

## A EDUCAÇÃO PIAUIENSE NO BRASIL NEODESENVOLVIMENTISTA

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### RESUMO

O texto objetiva analisar os desdobramentos das políticas educacionais no Piauí, entre 2003 e 2015, considerando o contexto socioeconômico e político desse estado. Para isso, realizamos uma pesquisa bibliográfica e documental dos principais aspectos que marcaram o desenvolvimento socioeconômico, político e educacional do Brasil e do Piauí nesse período, marcado pelo neodesenvolvimentismo. Concluímos que houve um movimento positivo de expansão da oferta da educação

básica e de melhoria de indicadores educacionais no estado. Contudo, existiram entraves resultantes das limitações do neodesenvolvimentismo, a exemplo das parcerias público privadas, que possibilitaram ao mercado definir propostas didático-pedagógicas e angariar recursos públicos. Igualmente, permaneceu o caráter gerencial no controle de resultados e na racionalização das ações educativas.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Neodesenvolvimentismo, Políticas educacionais, Piauí.

## THE PIAUÍ'S EDUCATION IN THE NEODEVELOPMENTALIST BRAZIL

### ABSTRACT

The text aims at analyzing the developments of educational policies in the state of Piauí, between 2003 and 2015, considering the socioeconomic and political context of this state. To this end, we carried out a bibliographical and documentary research of the main aspects that marked the socioeconomic, political and educational development of Brazil and Piauí in this period, marked by neodevelopmentalism. It is possible to conclude that there was a positive movement of

expansion of the offer of basic education and improvement of educational indicators in the state under analysis. Nevertheless, there were obstacles resulting from the limitations of neodevelopmentalism, such as public-private partnerships, which enabled the market to define didactic-pedagogical proposals and raise public resources. Similarly, the managerial character remained in the control of results and in the rationalization of educational actions.

**KEYWORDS:** Neodevelopmentalism, Educational policies, Piauí.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

At the end of the 1990s, in which different aspects of neoliberalism in Brazil had been deepened, above all, based on the idea of implementing a minimum State in terms of guaranteeing basic social rights and maximum in regulating the interests of large national and international capital, especially the financial-speculative one. Alves (2015) points out that, in the first ten years of the 2000s, a new pattern of development of Brazilian capitalism was constituted, alternative to neoliberal orthodoxy, neodevelopmentalism. It was, for this author, the “peripheral affirmation of social-democratic reformism, which attributed the role of inducing the capitalist economy in Brazil to the partnership between the State and the market.” (p. 131). Therefore, a confrontation with capital was not proposed. The attempt was to conciliate the interests of the market with some demands of the working class; a proposal, even if phantasmagorical, of social justice within the capitalist structure. Accordingly, this pattern was characterized by being:

supported by a political front composed, on the one hand, by the internal big bourgeoisie constituted by the great industrial groups such as the contractors OAS, Odebrecht, Camargo Correia, etc., and the industrial groups of Friboi, Brazil Foods, Vale, Gerdau, Votorantim, etc. and exporting agribusiness – all benefiting from the increase in exports focused on an aggressive financing policy through the BNDES, aimed at promoting Brazilian companies and investments abroad; on the other hand, by the organized layers of the Brazilian proletariat (old working class) and popular sectors – including the poor sub-proletariat, benefited by the growth of the economy, reduction of open unemployment and formalization of the labor market, supply of credit to boost the domestic market; increase in public spending and income transfer policies by means of social programs (Bolsa Família, Minha Casa Minha Vida, Luz para Todos, etc.) (Alves, 2015, p. 40).

In this context, the State behaved as a regulator and investor, implementing “state incentive programs for the oligopolization of the economy (strengthening of large private economic groups with support from BNDES); public investment programs in infrastructure (with or without public-private partnership); and state income transfer programs aimed at valuing the domestic consumer market (scholarships, minimum wage and wage formalization)” (Alves, 2015, p. 138). This economic tripod brought advantages to the working class, by reducing the unemployment rate, increasing formalization and valuing the minimum wage, as well as improving the educational offer; but it also showed its limits and highlighted the need to go beyond the attempt to reconcile the interests between capital and labor. This is because it did not propose, for example, to overcome meritocratic wage payment policies and flexible actions in labor relationships, in addition to attacking the social security system.

In summary, although a model of socioeconomic development that represented the overcoming of neoliberalism was not constituted, it was possible to expand important aspects of a social government project that broadly benefited the most impoverished working class in the country. More specifically, educational policies were marked by greater and more comprehensive investments; as well as a greater concern with educational management through different programs that provided technical assistance to federated entities.

Nevertheless, since May 2016, we have been experiencing the rupture of this pattern of development, resulting in the discontinuity of the social project that was in effect. In addition, with the result of the 2018 elections, progress is being made towards the establishment of a new socioeconomic and political conjuncture in Brazil that is capable of achieving a conservative and retrograde backward turn in the agenda of social and educational policies. Therefore, it is essential that we analyze the actions and omissions carried out in the area of education on the occasion of the neodevelopmentalist governments, since there were important initiatives that advanced in the perspective of the universalization of education, but that must be analyzed in the context of the contradictions and limitations imposed by the structure capitalist system and the specificities of Brazilian socioeconomic and political development.

Given the scenario of diversity and inequality that characterizes the Brazilian territory, leading to different forms of implementation of public policies in the country, we carried out a cut-off in the research of educational policies and established as objective: to analyze the unfolding of educational policies in Piauí, between 2003 and 2015, considering the socioeconomic and political context of this state. This option is based on the fact that Piauí experienced, in this period, important transformations resulting not only from its condition of economic dependence in relation to the Union, but also from the intimate political alignment between the state and federal governments.

In order to accomplish this investigation, we carried out a bibliographical and documentary research that led us to understand the main aspects that marked the socioeconomic, political and educational development of Brazil and Piauí in the period of neodevelopmentalist governments. Bibliographic studies were also performed on the educational reality of Piauí; and analyzed documents, such as government plans and regulatory goals for educational policies.

