

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING: AN EXPERIENCE IN THEMATIC RESEARCH IN THE TEACHING OF POLICIES IN THE LAW COURSE

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes to discuss the dimensions of meaningful learning based on the adoption of Project-Based Learning (PBL) with a thematic research bias. PBL was applied to the teaching of policies in the Law course, during the General Theory of the State (GTS) subject, in interfaces with the teacher-supervisor's umbrella project. The method used was the continuous evaluation of the students in the PBL orientation throughout the semester and the application of an electronic form prepared in Google Forms in 2018.1. It is noteworthy that the

dialogical promotion between the literature on GTS and the research on the implementation of policies for the effectiveness of social rights stimulated an active participation of the students in the teaching-learning process. The conclusion is that the PBL received positive feedback in terms of meaningful learning by promoting the inseparability of teaching, research and extension with studies of policies in the municipalities from which the students came from.

KEYWORDS: Active methodologies, Project-Based Learning, teaching Policies, Law.

APRENDIZAGEM BASEADA EM PROJETOS: UMA EXPERIÊNCIA EM PESQUISA TEMÁTICA NO ENSINO DE POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS NO CURSO DE DIREITO

RESUMO

Este artigo propõe discutir as dimensões de aprendizagem significativa com base na adoção da Aprendizagem Baseada em Projetos (ABP) com viés de pesquisa temática. A ABP foi aplicada para o ensino de políticas públicas no curso de Direito, durante a disciplina de Teoria Geral do Estado (TGE) em interfaces com o projeto guarda-chuva do professor-orientador. Utilizou-se como método a avaliação contínua dos discentes nas orientações da ABP ao longo do semestre e da aplicação de um formulário eletrônico elaborado no Google Forms em 2018.1. Ressalta-se que a promoção dialógica entre a

literatura sobre TGE e a pesquisa sobre a implementação de políticas públicas para efetividade dos direitos sociais estimularam uma participação ativa dos educandos no processo de ensino-aprendizagem. Conclui-se que a ABP recebeu feedbacks positivos quanto à aprendizagem significativa ao promover a indissociabilidade ensino, pesquisa e extensão com os estudos de políticas públicas nos municípios de origem dos alunos.

Palavras chave: Metodologias ativas, aprendizagem baseada em projetos, ensino de Políticas Públicas, Direito.

1 INTRODUCTION

The promotion of a dialogical higher education has stimulated the need for educators to use multiple active learning methodologies (ALM) for undergraduate courses, especially in the context of new educational technologies and the need for an investigative praxis that evaluates the impact of the proposals adopted in the Social Sciences and Humanities disciplines (Freire, 1996; Lacerda & Santos, 2018; Morin, 2002).

The ALM are applied to promote educational action focused on the conceptual, procedural and attitudinal objectives of the subjects, insofar as they enable the development of the main competencies, skills and attitudes of the students' academic and professional training. Furthermore, they dialog with educational practices of inseparability between teaching, research and extension in undergraduate experiences (Adada, 2017; Diesel, Baldez & Martins, 2017; Perrenoud, 2000; Soares, 2021).

By proposing this perspective, higher education should promote a university experience marked by an encounter with academic and professional development. This takes place, above all, by mediating dialogues of knowledge, respecting the needs of students in line with comprehensive training for competitive insertion into the world of work and for citizen participation in society (Brasil, 2006; DeAquino, 2007; Sousa & Coelho, 2023).

In order to implement an active methodology, the teacher needs to take into account the students' previous knowledge, the interfaces of the subjects and their social context when defining proposals and their applications. It should be emphasized that educational proposals guided by the principles of ALM require, in their definition, a pedagogical and didactic agreement between educators and students. This encourages the participatory development of proposals in line with the requirements of the Pedagogical Political Project and the National Guidelines for Undergraduate Courses (Tavares & Bezerra, 2006).

Based on these assumptions, an idea that mobilizes the ALM is co-creation, i.e. the subjects take part in, have part in and are part of the process of constructing the proposal throughout the experimentation cycle. In this respect, evaluating the ALM adopted in the disciplines each semester is an essential condition for defining the proposals in a more appropriate way, given the competencies of the disciplines, the training profiles established by the undergraduate courses and the learning profiles of the classes/courses in relation to the disciplines offered (Bacich & Moran, 2018).

Consequently, new training horizons open up based on the stimulus of this evaluation practice on the process of construction, implementation and the impact of the ALM proposals on students. Continuous evaluations will allow teachers to rethink their teaching practice by getting to know how their students learn, what their learning styles are and how they evolve with the development of the active methodology adopted each semester. In addition, their construction processes in different undergraduate courses can be monitored, dynamically involving student participation (Adada, 2017; Castro, 2006; 2015; Hoffmann, 2003; Soares, 2021).

This pedagogical and didactic care is fundamental to contextualized educational practice, both from the point of view of teaching practice and the student's meaningful experience, since it promotes assertive communication and self-assessment of learning results mediated by the inseparability between higher education and the students' realities.

In this sense, by adding the paradigm of active methodologies, higher education seeks to develop competencies, skills and attitudes, adding scientific knowledge and humanistic-citizen training. From this perspective, Debal (2020, p. 21) predicts that "training a qualified professional, both in technical terms and in terms of personal skills, will make a difference to the graduate's life".

