



Educational Policies in Brazil: CONAEs as a participatory model for the BRICS National Education Plans

Políticas Educacionais no Brasil: CONAEs como modelo participativo para os Planos Nacionais de Educação do BRICS

Políticas Educacionales en Brasil: CONAEs como modelo participativo para los Planes Nacionales de Educación de los BRICS

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Abstract: The objective of this study is to analyze the Brazilian participatory model for the formulation of the National Education Plan, highlighting the potential of the National Education Conferences (CONAEs) as a possible inspiration for BRICS countries. The sources used in this analysis were the various key documents that guide Brazilian educational policies in constructing the national education plans and international discussions about the role of education from Unesco's perspective. These documents were examined considering the theoretical discussions regarding the impacts of neoliberalism on education. The results indicate that, despite the tensions, limitations and challenges involved in the construction of the National Education Plan, the Brazilian experience offers a valuable example of democratic participation to develop policies that promote social justice and equity. Furthermore, the CONAE model can serve as a counterpoint

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to the progress of neoliberal policies in the BRICS countries by proposing an alternative that focuses on inclusion and overcoming educational inequalities.

Keywords: Conae; BRICS; Educational policies; Participation

Resumo: O objetivo deste texto é analisar o modelo participativo brasileiro na formulação do Plano Nacional de Educação, destacando o potencial das Conferências Nacionais de Educação (CONAEs) como uma possível inspiração para os países do BRICS. As fontes utilizadas foram os diversos documentos-chave que norteiam as políticas educacionais brasileiras na elaboração dos planos nacionais de educação e discussões internacionais sobre o papel da educação na visão da Unesco. Tais documentos foram analisados a partir dos debates teóricos sobre os impactos do neoliberalismo na educação. Os resultados indicam que, apesar das tensões, limitações e desafios na elaboração do Plano Nacional de Educação, a experiência brasileira oferece um exemplo valioso de participação democrática que visa à construção de políticas que promovam justiça social e equidade. Além disso, o modelo das CONAEs pode servir como contraponto para o avanço das políticas neoliberais nos países do BRICS, propondo uma alternativa focada na inclusão e na superação das desigualdades educacionais.

Palavras-chave: CONAE; BRICS; Políticas educacionais; Participação.

Resumen: Este texto tiene como objetivo analizar el modelo participativo brasileño en la formulación del Plan Nacional de Educación, resaltando el potencial de las Conferencias Nacionales de Educación (CONAEs) como una posible inspiración para los países del BRICS. Las fuentes utilizadas fueron los diversos documentos-clave que nortean las políticas educacionales brasileñas en la elaboración de los planes nacionales de educación y las discusiones internacionales sobre el papel de la educación en la visión de Unesco. Esos documentos fueron analizados a partir de los debates teóricos sobre los impactos del neoliberalismo en la educación. Los resultados indican que, a pesar de las tensiones, limitaciones y los desafíos en la elaboración del Plan Nacional de Educación, la experiencia brasileña ofrece un ejemplo valioso de participación democrática que tiene por objetivo la construcción de políticas que promuevan justicia social y equidad. Además, el modelo de las CONAEs puede servir como un contrapunto para el avance de las políticas neoliberales en los países del BRICS, proponiendo una alternativa con enfoque en la inclusión y en la superación de las desigualdades educacionales.

Palabras clave: CONAEs; BRICS; Políticas educacionales; Participación

Introduction

In 2008, at the Yekaterinburg Summit, Brazil, Russia, India, and China formalized the constitution of a cooperation political-diplomatic entity, with South Africa joining their number in 2009 (Gomes, 2018). Known by the BRICS acronym, the group initially focused on economic and political cooperation but, since 2013, the focus has broadened to include cooperation in Education and other sectors⁴. Beginning in 2024, as per the decision made at the Johannesburg Summit, BRICS added Egypt, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Iran to the group, which currently represents “almost half of the world’s population and about one-third of the global GDP, promoting a multipolar world and an attempt at a fairer international order” (RFI, 2024). This type of geopolitical

⁴ <https://infobrics.org/>

alignment intends to seek a competitive balance in transnational markets and sustainable development for the regions involved.