Our assumption is that taking up, in this socioeconomic and political moment that the country is experiencing nowadays, the discussion about the educational policies that were on the agenda in the period of neodevelopmentalist governments makes it possible to reflect on which paths converged and which were intended for the institution of a public, free, universal, and socially referenced quality education, thus denying naive and/or biased analyses that do not give the studies of educational policies the necessary advances.

The organization of the text discusses, in the first topic, the socioeconomic reality of Piauí, between 2003 and 2015; and, in the second topic, it deals with the educational policies resulting from this context in that state.

## 2 SOCIOECONOMIC CONTEXT OF THE STATE OF PIAUÍ IN NEODEVELOPMENTISM

Piauí started the first ten years of the 2000s with negative results in all areas. In 2001, there was a panorama marked by: a drop in the share of the population employed in agricultural activities, although it still remained very high (45.3%); almost stagnation in the percentage of the population employed in industrial activities (10.4%); increase in jobs in the service sector, which reached 43.3%; permanence of a reality marked by low wages, since the highest percentage of the population in the revenue classification continued with an income of up to one minimum wage (43.7%) – although

there may have been a small improvement in this aspect; decrease in export activity; fall in industrial activity; aggravation of public indebtedness marked by negotiations unfavorable to the state economy; significant losses in harvested areas of the main state crops, with the exception of soybean production; and decrease in cattle, swine and goat herds (Secretaria do Planejamento do Estado do Piauí [SEPLAN], 2004).

The result of this low level of economic development was a state immersed in disadvantageous social indices, when compared not only to the Brazilian reality, but also to that of the Northeastern region. In 1999, for example, the infant mortality rate in Piauí was 45.3%, which, although lower than that of the Northeast (53%), was well above the Brazilian average (34.6%). In that same year, the percentage of employees with a formal contract was only 34.4% of the population; while, in the Northeast, it totaled 43.2%; and, in Brazil, 61.3%. Furthermore, the proportion of the employed population with an average monthly family income per capita of up to half the minimum wage was very high, reaching more than half of the population (51.5%); while, in the Northeast, this index was 39.8%; and, in Brazil, 18.9% (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [IBGE], 2001).

Accordingly, Piauí started the XXI century having to face problems such as: social and spatial concentration of income and wealth; poverty and social exclusion; disrespect for the fundamental rights of citizenship; environmental threat and degradation; low rate of job creation; several barriers that prevented productivity gains from economic activities, in addition to insufficient state investment capacity in priority productive areas (SEPLAN, 2004).

In this scenario, in 2003, the state embarked on economic, political and social changes following the neodevelopmentalist project from which it also benefited. As highlighted by Medeiros (2014), “the advances in social inclusion, in the improvement of income distribution and in the reduction of inequalities were considerable” (p. 31).

An indication of this advance is the significant decrease in the infant mortality rate, which, although it did not reach the regional and national average, registered, in 2013, a percentage of 21.1%; while, in the Northeast, the average was 19.4%; and, in Brazil, 15%. In addition, the proportion of people employed in formal jobs aged 16 or over was, in that same year, 31.7%; while, the Northeast recorded 39.7% and the national average was 58%. The average income in the main job of people aged 16 or over in formal work in Piauí was R\$ 1,560.00; in the Northeast, it was R\$ 1,537.00; and, in Brazil, it was R\$ 1,921.00 (IBGE, 2014). These data indicate an advance in social indicators, despite showing that, for the second decade of the XXI century, there was still a great challenge in improving the living conditions of the population of Piauí.

The registered social advances are the result of political and economic changes that have taken place in the state. Initially, we can highlight that although Piauí established, in the 1990s, a new legislation that favored the implantation of industries, resulting from the fiscal incentives policy, seeking to replace the action of regional policies of the 1980s, already in the beginning of the 2000. As Macambira (2002) notes, the state had not yet managed to attract many industrial enterprises. The lack of infrastructure put the state at a disadvantage in the fiscal war, especially in relation to its neighboring states that offered more advantageous conditions for the profitability of

private capital, highlighting the selective and excluding character of Brazilian industrial decentralization towards the Northeast.

This scenario took new directions from 2006 onwards, when 43 industrial companies were installed with tax incentives, in addition to another 180 until the year 2014, with an evident emphasis on the growth of civil construction through programs for road construction and affordable housing (SEPLAN, 2016).

Regarding the highlight of the civil construction industry, Medeiros (2014) states that “the decentralization of public investments in infrastructure and housing has produced this positive effect on the growth of the sector and has also attracted companies with headquarters in other states – not necessarily large contractors” (p. 63). However, it is necessary to consider that this fact can result in two negative aspects. First, in the increase of the economic dependence of the state in relation to the Union, generating a fragile and little autonomous industrial sector, since the growth based on investments in the infrastructure area, financed by the federal government, can strengthen the economy, but also raise a greater instability in the industry as it is largely leveraged by investments linked to housing programs, and therefore it is easier to suffer fluctuations, given the political changes. The second refers to the possible transfer of wealth by sending profits from these companies to their headquarters, making it difficult for the state to gain capital.

Consequently, we can say that industrial growth did not take place, mainly, through the production of industrial goods that could economically enhance the state through the export of products with higher added value, or even through the decrease in the volume of imports, allowing a greater surplus and more qualified jobs, as “the export agenda shows an economy that exports commodities, with low added value” (Fundação Centro de Pesquisas Econômicas e Sociais do Piauí [Fundação Cepro], 2015a, p. 61).

Even registering expansion in the installation of industrial companies in Piauí, this sector had, in 2012, a participation of only 18.6% of the state’s gross domestic product (GDP). In addition, it ranks as the 5<sup>th</sup> smallest industrial GDP in the country, representing a share of 0.4% of Brazilian GDP (Confederação Nacional da Indústria [CNI], 2014).