In this way, ALM promote a more dynamic, practical and contextualized teaching process (Adada, 2017; Debal, 2020). However, incorporating the innovations of ALM in higher education into the Institutional Pedagogical Project requires a transformation in the relationships between: a) teaching staff and students; b) pedagogical proposals and learning strategies; c) epistemological, methodological, pedagogical and didactic maturation in a collaborative way with the collective of subjects, this means the requirement of a systemic planning process in the course of the activities of the inseparability of teaching, research and extension, d) stimulation of the active role of students; e) encouraging interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary practices between activities (Demo, 2000; Epstein, 2013; Fazenda, 1998; Freire, 2006; Glasser, 2001; Goldenberg, 2004; Griffey, 2010; Lück, 2007).

Bearing these premises in mind, we chose to adopt Project-Based Learning (PBL) with a thematic research bias for teaching policies in the Law course. This choice is justified by the need to overcome the barriers of dogmatic and disciplinary legal teaching, which calls for a change in educational practices in favor of learning to learn and learning to do in Higher Education (Tavares & Bezerra, 2006; Magalhães, 2019).

Among the multiple pedagogical tools that make up active methodologies, PBL stands out as an effective approach to teaching policies in the field of law, as it promotes the connection between theory and practice, allowing students to experience real situations and develop essential skills and abilities for professional practice. By working on projects, students are encouraged to investigate social problems on a local scale, analyze legislation and action plans, propose solutions and debate complex issues, favoring the construction of critical and reflective knowledge (Hohendorff, Elsner & Bem, 2021; Soares, 2021). Along the same lines, Bender (2014) considers that PBL is an effective teaching practice for encouraging students to deal with real issues and problems, collaborating on solutions and giving feedback to communities.

In this way, this article aims to discuss the conceptual, procedural and attitudinal dimensions of meaningful learning based on the active methodology proposal selected for teaching policies in a law degree course at a private HEI in Rio Grande do Norte (RN), namely Project-Based Learning (PBL) with a thematic research bias. To this end, we analyzed the perception of the students of this law course about its implementation in the General Theory of the State (GTS) course in semester 2017.2, consisting of three units in a total of 60 hours/class, in addition to the extra-class guidance moments offered by the teacher-supervisor (Bender, 2014; Dias & Hoppe, 2019).

The findings of this application of PBL in the teaching of policies in the law course fostered teamwork, creativity and autonomy, preparing future law practitioners for the challenges of the world of work and for active participation in building a fairer and more equitable society. Furthermore, by engaging in concrete projects, the students demonstrate the importance of policies in promoting citizenship rights.

The analytical path of the proposed article is divided into five more parts. The first explains the methodology developed to assess the impact of the implementation of PBL among the students of the GTS course. Next, we present the history of the professor-supervisor's umbrella project, entitled "Management and Evaluation of Policies in the Semi-Arid Northeast" and its implementation using the selected modality of applied active methodology - PBL. The fourth part analyzes and discusses the responses to the form on the impact of Project-Based Learning (PBL) with a thematic research bias on the teaching of policies in the Law course. Finally, it shows that the implementation of the proposal was evaluated by the students as an active methodology capable of enabling meaningful learning.

2 METHODOLOGY

In order to capture the students' main perceptions of the proposed implementation of the PBL, three means were used: (1) continuous assessments mediated by brainstorming throughout the semester; (2) moments of guidance in the development of the PBL in GTS classes in the Law course and (3) assessments using an electronic form applied in the semester following the course. The choice to apply the form on the impact of PBL in the following semester, that is, in 2018.1, was an option to try to minimize influences on the students' responses since they were no longer the teacher's students.

The methodological design of this research is based on the qualitative and quantitative nature of the research, with descriptive and explanatory outlines of the application of PBL in the Law course through an experience report (Bender, 2014; Castro, 2006; Richardson, 2008). In this way, according to Goldenberg (2004), a broader and more intelligible idea of the complexity of the problem is sought from different points of view.

The combination of methods such as brainstorming, guidance and electronic forms offered a dynamic and effective approach to evaluating participants' perceptions and learning. Brainstorming stimulated creativity and the exchange of ideas, allowing those involved to express their opinions and suggestions collaboratively during the lessons, as well as evaluating the process. The guidance provided a clear structure, guiding students through individual and team activities during the learning process. The use of the electronic form after the conclusion of the 2017.2 semester allowed for data collection and analysis. Together, these tools for evaluating the application of PBL in the teaching of policies in Law course made it possible to capture the significant learning dimensions of the active methodology applied.

The electronic questionnaire drawn up on *Google Forms* to assess the impact of this PBL obtained a sample of 52 respondents, which corresponds to 78.8% of the 66 students enrolled in

the 2017.2 semester of the law course in question. This was the last class to experience the PBL during the development cycle of the professor-supervisor's umbrella project and its connections with the GTS subject.

The questions on the form were based on 23 descriptors and were answered using a five-point Likert scale, namely: 1 - Strongly Disagree; 2 - Disagree; 3 - Indifferent (or neutral); 4 - Agree; and 5 - Strongly Agree (Richardson, 2008).

