

INTERTWINING EJA WITH EPT HIGH SCHOOL IN THE RONDONIAN AMAZON: POSSIBILITIES FOR COMPLETING BASIC EDUCATION AND PREPARING FOR THE WORLD OF WORK

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ABSTRACT

The research investigates the offer of Youth and Adult Education courses integrated with Technical Professional Education (EJA-EPT) at the Federal Institute of Rondônia (IFRO), considering goal 10 of the National Education Plan. The aim is to understand the meanings attributed by education professionals, identify challenges and propose a collaborative pedagogical approach. With a qualitative approach (Ludke & André, 2017), it uses document analysis and focus groups with EJA-EPT teacher

coordinators. The results indicate low supply and discontinuity of courses, as well as challenges such as dropout rates, curriculum gaps and technological difficulties. It highlights the need for a specific institutional policy for the EJA-EPT, aligned with the reality of the students, and investment in continuing teacher training. The study highlights the importance of supporting adult students in completing their studies and reducing educational inequalities.

KEYWORDS: Youth and Adult Education - Technological Vocational Education, Federal Institutes, Rondonian Amazon.

ENTRELAÇOS DA EJA COM O ENSINO MÉDIO EPT NA AMAZÔNIA RONDONIENSE: POSSIBILIDADES PARA A CONCLUSÃO DA FORMAÇÃO BÁSICA E A PREPARAÇÃO PARA O MUNDO DO TRABALHO

RESUMO

A pesquisa investiga a oferta de cursos de Educação de Jovens e Adultos integrada à Educação Profissional Técnica (EJA-EPT) no Instituto Federal de Rondônia (IFRO), considerando a meta 10 do Plano Nacional de Educação. O objetivo é compreender os sentidos atribuídos pelos profissionais da educação, identificar desafios e propor uma abordagem pedagógica colaborativa. Com abordagem qualitativa (Ludke & André, 2017), utiliza análise documental e grupos-foco com professoras

coordenadoras da EJA-EPT. Os resultados indicam baixa oferta e descontinuidade dos cursos, além de desafios como evasão, defasagem curricular e dificuldades tecnológicas. Destaca-se a necessidade de uma política institucional específica para a EJA-EPT, alinhada à realidade dos alunos, e do investimento na formação continuada dos docentes. O estudo ressalta a importância de apoiar os estudantes adultos na conclusão dos estudos e na redução das desigualdades educacionais.

Palavras chave: Educação de Jovens e Adultos – Educação Profissionalizante Tecnológica, Institutos Federais, Amazônia Rondoniense.

1 INTRODUCTION

The more the masses unveil the objective and challenging reality on which they must focus their transformative action, the more they critically “insert” themselves into it (Paulo Freire, 2013, p. 38).

Paulo Freire's epigraph reflects on how a deep understanding of the challenging reality in which people are immersed is crucial to their ability to act in a critical and transformative way. Vocational and technological education at the Federal Institutes (IFs) is increasingly in line with Paulo Freire's vision of critical awareness. By integrating technical knowledge with an in-depth understanding of social and economic reality, students are encouraged to reflect on the reality that surrounds them or to reflect on the society of which they are a part, in order to promote active participation in favor of a fairer and more equal society.

With this in mind, this article looks at the last stage of Brazilian basic education - secondary education, with reference to the fulfillment of goal 10 of the National Education Plan¹-PNE (2014-2024), which deals with increasing enrollment in Youth and Adult Education - EJA, in secondary education integrated with Professional and Technological Education - EPT. According to the PNE, Goal 10 states that it should “offer at least 25% (twenty-five percent) of Youth and Adult Education enrollments, in primary and secondary education, in the form integrated with Professional Education”. PNE - Law No. 13.005/2014.

It is therefore understood that the essence of goal 10 of the PNE focuses on the completion of basic education, with a view to raising the level of schooling of young people and adults who, for various reasons, have not completed this stage of schooling. In order to meet this target, the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Rondônia - IFRO plans to expand the range of high school courses, linked to technical courses, which take into account the specific characteristics of the EJA public and provide, in addition to basic training, preparation for the world of work.