BRICS is jointly positioned to participate in the reform and management of neoliberal regulations (GOMES, 2018). These countries seek cooperation agreements, considering the intense socioeconomic inequality and the asymmetrical power relationships both transnationally and among themselves. Despite recognizing the inequalities and the need for mutual aid, BRICS is not committed to a South-South cooperation for promoting the self-sufficiency and emancipation of the group's members by overcoming the inequalities existing between them and the countries of the Global North (MUHR; AZEVEDO, 2019). To correct the South-North imbalances, it would be necessary to intensify cooperation with other countries and challenge the principles of the dominant international order. However, BRICS regiments other countries and, mostly, seeks to increase its access and representation in the market, at the UN, and in international geopolitics (MUHR; AZEVEDO, 2019).

Based on this logic and the clear and multiple inequalities (DUBET, 2020) present in the BRICS countries, overcoming educational difficulties was added to their political agenda. Under UNESCO's guidance in 2013, in Paris – France, and in 2014, in Fortaleza – Brazil at the IV BRICS Summit, they discussed the strategic importance of education for sustainable development and inclusive economic growth (UNESCO, 2014). The document “BRICS: Building Education for the Future” (UNESCO, 2014) emphasizes that the five participating countries at the time were involved in the Education for All movement, with the capacity to enroll all children at the elementary level. The document's scope indicates the recognition of the persistent difficulties that weaken the countries' economic growth and social cohesion since the emphasis of this transnational agency is on how education can be used as a tool for promoting sustainable economic and social development, without thoroughly questioning the underlying economic structures that perpetuate said inequalities.

The document emphasizes that their diversity of political experiences allows the BRICS countries to learn from one another, adopting successful policies from fellow group members (UNESCO, 2014). These countries can, in theory, share educational, management, and evaluation experiences from their educational systems to help overcome educational challenges, cooperating to mitigate inequalities, as well as assisting

low and medium-income countries (UNESCO, 2014). Academic cooperation and the exchange of knowledge are seen as essential for facing global and regional challenges.

Among the initiatives to improve education, it is possible to highlight the construction of plans to guide government action. The Unesco document (2014) describes the plans that exist in all five countries, including their periodicity, goals and targets. However, the participatory process for developing Brazil's National Education Plan (PNE) is not mentioned in said document. The PNE is created through a participative process that fully involves the government, society, and various social movements in the definition of the next decade's educational policies.

In the formulation of the PNE, the National Education Conferences (CONAEs) serve as a means of introducing direct democratic practices into the model of representative democracy (BODIÃO, 2016) with the goal to reduce inequality and improve the quality of education. The question arises as why Unesco did not mention the democratic and participatory CONAE model in the construction of the PNE. As a transnational institution, Unesco proposes solutions to reduce the inequalities that affect the peripheral countries more strongly within the context of neoliberal policies.

This article analyzes the Brazilian experience in the construction of government educational planning, highlighting the CONAEs as an example of democratic participation in the development of an educational project for the country. Despite the limitations imposed by the governments' alignment with the neoliberal belief system, this participative model still offers a promising path for rethinking education systems in the BRICS.

The central hypothesis is that the global conjuncture and the balance of power between states and blocs such as the G7, the G20 and the BRICS, are based on a neoliberal governance logic; however, there are resistance movements within the democratic states that seek to mitigate the poisonous effects of neoliberal policies in many social spheres. The participatory model used to develop the PNE, despite its barriers, advancements and setbacks, achieves a significant level of capillarity, involving different segments of society and, specifically, Education, to discuss the base document during the various stages of CONAE.

