Socio-educational Development of Black, Poor and Peripheral Adolescents in Brazil

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Abstract

There are many crossings that make up adolescence. Among them, being black and poor are markers that affect life and educational trajectory. In view of this, the general objective of this study is to reflect on the repercussions of poverty and social vulnerability in the socio-educational experiences of black, poor and peripheral adolescents in Brazil. Specifically, to discuss the role of the State in implementing public policies to guarantee rights, especially the right to education; to identify the concept of poverty and how it is experienced in the Brazilian reality; and to understand how poverty and social and racial inequalities are articulated in Brazil. A study that recognizes the work of UNESCO, with the standardization of the Convention on Combating Discrimination in Education, as an important initiative in the internationalization of the right to quality education for all. The analysis of public policies in the academic and social spheres has highlighted the relationship between social, racial and territorial markers in the existential and symbolic conditions of the population. These relationships can also be observed in educational policies that, like other fundamental rights, are the responsibility of the State. In a brief bibliographic survey on the *Scielo* data platform with the descriptors: black adolescence and social vulnerability, poverty, State, educational policies, right to education, human rights, articles were found that instigate problematizations about the inefficiency of public policies and social inequality as consequences of the narrowing of state intervention. The methodology used was of a qualitative bibliographic nature, to study the theoretical and legal elements in question, from a perspective that goes from the local to the global, thus contributing to the production of data that fosters the construction and socialization of knowledge.

Keywords: Black Adolescence; Social Vulnerability; Poverty; Public Policies; Right to Education; Internationalization.

1. Introduction

The analysis of public policies in Brazil has been growing and relevant in the academic environment, with studies focused on the political and economic frameworks that involve government decisions and their consequences for society. Thus, it is clear that there is a relationship between public policies and social markers, such as class, race, gender and territory, in the existential and symbolic conditions of the population. This relationship can also be seen in educational policies, which, like other fundamental rights, are the responsibility of the State.

In order to better understand this panorama, a bibliographic study was carried out as a methodological research procedure, with the aim of gathering knowledge on the subject from the publications of articles, books and periodicals. As inclusion criteria, national and international texts were used whose discussions on the State, public policies, society and education focused on problematizing the implications for the social and educational development of black, poor and peripheral children, adolescents and young people.

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The exclusion criteria were used for those texts that had adults and the elderly as subjects and for publications in languages other than English, Portuguese and Spanish.

Scielo database using the following descriptors: black adolescence and social vulnerability, poverty, state, educational policies, right to education, public policy law, international human rights treaties. In this survey, the articles and reference materials found instigated questions about the inefficiency of public policies that generate multiple rights violations and social inequality as a consequence of the narrowing of state intervention. Consequently, the impacts are greater for the black population, which has the largest number of black adolescents.

Authors such as Aguilar (2000), D'ávila and Jeffrey (2019) and Ham and Hill (1993), for example, form the theoretical basis of this study on the State, public policy and society. These authors criticize the Brazilian State, which acts minimally in close relations with the private sector, acting as a regulator of labor and power relations, and consequently, disclaiming responsibility for fulfilling social agendas. Aguilar (2000), specifically, develops the idea of a deserter State, discussing the nuances of a system that operates under capitalist logic and exempts itself from the problems triggered by it. The term deserter indicates the idea of authoritarianism, reduction and/or abandonment by the State of social demands and explains the system of political exclusion, which occurs when political spaces are reduced to such an extent that the State of desertion (abandonment) opens gaps for the action of private institutions.

In Brazil, the desertion of the State and the maintenance of the interests of the ruling class are noticeable in the growth of private and market initiatives in the face of labor relations, as well as in the fragility of the democratic system of law (Aguilar, 2020). This deserting logic is reflected in educational policies, in which the managerialist character of the State opens channels for the public-private relationship to be established in education.

Regarding the racial issue in Brazil, as part of this study, the black population accounts for the highest rates of poverty and social exclusion. According to Munanga (2001), of the 53 million Brazilians living in poverty, 63% are black, and of the 22 million living below the poverty line, 70% are black. This supports the relevance of this study and the necessary problematizations that encourage the implementation of public policies to eradicate poverty based, above all, on the premises of diversity, equity and social inclusion.

