Revista Brasileira de Educação do Campo
Brazilian Journal of Rural Education
ARTIGO/ARTICLE/ARTÍCULO
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.20873/uft.rbec.e10791

Rural Education: some indicators

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ABSTRACT. The following article, whose nature is descriptive and bibliographic, aims, based on Goal eight of the National Education Plan 2014-2024 (PNE), to identify some indicators for the Countryside Education. For such purpose, we consider the educational reality of the countryside based on: the low schooling of the population; in the negative evolution of the enrollments number in the last few years; and in the circumstances through which the quality benchmark, provided by the Basic Education Development Index (Ideb), has been unproductive to the define public policies aimed for the Countryside Education. Despite the operational difficulties of the educational system to obtain the necessary information for its composition, the results of the last two Ideb, however, already show progress. Based on these indicators, we conclude that some actions aimed at increasing the schooling of the countryside population were undertaken, however, the unequal educational condition among young people living in the countryside and those who live in the urban areas still persists. There is a possibility of fulfilling the goal eight of PNE by 2024, however, this may not mean progress in guaranteeing the countryside population's rights to an education of quality, but, on the contrary, its reduction.

Keywords: educational indicators, rural education, PNE.

Educação do Campo: alguns indicadores

RESUMO. O presente artigo, de cunho bibliográfico descritivo, tem como objetivo, a partir da meta oito do Plano Nacional de Educação 2014-2024 (PNE), identificar alguns indicadores da Educação do Campo. Para tanto, consideramos a realidade educacional do campo com base: na baixa escolaridade da população; na evolução negativa do número de matrícula nos últimos anos; e nas circunstâncias por meio das quais o referencial de qualidade, fornecido pelo Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica (Ideb), tem sido pouco producente para a definição de políticas públicas voltadas à Educação do Campo. Apesar das dificuldades operacionais do sistema educacional no sentido de levantar as informações necessárias para a sua composição, o resultado dos dois últimos Ideb já demonstram avanços. A partir desses indicadores, constatamos que algumas ações direcionadas a aumentar a escolaridade da população do campo foram empreendidas, mas a condição educacional desigual entre os jovens residentes no campo e os que vivem nas áreas urbanas ainda persiste. Há possibilidade de cumprimento da meta oito do PNE até 2024, no entanto, isso pode não significar avanços na garantia de direitos da população camponesa a uma educação de qualidade, mas, ao contrário, a sua redução.

Palavras-chave: indicadores educacionais, educação do campo, PNE.

Educación de Campo: algunos indicadores

RESUMEN. El presente artículo de cuño bibliográfico descriptivo tiene como objetivo, a partir de la meta Ocho del Plan Nacional de Educación 2014-2024, identificar algunos indicadores para la Educación del Campo. Para tanto, consideramos la realidad educativa del campo con base en: la baja escolaridad de la población; la evolución negativa del número de matrícula en los últimos años; y las circunstancias por medio de las cuales el referente de calidad, proporcionado por Ideb, ha sido poco productivo para la definición de políticas públicas dirigidas a la Educación del Campo. A pesar de las dificultades operativas del sistema educativo en el sentido de obtener las informaciones necesarias para su composición, el resultado de los dos últimos Ideb, sin embargo, ya muestran avances. A partir de estos indicadores, constatamos que algunas acciones dirigidas a aumentar la escolaridad de la población del campo fueron empreendidas, pero, la condición educativa desigual entre los jóvenes residentes en el campo y en las áreas urbanas todavía persiste; hay posibilidad de cumplimiento del objetivo Ocho del PNE hasta 2024, con todo, eso no significará avances en la garantía de derechos de la población campesina a una educación de calidad, sino, al contrario, su reducción.

Palabras clave: indicadores educativos, educación rural, PNE.

Introduction

Access to schooling in the Brazilian population has made significant advances in the last thirty years. However, despite a near universalization of access to basic education, boosted since the 1990s, Brazil, until 2005, was among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in which compulsory education had the shorter durations, and children only accessed it from the age of seven (Ranieri & Alves, 2018).

With the advances of the expansion of the access to school education, the Brazilian educational policies begin to engage in the progression and the improvement of its quality. In the period between 1999 and 2005, elementary school had school retention rates between 10.4% and 13% and school dropout rates between 7.5% and 12%, and high school between 7.2% and 11.5%, and 14.7% and 16.6% in the same indexes (IBGE, 2020). Educational inequality, however, remains a problem, having high levels and existing in different dimensions and aspects.

In terms of quality, Brazil still holds a very low position in world indexes when the evaluation criterion is student learning. In 2015, it ranked 60th among the 76 countries evaluated in Mathematics and Sciences by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In the 2018 evaluation, even rising some positions, it continued to occupy the last places: 57th in reading, 66th in Science and 70th in Mathematics (INEP, 2019).

The low levels of Brazilian education keep challenging the State, over the past three decades, to develop and implement educational policies that qualitatively change these levels, putting Brazil on a more comfortable status before the international community. As an example, we can highlight the implementation of the *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Brasileira – LDB 9394/96* (Brazilian Education Guidelines and Bases Law) and the *Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais* – PCN (National Curricular Parameters) (1997); the creation of the *Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica e de Valorização dos Profissionais da Educação* – FUNDEB (Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and the Valorization of Education Professionals) (2006); the *Plano Nacional de Educação* – PNE (National Education Plan) (2001-2010), the *Plano Nacional de Educação* – PNE (National Education Plan) (2014-2024), the *Base Nacional Comum Curricular* – BNCC (National Common Curriculum Base) (2017); etc.

Approved in 2014 after an intense national debate, the PNE (2014-2024),

which sets 20 targets for the investment policy in Brazilian education for the next ten years, is the object of analysis in this research. We aim to analyze the goal eight of the new PNE, which focus on raising the schooling levels of the young people and adults in the countryside, of the black population, and of the 25% poorest.

