

The Challenges of Teacher Training and the Sociocultural Reality of EJA

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Abstract:

This article investigates the challenges of teacher training in Youth and Adult Education (EJA), analyzing how the socioeconomic and cultural inequalities of students influence pedagogical practices. Through a critical literature review, we dialogued with key authors such as Arroyo (2005), Freire (1967), Capucho (2012) and Costa and Evangelista (2017) to map the main gaps: lack of specific public policies, methodological approaches disconnected from the students' reality and lack of interdisciplinary continuing education. The results show that the precariousness in the preparation of teachers limits the potential of EJA, often reducing it to a compensatory model, instead of an emancipatory education. It is concluded that it is necessary to remunerate teacher training in this modality, with investments in practical training, contextualized curricula and integration between schools and social movements, ensuring teaching respects the trajectories and demands of students

Keywords: Young people and adults; teacher training; teaching and learning.



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Introduction

Youth and Adult Education (EJA) carries a historical debt: decades of state negligence have left millions of Brazilians without access to schooling at the appropriate age. Despite being a constitutional right, this modality still faces structural challenges, from the lack of public policies to the precariousness of teacher training – the central focus of this article. If the success of EJA depends directly on the qualification of teachers, how can we guarantee a pedagogical practice that dialogues with the socio-cultural reality educating, mostly these low-income workers?

To answer this question, we conducted a critical bibliographic research, dialoguing with fundamental authors such as Costa and Evangelista (2017), Capucho (2012), Dourado (2001) and Gomes and Borges (2022), who analyze the gaps in teacher training and the profile of EJA students. Our goal is to map these gaps and demonstrate that, without an urgent review of teaching methodologies and investment in continuing education, EJA will continue to reproduce inequalities, instead of fulfilling its emancipatory role.

The article is organized into two main parts: 1) the challenges in teacher training, where the disconnection between educational policies and the real needs of the classroom is discussed; and 2) the sociocultural reality of the students, highlighting how their life trajectories require flexible and anti-mercantilist pedagogical approaches. Finally, in the final considerations, we argue that the valorization of EJA necessarily involves the construction of an intersectoral training model, linked to the concrete teaching demands of these subjects.

METHODOLOGY

In order to understand the challenges of teacher training in EJA and its relationship with the sociocultural reality of students, a qualitative approach based on secondary data is intended. The sources were selected from the SciELO and Google Scholar platforms, using descriptor codes such as "EJA teacher training", "EJA sociocultural reality" and "educational policies". The search was limited to articles published between 2000 and 2023, prioritizing studies that discussed educational inequalities and pedagogical practices.

According to Moresi (2003), a systematic review requires clear inclusion and exclusion criteria, ensuring the relevance of the material analyzed.

The collected data were submitted to content analysis, following the stages of pre-analysis, exploration of the material and interpretation. The emerging categorization of recurrent themes, such as deficient education, students' profile and absence of public policies. Lunetta and Guerra (2023) highlight that this technique allows the identification of discursive patterns in academic texts, revealing gaps and consensuses in the literature. Different articles were examined, of which 18 met the research objectives, according to a screening based on title, abstract and methodology.

The interpretation of the results considered the theoretical constructs of Mattar and Ramos (2021), which advocate triangulation between sources to validate qualitative findings. Perspectives on teacher training were contrasted, from critical approaches to institutional analyses, seeking convergences and divergences. The studies reviewed pointed out that the discontinuity of training programs and the heterogeneity of EJA students required flexible teaching models. The analysis also showed the lack of dialogue between initial training and the real demands of the classrooms.

Finally, the systematization of the data allowed us to map three problematic axes: curricular disconnection, teacher precariousness, and invisibility of the students' trajectories. The methodology employed, although limited to secondary sources, offered a critical overview of the obstacles in EJA, as demonstrated by the authors referenced. The absence of recent empirical research on continuing education has emerged as a gap to be explored in future studies.

The training challenges for EJA teachers

Teacher education in Brazil is a complex and challenging field, marked by tensions, historical and political changes. Is there currently an enigma in knowing where the teacher should really be trained? Although the Law of Guidelines and Base of National Education number 9.394/96 brings a chapter to take care of this demand, there are still many doubts about the appropriate space for training these professionals. In general, there are controversies in teacher training, that

is, an enigma hovers over where to train teachers for a specific teaching modality with great difficulties and peculiarities, such as the EJA modality.