We argue that this participation model can inspire countries associated with BRICS to tension or create inflections within the neoliberal policies that dominate the field of

education. With the objective of reflecting about the CONAEs' participatory processes and the effects of neoliberalism on education, we analyzed the following documents: The 1988 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Brazil; the Final Document of the CONAE 2010 National Education Conference; the Ministry of Education's Decree no. 577 of April 27th, 2017; the 2014-2024 National Education Plan: Law no. 13005 of June 25th, 2014; UNESCO. BRICS: Building Education for the Future. France: UNESCO, 2014; the Base Document of the 2024-2034 National Education Plan: State policy for guaranteeing education as a human right with social justice and sustainable socioenvironmental development, 2024; the Final Document of the National Popular Education Conference. Natal: National Popular Education Forum, 2022; and the Reference Document of the 2018 National Popular Education Conference (CONAPE). The document analysis was conducted based on authors who discuss neoliberalism and education.

The article is structured in two parts: in the first part, we analyze how the globalization of educational policies, propelled by transnational organisms and aligned with neoliberal logic, has molded educational reforms in peripheral countries. In the second part, we analyze how the National Education Conferences in Brazil allowed the active participation of educators and civil society in the formulation of educational policies that tension the discussion regarding the globalized and hegemonic project for education. Although these spaces allow for advances in the formulation of the PNE, they also present difficulties and barriers imposed by the economic and political context, which frequently dilute progressive proposals. The article ends with a presentation of our final considerations.

Globalization of Educational Policies: a hegemonic project for education

The economic globalization processes, far from global commercial freedom and integration, consist in the opening, subordination and dependency of vulnerable peripheral economies to transnational capital, which trends towards unlimited accumulation, sponsored by the imperialist economies of our time (BOLTANSKI; CHIAPELLO, 2002; WOOD, 2014). The imperialist powers protect their economies, controlling the conditions of commerce according to their own interests, demanding that

borders be opened for work, resources and for access to the markets of peripheral economies.

According to Wood (2014), it is up to nation states to maintain the conditions for capital accumulation, protecting their balance of forces, opening their borders to global capital and impeding an integration that could equalize conditions for workers globally. In this context, neoliberal ideology became hegemonic, and, in the name of the minimal State, the public institution is opened to commercial action, deregulating working-class rights and protections and destroying the little social protection obtained by workers in the 20th century.

It is not enough for neoliberalism to guide the actions of government leaders to perpetuate the capitalist system; it must also be accepted and incorporated by the working classes. In the post-structuralist view of Dardot and Laval (2016), it is important to adjust the behavior of those who are governed so that, using their own freedom, they naturally incorporate certain functional rules to capitalist accumulation and acquire resilient behaviors in the face of the countless crises generated by capital. Depending on the context and on the relationships of power, methods such as military coups, the radical deregulation of worker protections, economic blackmail or structural reforms are employed, emptying democracy without formally extinguishing it, among other possibilities. In the name of freedom, through political maneuvers and concessions, “the conducts, choices and practices of these individuals” are guided (DARDOT; LAVAL, 2016, p. 21).

To this end, according to Dale (2004), supranational forms of government have been created that disseminate a global educational project and influence national educational policies, with the aim of maintaining and reproducing the capitalist system. In this context, education assumes the role of “supporting the regime of accumulation, ensuring a context that does not inhibit its continued expansion, and providing a base for the legitimization of the system as a whole” (DALE, 2004, p. 437).

Transnational entities such as the OECD, Unesco, the World Bank and the IMF represent the political interests of those who concentrate capital, disseminating a globalized educational project that guides nation States in the development of reforms, advancing despite opposing forces. In Brazil, the globalized education project advanced

particularly after the neoliberal counter-reform of the 1990s, boosting managerialism in public management, including the educational environment.

In this scenario, the privatization of the public sector increase under the guise of improving the quality of education, leading to the dissemination of a neoconservative, neotechnic and functional education, hindering the development of a national education project committed with the people's emancipation, as idealized in the Federal Constitution of 1988. According to Peixoto (2022), Brazilian education has been marked historically by the dispute between public and private institutions, with the private sector modifying its political actions according to the context and the possibility of appropriation of State assets, hampering the strengthening of quality public education.