> Goal 8: raise the average schooling of the population from aged 18 (eighteen) to 29 (twenty-nine) years, so as to reach at least 12 (twelve) years of schooling in the last year of this Plan, for the populations of the countryside, the region with the lowest education level in the country and for the 25% (twenty-five percent) poorest, and equal the average education level between people who declared themselves black and those who declared themselves non-black to the *Fundação Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* – IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics Foundation). (Brazil, 2014, p. 33, our translation[i]).

Specific groups that present distinct demands, contexts and problematizations regarding the guarantee of the right to education are represented in this goal. Without disregarding the importance of each one of them, we narrowed down our analyses to the first group: that of young people and adults in the countryside.

This research proposal falls within the scope of public education policies, linked to the *Grupo de Pesquisa: Educação e Movimentos Sociais* – GPEMS/UFS (Research Group: Education and Social Movements). Its main objective is to identify indicators for rural education, an educational modality that has a history marked by data showing exclusion and quality levels below the national average, considering for this analysis the 2014-2024 PNE's goal eight.

The goal eight was chosen based on the accelerated process of rural schools' nucleation and shutdown, implemented by the municipal and state systems in Sergipe. Moreover, it was found that the goal eight is the only one, among the twenty in the PNE, which proposes to intervene specifically in the rural education. There are, as demonstrated by Santos (2018, p. 203), seventeen strategies focus on rural education in the set of 254 that make up the PNE, "however, only the goal eight of the Educação de Jovens e Adultos (EJA) (Education of Young People and Adults) refers to rural education, specifically, when establishing the effort towards increasing the schooling of young and adult peasants" (our translation)[ii].

It is an important goal for guaranteeing the right to education. Its relevance in the PNE can be seen if we observe the data of educational inequality between the young and adult population living in the countryside and that living in the city, shown in the last demographic

census (IBGE, 2010). The result of this census showed a difference of 2.1 years of schooling between these populations. While the average schooling of the population aged 18 to 24 years in the urban area was almost ten years of schooling (9.8 years), that of the rural area was not eight years (7.7 years) (IBGE, 2010).

This descriptive bibliographic study was carried out through the reading and analysis of the National Education Plan (PNE 2014-2024), of technical reports of the *Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira* – Inep (National Institute of Educational Studies Anísio Teixeira) and the *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* – IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), of the information available at the *Observatório do PNE* (PNE Observatory), as well as of authors dealing with rural education, such as Molina (2004; 2012) and Ribeiro (2010; 2012). It has, as a guideline, the educational reality of the countryside, regarding the level of schooling, the evolution of school enrollment and external evaluation, of the *Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica* – Ideb (Development Index of Basic Education). In this paper, we structured the text as follows: a brief presentation of the Rural Education scenario, in which we will bring the trajectory and data of the peasant reality; an analysis of the goal eight and its respective strategies; indicators evidenced by the goal and some considerations.

Trails in the rural education

The history of Brazilian education shows us that the rural areas, even with educational actions (projects, programs), are not treated as a priority in public educational investments, but with specific purposes with low-cost for social policies (Jesus, 2015); (França, 2021); (Santos & Paludo, 2020). According to the research carried out by Calazans, Castro and Silva (1981), the rural environment is seen as a space that requires educational investment only since the 1930s. A similar finding is presented by Barreiro (2013) in a research on training for agricultural education and training of rural teachers in the 1950s and 1960s. This was because there was a need for structural adjustment to the industrialization process that intensified in Brazil at that time, and education should ensure the formation of workforce for the expanding labor market in the country:

> Education assumes a rectifying function in order to prepare rural populations to adapt to the process of subordination to the capitalist mode of production, which assumes more defined contours, combining the expulsion of the land with the formation of manpower for the

> nascent industries (Ribeiro, 2010, p. 166, our translation[iii]).

The education's standpoint on which the educational action was based was backward with regard to the rural environment, misunderstanding it as archaic, as if it and its people lived and worked in a stage prior to capitalism. Therefore, it was up to the school to play the role of enabling the countryside people to face the challenge of dealing with the "introduction of technologies and innovations to agricultural production" (Ribeiro, 2010, p. 167, our translation[iv]), through scientific knowledge.

The agricultural companies presented two important demands to the Brazilian peasants: to adapt the workers to the new method of the productive process and to educate them to the consumption of the new agricultural production. In this sense, it was necessary to adopt educational programs and projects that would prepare workers for their new duties in the world of work. The arrival of the agricultural companies in the Brazilian countryside has produced an intense transformation of the peasant landscape. There is, therefore, a destruction of the subsistence areas, that is, "in this perspective, the subsistence crops of a large portion of the population are destroyed to give way to profitable production" (Ribeiro, 2010, p. 167, our translation[v]).

Some of the research on rural education, specifically those conducted by Calazans, Castro and Silva (1981), and Barreiro (2013), show that the courses and trainings carried out diagnosed the unsuitability of rural workers to continue in agriculture. This factor favored migratory processes from the countryside to the city in search of better living conditions. They also show a negative perception of the peasant population in the justifications and contents of the programs and courses aimed at their education:

> The rural worker is seen as malnourished (lacking in food), ignorant (lacking in information), sick (lacking in health), isolated (lacking in contacts with the outside), anomic (lacking in social and conscious ties), or averse to social solidarity (Calazans, Castro & Silva apud Ribeiro, 2010, p. 168, our translation[vi]).