Youth and adult education is at the center of the class struggle, as it is understood that it represents the struggle of workers, often denied the right to study. It is a modality of education made up of children from the disadvantaged class, with difficulty in attending school, because they are subjects of the humble class of society, so these students often need to work to be able to contribute financially to the family income, demonstrating that they are workers who do not have enough time to dedicate to their studies. The State, as a representative of the bourgeois class, has no interest in investing in the education of young people and adults, because it does not provide a return for capital, especially in the training of teachers. (Costa; Evangelista, 2017).

The education aimed at young people and adult workers in Brazil, as well as the teaching work in this educational segment, are historically developed in the context of a capitalist society, so their materialization is subordinated to its logic and orientations. Despite this, it should be noted that EJA was born outside the school environment and its path has always been marked by tensions between the struggles of social movements that defend an education based on the interests of the working class and another of a neoliberal order that defends the interests of the bourgeois class (Gomes; Borges, 2022, p. 3).

To analyze teacher training for EJA, it is necessary to consider the conception of change in the socioeconomic and political spaces, so that in recent times, there has been great change both in the international and national space. At the local level, we can mention the accentuated presence of extreme right-wing politics, which is directly linked to the logic of capital, which undoubtedly interferes directly in the public policies of the State, especially for the training of EJA teachers. It is not possible to analyze the training of teachers in youth and adult education without mentioning the international and national scenario, a process that is interrelated and that comes up against public policies for the training of teachers to work in EJA.

When we analyze the current context of teaching work in EJA, we find that there are several problems arising from the repercussion of productive restructuring policies, among them: the little experience of teachers to work in EJA; absence of specific training; the false idea that EJA demands less from teachers; the inequalities in relation to

funding in EJA legitimized in the legislation; the scarce financial investments and public policies in general for the training and specific performance of teachers; intensification of teaching work (Gomes; Borges, 2022, p. 4).

If we were to analyze the LDB/96 in detail, we would not find specific training for the education of young people and adults, the training being directed to basic training, which involves EJA. This demonstrates a disregard for teacher training who work in this important stage of national education. On the other hand, we can also understand how to reduce spending on the part of the State, expanding teacher training for young people and adults undoubtedly requires public resources, an action that the State has been avoiding in recent times.

Most teachers working in the municipal and state systems and also in the prison system in EJA classes have never received specific training for the function they perform; when the focus is directed to the educators working in the Literacy Program, the situation becomes even more complex, as the lay staff prevails, who receive light and insufficient training for the challenge they experience in the pedagogical spaces/times in which they work (Capucho, 2012, p.66).

This is a reality that is at the heart of youth and adult education, as already mentioned. Such a modality of education is not a priority in the public educational policies of the State, so that the public of EJA is formed by young people and adults of the working class, so the lack of interest of the State in this action, investment in this modality will not bring return to the class that lives from profit, from capital, hence this modality of education is at the mercy of society, A reality that has been going through history, with minimal modification.

This reality of precariousness in the training of EJA teachers may be related to the historical stigma and subordination with which the subjects, the EJA public, were relegated. It is important to highlight that they are not a priority public for the interests of capitalism. From the point of view of neoliberal policies, the sociocultural specificity of these subjects has little importance for the development of the country (Gomes; Borges, 2022, p. 12).

The training of teachers to work in the modality of youth and adult education has not been satisfactory, since there is a lack of interest on the part

of the State in developing more effective policies in the training of teachers for this modality of education. One of the factors that may be related to the absence of effective actions for EJA is the precarious government policy, which in turn is temporary, when the government ends, the projects directed to a certain action of education also end. Many programs have been implemented in teacher training, but when the government ends, the project is extinguished.

When we resort to the legal frameworks, from the 1990s onwards, we find in LDB 9.394/1996, in Article 62, the requirement of minimum training to work as a teacher in Basic Education, that offered at the secondary level, in the normal modality. However, studies by Cabral and Viganò (2017, p 214) reveal that, when it comes to EJA, there is a process of scrapping legal requirements of a contradictory nature that can also be seen in the execution of federal government programs, such as the "Literate Brazil Program, which opens the possibility of teaching to interested parties who only have a high school education". The idea of little training requirement presupposes, among other issues, a reduction in financial investment in literacy (Gomes; Borges, 2022, p. 12).

