

*Educational Equity in the State and Municipal Education Plans of
Northeastern Brazilian States: A Documentary Analysis*

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Abstract

This study deals with themes related to Brazilian government policies with focus on basic education. It aimed to analyze the term educational equity in the State and Municipal Education Plans of Brazilian Northeastern States and their respective capitals. This is a documentary study. Three stages were carried out: 1) searches on official websites of the nine Secretariats of Education, Legislative Assemblies and City Councils of the state governments and municipalities of the nine northeastern states and their respective capitals, with the aim to identify the state education plans of the states (PEE) and the municipal education plans (PME) of the Brazilian northeast capitals; 2) identification of the term equity in these documents; 3) preparation of electronic spreadsheets recording the findings of the searches carried out. It was observed that: all the states and municipal plans (capitals) in the northeast of the country are available on websites; the term equity was used in all the plans, but they do not present or propose a conceptualization of the term; the National Education Plan is a model for the PEEs and PMEs. It is concluded that in the documents analyzed, the term equity is associated with: guaranteeing equal access to and permanence in school and providing equal use of physical structures; raising the level of teacher training for all schools and raising the level of education, with priority for social groups and the socially and historically vulnerable population.

Keywords: Educational Equity, Education Plans, Document Analysis

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Introduction

It analyzed the Brazilian governmental actions in the education area. This study is part of the research project titled “Observatório da equidade educacional: da pesquisa à inovação” (Educational Equity Observatory: from research to innovation) TED 11970, MEC/SEB/NEES-UFAL, linked to the Ministério da Educação - MEC (Education Ministry), through the Secretária de Educação Básica (Secretary of Basic Education), in partnership with the Núcleo de Excelência em Tecnologias Sociais - NEES (Center of Excellence in Social Technologies) from the Universidade Federal de Alagoas (Federal University of Alagoas).

It seeks to analyze Brazilian public policies focused on Basic Education, involving educational equity and intersectionalities. The analysis strategies emphasized on the official documents: Educational States Plans (PEE) Municipal Education Plans (PME) of the Brazilian Northeast states and its respective capitals.

It was observed a concern *a priori* to the educational equity through intersectional issues.

In this sense, it highlights the educational equity, intersectionality and education plans as an efficiency instrument in public policies.

On educational policies, it is considered the concept of educational equity related directly to the idea of inclusion. To the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - Unesco (2019) inclusion is a result from continued work to identify and overcome limitations to the presence, participation and achievements of students. It is added as equity to the constant effort on pursuing justice in education relationships. This is translated on the attention and effort to guarantee that education is considered to be of equal importance to all students. Inclusion and equity, therefore, are overarching principles that must guide the elaboration of policies, plans and educational practices.

In the discussion about intersectionality is fundamental that is established as a priority the proposition of educational policies. It is a form of putting a lens on oppression dynamics and erasing of social vulnerable groups; it is not only the sum of characteristics that compose one's subjectivity (Crenshaw, 2002). In this way, paying attention to the intersectional aspects of the relations allows one to capture the structural consequences of subordination processes of people and/or social groups due to its own existence condition.

In this intersection between equity and intersectionality, it is urgent to establish articulation to understand differences markers of opportunity in Brazilian education. These markers are congeneric expressions that involve the most diverse social categories, such as race, gender, social class, age, among others (Henning, 2015), exposed to oppressive and discriminatory barriers fed by a capitalist logic. An intersectional analysis of educational policies can reveal the relationship between different levels of educational management in Brazil and, more importantly, how they materialize into norms in each territory.

Legal Foundations

There is a series of legal documents that guide specific public policies elaboration related to education, putting equity as its foundation and object of actions to be proposed. At a more general level, paving the way for the educational reform process is the Brazilian Magna Carta

(Brasil, 1988), specifically Art. 205 to Art. 214 as they established goals and guidelines to Brazilian basic education. Although it does not refer to the word equity, it brings with it a central idea for the discussion raised here: equal conditions and opportunities for all as a guiding principle of the entire Brazilian educational system.