The aim of this research was to investigate how the provision of high school courses linked to technical courses in the form of Youth and Adult Education integrated with Vocational and Technological Education - EJA-EPT already exists at IFRO. The questions that led to the research were: What are the meanings constructed by education professionals who live or have lived through the experience of offering EJA-EPT at IFRO? What are the main difficulties faced in offering EJA-EPT at IFRO? How can we think of a pedagogical proposal for EJA-EPT courses at IFRO?

This research has a qualitative approach based on the assumptions presented by researchers Lüdke and André (2017). It used bibliographical, documentary and field research. The bibliographic research (Gil, 2008) brought important contributions to the investigation, allowing us to understand

¹ The National Education Plan (PNE) is a set of guidelines, goals and strategies aimed at improving education in Brazil. Established by Law No. 13.005 of June 25, 2014, the PNE is valid for ten years and includes 20 goals covering all levels of education, from early childhood education to postgraduate studies, as well as valuing education professionals.

the concepts of EJA and EJA-EPT, as well as highlighting some scientific productions that problematize the changes and continuities of EJA-EPT.

The documentary research was guided by Severino (2017) and turned its attention to institutional documents, such as the Institutional Development Plan - PDI, Institutional Pedagogical Plan - PPI and some Pedagogical Projects of courses - PPCs offered in the EJA - EPT modality by IFRO, which helped in understanding how the courses in the EJA modality were planned and organized in relation to curricular issues.

The field research was carried out through online focus groups (Fox, 2019) with five (5) teacher coordinators who work or have worked on EJA-EPT courses at IFRO, in order to find out about the main difficulties they face. The activities were carried out synchronously online, allowing us to capture important data from the collaborators' life experience with the EJA, as well as their collective perspectives and understandings when sharing their work experiences. The group met for 3 meetings between February and March 2024, resulting in around 3 hours and 30 minutes of group interaction. The data from the meetings was recorded in the form of a report entitled "Memories of EJA at IFRO" and were submitted to content analysis (Bardin, 2016). Below, in Table 1, we present the self-description of each collaborating teacher in order to highlight their experiences with the EJA, both inside and outside the IFRO. For ethical and privacy reasons, we have chosen to preserve the identity of the collaborators involved in the research.

Table 1: Self-description of the collaborating teachers

Self-description related to professional practice in EJA

Teacher P1 - Graduated in Languages, with a post-graduate degree in Administration and Planning in Teaching, she has worked in education since 1985. She was the director of the Teresa Mitsuko Tustumi State Center for Youth and Adult Education (CEEJA) in Ji-Paraná for 12 years. Today, at IFRO, she teaches and participates in the development of the EJA-EPT pedagogical project. In 2024, she will have been teaching for 40 years, is proud of it and is looking forward to retirement.

Teacher P2 - Teaches Mathematics, holds a Master's degree from the Professional Master's in Mathematics (PROFMAT), has 30 years of teaching experience, worked in the EJA in the state of Rondônia for 7 years and coordinated the first EJA course offered on the Guajará-Mirim campus, from 2018 to 2022.

Teacher P3 - Teaches Geography, has a Master's degree from the Graduate Program in Professional and Technological Education (PROFEPT), has been with IFRO for 4 months and is the current coordinator of the Technical Administration course at the Guajará-Mirim campus. She has 13 years' experience in EJA in the state of Rondônia and is currently studying EJA-EPT.

Teacher P4 - Graduated in Languages with an emphasis on Portuguese and Spanish, she is a specialist in educational management, has worked for 10 years in the EJA in the municipality of Colorado do Oeste and says that the challenge now is to implement the EJA FIC nursery at the IFRO Ji-Paraná campus.