This study presents an approach to adolescence that is based on the assumption of a historical, social, cultural, and political construction. Although they have in common an age demarcation that goes from 10 to 19 years old for the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) [1]and from 12 to 18 years old for the Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA), the reality in which they are inserted significantly influences their development and behaviors. Discussions on adolescence are mainly based on the studies of Santos (2004), Bock, (2007), Maia (2018), Ferreira (2020), Ferreira and Faria (2023).

For Bock (2007), adolescence is the result of a social construction, which is not limited to the natural phase between childhood and adulthood, but rather in its complexity and subjective repercussions of development in relational contexts. It is in this sense and considering the multiplicity of being and being an adolescent in the world, that this study uses the term “adolescences”, in the plural, precisely because it considers the diversities and pluralities that make up the constitution of these subjects, according to their life realities.

[1] Adolescent and Youth Health — Ministry of Health . Accessed on November 14, 2024.

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An approach on black adolescents becomes important in this study, due to the understanding that social and racial markers imply the condition of existence of these subjects and the challenges posed for the implementation of public policies that contemplate diversity and the guarantee of fundamental rights such as education, housing, public safety and work (Ferreira & Faria, 2023).

The issues presented here have led to the following questions: What is the notion of adolescence that involves studies on this social group in Brazil? What does the literature say about black, poor, and peripheral adolescents? What factors influence the formation of adolescence? What is the role of the State in implementing public policies in the country? These questions arise associated with the desire to investigate how adolescence develops in contexts of social vulnerability and poverty. Thus, the following research question is posed: What are the repercussions of social vulnerability and poverty on the socio-educational experiences of black, poor, and peripheral adolescents in Brazil?

These questions prompted a desire for a deeper conceptual and theoretical understanding of the subject and the development of this study, whose general objective is to reflect on the repercussions of poverty and social vulnerability on the socio-educational experiences of poor, black, and peripheral adolescents in Brazil. The specific objectives are: to discuss the role of the State in implementing public policies and guaranteeing rights, including the right to education; to identify the concept of poverty and how it is experienced in the Brazilian reality; and to understand how social and racial inequalities are articulated in Brazil.

To achieve these objectives, this proposal addresses, through available literature, discussions on the repercussions of poverty and social vulnerability on the socio-educational experiences of black, poor and peripheral adolescents in Brazil, as well as on the awakening of awareness about injustice and social recognition. In terms of methodological procedures, this is a qualitative bibliographic research focused on the study of theoretical and legal elements on adolescence, poverty and fundamental rights, from a perspective that starts from the local to the global, thus contributing to the production of data that foster the construction and socialization of knowledge.

This study arises from the author's concerns as a teacher/pedagogical coordinator of basic education in the municipal public school system in the interior of Bahia, Northeast Brazil. These concerns led her to conduct master's research with students in the final years of elementary school, in a peripheral public school. In her master's degree, she sought to understand, based on the subjects' perceptions and experiences, the condition of adolescents in social vulnerability in the face of the incidence of violations of their basic rights and identified a series of violations of rights legally established for the protection of children and adolescents and the need to strengthen a protection network that involves the school, family and public authorities in order to guarantee the rights of children and adolescents (Ferreira, 2020). Thus, the concern gains momentum during the academic doctorate course at the Faculty of Education of the State University of Campinas - UNICAMP, and motivates the need for continued research, based on the perception of adolescents, on the relationship that the lack of support for everyday problems, arising from situations of poverty and social inequality (violence, unemployment, health services, security, culture, leisure, education, food, for example), has with their trajectories and experiences, both in the family, community and/or schooling context.

This is a study whose relevance for scientific development in Brazil in the medium and long term consists of the instrumental methodological dimension that proposes the analysis of the impact of poverty and social inequality on the socio-educational development of black and peripheral adolescents, taking into account the role of the family, school, society and the State in consolidating the network of comprehensive care and protection. An approach that contributes to reflections on the real needs regarding the role of the State in implementing the right to education in the context of the production of public policies.