In the training of rural teachers developed by the *Campanha Nacional de Educação Rural* – CNER (National Campaign for Rural Education), the program of the courses covered a universe much broader than the mere pedagogical aspect: "In addition to the disciplines of regular education, others composed the programs of the courses, such as: moral and civic education, hygiene and nursing, cooking, recreation and singing, training,

agriculture for the countryside and agriculture for the classroom" (Barreiro, 2013, p. 655, our translation[vii]). Although explained in all the material of the courses the objective of respecting the values of the local population, the records in reports, diagnoses and activities point in the opposite direction, as identified by Barreiro (2013) in the notes of an agronomist about the countryside man:

> The rural man, given his isolation, is a deformed man. He lives forgetful, even of himself, and in a sick conformism he lets himself be dragged along, cutting off half his existence through the ignorance that increases his hunger and undermines his organism with deficiency-related diseases ... His morals are based on family promiscuity, which denies him even the feelings of the human person. His spiritual life is tied to popular superstition and his school is the same old thing, repeated from generation to generation (Barreiro, 2013, p. 655, our translation[viii]).

The education would fulfill the role of "redeemer" of the above reality. In spite of this, the educational proposals were conceived externally and implanted in the rural environment without considering the demands of the subjects who were the target group of these formative processes. For Ribeiro (2010), the consequences of the characterization of the peasant thought externally have proved themselves to be as nefarious as the absence of the State:

> This abstract characterization of the reality of the peasant, or rather, this characterization defined by external interests that anticipate the expected results of the rural education that will be offered, has produced as much harm to rural populations as the state's immobilism with regard to the provision of social policies in response to the demands of farmers (Ribeiro, 2010, p. 169, our translation[ix]).

The aspects noted above also allow us to make some considerations. The first concerns the way in which rural education initiatives were taken until the beginning of the second half of the 20th century, by international organizations, by departments of the Ministry of Education – MEC, or under the influence of such organizations, that is, there was no Brazilian educational policy that aimed to guarantee the right to education of the peasant population. There were only educational proposals imported from abroad to be implemented in the Brazilian rural areas (Barreiro, 2010). Another consideration concerns the fact that the workers were not consulted about their educational needs. The proposals to be implemented in schools, unions, parishes, among others, were delivered to the State's most diverse partner agencies, which were also not consulted about nor could interfere in their objectives, contents or methodologies. These attributes of importation and silencing of, or

indifference to, the local contexts in the educational processes of schools located in rural areas persist even today. As pointed out by Pimentel and Coité (2021, p. 271), "the education for the rural population is approached based on a substantially urban-oriented curriculum. Consequently, it is far from the particularities, needs and reality of the countryside" (our translation[x]). We call these educational processes "rural education".

The rural education is organized based on educational principles and objectives linked to the formation of workforce for the labor market of large urban centers. Its curricula, its methodologies, its pedagogical materials, and the functioning of the school follow the same pattern used by urban schools. It is a school that is in the rural environment with "strong marks of the urban", as stated by Knijnik (2001, p. 142): "the school of the rural environment is a school that being there, is out of there" (our translation[xi]). "There are millions of children who see their world hidden at school, either through what is in the textbooks, or through the contents that are worked in the classroom, the content of the city" (Knijnik, 2001, p. 142, our translation[xii]).

Assuming a clear intention to oppose the rural that denies the history of the subjects who survive from the work of the land, the social movements of the countryside start a process of re-signification of themselves as "collective political subjects" (Ribeiro, 2010, our translation). This process of re-signification builds the term "Countryside" to replace "Rural", which, from then on, comes to represent both the struggle for land and the struggle for education. Thus, the term "Countryside" takes on a political connotation of the continuity of peasant struggles and, "therefore, it does not mean the profile of the soil in which the farmer works, but the historical project of society and education that has been forged in and by the peasant movements" (Fernandes & Molina, 2004, p. 32, our translation[xiii]).

This project of society and education puts under suspicion the homogenizing character of education and teaching and calls for an education that recognizes and values the heterogeneity and specificities of different social, cultural, territorial, and economic context in school education. The overcoming of a (rural) education noticeably committed to urban marketing objectives, which have as priority only instrumental and preparatory training processes for the labor market, is one of the main objectives of countryside education which, according to Caldart (2012):

> projects a future when it recovers the essential link between human formation and material production of existence, when it conceives educational intentionality in the direction of new patterns of social relations, through the ties with new forms of production, with free associated labor, with other values, political commitments, with social struggles that face the contradictions involved in this process (Caldart, 2012, p. 263, our translation[xiv]).

In this sense, the curricula of countryside schools, the methodologies adopted, and the organization of pedagogical work, should prioritize the valorization, the respect for peasant culture, the plurality of knowledge in the rural environment, the identities of the subjects living in the countryside (Pimentel & Coité, 2021), as opposed to what occurs in most countryside schools. Even if processes of transformation of countryside schools into countryside schools are underway, the prevalence is still the perspective tied to countryside education. Negative educational indices (illiteracy, teacher qualification, structural conditions, and access to schools) predominate in rural areas (IBGE, 2020).

Countryside schools have historically presented vastly different physical characteristics in terms of available resources. Considering the number of classrooms as an indicator of school size, 75% of urban schools that offered elementary and middle school in 2010 had more than five classrooms. For schools located in rural areas, the profile was different, as 94% had fewer than five classrooms. In 2016, schools with only one teacher (*escolas unidocentes*) located exclusively in rural areas accounted for 7.2% of Brazilian schools (INEP, 2017).

If we take teacher qualification as a reference, the data continue to show significant differences, as shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1 – Qualification of early childhood education and elementary school teachers (1st to 5th grade).

Area	**Teachers with only high school diploma (non-normal)**	**Teachers with a degree (without *licenciatura*)**	**Total teachers without minimum training**	**% of all teachers**
Urban	75,524	18,020	93,544	10.5
Rural	20,501	2,862	23,363	13.3

Source: Censo Escolar 2013/Inep/MEC. Own elaboration, 2020.

Table 2 – Qualification of middle school (6th to 9th grade) and high school teachers.