Although the Federal Constitution of 1988 (BRASIL, 1988) establishes education as a subjective public right, guided by principles such as quality, democratic management, equal access and permanence, neoliberalism's progress throughout the country has aggravated the dispute for public funding, allowing private organizations to control educational policy and expand the financialization of education. According to Peixoto (2022), the competition is incited by the financialization of education, which permits the operation of large corporations at all educational levels, modalities and stages. These corporations dictate what, how, and when things must be taught, disseminate worldviews and values, promote a globalized educational project based on educational technologies and platforms, entrepreneurship, and merit as pathways for educational effectiveness.

In this model, despite the redeeming discourse, education maintains inequalities in the school systems, with no space for a unitary education built to emancipate the lower and working classes. Laval (2019) explains that school's classic objectives, such as political emancipation and personal development, are replaced by productive efficiency and professional insertion. This occurs in a world with a scarcity of formal employment, seasonal and flexible occupations, with no guarantees of social protection that the working class gained during the development of industrial capitalism (CASTEL, 2005). According to this logic, school should serve to prepare flexible workers who are self-disciplined, capable of solving problems on their own and employable, promoting passive obedience to precise instructions (LAVAL, 2019).

As a result, there is an increasing demand for schools to turn out entrepreneurs, teaching students how to survive a capitalist economy that is constantly in crisis, with a

reduction of available work positions and social protections. In this manner, there is the obfuscation of both historical investment problems in school infrastructure and teacher qualification and careers as well as the unjust social distribution of accumulated wealth, which is concentrated to the point that the economic distance between the rich and the poor resembles an abyss, are concealed (PIKETTI, 2014).

This transnational educational reform movement does not include the population's participation as a mainstay of its proposals that are supposedly oriented towards quality, inclusion and equity. When a transnational education project is implemented despite the particulars and demands of each country, participation is restricted to the manner of implementing a generalistic project of education, with the clear intention to hold the subjects accountable for the results of external demands.

This is the conception of the managerial administration model that has mostly guided administrative reforms in different countries, especially in Brazil. Stemming from the private sector, this model prioritizes administrative efficiency and the economic and financial spheres of management (PAULA, 2005). Paula (2005, p. 41) emphasizes that this model is "participative at the discourse level, but centralizing regarding the decision-making process, the organization of political institution, and the construction of public participation channels".

According to the Unesco document, the current educational proposal in the BRICS countries does not differ from the hegemonic educational proposal. Unesco does not oppose this proposal either, as it is compelling to defend the connection between education and the economic development of the countries; the increase in management efficiency; holding teachers and staff responsible for educational results; defending the operation of private entities in public education, among other requirements (UNESCO, 2014).

Educational reforms do not take place without tension, resistance and confrontation stemming from organized civil society, which initiates debates about the pathways of education. In Brazil, this discussion involves distinct forces that, many times, have conflicting projects for education and society, gathering syndicates, social movements and teachers; neoliberal and neoconservative groups; scientific, religious and political groups, among others. This discussion marks the construction of Brazil's PNE, during which civil society is called to participate in the CONAE. [The](#) CONAEs are spaces

where the national education plans are discussed, as well as others, such as Parliament and the National Education Council.

National Education Conferences in Brazil: participation and context

In contrast to the globalized educational project, in Brazil educators organized in syndicates, scientific and academic associations have been promoting debates, conferences, political articulations and other actions with the goal of interfering in the paths of national education through an educational project unlike the hegemonic one. Among the banners flown by these educators, there is the defense of a socially referenced education, public education, public funding for public institutions, a democratic management for education and quality in all educational levels and modalities.

The CONAEs reveal themselves as a possibility for civil society participation in the development of the country's educational policies, discussing topics that are important for national education. However, the capacity to influence the political sphere and achieve the desired purposes still depends on the political and socioeconomic context.

