

**THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATIONAL MODALITY YOUTH AND ADULT
EDUCATION – HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL**

**O PAPEL DA MODALIDADE DE ENSINO EDUCAÇÃO DE JOVENS E ADULTOS
- NÍVEL MÉDIO**

**EL PAPEL DE LA MODALIDAD EDUCATIVA EDUCACIÓN DE JÓVENES Y
ADULTOS – NIVEL MEDIO**

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ABSTRACT

Youth and Adult Education (EJA) stands as one of the fundamental pillars of contemporary Brazilian education, aimed at correcting historical inequalities and ensuring the universal right to schooling. This article seeks to analyze the role of EJA at the secondary level, discussing its historical foundations, legal frameworks, and public policies, as well as the methodologies and pedagogical practices that foster social inclusion and citizenship formation. The research adopts a qualitative and bibliographic approach, based on contemporary theoretical references and institutional documents such as the National Curriculum Guidelines and UNESCO reports, to understand the relevance of this educational modality within the Brazilian context. The theoretical analysis indicates that EJA represents more than a formal educational space, becoming an environment of emancipation and appreciation of popular knowledge, fostering autonomy, critical thinking, and social awareness. Furthermore, the effectiveness of EJA depends on the continuity of public policies, the strengthening of teacher training, and the expansion of structural investments. Therefore, EJA is reaffirmed as a key instrument for inclusion, equity, and social transformation, indispensable to building a more just and democratic society.

Keywords: Youth and Adult Education. Social Inclusion. Citizenship. Public Policies. Human Development.

RESUMO

A Educação de Jovens e Adultos (EJA) constitui-se como um dos pilares fundamentais da educação brasileira contemporânea, voltada à reparação de desigualdades históricas e à garantia do direito universal à escolarização. O presente artigo tem como objetivo analisar o papel da EJA no nível médio, abordando seus fundamentos históricos, marcos legais e políticas públicas, bem como as metodologias e práticas pedagógicas que favorecem a inclusão social e a formação cidadã. A pesquisa, de abordagem qualitativa e natureza bibliográfica, baseou-se em referenciais teóricos contemporâneos e documentos institucionais, como as Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais e relatórios da UNESCO, buscando compreender a relevância dessa modalidade no contexto educacional brasileiro. Os resultados da análise teórica apontam que a EJA representa mais do que um espaço de

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ensino formal, constituindo-se como ambiente de emancipação e valorização dos saberes populares, ao possibilitar o desenvolvimento da autonomia, do pensamento crítico e da consciência social. Além disso, evidencia-se que a efetividade da EJA depende da continuidade de políticas públicas, do fortalecimento da formação docente e da ampliação de investimentos estruturais. Assim, reafirma-se que a EJA é instrumento de inclusão, equidade e transformação social, sendo indispensável à construção de uma sociedade mais justa e democrática.

Palavras-chave: Educação de Jovens e Adultos. Inclusão Social. Cidadania. Políticas Públicas. Formação Humana.

RESUMEN

La Educación de Jóvenes y Adultos (EJA) se consolida como uno de los pilares fundamentales de la educación brasileña contemporánea, orientada a reparar las desigualdades históricas y garantizar el derecho universal a la escolarización. Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar el papel de la EJA en el nivel medio, abordando sus fundamentos históricos, marcos legales y políticas públicas, así como las metodologías y prácticas pedagógicas que promueven la inclusión social y la formación ciudadana. La investigación, de enfoque cualitativo y carácter bibliográfico, se basó en referencias teóricas contemporáneas y documentos institucionales, como las Directrices Curriculares Nacionales y los informes de la UNESCO, para comprender la relevancia de esta modalidad educativa en el contexto brasileño. El análisis teórico demuestra que la EJA es más que un espacio de enseñanza formal, convirtiéndose en un ambiente de emancipación y valorización de los saberes populares, al fomentar la autonomía, el pensamiento crítico y la conciencia social. Asimismo, se destaca que la efectividad de la EJA depende de la continuidad de las políticas públicas, del fortalecimiento de la formación docente y de la expansión de las inversiones estructurales. De este modo, se reafirma que la EJA es un instrumento de inclusión, equidad y transformación social, indispensable para la construcción de una sociedad más justa y democrática.

Palabras clave: Educación de Jóvenes y Adultos. Inclusión Social. Ciudadanía. Políticas Públicas. Desarrollo Humano.