Teacher P5 - Pedagogue, Master's student in the Postgraduate Program in Professional and Technological Education - PROFEPT, research on the Feasibility of Implementing PROEJA on IFRO campuses.

Her first experience with EJA was in the period from 2013 to 2014 when she participated as a literacy teacher in the Literate Brazil Program, later she acted as a Collaborating Teacher in the Lato Sensu Postgraduate Course in Youth and Adult Education, in 2020, she taught the subjects of Youth and Adult Education in Diversity and Citizenship; Teaching Methodologies and Strategies. He worked at the Guajar- Mirim campus, during the offer of two EJA/EPT courses, and participated in the commission to prepare the Pedagogical Project for the Technical Course in Administration Integrated to High School, in the EJA/EPT modality. He said he has had significant experiences along his journey with the EJA and intends to continue this journey so that education reaches everyone.

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on data collected at GFO.

The collaborating teachers' self-description of their professional work in the EJA shows that they have significant experience in the EJA, in which they have faced various challenges throughout their careers, both in the state education system and at the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Rondnia-IFRO.

2 FROM YOUTH AND ADULT EDUCATION TO THE PROPOSAL INTEGRATED WITH PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL EDUCATION (EJA-EPT)

The National Education Guidelines and Bases Law (LDB 9.394/96) establishes an educational structure segmented by age group. In practice, for various reasons, this division is not always achieved, so that many Brazilians reach adulthood with a low level of schooling, often having only been literate. For people who did not have access to or did not complete their studies at the appropriate age², there is a form of basic education called Youth and Adult Education (EJA), aimed at young people over the age of 15 to complete elementary school and from the age of 18 for adults who wish to resume their studies to attend high school.

A brief survey of the history of EJA in Brazil shows that its roots date back to the beginning of the 20th century, when Brazil had a high illiteracy rate, with around 75% of the population unable to read or write. Access to education was limited, especially in rural areas and among the poorest sections of society. The lack of investment in education and the absence of effective public policies to combat illiteracy contributed to this worrying scenario. There were isolated initiatives by the Popular Education movement, often linked to trade union and religious movements, for adult literacy, in an effort to combat illiteracy in the country.

² According to Brazilian legislation, the compulsory school age range is from 4 to 17 years old. By law, children must enter pre-school at the age of 4, elementary school at the age of 6 and secondary school at the age of 15.

From the 1940s onwards, with the creation of the Popular Culture Movement (MCP) by Paulo Freire and other educators, adult education began to gain prominence. The MCP proposed a literacy approach based on conscientization and using dialogical methods and content related to the students' reality. From 1960 onwards, government literacy programs emerged, such as the Brazilian Literacy Movement (MOBRAL) and the Adolescent and Adult Education Campaign (CEAA), which aimed to reduce the high illiteracy rates in the country.

Paulo Freire, In the 1970s, developed a literacy method, known as the Paulo Freire Method or Paulo Freire Literacy Method, which has become an international benchmark and has greatly influenced the EJA in Brazil and other countries. With the enactment of the 1988 Constitution and the 1996 National Education Guidelines and Bases Law (LDB), the EJA was officially recognized as a type of education that is equivalent to regular education and provides basic education opportunities for young people and adults who did not have access to or did not complete their studies at the appropriate age. Since then, Brazil has tried to implement YAE policies and programs capable of ensuring that young people and adults have access to and remain in school, with a view to promoting social inclusion, citizenship and the personal and professional development of these students.

Araújo and Simonard (2023) argue that EJA should be recognized as a fundamental social right, since it seeks to correct the lack of compliance with article 205 of the 1988 Federal Constitution, which establishes Education as a right for all, with both the State and the family being responsible for its promotion. However, Paulo Freire (2015, p. 89) highlights that “[...] despite initiatives such as Alfabetização Solidária, by the Fernando Henrique Cardoso government, and Brasil Alfabetizado, initiated by the Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva government and maintained by the Dilma Rousseff government, adult literacy and especially the elderly are progressing slowly”. Even though it intends to, EJA plays a fundamental role in democratizing access to education in the country, especially among groups excluded from the formal education system, over the course of two years.