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Thus, the study also contributes to the necessary internationalization of discussions on human rights to support the preservation of human dignity worldwide (Barreto & Vedovato, 2015). The inspiration for this exchange is based on the work of UNESCO, with the standardization of the Convention on Combating Discrimination in Education, which is understood as an important initiative in the internationalization of the right to quality education for all, as provided for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Federal Constitution (1988), which regulates the Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education - LDB 9394 (1996).

This article is organized into four sections, duly structured as follows: the "introduction" provides a general overview of the study, presenting the researcher's relationship with the object, problems, research questions and objectives, and the relevance of the study. This is followed by the section entitled "Socio-educational reality of black, poor and peripheral adolescents in Brazil", which presents considerations on the current social and educational situation of adolescents in a context of social vulnerability and poverty, of which black and peripheral adolescents have the highest rates of exclusion and discontinuity in their school trajectory. The section "The State and the implementation of public policies in Brazil" is dedicated to problematizing the State's action or lack thereof in the face of social demands and their repercussions on society. Finally, the last section is dedicated to the final considerations of the text, with some conclusions reached by the study, especially regarding the specific situation of black adolescents, for whom the legal apparatus does not reach a reality of guarantees and protection.

2. Socio-educational reality of black, poor and peripheral adolescents in Brazil

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), adolescence corresponds to the period of life between 10 and 19 years of age, while the Statute of Children and Adolescents (ECA) considers adolescence to be the period from 12 to 18 years of age. Pointing out age demarcations for adolescence is an important factor when taking into account that some physical and biological bodily changes can occur over time, even though this is not a rule, since each body reacts to the action of time in different ways. It is also an important factor for legal apparatuses and policies that use sociodemographic and age profile data for their implementation.

However, this study also considers that other factors, such as cultural, social, economic, political and racial factors, have significant influences on the constitution of this phase of human life. An example of this is the diversity and differences of peoples and their cultures that bring different ways of being and being adolescents in the world, such as indigenous peoples, quilombolas, gypsies, among others. Therefore, it becomes important to understand how the notion of adolescence has been constituted. Ferreira & Faria (2023) state that a notion of adolescence in Brazil was forged historically, based on psychology and influenced by biomedical knowledge. A construction that incorporates later and in a more articulated way the role of social markers of class, race and territory to explore the differences and inequalities that produce multiple ways of being adolescents or young people, as indicated by the studies conducted by Menezes and Silva (2020), which address the use of the notion of intersectionality in the Brazilian scientific field.

In the field of social and human sciences, according to studies by Santos (2024), the notion of Brazilian adolescence has been developed as a multiple object of study in an attempt to encompass its singularities, situations, social and human contexts and psychosocial configurations. Regarding the social, human and also cultural contexts in which adolescence is based, Ferreira (2020) presents his considerations based on the studies of Áries (1981), when he states that:

Each phase of life is the product of a process of socio-historical construction, which gains prominence in a given temporal context. The social construction of the notion of adolescence, for example, occurs in the 19th century, especially through the conjunction of medical and psychological knowledge, and gains

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momentum in debates on the universalization of education in view of the real need to spend more time at school, while also increasing the time of dependence on the family (Ariés (1981) cited by Ferreira (2020).

According to Ariés (1981), it is clear that adolescence, like other phases of human life, is the result of the process of social and historical relations, and because it occurs within a relational context of space and time, it acquires influences from these contexts. School and family, as socializing institutions, are examples of significant influences in the formation of individuals.

Bock (2007) also contributes to this discussion when he states that the concept of adolescence considers the importance of biological factors for bodily development, however, he reinforces that these should not make adolescence a natural phase, but rather consider the relevant connection with cultural, economic and social interaction conditions, as he states:

Adolescence is seen as a social construction with repercussions on the subjectivity and development of modern man and not as a natural period of development. It is a moment signified, interpreted and constructed by men. Marks of body development are associated with it. These marks also constitute adolescence as a social phenomenon, but the fact that they exist as marks of the body should not make adolescence a natural fact (Bock, 2007, p. 68).

