

## YOUTH AND ADULT EDUCATION: PERSPECTIVES OF RESIDENTS OF SLUMS AND URBAN PERIPHERIES

### EDUCAÇÃO DE JOVENS E ADULTOS: PERSPECTIVAS DE MORADORES DE FAVELAS E PERIFERIAS

### EDUCACIÓN DE JÓVENES Y ADULTOS: PERSPECTIVAS DE HABITANTES DE FAVELAS Y PERIFERIAS URBANAS



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#### ABSTRACT

Considering the profound social, territorial, and educational inequalities that have historically shaped Youth and Adult Education (Educação de Jovens e Adultos – EJA) in Brazil, especially in the contexts of urban slums and peripheral areas, this article problematizes this educational modality as a public and subjective right whose implementation remains constrained by structural processes of exclusion. The study aims to critically analyze EJA based on the experiences and living conditions of individuals residing in these territories, discussing the meanings attributed to this modality within Brazilian educational policies. To this end, the article adopts a qualitative theoretical essay approach, grounded in a critical analysis of the academic literature on EJA, popular education, and structural inequalities, in dialogue with authors such as Freire (2004), Arroyo (2017), Paiva, and Julião (2019). The analysis reveals that educational policies aimed at EJA have historically been marked by a compensatory and utilitarian character, often subordinated to labor market demands and correction-of-flow logics, which limits access, permanence, and educational success for students in this modality. It is concluded that strengthening EJA requires its affirmation as a space for human, political, and emancipatory education, guided by the principle of equity and the recognition of differences, overcoming reductionist practices and reaffirming education as an instrument of social justice.

**Keywords:** Youth and Adult Education. Socio-educational Inequalities. Territory. Popular Education. Equity.

#### RESUMO

Considerando as profundas desigualdades sociais, territoriais e educacionais que historicamente atravessam a Educação de Jovens e Adultos (EJA) no Brasil, especialmente nos contextos de favelas e periferias urbanas, este artigo problematiza essa modalidade como um direito público e subjetivo cuja efetivação permanece tensionada por processos estruturais de exclusão. Objetiva-se analisar criticamente a EJA a partir das experiências e condições de vida de sujeitos moradores desses territórios, discutindo os sentidos atribuídos à modalidade no âmbito das políticas educacionais brasileiras. Para tanto, procede-se a um

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ensaio teórico de abordagem qualitativa, fundamentado na análise crítica da produção acadêmica sobre EJA, educação popular e desigualdades estruturais, em diálogo com autores como Freire (2004), Arroyo (2017), Paiva e Julião (2019). Desse modo, observa-se que as políticas educacionais destinadas à EJA foram historicamente marcadas por um caráter compensatório e utilitarista, frequentemente subordinadas às demandas do mercado de trabalho e à lógica de correção de fluxo, o que limita o acesso, a permanência e o sucesso escolar dos sujeitos da modalidade. Conclui-se que o fortalecimento da EJA exige sua afirmação como espaço de formação humana, política e emancipatória, orientada pelo princípio da equidade e pelo reconhecimento das diferenças, superando práticas reducionistas e reafirmando a educação como instrumento de justiça social.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação de Jovens e Adultos. Desigualdades Socioeducacionais. Território. Educação Popular. Equidade.

## RESUMEN

Considerando las profundas desigualdades sociales, territoriales y educativas que históricamente atraviesan la Educación de Jóvenes y Adultos (EJA) en Brasil, especialmente en los contextos de favelas y periferias urbanas, este artículo problematiza esta modalidad educativa como un derecho público y subjetivo cuya efectivización permanece tensionada por procesos estructurales de exclusión. El objetivo es analizar críticamente la EJA a partir de las experiencias y condiciones de vida de los sujetos residentes en estos territorios, discutiendo los sentidos atribuidos a esta modalidad en el ámbito de las políticas educativas brasileñas. Para ello, se desarrolla un ensayo teórico de enfoque cualitativo, fundamentado en el análisis crítico de la producción académica sobre EJA, educación popular y desigualdades estructurales, en diálogo con autores como Freire (2004), Arroyo (2017), Paiva y Julião (2019). De este modo, se observa que las políticas educativas destinadas a la EJA han estado históricamente marcadas por un carácter compensatorio y utilitarista, frecuentemente subordinadas a las demandas del mercado laboral y a la lógica de corrección de trayectorias escolares, lo que limita el acceso, la permanencia y el éxito educativo de los sujetos de esta modalidad. Se concluye que el fortalecimiento de la EJA exige su afirmación como espacio de formación humana, política y emancipadora, orientada por el principio de la equidad y el reconocimiento de las diferencias, superando prácticas reducionistas y reafirmando la educación como instrumento de justicia social.