Area	**Teachers with only high school diploma (non-normal)**	**Teachers with a degree (without *licenciatura*)**	**Total teachers without minimum training**	**% of all teachers**
Urban	100,237	21,158	121,395	14.8

Rural	91,380	3,993	95,373	49.9

Source: Censo Escolar 2013/Inep/MEC. Own elaboration, 2020.

In the *Censo Escolar 2016* (2016 School Census), there is a considerable change in the qualification of teachers working in basic education. Of the 2.2 million teachers, 90% had *licenciatura*[xv]. Among these, 12.9% work in the schools of the rural area (INEP, 2017).

In the observation report of the *Conselho de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social* – CDES (Council of Economic and Social Development) (Brazil, 2011), it is noted that in the period corresponding to the years 2005 to 2012 there were significant advances in educational results, however, there are still high levels of inequalities in several aspects, among them the Countryside Education.

Educational access can be illustrated from these inequalities insofar as we verify data from 2012 and find that in Early Childhood Education the care of children from 0 to 3 years was 21.2% in the urban area and 9.4% in the countryside; in preschool, the percentages of children aged 4 to 5 years attended were 80.7% in the urban area and 66.7% in the countryside. Elementary school was the most equitable in terms of access, with 98.4% in the urban area and 97.5% in the rural area. While in the urban area the age/grade distortion was 19.9%, in the schools of the countryside the percentage reached 33.7%.

The situation of inequality is even more evident in high school. While 56.6% of young people aged 15 to 17 in urban areas attended high school in 2012, in rural areas this percentage was 41.3%. In that year, 31.9% of young people living in peasant communities and 58.4% of those living in urban areas completed high school (Brazil, 2011).

> The countryside schools are the ones with the worst infrastructure conditions to receive students – according to the *Censo Escolar de 2009* (2009 School Census), almost 20% of them have no electricity. The number of schools without a library and computer labs is in the range of 90%. Less than 1% of schools in the countryside are equipped with science labs (Brazil, 2011, p. 25, our translation[xvi]).

This scenario of Countryside Education needed to be expressed in the form of goals and strategies in the new *Plano Nacional de Educação* (National Education Plan), as a challenge to be faced in Brazilian education. According to the Ministry of Education, the goal eight of the PNE is part of the set of goals aimed "at reducing inequalities and valuing diversity" (Brazil, 2014a, p. 11, our translation[xvii]). When looking at the

strategies that have the role of implementing goal eight, some issues draw our attention.

First, there is no educational/pedagogical novelty in the six strategies of goal eight that would guarantee a change in the average level of schooling of the peasant population. These are strategies already used by the various educational systems, which only have a supplementary function, and which have little effect on the educational reality of young people and adults, especially those of the countryside population. The data on access to high school shown in the previous section of this paper demonstrate how education for peasants has worked in a funnel format (less than 40% of the students who start elementary school finish high school). The data show us that young peasants are the ones who face the most difficulty in accessing and staying in school, with only 31.9% of them completing high school (Brazil, 2011).

A second issue that draws our attention is related to the wide scope of the goal and the generality of the strategies. With goal eight containing such a significant range of groups vulnerable to the right to education (rural, black, and poor populations), specific strategies for each population group could be more effective in meeting the goal. However, the six strategies have as their central focus youth and adult education in a generalized way for all groups indistinctly, thus compromising the guarantee of recognition of the diversity and specificity of each contemplated group.

Also, in relation to the strategies of goal eight, it is worth noting that, of the groups contemplated, the rural population is the one that has the fewest years of study, and therefore would require greater political, financial, and pedagogical investment to meet the objectives to be achieved. In 2014, the *Observatório PNE* (PNE Observatory) presented data from IBGE/PNAD that already showed changes in relation to the 2010 census, however, the countryside population remained behind the other contemplated groups, with the lowest years of schooling. In 2020, the sixth year of PNE implementation, the field continues to lag in this indicator, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 – Average years of schooling.

Schooling - national average	**Populations targeted by the goal eight of the PNE**			
9.8 years	**Countryside**	**Black**	**25% poorer**	**Region with the lowest level schooling (Northeast)**

	2014	**2014**	**2014**	**2014**
	8.2 years	9.5 years	8.3 years	9.1 years
	2020	**2020**	**2020**	**2020**
	10 years	11.1 years	10.2 years	12 years
	Goal for 2014	**Goal for 2014**	**Goal for 2014**	**Goal for 2014**
	12 years	12 years	12 years	12 years

Source: IBGE/PNAD/Observatório do PNE (2014/2020). Own elaboration, 2020.

Despite the relevance of goal eight for the education of young people and adults, its effectiveness in terms of changing the educational reality of the countryside population may be compromised by the lack of specificity in terms of implementation, seeing that one of the strategies adopted by the municipal and state education systems has been the closing of countryside schools and transporting their students to other communities or to the headquarters of municipalities, a factor that causes dropouts and/or delays in the entry of children into school, especially in early childhood education. Our goal, however, is to contribute to the identification of indicators for countryside education, understanding, like Leal and Reali (2015), that they can base analysis of policies and favor the development of contextualized actions, in this case the increase in schooling of young people and adults living in the countryside.

Educational indicators and characteristics of countryside schools

Among the most important educational indicators used today in Brazil, we highlight the *Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica* (Ideb) (Basic Education Development Index), created in 2007 by the *Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira* (INEP) (Anísio Teixeira National Institute for Educational Studies and Research), as previously mentioned. Calculated through relations between the flow index raised by the *Censo Escolar* (School Census) and the performance averages in assessments applied by Inep, such as *Prova Brasil* (Brazil Exam) for schools and municipalities, and the exam held every two years by the *Sistema de Avaliação da Educação Básica* (SAEB) (System for Evaluation of Basic Education) for the states and the country, to the Ideb it is given the perspective of presenting concrete data for monitoring the quality of Education, from which society can mobilize to establish goals and aim for improvements for the education systems (IDEB, 2016).