In view of this, and taking into account the physical marks and social phenomena, this study addresses the specific situation of black adolescents, as it is known that being an adolescent and being black is an important condition in a society marked by racial segregation. Unfortunately, the rates record higher occurrences of crime and violence involving black adolescents and young people [2].

Discussions about black adolescence gain attention in this study, both because it is a gap in Brazilian literature and we understand the need to work on building knowledge on the subject, and because of its relevance to understanding that social and racial factors, already mentioned throughout the text, can shape their existential conditions, social experiences, as well as socio-educational development. In this regard, Kabengele Munanga (2001) states that 63% of Brazilians living in poverty and 70% of those living below the poverty line are black. In other words, the black population reaches the highest rates of poverty and social exclusion in Brazil.

In academic literature, “black adolescence” [3]appears most frequently in works associated with urban violence, racism and socio-educational measures. In mainstream media, representations of black adolescents in Brazil are also frequently associated with negative images, such as victims or perpetrators of violence. Negative representations of black adolescents pose challenges for the educational field, since these subjects make up the significant portion of the public that attends Brazilian public institutions. The social issues that affect black adolescents act on both a material and symbolic level and have negative consequences for their socio-educational development, fueling rates of social exclusion, violence, school failure, among others, especially when it comes to those affected by what Longo (2012) calls the stigma of the three Ps: black (‘preto’ in Portuguese), poor and peripheral (Ferreira & Faria, 2023).

In view of this, it is understood that there is a need to take a critical and investigative look at the implementation of public policies in Brazil in response to educational demands, as the country still

[2]See https://www.ipea.gov.br/atlasviolencia/dados-series/24.

[3]Regarding the term “Black adolescence”, academic productions about this stage of development have been identified panoramically on research websites, however, it is little used in the literature about the adolescent universe when related to racial issues.

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presents a scenario of violations that public policies do not effectively address, which consequently contributes to the reproduction and perpetuation of the cycle of violence and social inequality. Ferreira (2020) corroborates this debate in the educational field when he alludes to the history of socioeconomic, territorial, gender and racial inequalities that have rooted in Brazilian education a segregationist and exclusionary profile of economically disadvantaged social groups. A situation that keeps them at educational and cultural disadvantages due to the difficulties, still existing in education, of dialoguing with the differences and diversity of peoples.

A fact proven by Ferreira and Faria (2023), when they present indicators from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, IBGE (2019), on access and permanence of white and black students in basic education. According to:

From the articulation of educational indicators to the race variable, some inequalities gain prominence. In the initial years of elementary school, the presence of black and white children is practically the same from 6 to 10 years of age, respectively with 95.8% and 96.5%, but the differences increase over the years, since the difference in the final years of the same stage of education increases to 6 points (84.4% and 90.4%) and reaches 11.8% in high school (64.8% and 76.8%), indicating that socioeconomic mechanisms operate in the production of inequalities (Ferreira & Faria, 2023).

In view of this, Brazilian education faces a major challenge, despite guaranteeing the right to education for the majority of the population, as the numbers identify access records, however, satisfactory completion records have not been achieved.

In this sense, it is also important to highlight that, although three decades have passed since the enactment of the Child and Adolescent Statute - Law 8,069 (1990) and a decade since the Youth Statute - Law 12,852 (2013), fundamental milestones for guaranteeing fundamental rights and for formulating public policies for these subjects, educational indicators point to common situations of violations of their comprehensive protection during the school phase.

Mentioning these regulatory frameworks and the persistent situation of violations of fundamental rights experienced by adolescents and young people places us before the reality of these social groups and invites us to reflect on the social gaps faced by thousands of individuals who are not assisted by a policy that offers support for their emergency demands, mainly educational, health, economic and social. This reflection is very pertinent in the national scenario when Brazil, in addition to pre-existing social and economic problems, is going through the impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic. An unprecedented health, political, social and economic crisis in the country, which in general “exposed in real time the lack of public policies for black people, the majority of the Brazilian population, which translates into the high rate of deaths from coronavirus and other diseases, genocide, difficulties in accessing education, and an increase in domestic violence” (Franco & Soares, 2020, p.1235). The impacts of the pandemic are still latent in the Brazilian political and social scenario, aggravating for those affected by social, racial and territorial markers.