The descriptors adopted in the form applied were structured into questions in order to get to know the students' perceptions of the evaluation of the PBL carried out from the perspective of active methodologies, considering meaningful learning in teaching, research and extension, taking as an anchor the evaluation of the policies studied by the students in 2017.2. With this in mind, two correlated dimensions of the proposal were explored, namely: (1) perceptions of the evaluation of PBL from the perspective of the active methodology adopted and (2) the evaluation of the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and effectiveness of the policies studied by the teams in 2017.2.

For the first dimension, the descriptors were structured in questions, for example: Did the Active Methodology proposal for teaching Policies stimulate scientific initiation in the Law course? Did the Active Methodology proposal for teaching Policies stimulate the relationship between theory and practice in the teaching-learning process in the Law course? Did the Active Methodology proposal for teaching Policies stimulate research on policies close to the reality of Law course students?

Regarding the second dimension, the descriptors were: Did the Active Methodology proposal for teaching Policies enable the team to evaluate the effectiveness of policies? Did the Active Methodology proposal for teaching Policies enable the team to evaluate the efficiency of policies? Did the Active Methodology proposal for teaching Policies enable the team to evaluate the relevance of policies? Did the Active Methodology proposal for teaching Policies enable the team to evaluate the effectiveness of the policy studied?

In addition to the form applied at the end of the course, feedback from out-of-class guidance and brainstorming moments during classes was used to evaluate the process and the impact of the proposal from the perspective of meaningful learning.

For the qualitative analysis of the descriptors, tables were also used to present the results and problematize the contributions of the active methodology selected for teaching policies in undergraduate law courses. Based on classroom guidance mediated by brainstorming moments, notes were made to the teams, sharing doubts and insights about the process of building the PBL for teaching policies.

3 WEAVING AND EXPERIMENTING WITH PBL IN THE TEACHING OF POLICIES IN THE LAW COURSE

The application of ALM in the teaching of policies in the Law course of a private university in Rio Grande do Norte state was part of the professor-supervisor's umbrella project entitled Management and Evaluation of Policies in the Semi-arid Northeast. From 2014 to 2018, this project was carried out in conjunction with the GTS discipline, mobilizing 510 students through research projects aimed at evaluating the implementation of policies and the realization of social rights provided for in article 6 of the 1988 Federal Constitution (CF88).

From semester 2014.1 to 2017.2 semester, 102 projects were developed in the GTS discipline, distributed across eight themes: the right to education, assistance to the destitute, the right to health, the right to security, the right to work, the right to maternity and childhood protection, the right to leisure and, finally, the right to social security (Figure 1). These themes were selected based on the priorities of the demands for access to social rights in the municipalities from which the students came from. These municipalities comprised the territory covered by the HEI, most of which are located in the West of Rio Grande do Norte and in the state of Ceará.

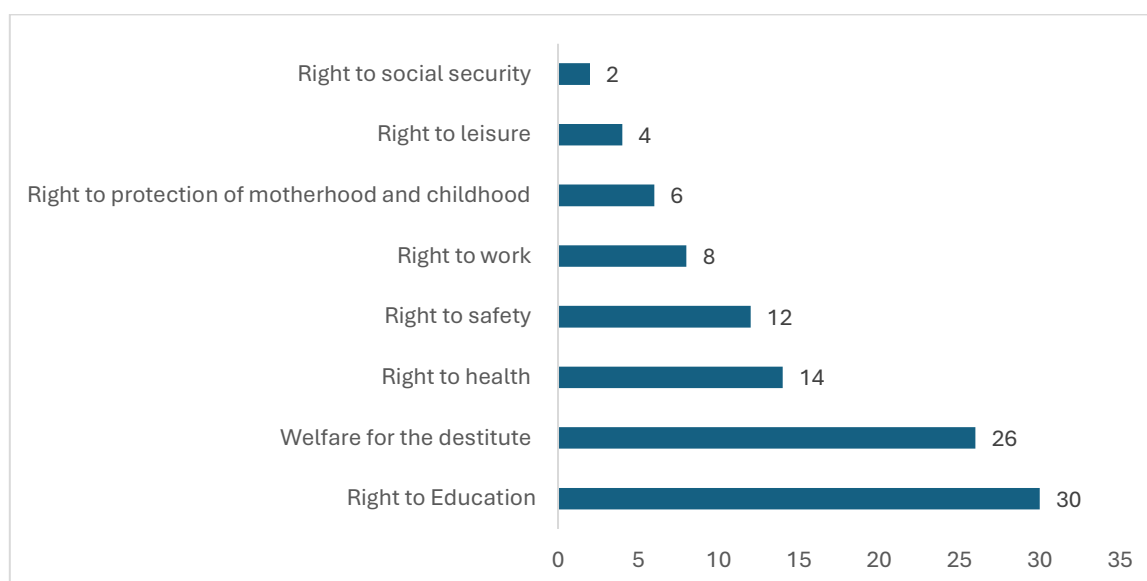


Figure 1 - Themes of projects developed by students in the interval from 2014.1 to 2017.2.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

During this period, topics related to the right to education (30%) and assistance to the destitute (25%) were the most researched topics during the development of the umbrella project, with 30 and 26 projects, respectively. Each remaining topic researched by students in the semesters 2014.1 to 2017.2 appeared with the equivalent of around 10% among the projects.

In the semester 2017.2, the implemented PBL proposal had its development cycle started with the presentation of the GTS discipline on the first day of class, with reports from students from more advanced periods and who, therefore, had previously experienced ALM. At the time of

the presentation of the GTS discipline, the second-semester Law students in 2017.2 had the opportunity to learn about the professor's umbrella project and the PBL implementation proposal for its acceptance or rejection.