The school flow indicators measure the student promotion, school retention and school dropout, while the standardized exams are applied by the Inep at the end of

the stages corresponding to the 4th and 9th years of elementary school and 3rd year of high school. The Ideb thus adopts the idea that "an educational system that systematically fails its students, causing a large part of them to leave school before completing basic education, is not desirable ..." (Fernandes, 2007, p. 7, our translation[xviii]), even if those approved do not achieve high scores on standardized exams when finishing the highlighted stages. In addition to being easy to understand and calculate, the Ideb has the advantage of making explicit this "exchange rate" between approval and school performance, that is, it shows how education systems are willing to obtain increases in their approval ratings despite the loss of points on standardized exams.

The proposal of the PNE's goal eight, of raising the average schooling levels of the population aged 18 to 29 years living in the countryside to at least 12 years of study by 2024, adopts as its first strategy "to institutionalize programs and develop technologies for flow correction, for individualized pedagogical monitoring and for recovery and partial progression, as well as prioritize students with lagging school performance..." (Brazil, 2014a, p. 67, our translation[xix]).

The statement of this goal and its strategy are explicit in relation to the flow indicator associated with promotion, school retention and dropout of countryside students, as well as are tacit in their affinity with the scores obtained in standardized exams, when they prioritize students who have school performance deficits. Hence, the link between goal eight and the Ideb is clearly formulated in the PNE, which could not be otherwise, since this indicator is a central point in the semantic basis of the formulation of public policies for Basic Education. Created in 2007, the Ideb stemmed from a government policy called the *Plano de Desenvolvimento da Educação* (PDE) (Education Development Plan), which established a systemic planning with a view to the data on the poor quality of education in Brazil, shown by comparisons with other countries then disclosed, so that it would be possible, from more solid foundations, to direct investments and improve the management of resources by public agents.

The PDE represented "a path to promote the desired improvement in school quality without social purges, but this was only possible because its main indicator, the IDEB, definitively incorporated the idea that school inclusion is a policy that cannot be abandoned" (Marchelli, 2010, p. 582, our translation[xx]). More than a statistical indicator, the Ideb presents itself

as the priority driver of public policies for the improvement of the quality of education at the national level, in states, municipalities, and schools, because its composition enables the updated diagnosis of the educational situation in all these spheres, as well as the projection of intermediate individual goals to be achieved (IDEB, 2020).

In this sense, the Ideb is the main indicator of the quality of education, however, only 20% of countryside schools have it (Souza, Paludo & Beltrame, 2015, p. 10). Another important indicator is the accelerated process of closing the countryside schools. Cancian (2014) points out that in 13 years 32.5 thousand schools were closed in rural areas. The phenomenon results from several factors caused by the abrupt transformations in society and in the world of work. A survey conducted by the *Departamento Intersindical de Estatística e Estudos Socioeconômicos* – DIEESE (Inter-Union Department of Statistics and Socioeconomic Studies) (2014) on the wage labor market in rural areas points out some of the factors of population shrinkage in the Brazilian countryside:

> "a) greater industrial concentration in urban areas (increased demand for labor); b) changes in the productive process in agriculture (opening of agricultural borders, availability of credit, productive specialization of the agricultural process, etc.); c) fragility of the supply of goods and services by the State in the rural environment (health, education, leisure, transportation, etc.); d) scarcity, hardship and precariousness of work in the rural environment (which still persists, despite major technological changes and legal norms and instruments); e) increase in the technological level of rural activities; f) decrease in fertility rates, which significantly reduced population replacement; g) increased concentration of land ownership, due to the absence of a national policy of agrarian reform" (DIEESE, 2014, p. 3-4, our translation[xxi]).

The concerns about the decrease in the number of schools and the sharp drop in school enrollment in rural areas were the subject of regulation by the Federal Government. The problem received a political counterpart through Law no. 12.960, of March 27th, 2014 which amended the *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* (LDB) (Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education), in order to establish normative rules for the education system regarding the closing of countryside, indigenous, and quilombola schools, requiring studies and prior community consultation (Brazil, 2014b). Table 4 below shows changes in the number of urban and countryside schools in 21 years.

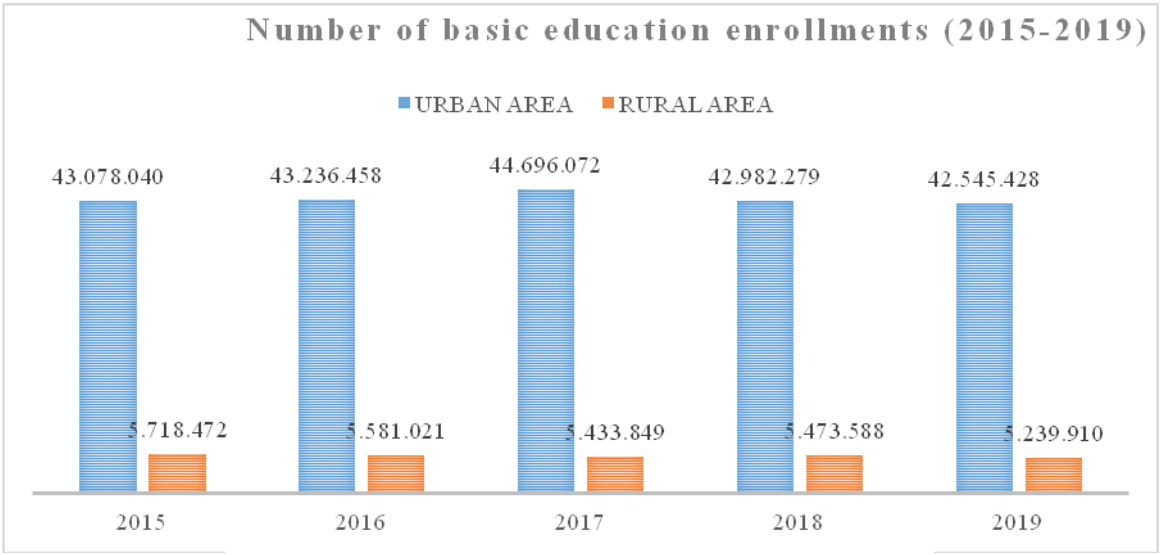
Table 4 – Number of Schools – Basic Education.