There was also an advance in the agricultural sector, with emphasis on the production of grains, especially soybeans and corn – which corresponded to 78% of the production value of temporary crops in 2012 –, taking into account the use of the natural potential of the Piauí’s Cerrado (Medeiros, 2014), in addition to state incentives. However, there is a challenge to add value to products through their processing, although it is necessary to recognize that:

[...] the growing production of soybeans has had a positive impact on the state economy, to the point of becoming an export item, changing the profile of Piauí’s foreign trade. The inclusion of soybeans in grain and its bran in the export list represents new increments, both in the physical or economic quantum of remittances from Piauí abroad (SEPLAN, 2008, p. 140).

It should also be noted that this grain production was closely linked to the growth of agribusiness, not always representing a socioeconomic balance that would benefit the local population. This fact becomes more worrying if we consider that Medeiros (2014) records, between

2000 and 2008, an important drop both in the value of production and in the planted area of products traditionally cultivated in the state, such as rice and beans, in addition to production of cassava, considering that these products are part of the food consumption of the local population, although they may not represent a significant economic activity.

Therefore, in the period under analysis, there was a development that stood out in the national agribusiness scenario – although still linked to the supply of raw material for the industry, meaning a subordinate insertion –, but which did not manage to advance in the same way in a production that would allow better living conditions for small producers, a fact that worries, given the high percentage of the rural population in this state, which is 34.2% (Medeiros, 2014).

The growth of the industrial and agricultural sectors in the state, in the analyzed period, allied to the credit policies provided greater dynamism to commerce, increasing its share of participation in the state's GDP. Nonetheless, it is necessary to take into account Medeiros' (2014) assertion that "a large part of the money that moves commerce and services is not surplus from local production, but from the transfer of surplus wealth produced in other territories" (p. 60).

Even with this dependent economic development, it was possible to record, in 2014, an increase in the state's GDP of 5.3% in relation to the previous year. The highlight was the growth of the agricultural and industrial sector and the fall in the service sector, although this still represents the most important share in the composition of Piauí's GDP. The agricultural sector changed from 6.37% to 7.42%; the industrial sector increased its participation, going from 13.33% to 15.91%; and the service sector went from 81.30% to 76.67%. In this last sector, the participation of 31.7% in the public administration in its composition stands out (SEPLAN, 2016).

It should be underlined that, in addition to state action through, for example, tax incentives, the Union also acted in the area of infrastructure, contributing to socioeconomic development, since "the low dynamism of Piauí's economy has always depended much more on public spending for its growth than on the expansion of productive activities" (Macambira, 2002, p. 29).

In this way, the investments made by the federal government were important in enabling a certain increase in the state's level of competitiveness, creating more adequate infrastructure conditions that led to the installation of industrial companies, although the development of this sector continues to be the bottleneck of the Piauí's economy. Therefore, in the context of greater investment by the Brazilian state, "the projects provided for in the Federal Government's *Plano de Aceleração do Crescimento* (PAC) for Piauí represent an important impetus for the State to consolidate a basic logistics network in the areas of transport, energy, housing, sanitation and communications" (SEPLAN, 2008, p. 19).

Although the investments made by the federal government in Piauí were necessary and positively signaled for a better and greater socioeconomic development of the state, this fact has revealed a reality of fragility, dependence and subordination that needs to be overcome. This is more significant if we consider the level of dependence that the state establishes in relation to transfers from the federal government, given that:



[...] in Piauí, federal transfers account for more than 50% of current income; the FPE alone participated with practically 40% of the revenue. This fact, typical of states with less mature and structured economies, emphasizes a strong dependence of budget resources from exogenous sources, subject to variation over which the state has no control (Fundação Cepró, 2015a, p. 73).

Undoubtedly, the lack of state control over these resources is the most negative aspect of this situation, as government policies can, in different ways, redefine the amount of resources allocated to the state, as well as revoke some transfers, such as those linked to income transfer. This reality becomes more worrying given the socioeconomic and political scenario that has been outlined in the country since 2016.

In light of the above, the undeniable fact is that Piauí “has been structured on a model of ‘reflex (or passive) integration into the national economy that has been taking shape for more than 60 years” (Medeiros, 2014, p. 10). Therefore, there was no change in the logic of economic development of the state in the period of neodevelopmentalism. Therefore, we can consider that Piauí is triple subordinated, due to the Brazilian economic subordination in the international scenario; the disadvantaged condition of the Northeast in the national economy and the passive integration of the state in that region. This fact has contributed to the establishment of a markedly contradictory society that, even with positive advances in its economic development, between 2003 and 2015, still occupies a disadvantageous position in the national scenario.

In this context, we also highlight a concentration of income in some regions of the state, resulting from the historical process of economic development, but which, to some extent, is reconfigured from 2003 onwards. The high growth of grain production in the Piauí’s Cerrado brought a higher concentration of income to the south of the state – the only region that registers a municipality (Uruçuí) with an annual per capita GDP higher than R\$ 22,274.00. Nevertheless, most of Piauí had, in 2014, a per capita income of up to R\$ 5,000.00; Teresina is in the second largest range of GDP per capita, given its potential for accumulating activities linked to the third sector (trade and services), as well as those arising from industry (Fundação Cepró, 2015a). Therefore, it is possible to affirm that the socioeconomic development of the state, in the first decade of the 2000s, was not able to expand the income towards the interior of the state, concentrating it only in more than one pole.

The data also show a structuring poor distribution of income at the end of neodevelopmentalist governments, which leads a significant part of its population to depend on income transfer programs, such as the Bolsa Família Program (54.5% of families served in the state), as well as a significant percentage of people without income (38.5%) or with income of up to one minimum wage (41.4%) (Fundação Cepró, 2015a). This reveals the situation of vulnerability of the majority of the population.