The motivating question for the projects developed by the student teams was to answer how policies contribute to the realization of social rights (Sarlet, 2012; Tinoco, 2016). Thus, their connection with the reality of the Democratic Rule of Law in Brazil was the anchor of the thematic research, together with the GTS discipline, taught in the second semester of the Law course, contemplating the conceptual objectives of the discipline, namely: What is the Rule of Law? What are policies? What are the criteria for managing and evaluating public? What are the social rights provided for in the Federal Constitution of 1988?

Specifically during the 2017.2 semester, 14 projects related to the implementation of policies were developed in four municipalities in Rio Grande do Norte (Mossoró, Campo Grande, Umarizal and Triunfo Potiguar) and one in Ceará (Limoeiro do Norte), whose titles are listed by municipality in Table 1 below.

Mossoró/RN	The Traffic Safety policies implemented by the municipality of Mossoró/RN
	Implementation of Policies for Psychosocial Support to Victims of Sexual Violence in the city of Mossoró/RN
	Education Policies for Youth and Adults in the city of Mossoró/RN
	The policies to combat drug trafficking in the city of Mossoró/RN
	Transversal education policies in the municipal network of Mossoró/RN
	Implemented policies and environmental education in the city of Mossoró/RN
	Resocialization policies implemented in the Agricultural State Penal Complex Mário Negócio
	Inclusion policies for children and adolescents with physical disabilities and reduced mobility in the municipal education system of Mossoró/RN
	Psychosocial support policies for mastectomized women in the city of Mossoró/RN
	Inclusion of children and adolescents with special needs in the public education system of the city of Mossoró/RN
Campo Grande/RN	Prevention and Fight Against Drug Use Policies in Schools in Campo Grande/RN
Umarizal/RN	Assistance to women victims of domestic and family violence in the city of Umarizal/RN
Triunfo Potiguar/RN	Assistance to children and adolescents in vulnerable situations in the city of Triunfo Potiguar/RN
Limoeiro do Norte/CE	Special Education Care policies for children in the city of Limoeiro do Norte/CE

Chart 1 – Titles of PBL projects developed in 2017.2 by city.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The projects listed above were divided into teams of five members and defined in a co-creative manner with the professor-advisor. The formation of the teams for the development of Project-Based Learning (PBL) with a thematic research bias for teaching policies in the Law course used three criteria: interest in the policies, social rights and the municipalities of origin of the students. Regarding the beginning of the professor's guidance, the selection of a public problem, a policy, a social right, a territory and the subjects targeted by the policy to be studied was

observed. Subsequently, once the teams were defined, each team developed an Individual Work Plan (IWP) to indicate the individual contribution of the members to the construction and execution of the selected active methodology.

The participating students were then encouraged to understand the relationships between the GTS discipline and the scientific initiation research on the effectiveness of policies and social rights in the HEI itself, also creating possibilities for extension activities with feedback on the results to the managers of the policies studied. Thus, the pedagogical tool of the PBL enabled dialogue with knowledge from the disciplines of Scientific Research Methodology, Constitutional Law and General Theory of the State offered in the second period of the course.

In this sense, a seminar was held on social control of policies and feedback was prepared through letters of suggestions with prescriptions for improvements to the management of the policies studied, addressed to the managers and analysts of policies participating in the research.

Under the guidance of the professor, documentary research was carried out, as well as the preparation and defense of an article, after checking for possible plagiarism in the Copysider software. This was followed by the preparation of the research protocol by the students, with the following steps: a) preparation of the projects; b) definition of the execution schedule; c) gathering information and documentary research in the institutions that manage policies and promote social rights studied by the teams; and, d) brainstorming moments to discuss the contents of the discipline with information from the research carried out in the institutions.

This sequence for formatting the PBL proposal was inspired by Bender's (2014) propositions and applied after defining the anchor theme and the guiding question for the projects linked to the General Theory of the State (GTS) discipline. Thus, students were encouraged to work as a team to achieve the learning objectives through a set of practices.

The structure of the application of PBL in teaching undergraduate Law courses involved several interactive stages that promoted student engagement and the practical application of concepts. Initially, students were introduced to the problem of the implementation of social rights and the role of policies, which sparked their interest. They were then divided into teams of five members, where they were asked to research and discuss different aspects of the generating theme, developing cooperation and critical thinking skills. In the next step, students developed a project.

In PBL, students are challenged to develop knowledge-sharing activities and the teacher plays an active and collaborative role as a designer of paths, individual and team activities. As the steps are explained by teachers and students become aware of the learning objectives, they become partners and commit to continuing the projects throughout the training process. Bacich and Moran (2018, p. 9) advocate the possibilities of learning with the application of PBL:

The interconnection between personal and collaborative learning, in a continuous and rhythmic movement, helps students to advance much further than would be possible alone or in a group. Innovative pedagogical projects combine, in the curricular organization, spaces, times and projects that balance personal and collaborative communication, in person and online, and which, under the guidance of a teacher, take us to a higher level of synthesis and new skills.