Year	Urban	Rural	Total
1997	87,921	137,599	225,520
2018	124,330	57,609	181,939
Difference	+ 36,409	– 79.990	– 43.581

Source: Inep: Censo Escolar (1997-2013). Own elaboration, 2020.

The effects of the closing of countryside schools have been accompanied by the idea of "nucleation", which proposes that several smaller schools be united into a single "pole-school", larger than the first ones and still located in the rural area. Even so, in many cases, the absence of a nearby "pole-school" forces students to travel long distances daily to the nearest school. Vulnerable to the economic circumstances that permeate social relations and to the political difficulties of the public sector to fight its effects, countryside schools experience great difficulties. Graph 1 presents data on the evolution in the number of enrollments in basic education during the years the PNE was in effect.

Graph 1 – Number of basic education enrollments, according to school location.

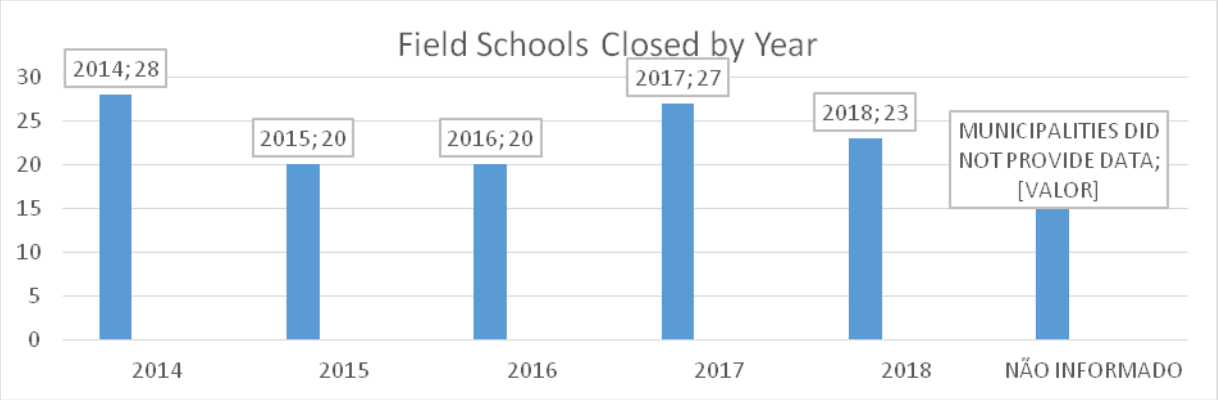


Source: Inep: Censo Escolar (2015-2019). Own elaboration, 2020.

Despite the observatory pointing out the achievement of goal eight in terms of raising the number of years of schooling of the population living in the countryside, the enrollment in countryside schools shows a decrease in the five years of implementation of the PNE, according to the data presented in graph 1.

In five years of the PNE, there was a loss of almost 500 thousand enrollments in basic education in countryside schools, when, *a priori*, there should have been an increase to ensure the fulfillment of goal eight. Researches conducted in different states and regions confirms the census data through the number of schools closed. In the North Region, for example, in the state of Pará alone, 6,158 countryside schools were closed in the period between 2000 and 2018 (Hage & Corrêa, 2019). In a similar period, the state of Goiás, in the Midwest, closed 1,249 schools, according to research conducted by Alves (2019). Sergipe, the smallest state in the Northeast, maintains the process of closing countryside schools at a steady pace, according to data in Chart 2.

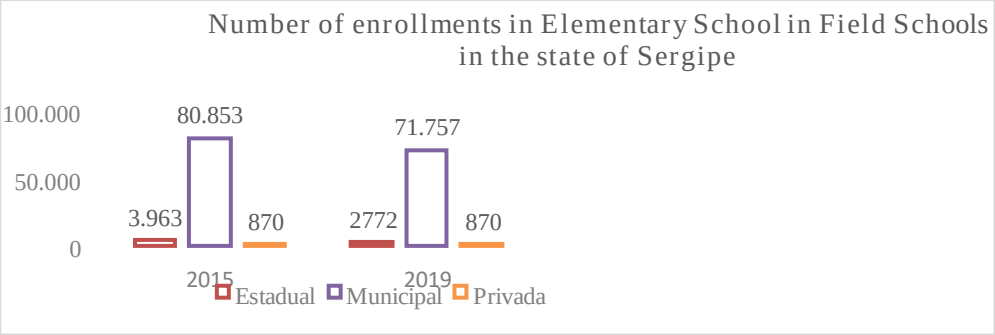
Graph 2 – Number of closed countryside schools in the State of Sergipe.



Source: Relatório do Diagnóstico da Educação do Campo em Sergipe/EDUCAMPO – 2021. Own elaboration, 2020.

Data from the *Censo Escolar 2019* (2019 School Census) have pointed, in Sergipe, in addition to the continuous closing of rural schools, a reduction in the offer of school enrollment vacancies in the state network, as well as the transfer of state schools to municipalities in the lending regime. In graph 3, it is possible to verify that, even in a fall, the largest volume of enrollments is in the municipal sphere, with more than 90%.

Graph 3 – Number of enrollments in Elementary School in Countryside Schools in the state of Sergipe.



Source: Inep/Censo Escolar (2015-2019). Own elaboration, 2020.

The State's virtual unaccountability for the provision of Countryside Education can compromise the fulfillment of goal eight of the PNE. Another significant aspect is the low performance of countryside schools in the Ideb, whose value is approximately 50% lower than that registered by urban schools.

