting most schools that wish to create their libraries or reformulate existing spaces that cannot yet be considered libraries. On the exemplary level, indicators are a horizon to be reached.

Legitimization of the standards was based on the body of knowledge in the LIS field. The legitimization process depends, mostly, on the capacity of the profession to create a body of abstract, but useful, knowledge that can be converted into specific solutions for particular contexts (Yinger & Hendricks-Lee, 2000). Once the proposal had been developed, based on this body of knowledge, the legitimization was complemented by a broad discussion of the proposed standards. Firstly, a workshop was held with the participation of leaders in librarianship in the country. Subsequently, the document was disseminated on the websites of the Federal Council of Librarianship (CFB) and of the School Library Research Group. There are plans for distribution in printed and electronic form, at no cost, to all Brazilian schools, ensuring that the totality of the educational institutions of the country become aware of the standards.

The principle that the standards should constitute flexible, changeable guidelines to be put into practice based on broad discussions with the Brazilian education and library communities served as starting point. To this effect, some actions were carried out. To ensure adequate revision, a specific space for the posting of suggestions and comments on the standards is to be created on the CFB website. The Board of the CFB will be responsible for systematizing the suggestions and leading the standard updating process that should take place within one year.

The fact that this is a document which, for the first time in Brazilian history, objectively defines a school library was taken into consideration. The collected data confirmed the poor situation of the libraries, already confirmed by previously conducted studies, covering specific geographical areas of the country. Therefore, we consider the document *School library as a space for knowledge production: parameters for Brazilian school libraries* (Appendix 1) constitutes the first step towards qualitative and quantitative changes in most school libraries in the country. Undoubtedly, other guidelines are necessary and, to this end, complementary documents that expand the standards, offering educational managers extra educational subsidies for the improvement of the libraries of their schools, are under development.

Considering that there is an expectation that the school community should become involved in the processes of creating and improving the library, the basic document presents at the end a checklist that allows for a systematic evaluation and planning of the library at each school.

Conclusion
The development of standards for Brazilian school libraries was guided by an awareness of the current relationship between society and public policies for education. According to education analysts, Brazilian society today manifests the desire for the compensatory policies that remained in place until today – merely to cover persistent deficiencies in education – to be replaced by affirmative policies. Such policies should be integrated into the larger body of social policies, ensuring the complete formation of the individual its various dimensions: intellectual, cultural, ethical, aesthetic, social and political (Arroyo, 2010). Design and improvement of policies for school libraries would create opportunities for students and communities to access knowledge that is developed socially and recognized as being necessary to the proper exercise of citizenship, as proposed by the National Curricular Standards (Brasil, 1997).

Therefore, the commitment the library profession assumes, by proposing guidelines for the creation and improvement of Brazilian libraries in a clear and objective manner, represents a political position that demands from librarians the competence to collaborate in the process of transforming school libraries into effective learning spaces.

Three key learnings:
- It is important that Brazilian librarians perceive the standards for school libraries as an innovative tool for creating libraries which are really learning spaces.
- The development of these standards is a starting point for further actions towards improving the quality of school libraries in Brazil.
- The process of implementation of the standards may be an opportunity for the library profession to unite in achieving common goals that will provide greater visibility for the profession.

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Appendix
School library as a space for knowledge production
Parameters for Brazilian school libraries
http://www.cfb.org.br/MIOLO.pdf

Physical space
The school library has an exclusive physical space, accessible to all its users:
■in the basic level: from 50m² to 100m²;
■in the exemplary level: above 300m².

The school library has seats to accommodate users that visit it to consult materials and/or engage in other activities:
■ in the basic level: enough seats to simultaneously accommodate an entire class, in addition to individual users;
■in the exemplary level: enough seats to accommodate an entire class, individual users and groups of students.

Other than spaces that cater to the standards functions of the library, it has a space for technical and administrative duties:
■in the basic level: a service counter, a desk, a chair and a computer with internet access for the exclusive use of employee(s);
■in the exemplary level: a service counter and a room for technical activities, with a desk, a chair and a computer with internet access for the exclusive use of each of employee(s).

Collection
The library possess a collection of books compatible with the number of students:
■in the basic level: minimum of one title per student;
■in the exemplary level: minimum of 4 titles per student, no more than five copies per title are necessary.

The collection includes the variety of textual genres and information sources needed for various school uses, such as: encyclopedias, dictionaries, almanacs, atlas, etc.

Other than books, the school library has magazines and non-printed materials, such as: audio, visual and digital documents and material.

Computers connected to the internet are to be used in the library as sources of information, complementing the collection. The number of computers is:
■in the basic level: at least one computer connected to the internet for the exclusive use of teachers and students in learning/research activities;
■in the exemplary level: enough computers connected to the internet for the exclusive use of teachers and students in learning/research activities for a whole class.

Collection organization
The collection is organized in such a manner that the materials can be found quickly and easily:
■in the basic level: the library catalogue includes at least the books in the collection, enabling them to be accessed by author, title or subject;
■in the exemplary level: the catalogue of the library is electronic and enables remote access to all the items in the collection; enables – besides access by author, title and subject – access through other access points.

Services and activities
The library provides the following services on a regular basis:
■in the basic level: on-site consultation, home loan, reading incentive and research guidance activities;
■in the exemplary level: on-site consultation, home loan, reading incentive and research guidance activities, new acquisitions disclosure service, exhibits and services specifically aimed at teachers, such as bibliographic data collection and alert bulletins.

Personnel

The library has a librarian in-charge and employees to cater to the users during all the shifts in which the school is open:

■in the basic level: one supervising librarian, responsible for a group of libraries (in the cases in which the library is part of a system/network with several libraries), along with support personnel that must be present in each library during each shift;

Note: a supervising librarian supervises four libraries at most, provided these libraries, together, serve to up to four thousand students.

■in the exemplary level: one librarian responsible for the library and support personnel during each shift according to the number of students in the school.