As a way of regulating what the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil (Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil) on the mentioned articles - the Law 9.394, from december 20 of 1996 (Brasil, 1996) and the Law 14.113 from december 25 of 2020 (Brasil, 2020) -, which establishes Guideline and Foundations of National Education (Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional - LDBN) and creates the Development and Maintenance Fund of Basic Education and the Education Professional Valorization (Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica e de Valorização dos Profissionais da Educação) respectively, present itself as issues that might be considered as equity indicators. We have, as examples, equal conditions to access and permanency at school, guarantee of quality standards; consideration of ethnic-racial diversity and respect to the human diversity, and the use of resources by students that favor those in socially and economically disadvantaged conditions.

Education Plans as a Public Policy to Promote Educational Equity

The education plans emerge within the scope of legal documents. They do, however, in a more operational way, since they establish goals to be achieved and practical strategies whose implementation makes it possible to achieve them.

The National Education Plan (PNE) is a result of a joint effort by educational thinkers and public administrators that refers to 1931. After the elaboration of precursor documents, the first PNE is approved in 1962 and, from there, it starts being mandatory and continuous, but with a definite duration as a way of enabling it to be evaluated and reworked. It also becomes part of developing national plans. The current PNE refers to the years 2020-2024 and was established by Law 13.005 on June 25 of 2014. Its approval has a ripple effect over Federal District, States and cities, since determinantes to federated entities the education plans elaboration, which attend to predefined strategies in PNE (Brasil, 2024).

The education plans are, therefore, an educational planning instrument. They seek to guide the implementation and improvement of public policies. They are constituted by specific legislation in all levels and established in a hierarchical form: the municipal plans are elaborated based on state plans, which for its part, are based on the National Education Plan (PNE). Because of their strong operational appeal, they are structured in goals and these in strategies, converting in an important way of evaluating national educational policies.

The educational equity is a central aspect, in the previous cycle of the National Education Plan (PNE 2014-2024), and also it will be in the new PNE cycle that initiates closely. Although, the guiding documents don't explore or describe how the school management bodies, in their own locations and territories, should approach the promotion of equity. Therefore, this gap is investigated. The present study analyzes the promotion of equity present, materially, in guiding educational documents of Brazilian states and cities.

Methodological Procedures Adopted

The methodology characterizes documentary research, which, unlike bibliographical research, is concerned with the search of official documents, books, newspapers, letters, movies, reports, among others. In other words, material that didn't receive any scientific treatment (Sá-Silva et al., 2009).

It had as an analysis object, the States and Municipals Education Plans from the Brazilian Northeast states and its respective capitals, main initial target of the research, which will expand to other Brazilian regions. The elaboration of education plans by states and municipalities arise from the guidelines approved on PNE (National Education Plan) to the period from 2014 to 2024 upon the Law 13.0005/2014 (Brasil, 2014).

Three principal stages were carried out: 1) the search on official electronic sites from the nine Education Secretaries (Secretarias de Educação), Legislative Assembly (Assembleias Legislativas) and Councillor's Chamber (Câmaras de Vereadores) from the states and cities of the nine Northeastern state and its respective capitals, with the goal to identify the municipal education plans from Northeastern capitals and state education plans from Northeastern states; 2) identification, on these documentos, of the following descriptors: equity, gender, person with disability, poor/poverty, ethnic-racial, quilombola, indigenous; 3) elaboration of electronic worksheets of terms on the documents, besides the identification about the context in which the term equity is used.

Results and Discussion

The results indicate that the official documents are available in a public form and of easy access. However, the education plans, both state and municipal, from eighteen analyzed plans, in eleven - four cities and seven States - don't present a diagnostic document, studies and analysis that give foundation the establishment of goals and strategies, in other words, it wasn't available on electronic pages where its respective education plans were found, nor placed as part of PEE and PME.