Before the implementation of the PNE, the state of Sergipe did not reach the goal estimated in Ideb in all basic education for the year 2013. The most serious situation was in the final years of elementary school, which obtained 2.8, when the expected goal was 3.6, and high school, with 2.8, while the forecast was 3.4 (IDEB, 2013).

After the implementation of the PNE, the situation of countryside schools in Sergipe has shown significant changes in the evaluation of the Ideb. Currently, all state high schools are included in the IDEB database, whereas this has not always been the case. In 2017, of the 24 schools in the state network, 10 had no information regarding the achievement or not of goals in the Ideb, and 1 was not even registered. In the following IDEB (2019), 18 schools met the expected goals, 3 did not meet them, and 3 still had no information about them (IDEB, 2020). These data confirm what has been previously stated about the potential of the Ideb as an indicator for monitoring the fulfillment of goal eight of the PNE, although it is still insufficient, because it does not present data such as the reduction of enrollments, closing of schools, and increase in the years of schooling of young people. This allows us to recall the contributions of Alavarse et al. (2013), in the sense that the increase in the performance of schools in Ideb is an important part of the verification of the achievement of the PNE's goal eight, but it is not all there is to the goal's fulfillment.

Another indicator that might points to the fulfillment or not of goal eight concerns school closings. The shrinking of the countryside population caused by the expansion of the mechanization of

agriculture, and the consequent loss of traditional jobs, has entailed the closing of schools whose number of students is reduced, so that the adoption of the nucleation system through "pole-schools" imposes on the municipal secretariats and state education networks complex transport operations for the displacement of students. Even though the occurrence of a good performance of schools in the Ideb indicates an increase in the quality of education, the closing of these schools reduces the possibility of more young people being able to increase their schooling, thus compromising the achievement of the goal eight of the PNE.

Finally, the reduction in enrollments in countryside schools is also an indicator that points to the difficulty in raising the schooling level of young peasants, exacerbating the educational inequalities that are already well consolidated in relation to the guarantee of the right to education for the countryside population.

Final remarks

Countryside Education is a recent area of debate and discussion in the Brazilian scenario, and it is under permanent construction, both in its statements and in its own concepts (Caldart, 2012). The countryside presents a large volume of problems whose assessment and analysis through educational indicators is extremely necessary. In this article, we intended to identify indicators for countryside education considering the fulfillment of goal eight of the PNE, proposing to present an analytical tool in order to understand the objective conditions for the achievement of that goal regarding the Countryside Education.

The development of the research showed three indicators that directly interfere in the achievement of the goal: persistence of low schooling of the countryside population, reduction in the number of school enrollments and reduction in the number of schools in the rural areas. It also showed some difficulties in using the main instrument for evaluating basic education, the Ideb, as a resource for monitoring compliance with the goal.

Regarding low schooling, some actions aimed at increasing it in the countryside population have been undertaken in the last decade, such as the improvement of school transport, now working in three shifts in a partnership between states and municipalities, thus ensuring, to young peasants, the possibility of continuing to study even when the local school does not cover all basic education. It is also worth mentioning the implementation of actions, even if

punctual, such as the expansion of Preuni Seduc[xxii], which increased the possibilities of access to higher education for more young people and adults, among others policies. However, the unequal educational condition between young people living in rural areas and those living in urban areas persists. It was also found that the young peasants are in the most disadvantaged situation compared to the other groups highlighted in goal eight, namely the black population and the 25% poorest.

Concerning the drastic decrease in school enrollment and the consequent reduction in the number of schools, research has shown that there are a set of structural factors that include from transformations in the relationship between capital and labor produced in the countryside, to the operational difficulties of state and municipal education networks, which have been causing this reduction in the supply of education for the peasant population. In this sense, analyses of compliance with of goal eight that disregard these two indicators should/can be problematized.

As for the Ideb, the research showed that its use for the evaluation of countryside schools has not been much productive due to the operational difficulties of the educational system in raising the necessary information for its composition. Many countryside schools do not participate in the Ideb, because they do not meet one of defining criteria for this participation – the number of students in the school. Consequently, the lack of information compromises the use of the instrument both for the analysis of Countryside Education, and for the fulfillment of goal eight of the PNE. Despite this, the investigation identified that in Sergipe some schools were included in the last two results of the Ideb (2017-2019), with even an increase in the number of those that reached the expected goals, a factor that favorably identifies Ideb as the most relevant instrument in monitoring the goals of the PNE.

The results presented here point to indicators capable of measuring the achievement of goal eight, thus reaching our main objective. They also indicate the need for attention, since the fulfillment of this goal with regard to increasing the schooling of young peasants may not mean advances in guaranteeing the right to high-quality education, but probably a reduction in its supply and quality. These results can guide municipalities and states to intensify actions and correct strategies related to educational policies aimed at villages, settlements, quilombola communities, among others, in order to change the reality exposed here.

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[i] On the original text: “Meta 8: elevar a escolaridade média da população de 18 (dezoito) a 29 (vinte e nove) anos, de modo a alcançar, no mínimo, 12 (doze) anos de estudo no último ano de vigência deste Plano, para as populações do campo, da região de menor escolaridade no País e dos 25% (vinte e cinco por cento) mais pobres, e igualar a escolaridade média entre negros e não negros declarados à Fundação Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística – IBGE”.

[ii] On the original text: “entretanto, apenas a meta oito da Educação de Jovens e Adultos (EJA) faz referência à Educação do Campo, especificamente, ao estabelecer elevação da escolaridade dos jovens e adultos camponeses”.

[iii] On the original text: "A educação assume uma função retificadora visando preparar as populações rurais para adaptarem-se ao processo de subordinação ao modo de produção capitalista, que assume contornos mais definidos, combinando a expulsão da terra com a formação de mão de obra para as indústrias nascentes".