The policy of neglect towards the training of EJA teachers is related to the State's position towards financial interests at the international level, so that in order to meet the demands of the market, national public policies tend to reduce investments, hindering the implementation of more effective actions to develop a project that will ensure the training of teachers who work in the education of young people and adults. "In the 1990s, Brazil intensified political actions and educational reforms in line with the guidance of international organizations, the most effective translation of which is expressed by the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB, Law No. 9,394/96)" (Dourado, 2001, p. 50).

In the National Curriculum Guidelines for EJA (OPINION CNE/CEB n. 11 of May 10, 2000), it mentions that teacher training cannot be a decontextualized training, uninformed of the student's reality, the teacher to exercise the function of professional in the EJA modality must be inserted in the context of their realities, with pedagogically appropriate conditions to develop work according to the reality of the students. A teacher who knows how to develop educational action in all senses, both pedagogical and effective, is capable of developing conditions to act in the teaching-learning process of young people and adults.

It can be said that the preparation of a teacher focused on EJA must include, in addition to the training requirements for each and every teacher, those related to the differential complexity of this teaching modality. Thus, this teaching professional must be prepared to interact empathetically with this portion of students and to establish the exercise of dialogue. Never a teacher who is lightened or motivated only by good will or by idealistic volunteering, but a teacher who is nourished by the general and the specificities that qualification as systematic training requires (Brasil, 2000, p. 5).

This orientation does not materialize in practice, so that in the legislation it is perfect, but in the reality of the modality of youth and adult education this recommendation is distant, it is not effective in the context of the preparation of the teacher to work in the EJA classroom. In reality, what happens are actions of party politics, where each government that wins implements its own policy, the policy of bargaining, of camaraderie, of the exchange of favors, the teachers are allocated according to this conception, being trapped by the dictates of the centralization of power, in this way how the professional will develop a project that is in accordance with the reality of the students, if the action of teachers is trapped in a conception of exchange of favors.

of the aforementioned Guidelines point out the relevance of teacher preparation with specific training requirements, in practice what is observed are other conditions of teaching work in EJA, much more legitimized by interference from party politics and that disregard legal determinations (Gomes; Borges, 2022, p. 13).

We tried to analyze the policy of teacher training to work in the modality of youth and adult education, as it was explicit that this policy is far from being effectively implemented according to the law, so that it recommends an action, but the implementation in practice is far from what the legal norms preach, Thus, what we have is an education for young people and adults that needs the support of society in general to effectively develop the teaching-learning process as the students really deserve.

The sociocultural reality of EJA students

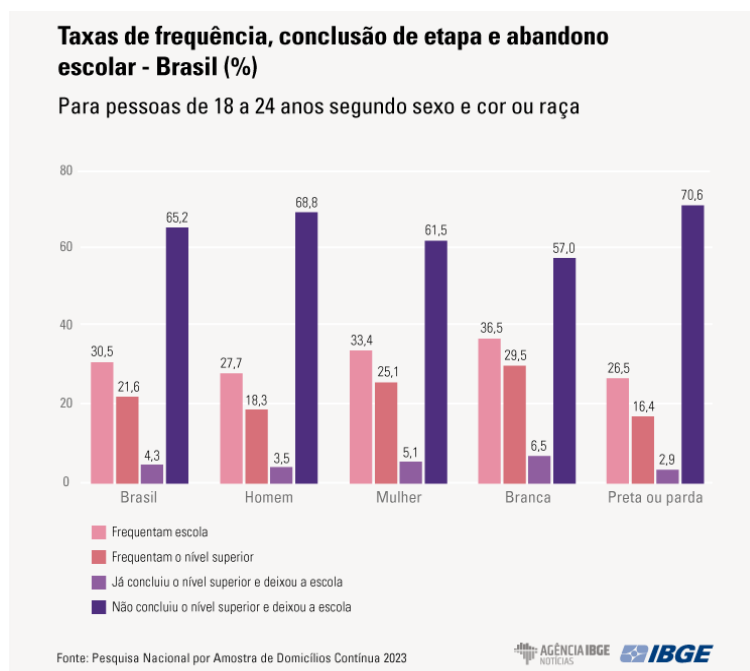
The right to education is a way to ensure a better future perspective, however, often the family is unable to keep the child in school, and the child ends

up having to work to help support him. In Brazil, education faces difficult situations regarding the quality of teaching and access to systematized education, where age/year distortion is a very frequent problem in educational institutions in the country, triggered mainly by repetition, late entry into school, dropout and return of the dropout student.