These data corroborate Medeiros’ (2014) assertion that “it is in the income dimension that the level of poverty that still predominates in Piauí and the persistent inequality between the states and regions of Brazil, even with the advances made in recent years” (p. 86). In this sense, the author’s remark about neodevelopmentalism is important, considering that “Brazil’s development model needs to have investment, and not just consumption, as the engine of growth” (p. 33).

Accordingly, it is necessary that there are initiatives to establish the economic development of Piauí in a way that is less dependent on the Union, based on a production that is capable of generating its own income, employment and income, providing better living conditions for the population.

Despite constituting a more optimistic socioeconomic scenario between 2003 and 2015, the state government remained with a perspective of retreat from state action in the social area, as can be seen in the Pluriannual Plans (PPA) of 2004-2007 and 2008- 2011. In the first, it is stated that the economic situation in which the state found itself demanded a momentary reflux in the volume of public investments (SEPLAN, 2004); in the second, in a context of already positive results for the economy, the need for the state to make sacrifices in its actions is highlighted (SEPLAN, 2008), making it evident that the social area would be the most affected. According to this understanding, the following plans are also based on the proposal of rationalization of public spending, therefore, selective and excluding, which was not denied with neodevelopmentalism.

In this setting, there was progress in the establishment of public-private partnerships (PPP) that are proposed with the objective of modernizing results-oriented management (SEPLAN, 2016). To this end, in 2005, the Public-Private Partnership Program of the state of Piauí was instituted through the Law PL nº 5.495, in addition to a subsequent complementary legislation that opens space for the transformation of public resources into private through the exploitation of the private sector in the provision of public services. For this purpose, the state government currently maintains an active portal on the internet where it is possible to access feasibility studies, public calls and explanatory booklets. Although it is claimed that through these partnerships it is possible to improve services for the population due to the financial weakness of the state, what is certain is that another space is offered for the exploitation of capital on the working class with state incentives in a Brazilian territory that has not yet manages to offer decent living conditions for a significant portion of its inhabitants.

Despite the important developments of the new pattern of capitalist development in Brazil in the reality of Piauí, at the end of the analyzed period, a reality remained in which “education, health, employment and income are still serious obstacles to the development of Piauí, leaving it in a situation of disadvantage compared to other states” (Fundação Cepro, 2015a, p. 46).

Given this scenario, the Sustainable Development Plan of the State of Piauí 2050 (PDES-PI 2050) proposes that investments be made in the priority segments of the state, highlighting potential in agribusiness, mining, production of renewable energy and tourism and leisure. The objectives are, respectively: to expand grain production in the Piauí’s Cerrado (improve and stabilize productivity and add value to the agribusiness chain); expand mineral exploration, generating and adding value in the mining chain; generate energy, especially from renewable sources that take advantage of federal policies, seeking the sustainable development of the state; develop tourism in order to make it a source of employment and income for socioeconomic development (Fundação Cepro, 2015b).

As proposed in the PDES-PI 2050, the idea that “Piauí is not poor; it is a land of many resources and untapped opportunities” (Medeiros, 2014, p. 9). Nevertheless, it denies the contradiction that “Piauí is poor because it is marginalized and discriminated against, but also



because its elites are uncommitted” (Medeiros, 2014, p. 9), thus obscuring the fact that there are structural issues in the socioeconomic organization of the state that need to be faced.

From this perspective, Medeiros’ (2014) hypothesis about the PDES-PI 2050, when it was still being prepared, was confirmed, and this document “appears to be more a portfolio of investment opportunities than a plan that articulates state, federal and private initiative investments – a reference for mobilizing society and the business community and directing government actions” (p. 129). Still in this context, PDES-PI 2050 reveals that:

[...] the low level of education is one of the biggest bottlenecks to the contribution of productive investments in the state, being a serious competitive disadvantage. The reversal of this situation necessarily involves improving the efficiency of the public education system, in order to guarantee not only the universality of basic education, but also effective results in terms of training and adequate training of young people from Piauí (Fundação Cepro, 2015a, p. 53).

In addition to the need to make the state of Piauí an important competitor, we understand that investments in education are extremely necessary for a state that needs to improve the quality of life of its population. Therefore, investments in education must be taken as a condition for the consolidation of a state that is less dependent and more capable of generating wealth aimed at offering services in a dignified manner for the majority of the population and not being restricted to meeting the interests of capital that benefits from a vulnerable workforce. To this end, it is necessary to concentrate efforts in the areas of education, science and technology. It is from this assumption that we analyze the directions of educational policies in the next topic.

### 3 EDUCATIONAL POLICIES IN/OF PIAUÍ: NEW DIRECTIONS, OTHER RESULTS?

The Brazilian educational policy revealed the existence of a broad process of reforms resulting from changes in the pattern of accumulation of capitalist society, bringing transformations to the structure, organization and operation of basic education, from the second half of the 1990s. The scenario was one of approval Law of Directives and Bases of National Education (LDB) contributed to the implementation of neoliberal reforms (Ramos, 2016). Piauí is part of this movement in the context of its socioeconomic and political specificities, unveiling an unsatisfactory scenario.

The educational indices registered in Piauí, in 1999, were worrying, as there was an illiteracy rate of 31.6% and a functional illiteracy rate of 53.1% of the population, therefore higher than in the Northeast (26.6% and 46.2%) and in Brazil (46.2% and 26.4%). Added to this data, there was, in that same year, a challenging schooling rate, especially among young people and adults. Among those aged between 18 and 19, the rate was 42.9%; and, among those aged between 20 and 24, it was only 22.3%. In Brazil, these rates were 51.9% and 25.5%; and, in the Northeast, 52.8% and 26.3%, respectively (IBGE, 2001). Therefore, there was an urgent need for new directions for school education in the state, in order to guarantee decent conditions of supply, as well as to raise the educational level of the population.