Regarding content and form, all state and municipal plans that were analyzed comply with what is required by the PNE, in the sense to meet with foreseen guidelines, goals and strategies, as determined by the Art. 8. It is observed that the PNE is a mode to the most of PEE and PME, establishing twenty goals in the same order defined on PNE. Three municipalities and four states are exceptions. They comply with the norm of approach topics covered by the national plan, but establish a different amount of goals, also arranged in their own order.

All plans analyzed use the term Equity, either in the diagnosis on which the law and plan were based, in the law establishing the education plan, in the set of goals and strategies or in all three documents. However, none of the documents, plans and diagnosis, present or suggest a conceptualization for the term. There is, to a certain extent, a tacit use.

Occurs, nevertheless, an indirect conceptualization, once the word equity is used both as a way of qualifying the goals of the plans and as a regulatory/indicator principle of the quality of the goals set. In a general way, the term Equity designs to the application of public resources on education, in other words, equity as a standard that impacts directly the access and permanency at school and the equal use of physical structures; subsidizes strategies that

assure educational equity to determined social groups as to guarantee learning equity, primarily, to social groups and population historically vulnerable; and to raise the training level of teaching staff to all schools.

These intentions, reflected in the goals and strategies of each plan, act as indicators of how equity should be manifested in educational policies from States and cities. Thus, it has a positive impact on vulnerable populations, social groups and communities and their intersectionalities.

It was with this perspective that it was searched, on the plans, the occurrence of terms that could contribute to the formulation of an overview on intersectional issues. It was conceived that the presence of words gender, disability, poor, ethnic-racial, quilombola and indigenous, within the scope of the idea of gender relations, attention to the poorest people, ethnic-racial relations and structural and pedagogical procedures guided to specific population groups, would indicate a link *a priori* to public policies with educational equity.

All defined terms are present on the analyzed documents. Disabilities, indigenous, quilombola and ethnic-racial are identified more often, possibly related to the direct reference to these groups in the current National Education Plan (PNE). Besides that, the logic behind the analysis, in this article, explains this profusion: in education plans, equity is translated on the referred actions to the groups and populations historically vulnerable. It is necessary to verify, also, a possible relationship with social mobilization in favor of these issues. In general terms, denote intersectional aspects in public politics, which reinforce the necessary qualification or explanation to a more precise comprehension of what is meant by equity.

Conclusion

At last, we considered that the analyzed plans present, in discursive terms, intention, albeit tacit, in the search for educational equity on strengthening actions from education and a general overview favorable to the amplification of the importance of intersectionalities on the process of formulating public policies. Nevertheless, important intersectionalities such as poverty and gender receive less attention.

From the method point of view, the research proved to be a strong tool in the comprehension process from which are the priorities materialized by the public policies register. It also enabled a broad identification of context and meaning of the terms on Education Plans available on governmental sites, what can be considered an important tool on the monitoring of Brazilian educational policies. It emphasizes the importance of activities developed by the Educational Equity Observatory.

To a certain extent, the fact that part of the federative bodies (seven States and three municipalities) don't present the diagnosis document that grounds the elaborated education plan, gives the impression that the demand and need of these plans result directly and exclusively from a legal determination: art. 214 from the Federal Constitution (Brasil, 1988) and from the National Education Plan (PNE), by the Law 13.005 of June 25 from 2014 (Brasil, 2014) and not from an intentional, critical and plural reading of the social context. This situation limited the analysis to understand at which level the educational plans are compatible with the local reality to justify the goals and strategies, or if seek to meet the established parameters as an end in itself.

The research continues with the amplification of analysis, by interviews with public managers, with the purpose to verify the strengthening of intersectionality as a attention object in the formulation of this public policy in Brazilian international education.

The existence of education plans, all the effort taken and public structure mobilized to its elaboration, open a vast field of citizen participation to be taken up by different actors in a perspective of a political opportunity (Abers et al., 2018).

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