In this sense, this study understands that the intersections of the aforementioned markers, and also mentioned throughout this text, are constructors of adolescence as well as childhood and youth. As pointed out by studies by the United Nations Children's Fund - UNICEF (2018), through territorial and racial signaling data, on poverty in childhood and adolescence when they reveal that:
In Brazil, almost 27 million children and adolescents (49.7% of the total) have one or more rights denied. The most affected are black girls and boys, living in families that are financially poor, living in rural areas and in the North and Northeast regions. (UNICEF, 2018, p.05)

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With this work by UNICEF, it is also evident that poverty for the black population living in peripheral areas is closely related to the violation of their basic rights, since the monetary issue influences restrictions on access to education, information, protection against child labor, housing, water and sanitation. The term “multiple deprivation” is used in this study to explain that the absence of one or more rights influences the others.

This relation between poverty, territory and violation of rights, including the right to education, can also be seen in other continents and countries. Studies by Pomati and Nandy (2019), for example, on poverty and child malnutrition in Central and West African countries, show that economic and educational factors are associated with poor living conditions for families, both in rural and urban areas, and have an impact on children's development.

In Germany, one of the largest economies in Europe, ranked 20th among the richest countries in the world, poverty affects approximately 14 million of its 83.2 million inhabitants, a significant figure given its economic potential. However, what draws our attention is its relative nature, which means that poverty in Germany is measured by the average living conditions of the population, unlike what happens in countries with absolute poverty affected by hunger, unemployment, violence, misery, etc. Poverty in Germany is closely related to people's income percentage, manifesting itself in the subtleties of social issues and limitations on access to food and housing that lead them to live in the outskirts and require assistance from the welfare state, a characteristic of the German government in guaranteeing subsistence to poor people (Kinkartz, 2023).

Focusing on international discussions becomes relevant in this study to broaden the scope of discussion on the topic and reinforce how social, racial and territorial markers are closely related to the social and educational development of the population, and consequently, of children, adolescents and young people. This requires greater investment in government actions through public policies to eradicate and/or mitigate problems arising from poverty and social inequality.

For this process to be possible, an understanding of the notion of poverty is essential. According to (Vedovato, Gomes, Franco & Pessoa, 2020), although poverty is understood as the absence of what is necessary, defining what is actually necessary is still a major challenge. And, considering that the fight against poverty has been a focus of action on several government agendas and international human rights organizations, the way in which it is conceptualized and understood is fundamental to qualifying government action and its public policies.

3. The State and the implementation of public policies in Brazil

The discussion on public policies in Brazil has gained momentum in the academic community, especially in the analyses and reflections on the government's actions in response to the population's social demands. According to Silva (2008), this dynamic is important for understanding the political, economic and social frameworks on which policies are based, and is therefore fundamental for advancing the characterization and analysis of the situation and its consequences in the lives of individuals.

This study understands public policies as actions of the State, acting through government programs and projects in response to the specific demands of the population (Araújo, 2011). In Brazil, for example, there are social programs to eradicate poverty (Bolsa Família, emergency aid, among others). And in the field of education, educational policies to universalize basic education, as regulated by the Federal Constitution of 1988, which regulates the Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education – LDB 9394 (1996). It is worth mentioning that the policy of universalizing basic education in Brazil is based on guaranteeing the right to quality education for all, and therefore it is a privileged area when it comes to analyzing the relationship between the State, society, public policy and education.

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Ham and Hill (1993) note that analyses of public policies arise from two important perspectives motivated by self-interest. The first perspective focuses on the problems that the government faces as a result of the development of industrial society. The second perspective stems from the need and interest of social science researchers in expanding studies on the relationship between the State, society and public policies. Understanding these perspectives has boosted the development of academic programs and consolidated a theoretical and methodological field of scientific research in different areas of knowledge about the State and public policies.

It is also important to highlight that the process of analyzing public policies was also mobilized by the interest in investigating the State's actions with regard to public spending. "Examining the political world, with a focus on understanding what governments do, why and for whom they do it, or even who wins and who loses in government decisions" (Martins, 2013, p. 279), implied changes in the process of configuring the State that shifted the idea of a State acting in the face of public policies responsible for the population's quality of life, to an arbitrary and regulatory action in labor relations.