In this context, the expectation was that the approval, in 1996, of the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education (LDB) and of the Fund for Maintenance and Development of Elementary Education and Valorization of Teaching (FUNDEF) would mean an improvement in the offer of education public in the state, including because the national legislation addressed aspects that contemplated the problems of the local reality. This was because public education in Piauí suffered from a lack of adequate infrastructure in schools, with low teachers' salaries and constant delays in payments.

Faced with this reality, even before the regulation of the LDB 1996 in the state, the government of Piauí regulated FUNDEF through Law PL nº 4.998/1997, providing that this fund began to take effect in 1998, revealing that there was an urgent nature with regard to the institution of fund policy. There was a priority concern with the regulation of FUNDEF due to the fear of governments, both state and municipal, of losing funds from the Union, as they would represent a possibility of advancing the provision of education in the state, although they were limited to elementary education. This understanding is justified because, at the time, it was already understood that the fund policy would play a fundamental role in the financing of Piauí education (Law nº 4.998, 1997). This fact is still a reality, in the times of FUNDEB, if we consider that "in Piauí, especially for the municipalities, FUNDEB works as a 'true according to FPM<sup>1</sup>', in the expression of the mayors themselves" (Medeiros, 2014, p. 34).

Due to the change in the logic in the financing of national education, in which enrollment came to represent a guarantee of funds in the education networks, the regulatory actions and implementation of FUNDEF in Piauí revolved around the increase in the number of enrollments. According to Sales and Silva (2013), in the state, this logic generated a dispute for elementary school students between the municipal and state networks. As a result:

[...] the education networks, in order to receive a greater transfer of resources from FUNDEF, resorted to advertising campaigns, at the beginning of each year, with a view to attracting more students. Several strategies were carried out by state and municipal networks to expand their enrollment, since, in the context of the same municipality, there were usually municipal and state schools performing the same service (Sales & Silva, 2013, p. 1290).

In view of this reality, we cannot deny that the regulation and implementation of FUNDEF already signaled important movements to reorganize Piauí's education, since it was necessary to provide greater assistance in the provision of elementary education. However, the main regulatory framework for education in Piauí, since then, is Law PL nº 5.101/1999, which provides for the state education system and other measures. The law reaffirms the LDB 1996 regulations, mostly repeating its articles and sections, and it is possible to detect some particularities, such as the guarantee of allocation to education of 30% of the revenue resulting from taxes and constitutional transfers, and not only the minimum 25%, as provided for by national law (Lei nº 5101, 1999).

Therefore, we can consider that educational reforms in Piauí took a more significant form from the beginning of the 2000s, a historical moment marked by the election of José Wellington

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<sup>1</sup> Municipality Participation Fund (FPM, as per its Portuguese acronym).

Barroso de Araújo Dias as State Governor and of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva as President of the Republic, both from the Workers' Party – *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT). This fact, according to Medeiros (2014), “contributed to better federative articulation and, consequently, better results” (p. 35). Therefore, a more promising scenario for educational policies was identified because there were government projects at the federal and state levels aligned with the possibility of a retreat from neoliberalism and the expansion of a social project.

The panorama for changes in education in Piauí was set. There was reformed education legislation, another funding policy, and new elected governments. In this context, the 2000s showed, since its inception, that the paths of education in that state would take other directions. This occurred because educational planning, created in a state strongly in tune with neoliberal policies, found an implementation scenario characterized by another government project that announced itself more concerned with the living conditions of the working class. Nevertheless, as there was no overcoming of neoliberalism, the regulation of education happened linked to the processes of decentralization and control of results that were not always positive.

The decentralization in the provision of education proposed by the LDB 1996 resulted in a process of municipalization of elementary education. Piauí also went through this process and, judging by the financial capacity of most municipalities, this greater offer of elementary education by this federated entity should be viewed with care. This fact is justified because the demand for a greater structure for the operation and expansion of this stage of education was not, and still is not, a situation to be remedied in the short term by the municipal networks, unlike the urgency with which the regulation was made. and the implementation of FUNDEF in the state, resulting in a greater number of enrollments in these networks in a short space of time and, in some cases, in an already weakened operating structure, although it is possible to verify an improvement from this fund. Therefore, the problem that arises in the reality of the state of Piauí is the same as throughout Brazil, since the municipalization process took place in the context of a still undefined collaboration regime, compromising the provision of quality education in the state.

Evidence of the incapacity/difficulty to implement a quality offer in the municipal education network in Piauí is the fact that, in 2015, only 59.4% of the municipalities in this state reached the goal of the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB) for the initial grades of elementary school in the municipal network; while, in Brazil and in the Northeast, these percentages are 74.7% and 69.9%, respectively. In the final grades, these results are more worrying, as only 29.8% of the municipalities in Piauí, 32.1% in the Northeast and 31.8% in Brazil reach the goal. If these results of the municipal networks of Piauí are compared with the other states, we will see that it has the 3<sup>rd</sup> worst percentage in the Northeast and the 7<sup>th</sup> in Brazil for the initial grades of elementary school (Ministério da Educação, 2016).

Still regarding decentralization, partnerships were established with the private sector and non-governmental organizations through which the state government shares responsibilities. As an example, we can mention the establishment of partnerships with: Instituto Natura and Comunidade Educativa Cedac (2012), which resulted in the implementation of the Trilhas Project; ProBem Institute and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2010), through the execution of the Palavra Criança Program; the Ayrton Senna Institute (2013), with the Se Liga, Acelera Brasil and

Gestão Nota 10 programs; and the Unibanco Institute (2015), with the Jovem do Futuro program<sup>2</sup>. Such initiatives were based on the perspective of managing the educational process that decentralizes not only responsibilities, but also pedagogical processes, offering these private institutions the possibility of defining the didactic-pedagogical proposals that would compose the education of the public served by the programs. In other words, the state government continued to benefit the private sector through public resources and also enabled its participation in the definition of educational policies.

Therefore, it is worrying that Piauí, through the decentralization of responsibilities in the educational offer, has “outsourced” part of the planning and implementation of pedagogical processes important to the private sector, considering that the actions proposed in these partnerships are often aimed at areas vulnerable to the educational reality of the state, such as literacy phase and high school level.

