

Presentation of the Dossier: Policies and management of education in municipal contexts

This dossier presents articles that discuss and analyze educational policies in municipal contexts, using as a reference the Articulated Actions Plan (PAR) and its implications in the construction of intergovernmental relations in the Brazilian educational field, its foundations, conceptual bases, methodologies and main trends.

The six articles included in the dossier **Policies and Management of Education in municipal contexts** present the final results of the research entitled “Evaluation of the Articulated Actions Plan (PAR): a study in municipalities of the states of Rio Grande do Norte, Pará and Minas Gerais in the period from 2007 to 2011”, whose overall objective was to evaluate the results of the implementation of the Articulated Actions Plan (PAR) in municipalities of the states of Rio Grande do Norte, Pará and Minas Gerais in what refers to educational management; training of teachers and service and school support professionals; pedagogical practices and evaluation; infrastructure and pedagogical resources, evidencing its repercussions for the systematization of the collaboration regime among the federated entities.

The Articulated Actions Plan was established through Decree 6.094/2007, which defines in art. 9 that the PAR is “...an articulated set of actions, supported technically or financially by the Ministry of Education, which aims to fulfill the goals of the Commitment and the observance of its guidelines” (BRASIL, 2007).

As a way to operationalize the PAR, Resolution/CD No. 029 of June 20, 2007, was established by the National Fund for the Development of Education (FNDE), which establishes the criteria, parameters and procedures for operationalization of the supplementary financial assistance to educational projects under the All for Education Commitment in 2007. According to the Resolution, the technical and financial assistance of the Ministry of Education (MEC) would be organized considering four thematic axes: Educational management; Training of teachers and of service and school support professionals; Pedagogical practice and evaluation, and Physical infrastructure and pedagogical resources. Also in accordance with the aforementioned Resolution, the Articulated Actions Plan, prepared in collaboration with leaders and technicians of the member states of the federation, formed the basis for the conclusion of the financial assistance agreements for educational projects by FNDE/MEC.

The questions that guided the research were based on the assumption that the development of this policy is driven by a process that takes place at a certain historical moment and contemplates several elements, sometimes contradictory, but which, in general, respond to the rhythm and direction of the capitalist system. Thus, the following research questions were elaborated: a) Has the implementation of the PAR contributed to the systematization of the collaboration regime, specifically regarding intergovernmental relations in the cities surveyed? b) did the implementation of PAR, in the four dimensions addressed by it, contribute to the improvement of educational indicators in municipalities in the states of Pará, Rio Grande do Norte and Minas Gerais?

The research was constructed having historical-dialectical materialism as methodological theoretical support in the search for overcoming the subject-object dichotomy and, therefore, goes beyond a static, mechanical research paradigm that seeks to frame reality in a single aspect. Thus, the analysis of the Articulated

Actions Plan, as an educational policy, was apprehended in the different economic, political, cultural and historical dimensions of the realities investigated in fifteen municipalities of three states (Rio Grande do Norte, Pará and Minas Gerais), to show the relations of interdependence and mutual determination between these dimensions and the elements that constitute it in concrete reality.

In addition to the categories of method as contradiction, mediation and totality, the conceptual categories on “Federalism” and their constitutive dimensions were chosen: “intergovernmental relations”, “collaboration regime”, “decentralization”, “autonomy” and “participation”.

This was the effort of the research whose results are presented in the six articles that structure this dossier, insofar as they seek mediations and contradictions, between the guidelines of educational policies implemented through the PAR and their implications in the systems of education of the networks investigated.

In “Federalism and Educational Planning: An Analysis from the Articulated Actions Plan (PAR)”, the authors Karla Cristina Silva Sousa and Alda Maria Duarte Araújo Castro analyze the concept of “federalism as a pact” and its influence on educational planning, in particular in the Articulated Actions Plan (PAR). Using documents and bibliographic research, the authors conclude that federalism in Brazil has been marked by “tensions characterized at times as centralization processes, at times as decentralization” and that in the case of PAR, the federal government, under the discourse of autonomy and decentralization, promotes a strong interference in municipalities turning them into mere executors of actions, curtailing their autonomy.