The creation of the National Education System (SNE) and the regulation of a collaborative system among the states, considering their common responsibility to education defined in article 211 of the 1988 Federal Constitution (BRASIL, 1988), were central topics in the National Conferences for Basic Education in 2008, as well as in three CONAEs, in 2010, 2014 and 2024, as well as two CONAPEs, in 2018 and 2022.

The goal of the Education Conferences is to contribute to the construction of the PNE based on an analysis of Brazilian educational problems, marked by strong educational and regional inequalities that mostly affect the poorer portion of the population. A low socioeconomic level is another factor that strongly affects academic success yet, with the correlation between income and educational performance being widely documented in national and international literature (FREITAS, 2005). Thus, the national conferences allow the various segments of education and civil society to participate in the debate, highlighting the confrontation between inequality and the permanent fight to guarantee the rights of the Brazilian population.

The first CONAE, held in Brazil in 2010, had as its theme "Building the National Articulated Education Plan: The National Plan for Education, Guidelines and Strategies". As mentioned by Neves (2013), the event was preceded by the compilation of a Reference

Document, developed by a committee that included Unesco, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), and specialists from Brazilian universities. Neves (2013) criticized Unesco's strong interference in this process, observing that the participation of civil society was limited to academic specialists and the MEC, which compromised the broader representativity of the population's demands. This document, created prior to the CONAE, reflected the considerable influence of international organisms in the formulation of Brazilian educational policies. However, the document was submitted to the CONAE decision-making process.

It is important to highlight the roles played by MEC and by the National Education Forum in organizing the different stages of the CONAE and the independent conferences that supported the qualified discussion process of the topics involved in the formulation of the PNE. Starting with the base document, the summoning and mobilization of various sectors began, including social movements, educators, business representatives, members of the working class, students and other segments of society, to discuss the direction of education in municipal, intermunicipal and district-wide conferences.

The municipal conferences discussed and approved proposals, electing delegates for the state and regional stages that led up to the national phase, during which the proposals were discussed, voted on, and consolidated in the Final Document developed during the CONAE. This process, implemented by Workers' Party (PT) presidents Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, in 2010, and Dilma Rousseff, in 2014, aimed to integrate various standpoints and needs with the perspective of contributing to the formulation of more democratic and effective educational policies.

Despite this intense mobilization, the proposals contained in the final document delivered to the Ministry of Education, were mostly disregarded during the development of the Law Project (LP) no. 8035/2010, which was sent to MEC by Congress to approve the PNE at that time (BODIÃO, 2016). However, during the debate in Congress, which mostly considered the proposals made by the CONAE, the LP received 2916 amendments, reflecting the interests of antagonistic social groups. This demonstrates how different orientations influenced the goals, targets and indicators of the 2014-2024 PNE, authorized by Law no. 13005, of June 25th, 2014 (GOMES, 2015). The PNE was finally approved in 2014, with a delay of three and half years, which affected Brazilian educational planning, considering the dynamics present in the dispute arenas.

Despite the criticism against the process (NEVES, 2013; BODIÃO, 2016), it cannot be denied that some advancements were achieved during the discussions for the approval of the PNE. The project included 20 targets aimed at guaranteeing of the right to education, with structuring goals for all educational levels and modalities. Regarding basic education, the goals focus on educational quality, including access, universal literacy and increasing schooling and educational opportunities through EJA (Young Adult Education Program), as well as in high school and in professional education). Specific goals also address reducing inequality and valuing diversity; ones that have to do with valuing basic educational professionals regarding their education, salary and career, the improvement of educational quality and the democratic management of public education.

The targets related to higher education include expanding and enhancing the quality of undergraduate and graduate programs, increasing enrollment, and the qualifications of Masters and PhD level professors who work in higher education. Target 20 establishes an increase of public investment in public education, reaching the level of 7% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the law's 5th year of validity, and the equivalent of 10% of the GDP at the end of the ten-year period (BRASIL, 2014).