[iv] On the original text: “introdução de tecnologias e inovações à produção agrícola”.

[v] On the original text: “nessa ótica, os cultivos de subsistência de grande parcela da população são destruídos para dar lugar a produção rentável”.

[vi] On the original text: "O trabalhador do campo é percebido como desnutrido (carente de alimentos), ignorante (carente de informações), doente (carente de saúde), isolado (carente de contatos com o exterior), anômico (carente de laços sociais e conscientes), ou avesso à solidariedade social".

[vii] On the original text: "Além das disciplinas do ensino regular, outras compunham os programas dos cursos, como: formação moral e cívica, higiene e enfermagem, culinária, recreação e canto, formação, agricultura para o campo e agricultura para sala de aula".

viii On the original text: O rurícola, dado o seu isolamento, é um homem deformado. Ele vive esquecido, até de si mesmo, e num conformismo doentio se deixa arrastar, vida à-fora, cortando metade da existência pela ignorância que lhe aumenta a fome e mina-lhe o organismo com moléstias de carência. [...] A sua moral se fundamenta na promiscuidade familiar, que até lhe nega os sentimentos da pessoa humana. Sua vida espiritual é presa a crendices populares e sua escola é a mesmice, repetida de gerações a gerações.

[ix] On the original text: "Essa caracterização abstrata da realidade do camponês, ou melhor, definida a partir de interesses externos que antecipam os resultados esperados da educação rural que se irá oferecer, tem produzido tantos malefícios às populações rurais quanto o imobilismo do Estado com referência à oferta de políticas sociais em resposta às demandas dos agricultores".

[x] On the original: “a educação para a população do campo é abordada com base em um currículo substancialmente voltado para o urbano. Consequentemente, distante das particularidades, das necessidades e da realidade do campo”.

[xi] On the original text: “a escola do meio rural é uma escola que estando lá, está fora dali”

[xii] On the original text: “São milhões de crianças que, na escola, veem seu mundo ocultado, seja através do que consta nos livros didáticos, seja através dos conteúdos que são trabalhados na sala de aula, conteúdo da cidade”.

[xiii] On the original text: “portanto, não quer significar o perfil do solo em que o agricultor trabalha, mas o projeto histórico de sociedade e de educação que vem sendo forjado nos e pelos movimentos campesinos”.

[xiv] On the original text: "projeta futuro quando recupera o vínculo essencial entre formação humana e produção material da existência, quando concebe a intencionalidade educativa na direção de novos padrões de relações sociais, pelos vínculos com novas formas de produção, com o trabalho associado livre, com outros valores, compromissos políticos, com lutas sociais que enfrentam as contradições envolvidas nesse processo".

[xv] The *licenciatura* is a professional degree that allows one to be a teacher in basic and secondary education.

[xvi] On the original text: “As escolas do campo são as que estão em piores condições de infraestrutura para receber estudantes – pelo Censo Escolar de 2009, quase 20% não possuem energia elétrica. Está na faixa de 90% a quantidade de escolas sem biblioteca e laboratório de informática. Menos de 1% dos estabelecimentos de ensino no campo estão equipados com laboratórios de ciências”.

[xvii] On the original text: “à redução das desigualdades e à valorização da diversidade”.

[xviii] On the original text: “um sistema educacional que reprova sistematicamente seus estudantes,

fazendo que grande parte deles abandone a escola antes de completar a educação básica, não é desejável ...".

[xix] On the original text: "institucionalizar programas e desenvolver tecnologias para correção de fluxo, para acompanhamento pedagógico individualizado e para recuperação e progressão parcial, bem como priorizar estudantes com rendimento escolar defasado...".

[xx] On the original text: "um caminho para promover a desejada melhoria da qualidade na escola sem expurgos sociais, mas isso só foi possível porque seu principal indicador, o IDEB, incorporou definitivamente a ideia de que a inclusão escolar é uma política que não pode ser abandonada".

[xxi] On the original text: "a) maior concentração industrial nas áreas urbanas (aumento da demanda de mão de obra); b) mudanças no processo produtivo na agricultura (abertura de fronteiras agrícolas, disponibilidade de crédito, especialização produtiva do processo agrícola etc.); c) fragilidade da oferta de bens e serviços pelo Estado no meio rural (saúde, educação, lazer, transporte etc.); d) escassez, penosidade e precariedade do trabalho no meio rural (que ainda persiste, apesar das grandes transformações tecnológicas e de normas e instrumentos legais); e) incremento do nível tecnológico das atividades rurais; f) diminuição de taxas de fecundidade, que reduziu sensivelmente a reposição da população; g) elevação da concentração da propriedade da terra, pela ausência de política nacional de reforma agrária" (DIEESE, 2014, p. 3-4).

[xxii]Preuni Seduc is a Pre-University Program of the *<en>Secretaria de Estado da Educação, do Esporte e da Cultura de Sergipe</en> (Sergipe's Secretary of State for Education, Sports, and Culture), which aims to prepare young people and adults who have already finished high school for the *<en>Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio</en> – ENEM (National High School Exam).

Author Contributions: The author was responsible for the designing, delineating, analyzing and interpreting the data, production of the manuscript, critical revision of the content and approval of the final version published.

Conflict of Interest: None reported.

Article Peer Review

Double review.

Funding

No funding.

How to cite this article

APA
Santos, M. (2021). Educação do Campo: alguns indicadores. *Rev. Bras. Educ. Camp.*, *6*, e10791. http://dx.doi.org/10.20873/uft.rbec.e10791

ABNT
SANTOS, M. Educação do Campo: alguns indicadores. **Rev. Bras. Educ. Camp.**, Tocantinópolis, v. 6, e10791, 2021. http://dx.doi.org/10.20873/uft.rbec.e10791

Article Information

Received on October 20th, 2020
Accepted on April 09th, 2021
Published on August, 07th, 2021