In addition, to evaluate the process of carrying out the research by the students, an interview script was created with eight questions distributed on the evaluation of the efficacy, efficiency, relevance and effectiveness of policies and social rights. These interviews were scheduled with two representatives of the public institutions managing the respective policies investigated. It was recommended that the Free and Informed Consent Forms (FIC) be drawn up and signed, and that the interviews be recorded, transcribed and analyzed.

It is important to emphasize that the methodological resources used protected the ethical aspects of the research both in the execution of the project and in the dissemination of its products and results, guiding and recommending the confidentiality of the participants' identification based on the anonymized data set.

The supervising professor also made available a scheduled agenda for extracurricular guidance for the teams with the purpose of assisting in the formal referral of students through official letters to the Law Department of the IES and to the organizations managing the policies researched in the corresponding municipalities.

During the execution of the projects, the brainstorming and guidance sessions with the teams allowed for process evaluations on the main contributions of the PBL implementation to the promotion of the objectives of the TGS discipline. The LMA perspective was then applied, which considers the development of learning objectives as an evolutionary form in view of each stage of the process of constructing a proposal applied in undergraduate disciplines (Ferraz & Belhot, 2010).

According to Ferraz & Belhot (2010), the learning objectives of a discipline and its practices must be defined considering the profiles and styles of how students learn, leading them to remember, understand, apply, analyze, synthesize and evaluate. Furthermore, dialoguing, creating and sharing are fundamental in the process of meaningful learning with the use of active methodologies in higher education, respecting the profiles and levels of cognitive development according to the outline of the proposal.

In terms of learning activities that also allowed monitoring the development of knowledge of each participating student, the teacher-advisor encouraged the construction of mental maps and checklists of Competencies, Skills and Attitudes (CSA) of the class, mapping and avoiding specific problems in assimilating the concepts, procedures and basic attitudes of the training process and the scheduled classes. In this way, collaborative learning between the students in the teams and the teacher-advisor was a highlight in the process of defining and developing this PBL proposal.

Experimenting with different activities and learning objectives in a discipline made perfect sense in the evolutionary and significant process of the content, practices and new attitudes to be constructed in the relationships between the subjects of the educational process. This can be observed based on some feedbacks listed below that were prepared by the students during the experimentation of PBL in this context (Table 2).

Student #1	"This project, besides familiarizing students with the experience of conducting research and work of this level, has an awareness-raising role capable of making us critical and presenting us with new horizons and other realities."
Student #2	"The development of the proposal is an opportunity for the student to insert himself in the scientific research and develop his knowledge through theory and practice, having as positive points the learning and the development of

	projects to reach where the State is not acting, and as negative points the incentive of the State that does not support the effectiveness of policies, not only in the semi-arid region, but throughout Brazil.”
Student #3	“1. The clear understanding to the student about the importance of policies and their effectiveness in citizens' lives. 2. The opportunity for the student to enter into the practice of the scientific content of the subject taught in the classroom. 3. Making it possible to evaluate the extent of the government's commitment to public policy. 4. The opportunity for the student to have a clear vision of identification with issues distant from their day to day as users of the citizen system such as health, safety and education. Note: I was not the same after the research, now I have a critical and evaluative look at issues related to citizenship.”
Student #4	“This research is important so we can detect policy efficiency and it is also of great importance in the 2nd period, so we can get out of the common classroom dynamic (theory).”
Student #5	“This research is important so we can detect policy efficiency and it is also of great importance in the 2nd period, so we can get out of the common classroom dynamic (theory).”
Student #6	“Enables greater interaction between students and society.”
Student #7	“I believe that the greatest contribution is the recognition of the possibility of the university's contribution, through the future operators of law, to provoke and contribute in an effective way so that there can be a dialogue, aiming at an improvement in what is evaluated. Valuing human dignity and causing a collective reflection of the parties involved.”

Chart 2 - Feedbacks from brainstorming moments and out-of-class orientations.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The feedback highlighted multiple aspects related to the knowledge provided by the implementation of PBL for teaching policies in the GTS discipline, related to the importance of researching topics related to the social reality that are the object of public authority action, familiarization with the practice of preparing and executing policy evaluation research, the understanding that it is important to move away from the classroom dynamics, and the possibility of accessing and understanding the social problems that are the object of policies (Arretche, 2007; Fonte, 2013; Höfling, 2001; Muller, 2018; Secchi, 2016; Tinoco, 2016).

Based on the contextualization of the situational diagnosis of policies and social rights in their respective municipalities of origin, the students were challenged to develop a policy evaluation project.

Thus, the direct products and results detected based on the application of PBL were: a) preparation of articles; b) presentation; c) publication in scientific events; and, d) preparation of letters of intent with feedback for managers of the policies researched with points for improvement/opportunities.

The students' reports reveal learning objectives related to the theoretical knowledge of the GTS discipline, demonstrating the ability to remember information and content previously covered in class. They also demonstrated the ability to understand the information obtained through field research and the importance of experimenting with research in the training process. In this way, the students executed the research protocol under the supervision of the teacher-advisor, enabling pertinent dialogues with data, comparisons of realities and connection with the literature on policies systematized in the discipline (Blythe & Gardner, 1990; Pimenta & Ghedin, 2008).

It was found that the implementation of PBL in the GTS discipline enabled the students' participatory involvement in investigating the reality of policies in their living spaces in view of the promotion of the realization of social rights (Arretche, 2007). In this sense, the student teams made visits to institutions that manage policies.