Youth and Adult Education integrated with Professional and Technological Education (EJA-EPT) in Brazil officially began in 2007 with the creation of the National Program for the Integration of Professional Education with Basic Education in the Youth and Adult Education Modality (PROEJA), through Decree No. 5,840 of July 13, 2006, during the government of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. The initiative was developed by the Ministry of Education (MEC), in partnership with other entities and educational institutions, as part of efforts to promote education and professional training for young people and adults in Brazil. EJA-EPT combines the completion of Basic Education (elementary and secondary education) with professional training, giving students the opportunity to return to their studies and, at the same time, acquire technical skills and competencies for the world of work.

In 2024, during his third term as president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva launched the National Pact for Overcoming Illiteracy and Qualifying the Education of Young People and Adults,

especially targeting those who did not complete basic education at the appropriate age³. The pact aims to promote educational inclusion and provide quality education for all, regardless of age. It is worth noting that one of its objectives is to expand the offer of EJA integrated with EPT; investments and strategies were targeted for this expansion and qualification.

In EJA-EPT, the curricula are integrated, combining subjects from Basic Education with subjects from the professional area. Practical activities and internships are offered that allow students to apply theoretical knowledge in real work situations, being relevant for adults who seek to qualify professionally and improve their employability conditions, while completing their basic education. Souza, Freitas and Arena (2019, p. 44) argue that “EJA is an action that goes beyond the job market; it is an initiative that favors the constitution of the being in an *omnilateral* way”. EJA-EPT aims to contribute to the comprehensive education of students, preparing them not only for the world of work, but also for citizenship and the full exercise of their rights and duties in society.

3 EJA-EPT AT THE FEDERAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY OF RONDÔNIA – IFRO

Youth and Adult Education integrated with Professional and Technological Education (EJA-EPT) at the Federal Institutes of Education, Science and Technology (IFs) began shortly after the creation of the National Program for the Integration of Professional Education with Basic Education in the Youth and Adult Education Modality (PROEJA). The Federal Institutes began to offer technical courses integrated with high school for young people and adults who did not have the opportunity to complete their studies at the regular age.

The Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Rondônia - IFRO was created by Law No. 11,892 of December 29, 2008. It currently has 10 units (campuses) that serve 09 municipalities in the State of Rondônia in person. It has 44 Distance Education centers - EaD, which expands activities in the state of Rondônia. It also has 15 EaD centers in the states of Minas Gerais, Pernambuco and Paraíba, in addition to 01 (one) international EaD center in the neighboring country - Bolivia and 12 EaD centers in partnership with the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel - Capes (Open University of Brazil-UAB).

According to Article 7 of Law No. 11,892, the Federal Institutes have, among others, the objective of “I - providing technical and professional education at the secondary level, primarily in the form of integrated courses, for those completing elementary school and for the youth and adult education public”, aiming to provide professional training to students immediately after finishing elementary school. This integration between the common core of secondary education and the

³ Free and mandatory basic educations from 4 (four) to 17 (seventeen) years of age, ensuring that it is also offered free of charge to all those who did not have access to it at the appropriate age (BRAZIL, 2016);

technical course, guarantees a more complete education, expanding opportunities for insertion into the world of work and contributing to the development of the student's skills and competencies.

The report by IFRO Regional Observatory, entitled "Informative Synthesis of Socioeconomic and Educational Indicators of the municipalities of the state of Rondônia SIM-RO", issued in March 2024, based on data from the National Institute of Studies and Educational Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP) - Basic Education School Census 2023, reveals that the total number of enrollments in EJA in Rondônia, in 2023, was 19,512.