Rute Regis de Oliveira da Silva and Antônio Cabral Neto in the article “Intergovernmental relations and federative coordination in the context of the Articulated Actions Plan” aim to “understand if the formulation and implementation of PAR in the municipality of Natal were based on intergovernmental relations and on federal coordination”. Using documents and semi-structured interviews, the authors concluded that the PAR “contributed to the exercise of a more articulated planning among the federated entities and for the Union to begin the process of federative coordination in the area of education.” To that end, it sought to meet “the needs of municipalities and states based on voluntary transfers, thus impelling, even embryonically, intergovernmental relations in the Brazilian federation”.

Maria Goretti Cabral Barbalho and Odete da Cruz Mendes analyze the implications of PAR in teacher training in municipalities of two states, in the article “Federalism and teacher education policies: PAR Implications in municipalities of Pará and Rio Grande do Norte”, regarding “the political-administrative issues stemming from federalism”. Based on the analysis of documents and interviews, the authors investigated “the powers of the federated entities in the actions of teacher training in the PAR and its relation with federalism”. They concluded that the implementation of teacher training actions in municipalities of Pará and RN, although they “have experienced the collaboration regime, at times more and at times less visible, it’s been verified the nuances of Brazilian federalism, typical of the decentralized and managerial administrative-financial guidelines, with characteristics that indicate a dependency of the Union, mainly in relation to the financing that remains centralized at federal level”.

Vera Lúcia Jacob Chaves, Valéria Silva de Moraes Novaes and Gilmar Barbosa Guedes in the article “The school management and the forms of provision to the position of school director: the plan of articulated actions in focus” aim to analyze the

recent trends in the choice of school principal after the adoption of the Articulated Actions Plan (PAR). Using the documentary study and semi-structured interviews conducted with subjects who participated in the preparation of PAR in municipalities of the states of Pará and Rio Grande do Norte, the authors concluded that the principle of democratic management defined in the constitutional text is far from being implemented in reality in the investigated municipalities and that the choice of leaders follows the patrimonial logic. They also conclude that “the PAR did not contribute to the process of democratization, since up to now in most of the municipalities investigated there is no election to choose principals with broad participation of the school community, predominating political indications.”

In the text, “Continuing education and pedagogical practice in the articulated actions plan”, Arlete Maria Monte de Camargo and Maria Aparecida de Queiroz analyze whether the actions of continuing formation under the Plan of Articulated Actions contribute to the “improvement of the school performance in Portuguese and Mathematics in the standardized exams as is the case of Prova Brasil [...] and how this logic has repercussions on teaching work”. The article used documentary data and semi-structured interviews carried out in municipalities in the states of Rio Grande do Norte and Pará. They concluded that the PAR matrix is based on the emphasis on results in detriment of teaching and learning processes, “prevailing guidelines that compromise administrative autonomy and pedagogical aspects of the school and, consequently, the teaching work in general and the particularity of the improvement of the academic performance of students in Portuguese and Mathematics, which are defined, as a priority, through external evaluations.

To conclude the dossier, Luciane Terra dos Santos Garcia, Maria Simone Ferraz Pereira and Maria Edilene S. Ribeiro, discuss the relationship between PAR and IDEB and the conception of educational quality that the government intends to consolidate in the article entitled “PAR and Ideb: planning and evaluation for what quality?”. They use data collected in documents and semi-structured interviews in municipalities in the states of Rio Grande do Norte and Pará. The authors conclude that “both PAR and Ideb are part of a set of conservative policies that, by linking education with economic development, promotes in schools a conception of quality based on meritocratic logic, on the accountability of local subjects for results, on the reduction of curricula according to what is demanded in the evaluations”.

The articles presented in this dossier show results of part of the research carried out and show the complexity of the implementation of PAR as a planning policy induced by the federal government to the federated entities. Its analysis, guided by the historical-dialectical perspective, required a broad investigative process, which explored different sources of data, as well as a careful theoretical-conceptual delimitation around the structuring categories of this policy. It is hoped that the reading of the dossier will be able to support new studies and research that will deepen the discussions about the policies that demarcate the actions of the federal government in its relationship with the federated entities, that, under the discourse of autonomy and decentralization, seeks to maintain power and control in the management of education in a context of crisis and cutbacks in resources for Brazilian education.

Vera Lúcia Jacob Chaves
Alda Maria Duarte Araújo Castro
Marcelo Soares Pereira da Silva