**Palabras clave:** Educación de Jóvenes y Adultos. Desigualdades Socioeducativas. Territorio. Educación Popular. Equidad.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Youth and Adult Education (EJA) is historically a modality marked by tensions, disputes and contradictions within Brazilian educational policies. Aimed at subjects who had their schooling processes interrupted or denied, EJA reveals, in a striking way, the structural inequalities that cross class society, especially when considering the territorial cut of residents of favelas and urban peripheries. These subjects, for the most part, carry fragmented school trajectories, crossed by experiences of poverty, multiple violence and systematic restrictions on access to basic rights.

In the Brazilian context, the processes of urbanization and industrialization, intensified from the beginning of the twentieth century, contributed to the consolidation of territories marked by the precariousness of living conditions and the historical denial of social rights. The favelas and peripheries, constituted in this movement, began to concentrate populations subjected to unequal labor relations, low levels of schooling and successive forms of educational exclusion. In this scenario, EJA emerges, simultaneously, as a possibility of guaranteeing the right to education and as a space tensioned by compensatory policies, often guided by the logic of minimum training for the labor market.

Although the Federal Constitution of 1988 and the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (Law No. 9,394/1996) recognize education as a right of all, ensuring the full development of the person, the exercise of citizenship and the qualification for work, it is observed that, in practice, this right materializes in a profoundly unequal way. For the subjects living in favelas and peripheries, access, permanence and school success in EJA are crossed by social, territorial and institutional conditions that limit the realization of this right, revealing the limits of public educational policies in the face of structural inequalities.

In this context, this article aims to critically analyze EJA from the perspectives and living conditions of residents of favelas and peripheries, problematizing the meanings attributed to this modality within Brazilian educational policies. It is based on the understanding that EJA cannot be reduced to a strategy of flow correction or functional adaptation to the labor market, but must be conceived as a space for human, political and emancipatory education.

Methodologically, it is a theoretical essay with a qualitative approach, based on the critical analysis of the literature on EJA, popular education, territory and social inequalities. The dialogue with authors such as Freire (2004), Arroyo (2017), Paiva and Julião (2019) allows us to understand EJA as a field of disputes between antagonistic educational projects: on the one hand, practices aligned with the reproduction of social inequalities; on the other,

experiences and conceptions guided by emancipation, equity and the recognition of differences.

The article is organized into four sections, in addition to this introduction. Initially, the historical relationship between EJA, territory and social inequalities is discussed. Then, the impacts of educational policies and living conditions on the processes of access and permanence of subjects in EJA are analyzed. In the third section, the contemporary challenges imposed by territorial violence and the precariousness of social rights are problematized. Finally, in the final considerations, the need to strengthen EJA as a public policy committed to social justice and to the critical formation of subjects is reinforced.

## **2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Youth and Adult Education (EJA) is historically an educational modality intrinsically linked to the struggles for the right to education and the democratization of access to school knowledge in Brazil. Although the Federal Constitution of 1988 and the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education recognize EJA as an integral part of basic education and as a public and subjective right, its implementation remains marked by profound contradictions. As Paiva (2019) points out, the distance between normative recognition and the concrete guarantee of this right highlights the limits of educational policies in the face of the structural inequalities that cross Brazilian society. In this sense, EJA cannot be understood as a residual or merely compensatory policy, but as an expression of interrupted school trajectories produced by historical processes of exclusion.

The subjects who demand EJA are, for the most part, workers and residents of favelas and urban peripheries, whose life experiences evidence the articulation between social class, work, territory and schooling. Arroyo (2017) highlights that these subjects bear the marks of a profoundly unequal society, in which the right to education is constantly postponed, especially for those inserted in contexts of social precariousness. Favelas and peripheries are configured as socially produced territories, crossed by processes of socio-spatial segregation, daily violence, precariousness of public services and the selective presence of the State. Such conditions directly affect the access, permanence and academic success of EJA students, reinforcing that their educational trajectories cannot be interpreted from individualizing or meritocratic explanations.