It should be noted that, in a more systematic way, the booklet “Government of the State plus partnership: better services, less costs” inserted education as one of the areas in which the public-private partnership can be developed (Secretaria de Estado do Governo, 2015). This fact leads us to the understanding that education can expand with a greater openness of the state to the division of responsibilities with the private sector, although the PPP management portal in Piauí still does not indicate any feasibility study in this area. This was an important step backwards made by a Workers’ Party (PT) government, which was expected to be more interested in strengthening the public affairs that governed the state from 2003 to 2010 and returned to occupy the Karnak Palace from 2015 to 2018, and was re-elected for the period from 2019 to 2022.

It is also necessary to highlight the numerous programs implemented in the state in the context of the Education Development Plan (PDE), created in 2007 by the federal government, which do not fail to be configured in experiences of decentralization of important responsibilities, strengthening actions of the federative pact and, consequently, contributing to the quality of education in Piauí.

Nevertheless, the impacts, even if they are successful experiences, may last a short time, given the transitoriness of most of the programs, besides the frequent lack of an organic articulation between them and the regular school activities. In this context, we can highlight the execution, in Piauí, of programs such as: National Plan for Literacy in the Right Age (Pnaic); Innovative High School Program; National Program for Access to Technical Education and Employment (Pronatec); More Education; and Literate Brazil Program. In this sense, Medeiros (2014) concludes:

For basic education, close to universalization, the biggest challenge currently posed is quality. The programs implemented by the federated entities, under the coordination of MEC, have had a relatively small impact. The really significant advances reach a small percentage of students. We are taking “quality steps” when we need to make “quality leaps” (p. 40).

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<sup>2</sup> Information about the projects was accessed through the State Government Portal and the State Secretariat of Education of Piauí at the addresses available at: <https://www.piaui.pi.gov.br>; <https://www.seduc.pi.gov.br>.

With the decentralization of education, which is instituted in a manner consistent with national educational guidelines, the need to exercise greater control over educational results was also evident in Piauí. It is in this context that the state instituted, following the example of the *Prova Brasil*, the *Prova Piauí*, in 2008, with the objective of assessing the learning results of elementary and high school students. Nevertheless, the greatest systematization of the control of educational results took place with the implementation of the Educational Assessment System of Piauí (SAEPI) in 2011. This system, from the beginning, carries out a standardized large-scale assessment of all basic education in the state. It is, therefore, a program that aims at:

[...] diagnosing student performance in different areas of knowledge and education levels, as well as support the implementation, (re)formulation and monitoring of educational policies, thus actively contributing to improving the quality of education in the state (Secretaria de Estado da Educação, 2011, p. 12).

We emphasize the strong meritocratic character of this assessment system. An example of this is in the speech of the Secretariat of Education (in office from 2014 to 2018) in an interview for *Revista Sistema*. When asked about how to ensure that students continue to evolve in their learning as they go through the stages of schooling, she stated that continuing teacher training would be necessary, associated with awards and a competitive spirit focused on learning (Dias, 2016). Therefore, the concern with the need for continuous training of teachers and managers, with an emphasis on the production of results, assumes that a certain responsibility has been instituted on the part of school actors in fulfilling the goals. This fact is reaffirmed throughout the interview, emphasizing the lack of understanding or even lack of concern of the Secretariat of Education with the other determinants of the educational process, such as the social conditions in which the students are inserted and the teaching and learning conditions offered in the schools. As they say Silva, Lopes e Castro (2016, p. 390), large-scale assessment “has influenced the life of the school and the pedagogical practices of its professionals, since the current form of educational regulation implies making subjects responsible for the work they carry out”.

The focus on the training of teachers and managers as an element of achieving goals that appears in the speech of the aforementioned secretariat and translates the intentions of SEDUC-PI is consistent with the national educational policy of education that placed the spotlight on the training policy, although it already considered, in the second decade of the 2000s, other elements related to working conditions. A proof of this is the implementation of different programs in the state aimed at this purpose, which are carried out with the involvement of several institutions through partnerships or adhesions, such as: National Plan for the Training of Basic Education Teachers (Parfor) and the Open University of Brazil (UAB).

Although the training of teachers and managers is important for the constitution of a quality education, it is necessary to highlight the particular situations that involved the institution of training policies in Piauí. This implies considering two aspects: the first has to do with the objective that teacher training was meeting, because if it is primarily focused on achieving results translated into educational indices, it runs the risk of becoming a mere instrument for training teachers. The second aspect is configured in the type of training offered to teachers and managers, as programs

such as Parfor and UAB can add little in raising a socially referenced quality to education without concrete conditions for learning and production of knowledge.

Moreover, according to Dias (2016), SAEPI enabled the rational allocation of investments and the realization of a strategic planning based on the results. Although it is not specified how this strategic planning was carried out, we can say that this speech reveals that Piauí adopted, in the period under analysis, a model of managerial educational management with the same principles established by the Brazilian State in times of neoliberal governments. This perspective has contributed to greater accountability of the school and teachers, since more important than the process of building students' learning is the result that is reached, which can only be achieved with a focus on the control and rationality of educational actions.

Corroborating this understanding, we highlight the adoption of the *Gestão Nota 10 Program*, in partnership with the Ayrton Senna Institute, between 2007 and 2015, which proposed management indicators and goals to be met through the management of routines in schools and secretariats, seeking to improve the quality of teaching indicators.

The result of this movement to reorganize the structure and operation of basic education in Piauí, which took shape in neodevelopmentalist governments, was a less bleak scenario, but marked by many problems to be overcome. Accordingly, "the biggest challenge that Piauí faces in education is similar to what is presented for all social indicators: as we start from a very low base, the levels achieved are still not satisfactory" (Fundação Cepro, 2016, p. 15).