The political disputes observed during the development of the plan continued throughout the implementation of each target, which depended, among other factors, on the government's planning articulation connecting efforts at a statewide level, coordinated by the federal government. The collaboration to materialize the targets proposed in the PNE, attempted during the government of President Dilma Rousseff (2011-2014 and 2014-2016), was affected by the changes that occurred in the country's economic and political scenario, ending the neo-developmental project that marked the PT presidencies.

This project was guided by the goals of economic growth and social inclusion but was affected, among other factors, by the "crisis situation of the global economy, the European Union crisis, China's expressive economic deceleration and the price drop in commodities and oil" (FERREIRA; OLIVEIRA, 2021). Maciel (2021) considers that the repercussion of the world economic crisis and the conflicts against the moderate neoliberal conception and the state inductivism taken on by the PT government became irreconcilable beginning in 2013, culminating in the parliamentary, legal and mediatic coup that removed president Dilma Rousseff (2011 to 2014, 2015 to 2016) from power with the support of the middle class and small and medium capital (MACIEL, 2021).

President Michel Temer (2016-2018) assumed the presidency, developing an ultraliberal government. This included the approval of Constitutional Amendment (EC) no. 95/16, which implemented a new fiscal regime for the Federal Government, which meant that beginning in 2017, the executive power's funding could only be adjusted according to the previous year's inflation. This contributed to the relegation of the PNE/2014 to the backdrop. Later, the government led by Jair Messias Bolsonaro (2019-2022) followed this same logic, affecting the PNE's coverage.

According to Law no. 13005/2014, among other responsible institutions, the National Education Forum (FNE) was tasked with holding the CONAEs every four years to monitor, to follow, and disseminate the achievement of the 2014/2024 PNE's targets and, furthermore, propose policies to help achieve the desired results (BRASIL, 2014). This forum was reformulated by Decree 577, of April 27th, 2017, in a unilateral decision from the MEC made by Mendonça Filho, who was then the Minister of Education in Michel Temer's government.

The decree excluded certain scientific and labor representatives and restricted the participation of others, who were required to compete for a spot in the forum, giving the Minister the final word on who would participate in the forum. Thus, the FNE deviated from its purpose, being later extinguished, which led to the non-occurrence of the CONAE scheduled for 2018. The participation of civil society in monitoring the PNE targets, among other policies, was majorly compromised in this short period of time during the ultraliberal governments, during which the hegemonic educational project advanced, alongside educational projects with an authoritarian connotation, such as the militarization of certain basic education schools during the presidency of Jair Messias Bolsonaro (2019-2022).

As a counterpoint to the government authoritarianism that hindered the accomplishment of the PNE targets, organized civil society constituted the National Popular Education Forum (FNPE) in defense of a public, secular, democratic, inclusive, critical education of socially referenced quality (FNPE, 2018). This forum called upon society to participate in the 1st CONAPE, held in 2018, with the aim of "monitoring and evaluation the fulfillment of the PNE, the body of the law, targets and strategies, proposing policies and actions, and indicating responsibilities, co-responsibilities, concurrent,

complementary and collaborative attributions among the states and the educational systems” (FNPE, 2018).

Following this same logic, between July 15 and 17, 2022, the last year of Jair Bolsonaro’s presidency, the 2nd CONAPE, titled “CONAPE of Hope” was held in Natal/RN. This conference reaffirmed the Reference Document titled “Rebuilding the Country: The Resumption of the Democratic State and the defense of public popular education that is publicly managed, free, democratic, secular, inclusive and of social equality for all”, which was developed during the 2018 CONAPE (FNPE, 2022).

As a result of the discussions that were conducted, the participating delegates signed the Natal Charter, in which they opposed Constitutional Amendment no. 95/2016; the dissociation of constitutional funding for education; the privatizations that were currently underway; and the tax reform, among many other measures opposing the defense of the Democratic State and the PNE (FNPE, 2022). On the occasion, the participants also defended an audit of the public debt; the monitoring and consolidation of the PNE; the regulation of the National Education System; and the expansion of public funding for education.