For Ham and Hill (1993), the State's shift from the sphere of providing public services and social benefits was preponderant for its engagement in merely regulatory and social control activities. Such activities, always focused on economic issues, exert great influence, affecting almost all aspects of the population, with aggravating factors for the black and poor population.

It is in this sense that the history of exclusion, social vulnerability and rights violations affecting the black population can be identified in the formation of Brazilian society. They continue to bear the marks of the condition of subordination and violence that were imposed on them over time, since the Portuguese colonization in the year 1500. As a result of this process of colonization and enslavement of people, especially Africans, social and racial inequalities in the country continue and the resulting problems are perpetuated in society.

An approach to the role of the State in relation to public policies contributes to this discussion due to its importance in understanding that the changes in the role of the State have had a major influence on society, particularly on the poor population, whose scarcity of resources leads to multiple violations. Based on Maia's studies (2018), it can be inferred that black children and adolescents are more affected, historically in Brazil, by social inequalities resulting from the State's lack of action. Information reiterated by data published in studies by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF 2018) on poverty in childhood and adolescence reveals that:

In Brazil, more than 18 million children and adolescents (34.3% of the total) live in households with insufficient income to acquire basic food items. But poverty in childhood and adolescence is even greater. This is because, to understand poverty, it is necessary to go beyond income and analyze whether girls and boys have their fundamental rights guaranteed […] Including “deprivation of rights” as one of the faces of poverty is not common in traditional analyses on the subject, but it is essential to highlight serious problems that affect girls and boys and put their well-being at risk (UNICEF, 2018, p. 05).

The same study also reveals that poverty in the country is closely related to the violation of rights, is linked to financial restrictions and comes up against restrictions on access to basic rights such as education, information, protection against child labor, housing, drinking water, basic sanitation and public safety.

It is worth highlighting that the poverty situation in Brazil is an area of interest in this approach to the State's role in public policies, due to the nature of certain government actions that act in the production and reproduction of inequalities, maintenance of poverty and exclusion of social groups historically affected by their economic, racial and territorial conditions (Pires, 2017).

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To face the reality of violations, (Maia 2018) points out the necessary correlation of forces between society and the State (federal, state and municipal levels) in the implementation of effective public policies and in addressing social and educational inequalities. These problems both segregate and exclude the economically less favored population, of which black people are the majority, exposing them to social contexts in which the available constitutional guarantees are far from the real needs and demands of this social group.

4. Final Considerations

The field of research into public policies and education, at the interface between the various regional and international realities, allows for the evaluation and comparison of public and educational policies, and also enables the construction of new horizons and implementation strategies. This process requires the necessary consideration of the struggles for the realization of human rights, democracy and social transformation.

In view of the above, this study is highly relevant for economic development and social well-being in Brazil. The discussions raised in this study foster an understanding of how the relationship between public policy and education is fundamental and requires State action in implementing public policies, fulfilling its strategic role in meeting social demands and guaranteeing the basic rights of the population.
The socially and economically disadvantaged classes are the most affected by the consequences of social vulnerability and poverty in the country. This situation exposes poor black adolescents from the outskirts of the city to a socio-educational reality of exclusion, violations of basic rights, violence and discontinuity in their schooling. Therefore, it requires greater investment in mechanisms to protect and guarantee rights, especially the right to education, with greater investment in quality public education. It is known that black adolescents in Brazil, marked by social inequalities, are those who use the majority of public education services.

Despite all the institutional and legal advances in protecting children and adolescents, such as the Statute of Children and Adolescents (ECA) of 1990, the reality of exclusion and violence stems from the country's social and racial inequalities. In this sense, it is noted that the theoretical and legal guarantees available in the country are far from the real needs and possibilities offered to this social group. Therefore, this study presupposes the need for the State to play an active role in identifying social needs, in order to formulate a political agenda that prioritizes the implementation of public and educational policies, the eradication of poverty and access to and permanence in quality education.

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