In this setting, the situation of low socioeconomic indicators historically constructed in the state is an important determinant in the constitution of its public education, since the difficulties to be overcome required greater effort than in other educational realities. This happens because the very scenario of subordinated socioeconomic insertion of this state in the national scenario (addressed in the previous topic) makes it more difficult for it to face its structural problems, since it requires greater planning and a greater share of investments. In addition, governmental choices, by not overcoming the neoliberal perspective, contribute to the lack of larger-scale actions in the educational area.

The result of the contradictory and ambiguous scenario instituted between 2003 and 2015 in Piauí is a limited advance in educational results. In order to understand this reality, we can initially analyze the results of the general IDEB<sup>3</sup> of Piauí, in the period from 2005 to 2015. Although this index does not represent the only way of assessing basic education and has serious limitations, given its standardization character, it can indicate some advances and setbacks in the constitution of quality education. Thus, the state of Piauí pointed to a progressively positive evolution in the results of IDEB, since 2005, making it possible to affirm that "over 10 years of IDEB, it followed the advances in the process of improving the quality of education in Brazil and performed above the national average. The persistence of the upward trend allows the improvement process to be characterized as consistent" (Fundação Cepro, 2016, p. 15).

<sup>3</sup> The general IDEB represents the average of all networks and of all grades, jointly (Fundação Cepro, 2016a).



A better detail of the IDEB results in Piauí can be seen in Table 1, in which it is possible to observe that the growth of the index between 2005 and 2015 follows the same dynamics established in the Northeast and in Brazil, with a greater advance in the initial grades of elementary education. At this stage of education, the public network in Piauí grew from 2.6 to 4.6, registering a better performance compared to the regional and national reality. In the final grades of elementary school, the public school system in Piauí had similar results to the Northeast and Brazil, registering an IDEB of 2.8 in 2005 and 3.9 in 2015. Concerning the results of high school, it can be said that the numbers for Piauí, the Northeast and Brazil were quite modest, although we can see that the Piauí's state network had a better performance when it went from 2.3, in 2005, to 3.2, in 2015.

**Table 1: IDEB of elementary education (public network) and high school (state network) in the state of Piauí.**

Year	Elementary School – Initial Grades (Public School)			Elementary School – Final Grades (Rede Pública)			High School (State Network)		
	Brazil	Northeast	Piauí	Brazil	Northeast	Piauí	Brazil	Northeast	Piauí
		t			t			t	
<b>2005</b>	3.6	2.7	2.6	3.2	2.6	2.8	3.0	2.7	2.3
<b>2007</b>	4.0	3.3	3.3	3.5	2.9	3.2	3.2	2.8	2.5
<b>2009</b>	4.4	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.1	3.5	3.4	3.1	2.7
<b>2011</b>	4.7	4.0	4.1	3.9	3.2	3.6	3.4	3.0	2.9
<b>2013</b>	4.9	4.1	4.1	4.0	3.4	3.6	3.4	3.0	3.0
<b>2015</b>	5.3	4.6	4.6	4.2	3.7	3.9	3.5	3.2	3.2

Source: Own elaboration based on data from Brazil (2016).

Such results described in Table 1 show that Piauí has advanced in the process of improving the IDEB indexes; however, in the analyzed period, it was not able to reach the national average in any of the teaching stages, even though its performance has improved and the distance between the national and state indexes have declined. This proposition is also justified by the fact that Piauí still remains among the states with the lowest indexes of the general IDEB, being in 20<sup>th</sup> position, with only 0.4 points above the last one, and 1.5 points away from the first one (Fundação Cepro, 2016).

We can also check the results of SAEPI assessing the performance of elementary and high school students in the areas of Portuguese language and mathematics. In elementary school, the results were almost unchanged in the performance of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students, between 2011 and 2015, remaining in both areas, during these five years, within the basic performance standard<sup>4</sup>. In addition, in 2015, there were almost 30% of students who focused on below-basic performance in Portuguese and almost 50% in mathematics (Secretaria de Estado da Educação, 2016). This means that students “completed elementary school with performance far below expectations and future educational projections are highly compromised, as the probability of these students failing high school or dropping out of school is high” (Secretaria de Estado da Educação do Piauí, 2016, p. 16). In the same period, the results for high school show a small positive oscillation in the proficiency of students who were completing this stage of education in the assessed two areas.

<sup>4</sup> SAEPI classifies the performance standard in: a) below basic; b) basic; c) adequate; d) advanced.

As an important aspect to be considered in the analysis of the provision of school education in Piauí, we also point out data on the care of children, young people and adults in basic and higher education, organized by Cruz and Monteiro (2016). The scenario that emerged is an increase in the percentage of children between 0 and 3 years old who attend school, from 15.3%, in 2001, to 27.3%, in 2014; and, in Brazil, this rate is more than doubled in the same period, reaching 29.6% in the last year. With regard to children aged 4 to 5 years, this service was very close to universalization, registering a total of 96.6% in 2014, even surpassing the national percentage, which is 89.1%. In that same year, the net enrollment rate in elementary education pointed to the near universalization of this stage of education in the state, totaling 97.8%, higher than the Brazilian average, which is 97.5%. In high school, the percentage of net enrollment reached only 52.6% in 2014, well below the national average, which is 61.4%. With regard to higher education, the percentage of enrollment of the population aged between 18 and 24 was only 14.9% in 2014; while, in Brazil, it was 17.7% (Cruz & Monteiro, 2016).

The analysis of these data reveals that school education in Piauí has followed the national trend of increasing access percentages since the beginning of the 2000s. However, it is noteworthy that the highest attendance was in the second stage of kindergarten and elementary school, showing that the continuation of studies, which enables a higher academic level education, was a distant reality for a significant portion of young people from Piauí, showing the need for a greater effort by the public authorities. We cannot ignore the fact that these results are a consequence of the educational policies instituted in the country, especially the fund policies, which, for a decade, were centered on elementary education, secondary to the effort to expand access to high school and higher education, thus registering attendance rates still unacceptable.