Precisely this condition of class and low-income worker leads most EJA students to be among the population most vulnerable to the effects of the covid-19 pandemic, feeling both the impacts related to the disease itself and its treatment, as well as the economic consequences arising from the need for social distancing. Since March 2020, therefore, many of these young people, adults, and the elderly who attend Basic Education have been in a precarious situation of survival and, most likely, with few prospects of returning to their studies (Nicodemus; Serra, 2020, p. 874).

Social inequality is the main obstacle to education, as low-income students end up performing poorly in schools because they have to work to help support their families, which contributes to adding up to a multitude of people who dropped out of school, when they should be studying. We could ask about public welfare policies, the answer is that they exist, but they are not enough to meet the family's needs. In the image below, some IBGE data prove that education has not been a priority in the lives of many children and adolescents in Brazil.

FIGURE 1: Attendance rate, stage completion and school dropout.



Fonte: <https://agenciadenoticias.ibge.gov.br/>

These data, from the IBGE, reveal that most people between 18 and 24 years old, only 27.7% of men and 3.4% of women attend school, where 4.3% of students complete higher education and drop out of school. These data demonstrate the importance of investing and encouraging children to stay in school, emphasizing Youth and Adult Education as a teaching modality adapted to students who are out of school and are old enough to attend this type of education, as they need to work and study to have a better future perspective.

The young people and adults of EJA are a clear denunciation of the insurmountable distance between the forms of life to which popular childhood, adolescence and youth are conditioned and the stubborn rigidity and selectivity of our school system. Looking in the mirror of the trajectories of young people and adults who return to EJA would perhaps be a way for the system to recognize the insurmountable distance. It was not the EJA that distanced itself from the seriousness of the school system, it was the one that distanced itself from the real living conditions of the popular sectors. Youth and adult education will advance in its configuration as a public field of rights to the extent that the school system will also advance in its configuration as a public field of rights for the popular sectors in their concrete forms of life and survival (Arroyo, 2005, p. 48-49).

Paulo Freire (1967) experienced Youth and Adult Education in such a special way, that he is one of the main references when talking about EJA, as he was an integral student and later a teacher in this teaching modality, and these experiences inspired a teaching method that starts from the students' culture, because for him, reading and writing are worthless if they cannot read reality.

[...] Awareness is a historic commitment. It is also historical consciousness: it is a critical insertion in history, it implies that men assume the role of subjects who make and remake the world. It requires men to create their existence with a material that life offers them [...] Awareness is not based on consciousness, on the one hand, and the world, on the other; on the other hand, it does not want a separation. On the contrary, it is based on the consciousness-world relationship. (Freire, 1980, p. 26-27).

The Freirean method is to adapt the methodology to the reality in which students live. To show the student that the school is an extension of his social life, in which he is an integral and active part of the process of knowledge construction, that is, he is directly inserted in its construction, and without it

teaching cannot happen. This methodological strategy comes precisely to work on the reality of the student, demonstrating that education is not only in reading and writing what is in the book, but providing the ability to read and understand the world, it is in this conception that Paulo Freire's pedagogy focuses its methodology that goes beyond the school space, encompasses the questioning of the structure of class society, where one class overlaps another.

[...] The capture and understanding of reality are remade, gaining a level that they did not have until then. Men tend to perceive that their understanding and that the 'reason' of reality are not outside of it, as, in turn, it is not dichotomized from them, as if it were a world apart, mysterious and strange, that crushed them. (Freire, 1987, p. 96).

From the moment that the student sees himself as an important axis in the learning process, he understands that the school is a mediator of knowledge that will improve and qualify professionals to enter the job market, even in the face of financial difficulties, the student needs to persist and remain in the institution. However, the school needs to play its welcoming role and the teacher needs to build an education that allows the student to reflect on his own reality, that develops his social critical potentials, to understand the place he occupies in society. Freire defends a society based on dialogue and the construction of an ethical, social and political responsibility.