The incorporation of the territory category into the EJA analysis allows us to understand that educational inequalities are produced beyond the school space. Territorial violence, long working hours, the instability of public policies and the multiple forms of violation of rights directly impact the daily school and learning processes. In this context, the

school can assume both the role of reproducing inequalities and a space for welcoming, resistance and collective construction, depending on the political-pedagogical project that guides it and the recognition of the experiences and knowledge of the EJA subjects.

The perspective of popular education, especially from the contributions of Paulo Freire (2004), offers important theoretical contributions to the understanding of EJA as a space for human, political and emancipatory formation. For Freire, education should be conceived as a social practice committed to dialogue, awareness and the transformation of reality, breaking with banking and technicist models of teaching. This conception recognizes students as historical subjects, bearers of knowledge built in their life and work experiences, and places concrete reality as a starting point for the formative processes. Such an approach is opposed to utilitarian practices that reduce EJA to rapid certification or immediate adaptation to the demands of the labor market.

However, educational policies aimed at EJA have historically been marked by a compensatory and utilitarian logic, often associated with flow correction and the fulfillment of quantitative goals. Paiva (2019) argues that this perspective reinforces the structural duality of the Brazilian educational system, allocating differentiated educational projects to different social segments. For EJA subjects, especially those from peripheral territories, this logic results in lightened curricula, precarious teaching conditions and devaluation of teaching work, limiting the emancipatory potential of the modality.

Julião (2019) highlights that, despite these limitations, EJA can constitute a privileged space for the affirmation of rights and strengthening of citizenship, as long as it is guided by political-pedagogical projects committed to equity, the recognition of differences, and social justice. Reaffirming EJA as an emancipatory public policy implies overcoming reductionist perspectives and facing the structural inequalities that produce educational exclusion. Thus, thinking about Youth and Adult Education from the territories of favelas and peripheries requires recognizing the subjects as protagonists of their stories and education as a central instrument in the construction of a more just and democratic society.

### 3 YOUTH AND ADULT EDUCATION, TERRITORY AND STRUCTURAL INEQUALITIES

Youth and Adult Education (EJA) expresses, in a particularly acute way, the social and educational inequalities historically produced within Brazilian capitalist society. The subjects who demand this modality, for the most part, belong to the popular classes and live in territories marked by precarious living conditions, such as favelas and urban peripheries. Their interrupted school trajectories cannot be understood as individual choices or personal failures, but as the result of structural processes of exclusion that articulate social class, territory, work and unequal access to rights.

The processes of urbanization and industrialization, intensified in Brazil throughout the twentieth century, contributed to the consolidation of peripheral territories intended for the housing of the labor force necessary for the expansion of capital. In this movement, the schooling of the popular sectors was historically conceived in an instrumental way, oriented towards the minimum training required by the labor market. This perspective reinforced the structural duality of the Brazilian educational system, in which education aimed at the elites differs profoundly from that offered to the working classes, both in terms of access and quality.

In this context, EJA began to occupy an ambiguous place in educational policies. On the one hand, it constitutes a strategy to guarantee the right to education to those who were deprived of this right in childhood; on the other hand, it often assumes a compensatory and utilitarian character, aimed at correcting the flow and rapid certification, without addressing the structural causes of school exclusion. As Paiva (2019) points out, the formulation of EJA policies reveals deep contradictions between the principles of inclusion, citizenship and quality and the material and institutional conditions effectively offered to the subjects of the modality.

The relationship between territory and schooling is central to understanding these contradictions. Favelas and peripheries are not only configured as geographical spaces, but as socially produced territories, crossed by historical inequalities, stigmatizations and systematic denials of rights. As Patrocínio (2018) points out, these territories bear the marks of socially excluding processes that directly impact the educational experiences of their residents. Thus, the difficulties faced by EJA students are not restricted to the school space, but are articulated with living conditions marked by insecurity, the precariousness of public services and instability in the world of work.

Throughout the Brazilian trajectory, educational policies aimed at the training of young people and adults were, to a large extent, designed based on the needs of economic development, and not on the formative demands of the subjects. The creation of institutions such as the National Service for Industrial Learning (SENAI) and the National Service for

Commercial Learning (SENAC), still in the 1940s, exemplifies the centrality of technical training aimed at the qualification of the workforce. Although such initiatives have contributed to the expansion of training opportunities, they have also reinforced the subordination of education to the demands of capital, limiting its emancipatory potential.