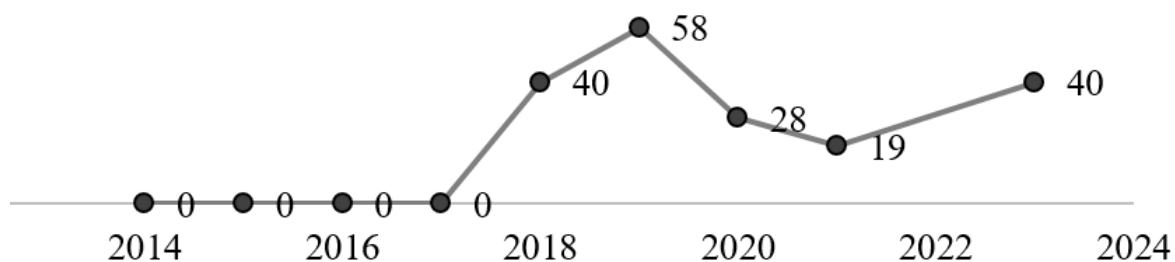
This total includes enrollments in different stages of education, including EJA Elementary School, EJA High School, Initial and Continuing Education Courses (FIC) at the Elementary and High School levels, in addition to the Technical Course Integrated with EJA (EJA Integrated with Professional Education at the Middle Level). Considering that IFRO's focus is on the final stage of Basic Education, High School, the institution aims to make EJA-EPT available at this educational level, serving individuals over 18 years of age who have completed Elementary School and seek to complete High School, while acquiring a professional qualification.

According to Araújo and Simonard (2023), almost three-quarters of young people between the ages of 18 and 24 are behind in their studies or have dropped out, especially during the transition to high school, which has serious long-term consequences for individuals and society.

Education is an essential pillar for individual and collective development, vital for the economic, social, and cultural progress of a nation. When a significant portion of young people do not complete their formal education, this results in a less qualified workforce, limiting society's capacity for innovation and global competitiveness, in addition to contributing to higher rates of unemployment and underemployment, thus increasing inequality and social instability. High school dropouts often occur due to the need to work to supplement family income, which leads young people to enter the world of work earlier, in unskilled and poorly paid positions (Araújo & Simonard, 2023).

By offering the possibility of completing secondary education in an integrated manner with vocational training, IFRO's EJA-EPT plays a significant role in promoting social inclusion and the personal, educational and professional development of individuals seeking opportunities for growth, which contributes to the formation of a more equitable society. Graph 1, below, is a reinterpretation of the 2023 School Census Statistical Panels, which demonstrates the evolution of enrollments in the federal EJA-EPT network in Rondônia from 2014 to 2023.

Graph 1 - Evolution of EJA-EPT enrollments in Rondônia from 2014 to 2023.



Source: Prepared by researchers based on the 2023 School Census.

Although the 2023 School Census data covers the period from 2014 to 2023, enrollments in the federal EJA-EPT network in Rondônia were only recorded from 2018 onwards. There was a drop in the number of enrollments during the years of the Covid-19 pandemic, from 2020 to 2021, and the absence of data in 2022 for the same reason. When crossing the 2023 School Census data with IFRO enrollment data, we found that all EJA-EPT enrollments in the federal network of Rondônia belong to IFRO.

Currently, IFRO campus in Guajará-Mirim is the only one offering EJA-EPT. In 2018, it inaugurated its first class with the Computer Technician course integrated with High School. A study conducted by Souza *et al.* (2019) analyzed the beginning of the course's activities and highlighted that its implementation faced significant challenges. The course initially attracted around 200 candidates, but many were disqualified during the enrollment process due to irregularities. After a public call, classes began in February 2018, in the evening period. The Course's Pedagogical Project (PPC) revealed a structure focused on the area of Information and Communication, integrated with High School, with 40 annual vacancies and a total workload of 2,433 hours.