They also defended the fulfillment of PNE Target 20, which anticipates the complementation of federal funds in educational funding, destining public funding exclusively for public educational institutions. The application of these resources should be monitored by the Social and Popular Control Councils. They also emphasized the importance of full-time education and democratic educational management, as well as the cessation of temporary professional contracts, among other relevant measures that demonstrate the historical fight of organized civil society to constitute an education of social quality in the country.

Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva’s victory in the 2022 elections, which led to his third term as president (2023-2026) created the opportunity to recreate the FNE and hold the Extraordinary National Education Conference in Brasília, from January 28th to 30th, 2024, as called for in the Natal Charter (FNPE, 2022). Despite the limitations and a possible alignment with the neoliberal economic model, the PT governments, due to their party base rooted in society and in social movements, have managed to construct effective dialogue channels with society.

The Reference Document for the 2024 CONAE (FNE, 2024), themed “National Education Plan (2024-2034) – State policy for guaranteeing education as human right, with social justice and sustainable socioenvironmental development” (FNE, 2024), emphasizes the return of the participation of different entities, and social and political movements in the construction of public policies through the discussion of the next PNE. To this end, the National Education Forum gathered a group of scientific, political and social associations to discuss, with civil society, the proposals in the Reference Document that will define the route taken by education during the next ten years. Public administrators, workers in education, advisers at educational monitoring entities, parents and guardians, students, various social movements, unions, and government institutions were invited to discuss and propose targets and strategies for the next PNE (2024/2034).

Seven thematic axes were established, articulated with educational planning with the goal of developing the National Education System (SNE), aiming to guarantee every person’s right to quality education, ensuring social justice and equity, with access, permanence, and conclusion in all levels, stages and modalities, in different contexts and territories, considering inclusion, diversity and the fight against the new and different forms of inequality, discrimination and violence. The axes are as follows:

Axis I – The PNE as the coordinator of the National Education System (SNE), and its connection with state, district and municipal ten-year education plans, on behalf of integrated and intersectoral actions in an interstate collaborative system; Axis II – Guaranteeing the right of all people to an education with social quality, with access, permanence and conclusion at all levels, stages and modalities, in different contexts and territories; Axis III – Education, human rights, inclusion and diversity: social justice and equity in guaranteeing the right to education for all and the fight against the novel and different forms of inequality, discrimination and violence; Axis IV – Democratic administration and quality education: the regulation, monitoring, evaluation, mechanisms and entities for social control and participation in decision-making processes and spaces; Axis V – Valorization of education professionals: guaranteeing the right to quality initial and continued education, a minimum wage level, a career and adequate working conditions that lead to better health; Axis VI – Public funding for public education, with social control and a guarantee of adequate conditions for education’s social quality, seeking to democratize access and permanence; Axis VII – Education committed to social justice, the protection of biodiversity, sustainable socioenvironmental development to guarantee good quality life on the planet and the fight against inequalities and poverty. (FNE, 2024, P. 15)

These axes were broadly discussed in “free conferences at municipal, intermunicipal, district and state levels, as well as webinars and public hearings”, and the Reference Document guiding the discussions received 8692 amendments (FNE, 2024, p. 12) stemming from 1321 municipal conferences, covering 4437 municipalities. The 2024 CONAE’s final plenary session, made possible by MEC, in which over 2400 people participated, endorsed the proposal, which was delivered to Camilo Santana, the Minister of Education, to be incorporated into the law project that will generate the new PNE.