1 INTRODUCTION

Youth and Adult Education (EJA) is a fundamental modality of the Brazilian educational system, aimed at guaranteeing the right to education to individuals who, for different reasons, did not complete their studies at the regular age. According to Haddad and Di Pierro (2023), EJA represents a historic achievement resulting from intense social struggles in favor of the democratization of education, acting as an instrument of inclusion and reparation of structural inequalities. In Brazil, from the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (Law No. 9,394/1996), the modality officially became part of basic education, assuming the commitment to serve young, adult and elderly subjects who seek schooling as a means of social emancipation (BRASIL, 1996). In this context, EJA consolidates itself as a public policy that transcends the pedagogical dimension, articulating itself with processes of social, cultural and economic transformation.

The relevance of EJA lies in its role in promoting social justice, enabling equitable access to knowledge and valuing the individual and collective trajectories of students. According to Carvalho (2021), this modality should be understood not as a compensatory mechanism, but as an emancipatory strategy, aimed at critical and citizen education. This perspective dialogues with Freire's thought, by understanding education as a practice of freedom and as a process of collective construction of knowledge. Thus, EJA reaffirms the ethical and political commitment of public schools to ensure conditions for continuous learning, contributing to the consolidation of a more democratic and inclusive society.

Despite its advances, EJA still faces significant challenges in the contemporary educational landscape. Studies by Catelli Junior and Haddad (2022) show the persistence of high dropout rates, insufficient funding, and the precariousness of supply conditions. In addition, the absence of lasting public policies compromises the continuity of actions aimed at the modality, weakening the training of teachers and the quality of teaching. This reality reveals a social and political gap that needs academic investigation, since EJA, in its function of inclusion, still lacks effective recognition as a State policy and pedagogical strategies that ensure the permanence and success of students.

In view of this panorama, this article proposes to analyze the role of the Youth and Adult Education – high school teaching modality, discussing its theoretical foundations, its public policies and its social and pedagogical impacts. The research problem that guides this study can be summarized in the following question: how does EJA contribute to social inclusion and the citizenship formation of young people and adults in contemporary

Brazil? The choice of the theme is justified by the need to understand how educational practices and the legal frameworks that sustain EJA influence the exercise of citizenship and the democratization of knowledge, especially in a context of persistent inequality and intense social transformations.

As for the methodology, the study adopts a qualitative approach, of descriptive and analytical character, based on bibliographic research. Reference works, scientific articles, institutional reports, and official documents were consulted, such as the National Curriculum Guidelines for Youth and Adult Education (BRASIL, 2020) and the UNESCO World Report on Adult Learning 2022 (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2022). The theoretical analysis was developed from the critical and comparative reading of authors who discuss EJA under the historical, political, pedagogical and social dimensions, allowing a comprehensive understanding of its relevance and its current challenges.

It is hoped that this research will contribute to the strengthening of the academic and political debate around EJA, by highlighting its transformative potential and its importance for the consolidation of education as a fundamental human right. According to Souza and Almeida (2021), valuing EJA implies recognizing the diversity of its subjects and the complexity of their demands, promoting an education that goes beyond the limits of formal schooling and achieves comprehensive education. Thus, the present work intends to broaden the understanding of the role of EJA in social inclusion and citizenship formation, reaffirming its centrality as an indispensable public policy for the construction of a more just, critical and egalitarian society.

2 CONCEPTIONS AND HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF YOUTH AND ADULT EDUCATION (EJA)

Youth and Adult Education (EJA) has historically been consolidated as an essential modality to guarantee the right to education to those who, for various reasons, did not complete basic education at the regular age. According to Haddad and Di Pierro (2023), EJA emerges as a political and social response to the structural inequalities of the Brazilian educational system, being the result of popular struggles and social movements that claimed universal access to knowledge and citizenship. This modality is part of the broader context of democratization of education, especially from the second half of the twentieth century onwards.

According to Carvalho (2021), EJA represents more than a compensatory space for schooling; it assumes the role of an instrument of social and political emancipation. The author highlights that contemporary conceptions of EJA have been guided by principles of inclusion and equity, considering the cultural, social and economic specificities of its students. Thus, the modality consolidates itself as a pedagogical field committed to social transformation, which distances it from a merely assistentialist vision.

The legal framework of EJA was established by the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (Law No. 9,394/1996), which recognizes the right to education for all at any age (BRASIL, 1996). This document legally consolidated EJA as a modality of basic education, defining its objectives, target audience and forms of offer. Subsequently, the National Curriculum Guidelines for Youth and Adult Education reinforced the need to build contextualized and socially significant pedagogical practices, aimed at the integral formation of subjects (BRASIL, 2020).

The trajectory of EJA in Brazil is marked by influences from critical pedagogical currents, especially the ideas of Paulo Freire. According to Machado (2020), Freire's thought contributed decisively to the understanding of education as a practice of freedom, defending the centrality of dialogue, critical awareness, and the valorization of popular knowledge. This perspective has become the foundation of policies and methodologies aimed at the education of young people and adults.