By trying to test the "findings" and always being willing to revise. By stripping himself of the maximum of prejudices in the analysis of problems and, in apprehending them, striving to avoid distortions by denying the transfer of responsibility. By the refusal of quietist positions. For security in argumentation. Through the practice of dialogue and not polemics (Freire, 1967, p. 60).

In this way, the education developed by Freire is based on liberating emancipation, on dialogue, generating the subject's belonging to his place of rights and duties in the society in which he lives regardless of his social condition, where "no one educates anyone and no one educates himself" (Freire, 2008, p. 68). Proposing a methodology built on the idea of a dialogue between educator and student, where the educator cannot bring ready-made tasks, because he needs to build together with the student, respecting the prior knowledge, relating

the student's reality, working on real concepts of the student's day-to-day knowledge.

The condition of being a free human being requires critical and renewed awareness, this concern being based on the reality of the students. Working with EJA is to understand the daily life of these students, so that they are students with an unfavorable condition in terms of socioeconomic and cultural issues. They are workers who live only on labor, that is, they work only to account for their existence.

Not just any adult. They are young people and adults with a face, with history, with color, with a socio-ethnic-racial trajectory from the countryside of the periphery. If this profile of youth and adult education is not well known, it will be difficult for us to train an educator of these young people and adults. (Soares, 2006, p.22).

They are young people who belong to a social class, who have an identity, they are workers, who have a condition of existence based on work, culture in the relationship of production articulated with historical experience. In other words, the students of young people and adults are subjects belonging to a regional culture, where handicrafts, music and dance produced in the reality of these students prevail. The lives of these students are products of subsistence, community building, mutual help with each other.

Man as a being of relationships. This temporalized and situated being, anthropologically unfinished – subject by vocation, object by distortion [...]. Man and only man is capable of transcending, of discerning, of separating different existential orbits, of distinguishing "being" from "non-being" [...] in the ability to discern he will be at the root of the awareness of his temporaneity, obtained precisely when crossing time, in a certain way even one-dimensional, he reaches yesterday, recognizes today and discovers tomorrow. (Freire, apud Gadotti, 1996, p. 719).

The teacher needs to be prepared to welcome his student, especially when they come from EJA, as they already bring with them a complex life history marked by factors that prevented them from studying in the opportune time for schooling, but they are looking for a new chance. The school needs to play its role by providing an adequate environment, teachers trained to work in this teaching modality and, mainly, working with methodologies that involve the student's attention, in order to ensure their permanence in the institution, because

complaining that students are unmotivated and dropping out does not solve the problem, because the question is to innovate and reinvent itself in order to ensure the student's meaningful learning.

EJA students belong to the working class, with their own identity as subjects who live off labor, they are workers, riverside dwellers, quilombolas, among others, who are fighting to ensure their own existence, they are men and women with dreams, desires and will to build a better life for themselves and their families.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The training of teachers for the youth and adult modality is in a situation of alert, so that historically the State has not provided effective actions to have training at the time that young people and adults deserve. This neglect is linked to the conception of public policies that has been presented in the context of Brazilian education. An educational policy that favors national and international entrepreneurs, this conception of thinking about education in the country compromises fundamental educational actions, such as the education of young people and adults.

Thinking about teacher training for EJA it is necessary to consider the socioeconomic conditions of the students, without this reality it is difficult to build a proposal for the training of the professional who will be in the classroom with the students. It is necessary to consider that EJA students are subjects who have historically stopped attending school not of their own volition, but because of a more urgent need, guaranteeing their existence. This responsibility allowed these young people and adults to look for financial alternatives to contribute to the family's support.

This demonstrates that the modality of young people and adults are formed by students with financial difficulties, this reality drives students to arrive in the classroom with low self-esteem, hence the need for teacher training that contributes not only to teach letters and numbers, but to build a new personality, demonstrating to these students that life goes on, That's why you can't be ashamed of your story, which by the way is very beautiful.

The study showed that the education of young people and adults needs to be expanded to a condition of guarantee of rights, in this way a new posture of education of young people and adults is being built. It is known that the challenge is great, but if society folds its arms, the situation of this type of education worsens even more. It is up to society as a whole to raise awareness to build an instrument of struggle for an education of young people and adults that deserves respect, at the same time understands the need to enable young people to become adults towards the improvement of conditions of existence.

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