The analysis of the course's trajectory shows a worrying dropout rate. According to Souza *et al.* (2019), the class reached the 3rd period with only 13 students remaining from the first class. This fact is attributed to several factors, such as incompatible work schedules, academic difficulties, and heterogeneity in the classroom. The authors point out the need for pedagogical, methodological, and social interventions to rethink the project and provide support to students, considering the specificities of the EJA modality and its broader purpose beyond professional training, which aims at full participation in society. Collaborating teacher P2 coordinated the Technical Course in Computer Science Integrated into High School, in the EJA-EPT modality, offered at IFRO Campus Guajará Mirim and mentioned that it was active from 2018 to 2022, being later replaced by the Technical Course in Administration Integrated into High School, in the EJA-EPT modality.

In 2023, the Federal Institute of Rondônia (IFRO) registered a total of 40 enrollments in the EJA-EPT modality. Data from this year's School Census indicate an equal distribution between males and females, with 20 enrollments for each group. Regarding the age group, most students are between 20 and 39 years old. To date, there are few records in the reports of the IFRO Unified Public Administration System (SUAP), which began to be operationalized in 2021. This data corroborates

the information provided by teacher P2, confirming that the only course documented in the EJA-EPT modality is the Technical Course in Administration Integrated with High School, offered by the Guajar-Mirim campus.

The analysis of the data from the reports issued by SUAP reveals a significant reduction in the number of students enrolled in the first period of the Integrated Technical Course in Administration with High School - EJA-EPT, which went from 47 students to 22 students in the second period of 2024. Upon investigating in detail, it is observed that this decrease occurred without any clear reasons, since, according to what is recorded in the system, 15 students were classified as dropouts, leaving the course without formalizing their departure; 09 (nine) students had their enrollments canceled, the reasons for which are not specified in the records and 01 (one) student failed due to absence. The failure to specify the reason(s) for the student's decline in the system makes it impossible to understand the reasons behind the reduction in the number of students.

According to IFRO's PDI for 2023-2027, the goal is to offer at least four courses for EJA-EPT. IFRO plans to hold the 1st EJA-EPT Meeting at IFRO, in order to provide a space for debate and socialization of the topic among educators, students and those interested in the area. The meeting aims to strengthen EJA-EPT as a fundamental modality for inclusion and socioeconomic development, in addition to promoting awareness of its importance in reducing educational inequality and preparing a more just and inclusive society. The event is expected to stimulate the development of more effective policies and the improvement of pedagogical practices, with a view to contributing to improving the quality of education offered by IFRO and the achievement of its institutional objectives.

3.1 Experiences, memories and reflections of teachers in search of a pedagogical proposal for EJA-EPT at IFRO

The Guajar-Mirim campus closed its first EJA-EPT course shortly after it began. The second course in this modality already shows a low number of students graduating. Given the lack of records on the reasons for dropouts and cancellation of enrollments, we consulted the teachers involved in the EJA-EPT experience at IFRO to identify the main difficulties faced in the courses.

For the collaborators, the challenges in offering EJA-EPT at IFRO are related to several aspects. These include the high dropout and evasion rate, difficulties in integrating high school with technical education for people with a large academic gap, fatigue from work or age, limited time for studies outside the institution in addition to classes, school gaps of up to more than 20 years between students, large age disparity in the classes, ranging from teenagers to the elderly, different levels of education in the same class, from semi-literates to graduates, difficulty in mastering technology, considering that the courses have a percentage of Distance Education (EaD) components, courses that do not correspond to the EJA-EPT entry profile, especially those that demand a lot of logical thinking and calculations, and the specific challenges of EJA-EPT in the EaD

modality, such as the lack of adequate monitoring methods and the lack of basic knowledge to meet the specific needs of the students.

Despite the significant relevance of the EJA-EPT offering in the prison system, the experiences of the collaborating teachers were different. One of them mentioned that some students saw school as a motivation to leave the prison system, but did not attend classes regularly. On the other hand, the other teacher reported that weekly attendance and entry/exit monitoring was carried out, which was forwarded to the Department of Justice (SEJUS).