Catelli Junior and Haddad (2022) point out that the history of EJA reflects the contradictions of Brazilian social development. While it advances in the recognition of the right to education, it also faces setbacks resulting from political and budgetary discontinuities. The authors point out that, in recent decades, EJA has oscillated between inclusive policies and fiscal containment measures that compromise its continuity and effectiveness.

In the Latin American context, Rodríguez (2021) observes that youth and adult education is a strategic element for educational justice. The author highlights that EJA should be understood as part of a social project aimed at overcoming structural inequalities, promoting the inclusion of historically marginalized groups. This understanding broadens the horizon of EJA beyond formal schooling, incorporating social, cultural and economic dimensions.

The World Report on Adult Learning 2022, published by UNESCO, reinforces that lifelong learning is a human right and a fundamental requirement for sustainable development (UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION,

2022). This international understanding legitimizes EJA as an integral part of global education policies and as a tool for building more equitable and resilient societies.

The research by Freitas and Santos (2022) shows that EJA students carry trajectories marked by multiple forms of educational and social exclusion. These authors identify that late access to school, dropout and precarious teaching conditions reflect historical inequalities that the modality seeks to repair. The permanence of these subjects depends, therefore, on pedagogical practices that value their experiences and knowledge.

In this sense, Mendonça (2019) argues that EJA should be understood from the diversity of its participants, which requires a flexible and inclusive curriculum. The author proposes a curricular approach that considers the plurality of sociocultural contexts, recognizing that the educational process needs to dialogue with the concrete realities of the students and promote meaningful learning.

The pedagogical dimension of EJA also involves teacher training. According to Martins and Oliveira (2024), the EJA teacher must have specific skills to deal with the heterogeneity of classes and the demands of adult subjects. This training must articulate theory and practice, contemplating didactic, political and cultural aspects, in order to favor the protagonism of students and the collective construction of knowledge.

The use of innovative methodologies has been pointed out as a determining factor for the success of EJA. Lima (2023) argues that active methodologies, when adapted to the profile of the students, can favor autonomy and engagement, transforming the classroom into a space for sharing and critical reflection. This pedagogical perspective is close to Freire's conception of dialogical and participatory education.

Studies by INEP (2024) indicate that, although the number of enrollments in EJA varies over the years, the modality still plays a relevant role in reducing illiteracy rates and expanding access to basic education. Data from the School Census show that there is a higher concentration of enrollments in regions with lower human development indexes, evidencing the social and compensatory character of EJA in the national context.

Souza and Almeida (2021) point out that EJA plays an essential role in the social and economic development of the country, by enabling individuals previously excluded from the educational system to enter the labor market with greater qualification. For the authors, the valorization of EJA as a permanent public policy is an indispensable condition for the strengthening of citizenship and for the promotion of social justice, reaffirming its historical role in the consolidation of human and educational rights.

3 PUBLIC POLICIES AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOR EJA IN BRAZIL

Youth and Adult Education (EJA) in Brazil is the result of a historical process of social struggles for the expansion of the right to education and for the inclusion of historically marginalized segments. According to Haddad and Di Pierro (2023), the consolidation of EJA as a public policy stems from a movement that involves both civil society and the State, being guided by principles of social justice and equal opportunities. The institutionalization of EJA occurs with the enactment of the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education – LDB No. 9.394/1996, which officially recognizes this modality as an integral part of basic education, ensuring the right to schooling at any stage of life (BRASIL, 1996).

The legal bases of EJA are reinforced by the National Curriculum Guidelines for Youth and Adult Education, approved by the National Education Council, which guide pedagogical practices and training principles aimed at the education of people who have not completed regular education (BRASIL, 2020). According to these guidelines, EJA must be anchored in the principles of equity, difference and proportionality, recognizing the particularities of adult subjects and their life trajectories. This conception breaks with the idea of a compensatory education and proposes an integral education aimed at emancipation and the full exercise of citizenship.

Carvalho (2021) highlights that EJA policies represent a field of ideological and political dispute, insofar as they involve different conceptions about the role of the State and education in society. For the author, EJA, over the last decades, has been tensioned between inclusion policies and practices of state unaccountability, which reduce education to an instrument of employability, disregarding its formative and liberating character. This duality reflects the very instability of educational policies in the country.

The studies by Catelli Junior and Haddad (2022) demonstrate that, even in the face of regulatory advances, EJA faces persistent challenges in financing and institutionalization. The authors point out that, after the end of federal programs such as Literate Brazil and ProJovem, there was a significant retraction in the supply and continuity of structuring actions. This discontinuity compromises the achievement of the goals established by the National Education Plan (PNE 2014–2024), which provides for the eradication of illiteracy and the universalization of basic education.