The document delivered to MEC by the FNE affirms education’s commitment to the exercise of “respect, tolerance, the promotion and valorization of diversity (ethnic-racial, religious, cultural, generational, territorial, physical-individual, disabilities, gifted and high ability individuals, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, political choices among others)” (FNE, 2024, p. 11). Among the CONAE axes, one that stands out is Axis III, due to its specific formulation. This axis is strictly linked to inequality, and it is also transversal to all the other axes within the document. The discussion of inclusion, diversity, human rights and equity is a part of the current public policy agenda, due to the mobilization of the various social movements that fight for resource distribution, representativity and the recognition of groups and people who are vulnerable due to culture, the economic system or simple misfortune. This axis mobilized different social movements in the definition of its goals and targets for the different populations and people who deserve special attention in education for the next ten years.

Upon integrating policies that promote respect for diversity and the fight against inequalities in the educational system, axis III of the PNE is not only aligned with the constitutional principles of human rights and equality, but it also contributes to guide the construction of a more plural and inclusive society. These measures are essential to overcome historical and structural barriers that limit the access and permanence of certain groups in formal education, thus promoting a fairer education that is aligned with the current challenges of a diverse society.

Furthermore, by emphasizing the promotion of welcoming and safe school environments for all students, axis III of the PNE reinforces the importance of pedagogical practices and institutional policies that recognize and value differences in ethnicity (indigenous, quilombola, gypsy and others), gender, global development disorders, physical and mental disabilities, high mental abilities and other forms of existing in the

world. This not only benefits students directly, but also contributes to the construction of a more inclusive educational culture, that prepares all students for an active and responsible participation in contemporary society.

In summation, CONAE's proposal was conceived to indicate to Congress what the civil society's demands are for education, containing ambitious goals that consider the historical debt to national education (FNE, 2024). There is a perspective that the law project that was delivered to Congress by MEC is inserted in a context of territorial variations, regional inequalities or even local implementation capacities. The Brazilian State must ensure a system of collaboration, in accordance with the federal pact, that permits the implementation of the future PNE and the achievement of its targets regarding the quality of educational levels and modalities, within a perspective of learning that includes equity, reducing the great educational and learning inequalities.

Final Considerations

Analyzing the CONAEs indicates that, despite the country's historical educational problems and the coexistence of opposing educational projects in the arena of educational policy, we are building a model of democratic participation and educational policy formulation in Brazil. This model offers important lessons to the BRICS countries regarding the confrontation of the current neoliberal education financialization model, which intends to colonize free public education. This does not mean that counter-hegemonic movements are undermining the advances of large private corporations in the public education sector but, mostly, that this is a public arena of resistance against the context of State reduction and privatization. The Brazilian experience, characterized by the ample participation of various sectors of society that intend to influence the development of the PNE, demonstrates that it is possible to build resistance that promotes social justice, equity and inclusion, despite the voracity of neoliberal policies.

Democratic participation in the CONAEs allows diverse voices, many of which are marginalized, to be heard, resulting in pressure against the Brazilian parliament. This process contrasts with the neoliberal approach, which frequently prioritizes market and technocratic interests and reduces education to a commodity or to neotechnic processes as a solution for educational problems, without attacking the historic debt of investment

that Brazil has to basic education. The CONAEs show that education and its discussion forums can be a power tool for fighting, emancipation and sustainable development, promoting parameters legally and democratically for the establishment of a fairer and more equitable society.

For the BRICS countries, adopting a model like the one espoused by the CONAEs can be an effective path to resist neoliberal pressure and build educational systems that reflect their socioeconomic and cultural realities based on the current conflicts that must be faced against the international organisms that promote the entrance of large private groups in public education. The cooperation and sharing of experiences between BRICS countries can strengthen their capabilities to face common challenges and promote an education that contributes to the development of their citizens and even the integration of peripheral countries.

Thus, the democratic processes of participation in the definition of education goals can not only break from the colonizing posture of world powers and capital in relation to peripheral countries, but also strengthen said countries and societies' sovereignty and self-determination in the definition of the type of citizen they intend to educate through schooling. When education is treated as a fundamental right and a public asset, it can be a crucial tool in the construction of a fairer future for all, with no person left behind.

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