For the collaborators, the development of the Pedagogical Project for the EJA-EPT Course needs to be carried out by people who are familiar with the realities of EJA and that the action to increase the supply of this type of education at IFRO should be linked to the performance of a survey of local demand so that the course is offered according to the needs and interests of the students. They highlighted the importance of designing a new course with an exclusive focus on EJA-EPT, emphasizing that it is not appropriate to adapt regular high school courses integrated with technical courses, nor to compare them in terms of dropout rates, failure rates, attendance, grades, among other aspects, given the heterogeneous profile of the students, which includes different age groups, previous educational experiences and varied life goals. Comparing them directly to other courses disregards their particularities.

The importance and need to consider the professions of the future when proposing the technical part of the EJA-EPT curriculum was also highlighted, adapting study programs to prepare students for the demands of the constantly evolving world of work, which involves identifying the skills and competencies needed for emerging professions and integrating them into the curriculum, ensuring that students are well prepared to face the challenges of the current and future professional world. By including relevant and up-to-date technical elements in the EJA-EPT curriculum, students have a better chance of acquiring the skills necessary to excel in their careers and contribute significantly to society.

Another point highlighted by the collaborators is related to the preparation and continued training of teachers with teaching methodologies and strategies aimed at teaching EJA-EPT that approach working from the students' experience, as they are mature people who have valuable knowledge to be explored by the teacher. Araújo and Simonard (2023) reinforce that:

[...] thinking about Teacher Training to work in Youth and Adult Education integrated with Professional and Technological Education (EJA-EPT) through the context of public policies, allows for ruptures in the construction of didactic-pedagogical actions that enable the teacher, specifically the bachelor or technologist, to mobilize knowledge beyond the technical-operational class. Training should encourage the teacher to plan classes/activities that can mediate the relationship between theory and practice, so that professional knowledge/knowledge is constructed and constituted by critical and emancipatory reflection. (Araújo & Simonard, 2023. p. 133).

Thus, teachers, particularly those with a bachelor's or technology degree, need to go beyond technical-operational teaching in order to incorporate an approach that promotes critical and emancipatory reflection in students. Araújo and Simonard (2023, p.136), when referring to Goal 10

of the National Education Plan (PNE), state that this demands a lot from EJA-EPT teachers who need to be “in constant training to work with this teaching modality focused on the adversities of the world of work, culture, social relations and the multiple dimensions of the education of young people and adults”.

The teachers who participated in the meetings highlighted that, in addition to developing the curriculum, the creation of a new course must include flexibility in the application of assessments and other activities throughout the course. Souza *et al.* (2019, p. 53) agree that “EJA is a different modality, so it needs to be organized taking into account specificities of time, space, methodology and assessment”. It is necessary to consider the fact that EJA-EPT students often face additional challenges in their lives, such as family and professional responsibilities. Often, these students are the main providers for their families, which can result in missing classes and the inability to participate in assessments due to family and work situations and problems.

This flexible assessment approach allows students the opportunity to balance their family and work responsibilities with their academic commitments. This not only recognizes the diverse circumstances faced by EJA-EPT students, but also promotes a more inclusive and adaptable approach to ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed in the course, despite their individual circumstances.

Aguiar (2023) analyzed PROEJA as a public policy aimed at vocational education and highlighted that, despite educational advances, education in this segment is still a social challenge. He emphasized that returning to classes after years out of school is a challenging reality for many PROEJA students, who seek qualifications to improve their lives with determination and dedication.

This research was driven by a fundamental question: how to develop a pedagogical approach for IFRO’s EJA-EPT courses. We recognize that this requires the adoption of a variety of strategies. Based on our studies and the educational experiences shared by collaborators, some essential pedagogical guidelines emerged to guide the planning of new courses or the reformulation of existing ones. Such as: a) Creating specific programs/courses for EJA-EPT, considering flexible schedules and adapted methodologies. b) Prioritizing in-person classes in the evening to increase the effectiveness and flexibility of adult students. c) Offering alternative channels of support and individualized guidance for students with specific difficulties. d) Valuing and recognizing the efforts of adult students, creating a welcoming and encouraging environment. e) Making the curriculum more flexible to make it relevant and applicable to the lives of adult students. f) Establishing partnerships with local companies for internships and insertion into the world of work. g) Carry out awareness campaigns on the importance of Basic Education, highlighting stories of former EJA-EPT students.