According to Machado (2020), public policies aimed at EJA should be understood from a human rights perspective and not as emergency actions. The author states that the current challenge is to articulate educational, social and economic policies in an integrated way,

ensuring material and symbolic conditions for meaningful learning. This approach requires valuing the protagonism of EJA subjects and recognizing their knowledge and life experiences as constitutive elements of the educational process.

In the international context, UNESCO has played an important role in the formulation of global guidelines and goals related to adult education. The World Report on Adult Learning 2022 reaffirms the commitment of signatory countries to lifelong learning, understanding it as a fundamental right and strategy for sustainable development (UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION, 2022). This document reinforces that public policies for EJA must articulate literacy, professional training and citizen participation, ensuring gender equity and cultural diversity.

The analysis by Freitas and Santos (2022) shows that, although Brazilian legislation ensures the right to EJA, there are discrepancies between what is provided for in the rules and the reality of the education networks. Many state and municipal systems lack adequate planning and resources, which results in regional inequalities and high dropout rates. For the authors, the effectiveness of the policies depends on the integration between the Union, states and municipalities, as well as the expansion of the financing mechanisms linked to Fundeb.

The 2023 School Census of Basic Education, published by INEP (2024), indicates a significant drop in the number of EJA enrollments, especially in high school. This scenario reveals not only difficulties in access, but also problems of permanence and quality of supply. Such data demonstrate the need for policies to encourage enrollment and actions articulated with other public policies, such as health, social assistance and work.

According to Paiva (2018), the formulation of effective public policies for EJA requires understanding the sociocultural profile of its students. The author points out that the diversity present in the classes — which includes workers, mothers, young people in vulnerability and elderly people — demands flexible and humanized policies, capable of responding to the real needs of the population. Valuing the life experiences of these subjects is a guiding principle of pedagogical and curricular policies.

Mendonça (2019) adds that EJA should integrate the concept of curriculum as a social practice, promoting dialogue between scientific knowledge and popular knowledge. Well-structured curriculum policies can contribute to reducing dropout and strengthening students' self-esteem. This understanding is in line with the guidelines of the national guidelines, which defend an education centered on plurality and respect for differences.

From the perspective of Souza and Almeida (2021), the consolidation of lasting public policies depends on valuing the professionals who work in EJA. The recognition of the specificity of this modality should be reflected in continuing education programs, adequate remuneration and improvement of working conditions. The lack of policies for valuing teachers is, according to the authors, one of the main obstacles to the effectiveness of actions in the field of EJA.

Lima (2023) argues that public policies also need to contemplate the methodological dimension of EJA. The incorporation of active methodologies and educational technologies can contribute to increasing the attractiveness of classes and promoting the protagonism of adult students. This pedagogical innovation must be supported by adequate training policies and technological infrastructure.

The analysis by Torres (2017) and Rodríguez (2021) shows that Latin American countries face similar challenges in consolidating youth and adult education policies. Both highlight that the sustainability of these policies depends on long-term institutional commitments and a conception of education focused on social justice. In this context, Brazil must reaffirm its commitment to EJA as a subjective public right, ensuring its continuity and strengthening as a State policy, and not just as a transitional government policy.

4 SOCIOCULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS AND CHALLENGES OF THE EJA PUBLIC AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

The public served by Youth and Adult Education (EJA) at the secondary level is composed mostly of subjects whose educational trajectories were interrupted for socioeconomic, family or institutional reasons. According to Freitas and Santos (2022), these students are, for the most part, workers who face long hours, precarious employment conditions, and domestic responsibilities, which makes returning to school a daily challenge. The heterogeneity of the classes is a striking characteristic of the modality, composed of young people who have dropped out of regular education and adults who seek to resume their studies after long periods of absence.

According to Carvalho (2021), EJA should be understood as a plural and intercultural space, in which different identities, histories, and life experiences coexist. This diversity imposes on the educational process a need for constant curricular and methodological adaptation. The recognition of students' experiences is essential to promote inclusion and engagement, transforming the school environment into a space for valuing popular

knowledge and collective learning. Thus, the central challenge is to balance the formal contents with the knowledge acquired in social practice.

Mendonça (2019) states that the EJA curriculum should reflect the cultural and cognitive specificities of adult students, allowing dialogue between scientific knowledge and empirical knowledge. The author argues that the distance between the school content and the student's reality is one of the main factors of demotivation and dropout. Therefore, the contextualization of pedagogical practices is indispensable for the teaching-learning process to have meaning and social relevance.