In addition to these issues, it should be noted that historical problems regarding the provision of education remain, such as illiteracy and the low schooling rate of the population in the state. In this context, a high rate of illiteracy among the population aged 15 years and over (20.2%) was also identified in 2014, only lower than the state of Alagoas, which has a very close percentage (22 %), and above the Brazilian average (12.4%). Regarding the average schooling of the population aged between 18 and 29, we can say that Piauí came very close to the national average. This is because, while in that state the index corresponds to nine years of schooling, in Brazil, it is ten years. It is also noteworthy that, in this aspect, Piauí was ahead of Pará, Paraíba, Alagoas and Sergipe, and two years away from the state that has the highest average of schooling: São Paulo (Cruz & Monteiro, 2016).

In summary, a markedly contradictory educational scenario takes place, considering that, although there was an improvement in education in this state during the neodevelopmentalist governments, the reality that emerged was still one of backwardness and exclusion of a significant part of the population in the provision of quality public education, thus requiring “the urgent need for greater investment in public schools in Piauí, as a precondition for guaranteeing the constitutional precept of the right to education and minimum conditions of supply, still far from a minimum standard of quality” (Oliveira, Sales, Carvalho, Santos, & Cruz, 2005, p. 141).

In view of this still latent need to improve basic education in Piauí, there are some paths indicated in the main instruments for planning socioeconomic and educational development, which

are: the State Education Plan (PEE), approved in 2015, and the PPA 2016-2017. Although the new situation established in the national political scenario, as of 2016, leaves in abeyance what the prospects for the implementation of these plans are; and, considering that our time frame of study ends in 2015, we will indicate some expected directions for school education in Piauí.

Piauí's PEE 2015-2025, in line with the National Education Plan 2014-2024, establishes the same guidelines and goals, considering few local specificities with regard to the percentages of offer and the curriculum. Therefore, it deals with the expansion of education at its two levels (basic and higher education), including people with disabilities, global disorders and high abilities; literacy of children up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade of elementary school; the expansion of full-time education; the reach of the averages projected by IDEB; the increase in the literacy and schooling rate of the population; the increase in the offer of professional education, as well as postgraduate courses; the elevation of teacher training initiatives; the valorization of professionals in public basic education; democratic management of public schools; and increased investment in education (Lei nº 6.733, 2015).

The fulfillment of these goals can lead to different results due to the capacity of local authorities and social and union movements in the process of implementing this plan. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that, given the educational reality in Piauí, there is a requirement for greater investment and management efforts that most Brazilian states demand. This understanding should be an element of concern in government plans, in order to focus greater funding and efforts on overcoming the still unfavorable reality of education in Piauí, which may depend on the advancement of the federative pact. It is in this context that the PPA 2016-2019 is approved, revealing the intentions of the current government.

The 2016-2019 PPA includes three main programs that have direct action on the state's educational agenda, namely: quality university for all; strengthening and expansion of professional education; inclusive and sustainable education and social development (SEPLAN, 2016). These three programs establish important and ambitious goals for the four years of execution of the plan that are in line with the PEE 2015-2025 and concern the overcoming of problems historically posed in Piauí's education, such as: reduction of the illiteracy rate; expansion and qualification of the offer of education for young people and adults; expansion of school education (basic and higher); infrastructure improvement in the provision of this education; and raising scientific production and access to knowledge through the expansion of postgraduate courses and the promotion of scientific events. Furthermore, the PPA 2016-2019 is concerned with the provision of a more inclusive education, with the need to expand student assistance, with support for teacher training at the postgraduate level and with an education aimed at coexistence in the semiarid region.

Therefore, the government of Piauí demonstrates that it is aware of the challenges proposed to school education at different levels and modalities. This recognition is necessary and important to overcome them. Nonetheless, an ambivalent educational policy is established, because, while it proposes an education aimed at greater democratic inclusion with quality, it also points out, in its strategies, to characteristics consistent with a more results-oriented management of education. This fact can be noticed when we analyze three aspects: the proposal to expand full-time high school, when most schools in Piauí have not yet managed to offer adequate infrastructure to operate in a single shift; the indication of the expansion of the educational offer through distance

education in a state that still lacks a solid basic education and a technological advance that can give sustainability to such offer, in most of the municipalities of the state; the establishment of the IDEB index as a goal; in addition to the extensive dependence on the federal government to expand and strengthen professional education, which must take place by means of PPPs.

#### 4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The reflections here systematized on the unfolding of educational policies in the state of Piauí in the period of neodevelopmentalist governments revealed that, between 2003 and 2015, there was a positive movement showed by the expansion of the offer of basic education, as well as by the improvement of educational indicators in that state. This movement happened in the context of an important economic development that took place with an increase in industrial companies, advances in agricultural production and greater dynamism in trade. In addition, decentralization, through a partnership with the union in the execution of programs aimed at basic education, proved to be a path to a more qualified offer.

Nevertheless, there are obstacles resulting from the very limitations of neodevelopmentalism, which does not propose a break with the market, although it has advanced in a project that has broadly benefited the working class. The attempt to reconcile the interests of capital and labor proved to be a limiting factor for advances in state educational policies, as the PPPs made it possible for the market to define didactic-pedagogical proposals, in addition to raising public funds, thus evidencing an obstacle to larger actions in public education. Similarly, the managerial character remained in the control of results and in the rationalization of the educational actions proposed based on the meritocratic and competitive nature of the assessment that has pointed to modest results.

Consequently, it is possible to affirm that Piauí remained, during the neodevelopmentalist governments, at a disadvantage in many economic and social indicators when situated in the Northeastern and Brazilian reality. It is, therefore, a state that is still poor in opportunities, even if not in potential. In summary, Piauí is no longer the northeast of the Northeast, but has continued, despite its positive movement, in the rearguard of Brazilian and Northeastern socioeconomic and educational developments.

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