During the process evaluation phase, students demonstrated their ability to apply theories to new situations, classifying and analyzing data from research on policies and comparing them with the dilemmas of the Democratic State of Law (Carvalho, 2016; Dallari, 2013). In this way, they developed a critical attitude towards the systematization of knowledge to question the realities researched through the synthesis and evaluation of the contributions of PBL in the training process.

In this direction, it is possible to list other positive points in the development of PBL, namely: the students presented arguments more adjusted to local realities in the moments of expository and dialogic classes, comparing the information obtained by the teams, thus allowing greater dynamism in the debates during the classes.

Through the stimulus to PBL, it is clear that it was possible to explore the GTS contents with prior access to the basic reference texts of the discipline and those of complementary reference of the research developed by the teams of students, with readings prior to the classes and summaries through mind maps after the explanations of the teacher-advisor. We point out, in this case, that the construction of new meanings through interfaces between theory and research allowed greater structuring of the discussions of the PBL anchor theme in the classroom demonstrations.

It is important to emphasize that meaningful learning requires classes that stimulate experience and practice related to theory (Freire, 1996, Soares, 2021; Sousa & Coelho, 2023). To meet this challenge, the proposal to implement PBL in the initial periods of an undergraduate course breaks with certain paradigms, such as those that research should be developed in isolated projects and that the right time to write articles should be in the most advanced stages of the course. This is because the proposal will play the role of being a starting point for the production of research and articles that will serve as a laboratory of experience for future Course Conclusion Papers.

4 STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE APPLICATION OF PBL IN THE TEACHING OF POLICIES IN THE LAW COURSE

The results of the questionnaires demonstrate that the implementation of this PBL enabled the construction of teaching situations that promoted a critical and investigative approach of students with the reality of research on the management and evaluation of policies. While seeking to identify the managing institutions, the students made prior diagnoses by gathering information, documental research on the history of policy, identifying the agendas of both municipal and state government authorities, and surveying the relevant actors of programs, policies, and projects for the interviews.

It is important to note that the significant learning generated by the application of PBL in the teaching of policies contemplated the inseparability of teaching, research, and extension

already in the second period of the undergraduate Law course. Furthermore, when responding to the form on the impact of the development of this PBL, most students demonstrated that the active methodology developed stimulated a clearer understanding of the conceptual objectives of the GTS discipline, maintaining dialogue with other disciplines, such as Constitutional Law and Scientific Methodology (Figure 2).

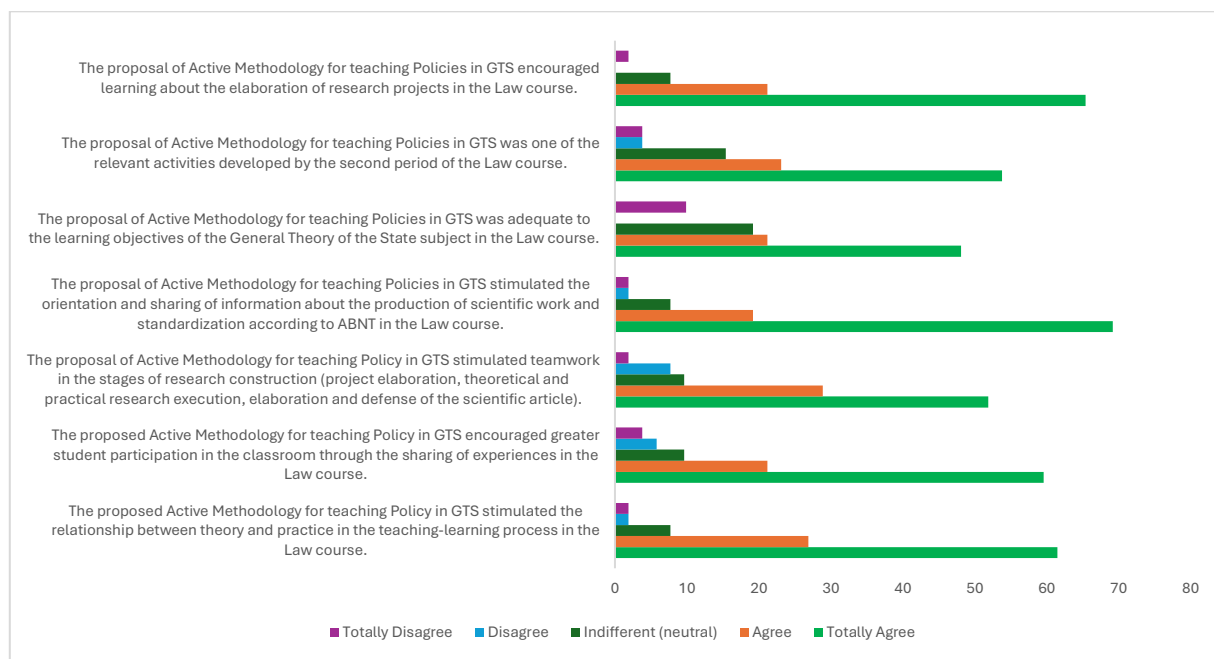


Figure 2 - Students' perceptions of the PBL's impact in stimulating Policies education.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

It is clear that students were more involved in classroom learning strategies and in teamwork to implement PBL on policies that addressed their home territories and management organizations. This practice experienced by students allowed for more assertive questions in class, also promoting dialogue between students, the supervising professor and other professors from the same period of the Law course.