The studies by Haddad and Di Pierro (2023) indicate that socioeconomic vulnerability remains one of the main obstacles to the permanence of EJA students. The precariousness of material conditions, unemployment and the absence of social support policies, such as transportation and school meals, aggravate the difficulties faced by students. This situation reinforces the need for intersectoral public policies that articulate education, social assistance and work, promoting real conditions for the exercise of the right to education.

According to Souza and Almeida (2021), EJA represents a concrete opportunity for social ascension and resignification of personal trajectories. For many students, returning to school means more than completing a formal stage: it is a way to regain self-esteem, belonging, and hope in new life possibilities. However, the authors warn that the absence of policies of valorization and psychosocial monitoring weakens the permanence of students, especially among the youngest.

Studies carried out by INEP (2024) show that, at the secondary level, the profile of EJA students is predominantly female and made up of people between 25 and 40 years old. Most are inserted in the informal labor market and have significant gaps in relation to the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. Such data indicate that pedagogical practices should prioritize contextualized and flexible methodologies, capable of reconciling study time with the demands of professional and family daily life.

According to Lima (2023), the adoption of active and participatory methodologies is essential to stimulate the protagonism of the adult student. Strategies such as interdisciplinary projects, conversation circles, and the use of educational technologies favor meaningful and collaborative learning. However, the author notes that many teachers still find it difficult to adapt these methodologies to the structural conditions of schools, which often lack technological resources and institutional support.

Martins and Oliveira (2024) emphasize that teacher training focused on EJA must consider the complexity of the sociocultural relationships present in the classes. The teacher must act as a mediator sensitive to the particularities of each student, recognizing the individual and collective potentialities of the group. For the authors, the absence of specific and continuing education for these professionals is one of the main factors that compromise the quality of the educational offer.

At the international level, Rodríguez (2021) argues that the EJA audience reflects, throughout Latin America, the structural inequalities of the region. Conditions of poverty, gender inequality, and digital exclusion are recurrent challenges, which require educational policies that transcend the school space and promote social justice. The author argues that adult education should be seen as part of a broader strategy for inclusion and human development.

According to the World Report on Adult Learning 2022, prepared by UNESCO, the cultural and age diversity of the EJA audience is one of the greatest potentials of this modality (UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION, 2022). Valuing this heterogeneity favors the exchange of knowledge, intergenerational dialogue, and the construction of learning communities, provided that educational policies and curricula are adequately adjusted to these characteristics.

Machado (2020) observes that EJA, when guided by a humanizing perspective, contributes to the strengthening of students' intellectual autonomy and critical awareness. The author argues that the act of learning, for young people and adults, is also an act of recognizing oneself as a subject of rights and culture. In this sense, the pedagogical challenge consists of building practices that overcome the compensatory character and affirm EJA as a space for liberation and identity reconstruction.

Finally, Catelli Junior and Haddad (2022) state that the challenges faced by the EJA public at the secondary level are not limited to the educational dimension, but encompass structural aspects of Brazilian society. Overcoming these obstacles requires long-term public policies, supported by adequate investments, teacher appreciation and strengthening of school management. EJA, by serving a diverse and vulnerable public, reaffirms its importance as an instrument for the democratization of knowledge and the realization of the right to education, constituting one of the pillars for the construction of a more just and egalitarian society.

5 PEDAGOGICAL METHODOLOGIES AND PRACTICES IN YOUTH AND ADULT EDUCATION

The choice of methodologies and pedagogical practices in Youth and Adult Education (EJA) must consider the uniqueness of its subjects, who carry with them diverse social, cultural and professional experiences. According to Machado (2020), the teaching-learning process in EJA cannot reproduce the traditional model of regular education, as its students have life trajectories that require more flexible and dialogical approaches. The starting point should be the recognition that these subjects bring a repertoire of accumulated knowledge outside the school, which needs to be incorporated as a legitimate part of the educational process. The author emphasizes that the pedagogy focused on EJA should value dialogue, active listening and problematization, in line with Freire's principles of emancipatory education.

The methodologies applied to EJA should prioritize the collective construction of knowledge and the active participation of students. According to Lima (2023), active methodologies, when well adapted to the profile of the students, stimulate critical thinking, autonomy, and engagement. Among the most effective practices are project-based learning, conversation circles, and case studies, which promote the integration of theory and practice. However, the author observes that the application of these methodologies requires continuing teacher training and adequate infrastructure, since many institutions still lack material and technological resources for their full implementation.

According to Carvalho (2021), the role of the educator in EJA is that of mediator of knowledge, and not of transmitter. The teacher needs to develop strategies that arouse the interest and curiosity of adult students, promoting meaningful learning that is directly related to their experiences. Pedagogical planning must be contextualized, taking into account the sociocultural environment of the students, their learning times and their practical limitations. Evaluation, in this context, assumes a formative character, focused on individual progression and the development of cognitive, affective and social skills.