To ensure the success of the Youth and Adult Education in Vocational and Technological Education (EJA-EPT) programs at IFRO, it is essential to consider the specific characteristics of the community and the students served. This requires a meticulous analysis that ranges from identifying the needs of local production arrangements to preparing the teachers and pedagogical team that will accompany these students. It is not feasible to offer EJA-EPT without comprehensive

ongoing training for all employees who will have contact with this public. Not only teachers and pedagogical team, but all employees, since EJA-EPT students may need to use resources such as the library or computer lab without prior experience.

Therefore, it is essential to train everyone involved so that they can provide a welcoming and effective educational environment, thus ensuring that students have the necessary skills to achieve academic and professional success.

Paulo Freire (2001) notes that, in Brazil and other Latin American countries, Adult Education is close to the concept of popular education, as reality demands sensitivity and scientific competence from educators. Araújo and Simonard (2023) agree and highlight that, over the years, EJA has been on the margins of the educational process in Brazil, being exclusionary for its working class due to inaccessible schedules and locations, in addition to the quality of teaching and resources that are almost always inferior, thus perpetuating educational inequalities.

Paulo Freire (2001) advocates an educational approach focused on awareness and social transformation. He believes that teachers need to go beyond the transmission of knowledge and become involved in the social reality of their students, understanding their living conditions, their challenges and their experiences within their social, economic and cultural context. Freire (2001) emphasizes the importance of educators not limiting themselves to the standardized and rigid procedures and content of the programs, but working to select and teach topics related to the reality of each location where the course is developed, so that the subjects are not unfamiliar to the students. To this end, educators need to be attentive and involved with what happens in the communities, as these experiences are essential for a more meaningful and contextualized EJA.

By immersing themselves in the social reality of students, teachers can adapt their pedagogical practice to make it more meaningful for students, by incorporating themes and problems from their daily lives into classes, with the aim of identifying and addressing issues of injustice, inequality and exclusion, with a view to promoting learning committed to the development of critical thinking and the possibility for students to understand and transform the society of which they are a part.

Freire (2013, 2015) states that teachers need to help students establish a relationship between the content they learn at school and their reality and experience in the community, in order to emphasize the importance of the knowledge that students have to achieve a deeper and more critical understanding of things. It is necessary to help students understand themselves, to recognize their limitations and prejudices, and then persuade them to question, analyze, and seek new perspectives that go beyond the knowledge they bring. Overcoming common sense requires reflection that needs to start with the student, but that also transcends them.

Paulo Freire (2001) addresses the need to value students' life experience and advocates an education that promotes autonomy, citizen participation and the emancipation of the oppressed, in order to view it as a method for transforming a more just and egalitarian society. Thus, it becomes clear that there is a need to create new strategies to increase the number of enrollments

in EJA-EPT at IFRO and to offer free and quality education to those who for some reason did not complete this stage and did not have opportunities at the appropriate age. In addition, it is crucial to think of actions to guarantee access, permanence, learning and successful completion of EJA linked to EPT.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Youth and Adult Education (EJA) is essential to democratize access to education, by covering those who did not complete their studies at the conventional age, with emphasis on groups that have been historically marginalized or who face specific difficulties in accessing formal education, such as workers who need to balance work and study, people in situations of social vulnerability, homeless people, migrants, refugees, people deprived of liberty, ethnic-racial minorities who may face discrimination and exclusion, women who face gender inequalities and family responsibilities that make it difficult to continue or begin formal studies, people with disabilities who may face physical, sensory or cognitive barriers, and the elderly who seek to learn or update knowledge at a later stage in life.

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