Regarding students' perceptions about the impact of implementing PBL on teaching policies regarding scientific initiation, it is possible to observe the main contributions with research at the local level, revealing, for example, the promotion of policies by municipal and state public authorities, as well as access to and guarantees of social rights in the realities of life of these Law students (Figure 3).

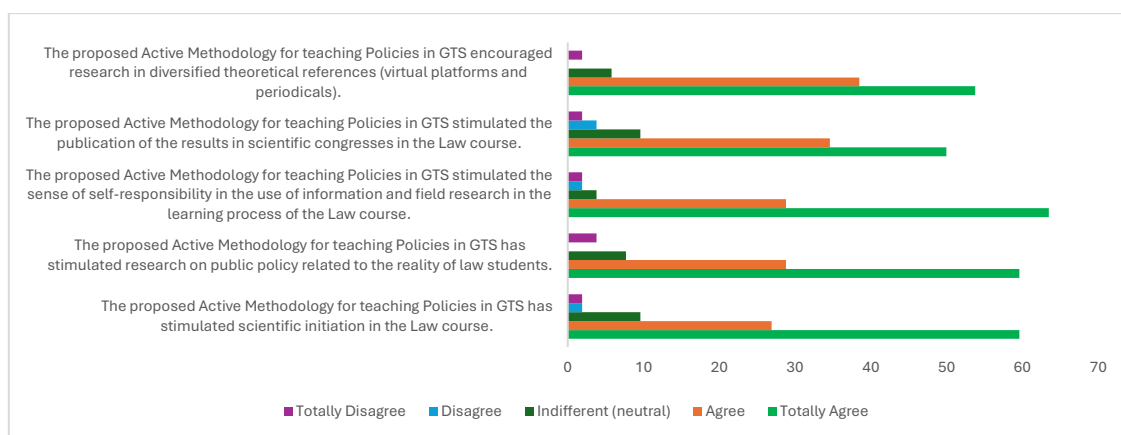


Figure 3 - Students' perceptions of the PBL's impact in stimulating Policies research.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The classroom dialogue and the sharing of information by the teams allowed for dynamic theoretical discussions and their applications in light of the research results, especially when considering how the State, through public policies, promotes the implementation of social rights, even if it selectively responds to the demands of the various segments of society. On these points, the students expressed some level of agreement, either total or partial, around 88%.

Another highlight of the PBL carried out was the opportunity to discuss the design and evaluation of public policies in the GTS discipline, encouraging the student teams to articulate the literature on the field and applied research. Throughout the classes and guidance, the students presented their IWT with contributions from the readings and the collection of information based on the realities researched.

Another point to be highlighted is that most of the teams published their results in local scientific conferences, enabling the defense of arguments and the presentation of academic papers by students in the second semester of the undergraduate Law course. These opportunities for research, production and dissemination of knowledge stimulate the academic-scientific spirit already in the initial phase of professional and academic training, as well as a provocative attitude on the part of students in seeking new possibilities for guidance in the following periods for conducting research and for publications in scientific events and periodicals.

The students also identified the impacts of implementing PBL on the possibilities of extension activities in undergraduate courses (Figure 4). In terms of extension, the main contributions of this LMA to significant learning were the moments of colloquiums at the University with the participation of relevant actors in the management of policies studied by the teams and feedback with letters of intent for managers with points for improvement in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and effectiveness of policies.

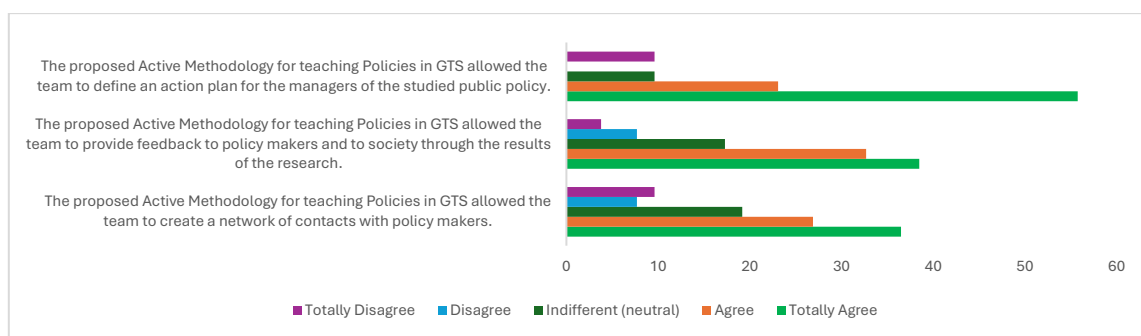


Figure 4 - Students' perception of the PBL's impact on stimulating extension activities.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Thus, the development of participation in proposals for extension activities in a dialogic manner between the university and society was observed, as the teams mobilized the community outside the University and provided feedback to the institutions. Therefore, the potential of university extension and the possibility of integrative LMA are defended here, enabling experiences of inseparability between teaching, research and extension even in the initial periods of undergraduate studies, respecting the process of dialogic construction of the skills and abilities of students with the communities.

Based on the notes of Magalhães (2019, p. 6):

The implementation of this type of methodology implies that there is a coordination in the educational institution at the level of its insertion in the curricula of the different disciplines, the involvement of students and teachers according to the principles of PBL and student assessments, which should focus on the collaborative processes of the project and the development of partnerships with agents outside the school.