The EJA National Curriculum Guidelines, published by the Ministry of Education (BRASIL, 2020), guide that pedagogical practices must be based on the principles of equity, diversity, and autonomy. These principles reinforce the importance of methodologies that contemplate the learning pace of students and that promote respect for their cultural, generational and cognitive differences. In addition, the document highlights that the EJA

curriculum must be interdisciplinary and articulated with contemporary themes, in order to favor the construction of a critical view of social and economic reality.

The use of educational technologies is another essential component in contemporary pedagogical practices. According to Martins and Oliveira (2024), digital tools enable the creation of more dynamic and interactive learning environments, especially in blended or distance education courses. However, the authors warn that the use of technology should be at the service of learning, and not limited to the reproduction of content. For this, the teacher must be prepared to act as a facilitator and integrator of digital resources, exploring platforms, applications and social media as instruments of critical and collaborative teaching.

According to Paiva (2018), EJA must break with the banking conception of education and adopt a pedagogical practice based on problematization and reflection. Teaching must start from the concrete reality of the students, addressing generating themes that emerge from their daily lives and that allow the development of critical awareness. This methodology, inspired by Freire's pedagogy, stimulates dialogue between educator and student and contributes to the strengthening of the identity of the subjects. In this sense, learning becomes an act of liberation, through which the student is able to understand and transform his reality.

The study by Catelli Junior and Haddad (2022) emphasizes that EJA faces the challenge of reconciling innovative methodologies with precarious supply conditions. Many schools lack appropriate teaching materials and adequate spaces, which compromises the effectiveness of pedagogical practices. Even so, the authors point out that the creativity of educators has been a determining factor in overcoming these limitations, through the construction of strategies adapted to the local reality. Community projects, cultural workshops and interdisciplinary activities are examples of practices that strengthen the bond between school and community.

For Mendonça (2019), the curricular approach of EJA should articulate scientific knowledge with popular knowledge, recognizing that students are not empty containers, but bearers of experiences that enrich the educational process. The curriculum, therefore, must be flexible, open and contextualized, integrating themes such as citizenship, sustainability, work and culture. This curricular conception allows the student to understand knowledge as a historical and social construction, stimulating a critical posture in the face of reality.

Freitas and Santos (2022) highlight that school dropout is one of the main challenges faced by EJA, and its overcoming depends on pedagogical practices that give meaning to learning. The lack of a bond with the school often stems from previous experiences of failure

and exclusion. Thus, it is necessary to create welcoming and encouraging environments, in which mistakes are understood as part of the process and learning is seen as a personal achievement. The relationship of trust between teacher and student is, in this sense, fundamental for school permanence and success.

In the Latin American context, Rodríguez (2021) observes that EJA presents itself as a space of resistance and transformation, especially among vulnerable groups. The author emphasizes that methodologies should promote education as a practice of freedom, through active participation and intercultural dialogue. Pedagogical practices, when aligned with this perspective, become instruments of social and political emancipation, strengthening the role of EJA as a promoter of educational justice.

According to Souza and Almeida (2021), the integration between work and education is one of the most relevant dimensions of pedagogical practices in EJA. The proposal for a comprehensive education must include not only academic content, but also practical knowledge related to professional and community life. This approach enables the construction of socio-emotional and technical skills that expand employability and strengthen the sense of citizenship. In addition, it stimulates the student's protagonism and their critical insertion in the world of work.

The UNESCO report (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2022) reinforces that methodologies aimed at adult education must adopt a lifelong learning perspective. This implies recognizing that the educational process does not end at school, but extends to social, family and professional spaces. The document recommends the strengthening of pedagogical practices that promote autonomy, collaboration and reflective thinking, in order to form conscious and participatory citizens.

Lima (2023) observes that the application of participatory methodologies requires a resizing of the role of evaluation. Evaluating in EJA should not only mean measuring results, but monitoring processes and recognizing individual progress. Formative assessment, in this context, favors the continuous development of the student and avoids the reproduction of exclusionary practices. Constant feedback and dialogue about performance become strategies to consolidate learning and value personal effort.

Carvalho (2021) adds that affectivity and pedagogical bonding are essential dimensions in the teaching work with young people and adults. The EJA teacher, by recognizing the symbolic value of education in the lives of these subjects, must act as a motivator and partner in the process of reconstructing interrupted trajectories. Affectivity,

when mediated by conscious pedagogical practices, becomes a structuring element of meaningful learning, creating an environment conducive to the intellectual and emotional growth of students.

According to Martins and Oliveira (2024), the continuing education of EJA teachers is an indispensable condition for the effectiveness of the methodologies. It is necessary for the teacher to understand the complexity of this modality, mastering didactic strategies that articulate theory and practice. Permanent updating allows the development of a reflective and critical posture, capable of facing the daily challenges of the classroom and adapting methodologies to social and technological changes.

Finally, Machado (2020) and Torres (2017) converge in stating that the pedagogical practices of EJA should be guided by ethics, social sensitivity, and commitment to human emancipation. Teaching young people and adults implies recognizing their stories, their difficulties and their potentialities, building bridges between school knowledge and the knowledge of life. EJA, when supported by participatory, humanizing and transformative methodologies, fulfills its historical role of giving back to the subject the right to learn, understand and intervene in the world with autonomy and dignity.

6 THE ROLE OF EJA IN SOCIAL INCLUSION AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Youth and Adult Education (EJA) plays an essential role in the consolidation of citizenship and in the promotion of social inclusion, by ensuring the right to education to those who, for various reasons, did not have access to or continuity in regular education. According to Haddad and Di Pierro (2023), EJA is a public policy that is configured as an instrument of historical and social reparation, aimed at overcoming educational inequalities that affect millions of Brazilians. Its function goes beyond the scope of literacy and formal schooling, constituting itself as a space for strengthening autonomy and social participation. In this sense, EJA reaffirms the constitutional principle that education is a right of all and a duty of the State.

Machado (2020) argues that EJA contributes significantly to integral human development, promoting not only access to knowledge, but also the expansion of the critical and ethical capacities of the subjects. The author argues that the educational process, in this modality, should value the life experience of students and stimulate social protagonism, enabling them to recognize themselves as agents of transformation. Citizenship education,

therefore, is not limited to the transmission of content, but involves the development of critical awareness and collective responsibility.

For Carvalho (2021), EJA represents one of the most concrete forms of social inclusion, as it welcomes subjects historically excluded by factors such as poverty, racism, gender inequality, disability, and age discrimination. The author emphasizes that inclusion in EJA should not only be physical access to school, but the effective participation of students in the teaching-learning process, with the recognition of their identities, cultures and knowledge. This conception is aligned with the paradigm of emancipatory education, which understands learning as a practice of freedom and not as an instrument of social adaptation.

According to Souza and Almeida (2021), EJA plays a decisive role in the social and economic reintegration of students, by expanding opportunities for employment, qualification, and social mobility. The authors observe that, when resuming their studies, many students begin to develop a new perception of their own capacity, which translates into self-esteem, self-confidence and community engagement. Citizenship education, in this context, is directly related to the achievement of autonomy and the expansion of political and social participation.

The EJA National Curriculum Guidelines (BRASIL, 2020) establish that the purpose of the modality is to guarantee not only the right to schooling, but also the exercise of full citizenship. The document emphasizes the need to promote pedagogical practices that encourage dialogue, respect for diversity, and appreciation of differences. In addition, it recommends the inclusion of cross-cutting themes — such as human rights, ethics, the environment, and cultural diversity — in the EJA curriculum, in order to strengthen the commitment to social justice and democracy.

Freitas and Santos (2022) highlight that EJA is also a space for reframing the life trajectories of students, especially those who have faced processes of exclusion and school failure. By providing rapprochement with the educational environment, the modality allows the reconstruction of affective and social bonds, stimulating the feeling of belonging and the recognition of the value of education as a tool of citizenship. The study of these authors shows that the EJA school often becomes a place of reception and identity reconstruction.

According to Lima (2023), the methodologies adopted in EJA should promote meaningful and participatory learning, centered on dialogue and critical reflection on social reality. The development of interdisciplinary projects and the use of generating themes are effective strategies to stimulate students' autonomous thinking and political awareness. In

this way, EJA contributes not only to academic training, but to the active exercise of citizenship and the strengthening of democratic culture.

UNESCO's report on adult learning (UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION, 2022) reaffirms that adult learning is one of the pillars of global social inclusion. The document defends lifelong learning as a human right and as a condition for building more equitable and sustainable societies. This perspective reinforces the role of EJA as a fundamental component of policies to combat poverty, social exclusion and structural inequalities, especially in Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Rodríguez (2021) observes that EJA, by acting on marginalized populations, takes on a character of social resistance and community reconstruction. The author points out that, in Latin America, the modality is a space of political empowerment, in which subjects learn to recognize themselves as citizens with a voice and power of action. The education of young people and adults, in this sense, works as a mechanism for democratizing knowledge and combating the concentration of symbolic and economic power.