According to the evaluation results, the PBL was highlighted by the students as an initiative to stimulate understanding of realities beyond the classroom, for example, the role of the State in promoting policies that guarantee social rights in different territories and their specificities. In this regard, aspects of efficacy, efficiency, relevance and effectiveness of the policies studied were highlighted.

It is possible to observe that the research process developed by the student teams on policies highlights the possibility of evaluation based on the parameters of efficacy, efficiency, relevance and effectiveness and whether the policies achieved the parameters in their implementation (Figure 5).

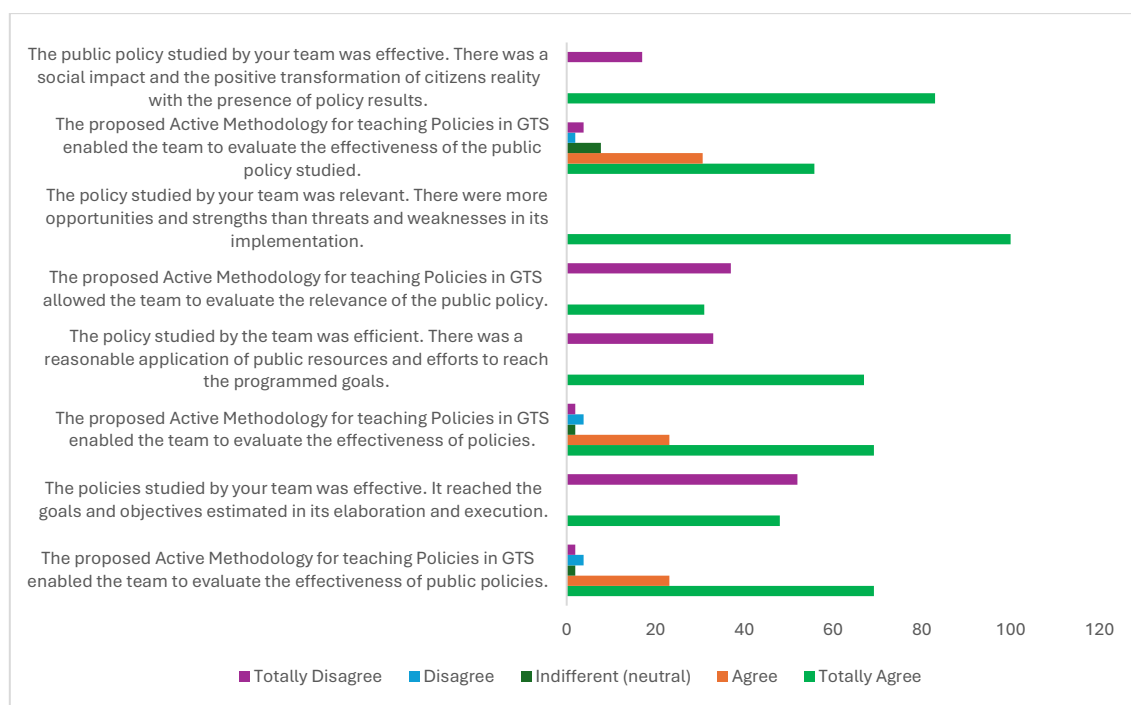


Figura 5 – Students' perception of the policies that are the object of the applied PBL.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

In this sense, of the 14 policies evaluated by the teams in 2017.2, 48% of respondents considered that the goals proposed by the actions were effective; for 62.9% there was efficiency in the application of resources and efforts according to the competencies of the federative entities in the implementation of the policies. For 100% of them, the relevance of the policies with more opportunities and strengths in their implementation processes was verified and 83% agreed with the effectiveness of the public policies in guaranteeing access to the social rights related to the policies researched.

5 CONCLUSION

The implementation of PBL for teaching policies was evaluated by students in the second semester of the undergraduate Law course at a private HEI in Rio Grande do Norte as an active methodology capable of developing significant learning in teaching, research and extension.

It was noted that the possibility of evaluating the efficacy, efficiency, relevance and effectiveness of policies and how they contribute to the realization of social rights provided for in art. 6 of the Federal Constitution of 1988 was a differential for the discussions and practices of the GTS discipline.

Regarding the implementation of the policies studied, the achievement of their goals, the application of resources, the efforts made by public agents, both their strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and threats, including the results of the policies in the municipalities where the students were from, were also highlighted.

It was shown that the focus of the development of PBL for teaching policies in the GTS discipline was to promote skills for the theoretical understanding of the interrelations between the Democratic State of Law, Policies and Social Rights, from the perspective of effectiveness/implementation. With this, the skills of interpreting, classifying, comparing, researching, sharing knowledge and actions in the practice of the inseparability between teaching, research and extension were stimulated.

In turn, the changes in attitude that reinforced students' curiosity and protagonism in their learning were the motivation for teamwork, implying the division of responsibilities in the fieldwork of research, presentation and defense of scientific papers.

It is important to emphasize that, through the evaluation carried out by students during the guidance process and the electronic form in the semester following the experimentation of PBL in 2017.2, it was noticeable that significant learning was constructed in a participatory manner, enabling students to take a leading role beyond the lectures and respecting the dimensions of individual development, as a team and guided by the teacher.

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