Catelli Junior and Haddad (2022) reinforce that EJA is a strategic instrument for strengthening democracy. By providing access to information and critical thinking, the modality contributes to the formation of subjects capable of understanding and intervening in political, economic and social issues. The authors argue that the expansion of EJA is an indispensable condition for the consolidation of active and participatory citizenship, especially in contexts of inequality.

Mendonça (2019) adds that the social inclusion promoted by EJA must be articulated with the construction of a critical curriculum, which considers the students' life and work contexts. The author argues that the school should be a space for valuing cultural diversity and promoting educational practices that stimulate solidarity, mutual respect and collective thinking. This social dimension of the curriculum contributes to the formation of citizens who are aware of their rights and duties.

Paiva (2018) points out that EJA enables the integration between education, culture and citizenship, transforming the school space into an environment of democratic coexistence. For the author, the educational process in EJA is an opportunity to rebuild social ties and promote collective learning, valuing dialogue as a tool for inclusion and empowerment. This pedagogical practice contributes to reducing social isolation and strengthening the students' sense of belonging to the community.

According to INEP (2024), educational indicators show that EJA students face multiple forms of vulnerability, but also reveal significant advances in the expansion of schooling. Statistics show that the resumption of studies increases the rate of insertion in the labor market and strengthens the cultural capital of the participants. Such data confirm the role of EJA as a promoter of opportunities and as a way to overcome educational and social exclusion.

For Martins and Oliveira (2024), the development of citizenship in EJA is directly related to the training of teachers committed to ethics, inclusion, and equity. Teaching must go beyond the transmission of knowledge, incorporating a reflective and humanizing posture, which recognizes education as a right and as a transformative social practice. Thus, the teacher becomes an active agent in promoting inclusion and strengthening citizen awareness.

Finally, Torres (2017) argues that youth and adult education, by being guided by the principles of social justice and lifelong learning, contributes to the construction of more democratic and solidary societies. The author argues that EJA should be understood not only as a compensatory policy, but as a State policy aimed at the emancipation of subjects and the strengthening of collective citizenship. In this way, EJA reaffirms its essential role in social inclusion and in the formation of critical, conscious citizens capable of transforming the reality in which they live.

7 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Youth and Adult Education (EJA) is one of the most relevant public policies for the democratization of education in Brazil, as it guarantees the right to education for subjects who, for different reasons, did not have access to or continuity in the process of regular schooling. Its historical trajectory demonstrates that, more than a compensatory modality, EJA is a space for the reconstruction of trajectories, for valuing popular knowledge and for promoting human dignity. According to Haddad and Di Pierro (2023), the strengthening of EJA is intrinsically linked to the consolidation of citizenship and the reduction of educational and social inequalities that still persist in the country.

Throughout the analysis developed, it was found that EJA is based on a solid legal basis, expressed in the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (BRASIL, 1996) and in the National Curriculum Guidelines (BRASIL, 2020), which guide its pedagogical practices and ensure its social function. However, the distance between legislation and

everyday reality is still present, manifesting itself in the insufficiency of resources, the discontinuity of programs and the precariousness of supply conditions. As Catelli Junior and Haddad (2022) point out, the sustainability of EJA depends on the implementation of State policies, and not on specific government measures, and must be accompanied by consistent investments in infrastructure, teacher training, and student support.

From the pedagogical point of view, it was evident that the methodologies applied to EJA must respect the sociocultural and cognitive specificities of the students. Learning needs to be meaningful, contextualized and based on the dialogue between school knowledge and life experiences. Authors such as Lima (2023) and Machado (2020) highlight that youth and adult education is, above all, a practice of humanization and emancipation, in which the teacher acts as a mediator in a process of collective construction of knowledge. This approach favors not only intellectual development, but also the strengthening of students' autonomy, self-esteem, and critical thinking.

In addition to its formative role, EJA fulfills a strategic social function by promoting inclusion, employability and citizen participation. Souza and Almeida (2021) and Rodríguez (2021) point out that the resumption of studies allows historically excluded individuals to reconstruct their identities, expand their professional opportunities, and recognize themselves as protagonists of their own history. Thus, EJA contributes to integral human development and to the construction of a more just, solidary and democratic society, in line with the UNESCO (2022) principles of lifelong learning and social equity.

In summary, the consolidation of EJA as an effective educational policy requires political commitment, institutional continuity and social recognition. It is essential to understand that investment in this modality does not represent a cost, but a strategic action of social justice and sustainable development. Strengthening EJA means ensuring that education is, in fact, an inalienable and permanent right, ensuring each citizen the possibility of learning, growing and transforming the reality in which they live. In this way, EJA reaffirms its role as an instrument of emancipation, inclusion and active citizenship, fundamental pillars for the construction of a more egalitarian and humane country.

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