This logic is maintained, in different ways, in contemporary EJA policies, especially when the modality is used as a mechanism for statistical adjustment of education systems, without due investment in conditions of access, permanence and school success. The persistence of high rates of functional illiteracy and age-grade distortion shows that the denial of the right to education is not solved only by expanding the supply of vacancies, but requires confronting the structural inequalities that cross the territories and the subjects. Paiva (2019, p.92) points out that:

[...] What would become of capitalist society, however, without the labor force that constitutes the illiterate and uneducated reserve army that submits to unqualified underemployment, without labor guarantees and without opportunities for advancement, if these uneducated people began to recognize the processes of subordination and oppression that maintain the wealth of a few with the poverty of so many?

Thus, understanding EJA from the territory category allows us to shift the focus from individualizing analyses to a critical reading of the social, political and economic conditions that produce educational exclusion. By recognizing EJA students as historical subjects, bearers of knowledge and experiences built in adverse contexts, space is opened to think of education not as an instrument of adaptation to the current order, but as a social practice committed to the transformation of the conditions that produce inequality.

#### **4 FAVELAS, PERIPHERIES AND EDUCATIONAL POLICIES: LIMITS OF ACCESS AND PERMANENCE**

The realization of the right to education in the modality of Youth and Adult Education (EJA) faces profound limits when analyzed from the concrete living conditions of the subjects living in favelas and urban peripheries. Although the Brazilian legal system recognizes education as a public and subjective right, educational policies aimed at EJA have proven to be insufficient to ensure, in an equitable way, the access, permanence and school success of these students. Such insufficiency reveals the distance between legal normativity and the reality experienced daily in popular territories.

Territorial inequalities operate as one of the main conditions of access to school. In many peripheral and slum contexts, the commute to the school is crossed by precarious

public services, lack of adequate transportation, restrictions imposed by armed conflicts and police operations, in addition to the constant fear resulting from daily violence. These factors have a direct impact on school attendance, especially in EJA, which is mostly offered during the night shift, a period in which security conditions become even more fragile.

The permanence of students in EJA is also impacted by multiple social vulnerabilities. Many subjects reconcile long working hours, family responsibilities and precarious housing conditions, which compromises the time and willingness necessary to monitor school activities. In addition, it is not uncommon for the school to be configured as the only space for access to regular food or basic services, revealing the assistance character that sometimes permeates the educational experience of these students.

In this scenario, the recurrent use of EJA as a strategy for correcting the flow and administrative management of education systems is observed. The early allocation of adolescents to the modality, with the objective of reducing age-grade distortion rates, tends to disregard the formative specificities of EJA and the complexity of interrupted school trajectories. Data from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2017) indicate that millions of students in Brazilian basic education are in a situation of school delay, most of whom come from the lower classes. The transfer of these subjects to EJA, without adequate monitoring and support policies, contributes to the worsening of educational inequalities, instead of addressing them. Paiva (2019, p.97) states that:

Quality, therefore, is not only made in the dimension of the subjects who study in school, but is linked with those who transit and orbit around them, in all the social and political spaces that shape them as subjects of rights for whom the school can be a powerful device of human and political formation.

The quality of education offered in EJA is another critical point of educational policies. As Paiva (2019) argues, the notion of quality cannot be dissociated from the social, institutional and political conditions that shape the school experience. In the case of EJA, the absence of structural investments, the precariousness of teaching work, the turnover of professionals and the fragility of pedagogical projects compromise the construction of significant training processes. Thus, the permanence of students does not depend only on their "individual motivation", but on the school's ability to recognize their experiences, knowledge and specific needs.

By prioritizing quantitative goals to the detriment of qualitative actions, public educational policies tend to make the obstacles faced by EJA subjects invisible. The expansion of the supply of vacancies, although necessary, does not guarantee, by itself, the right to education. According to Julião (2019, p.51):

We need to move forward by rebuilding our institutions and strengthening our "Democratic Rule of Law" [Article 1 of the Federal Constitution]. It is essential that the Councils strengthen and empower themselves institutionally to assert their rights as representatives of society in the State, defending the implementation of public policies that will guarantee the democratization of education in its various instances – elementary, secondary and higher education –, proposing that the expansion of access, the socialization of discussions, thus enabling social equity, guaranteeing no less rights for the entire population.

As Julião (2019) points out, the democratization of education requires the articulation between access, permanence, and learning, as well as the strengthening of participatory instances and the role of the State in the implementation of policies committed to social equity.

It is in this context that the strategic role of the school as a space of mediation between educational policies and territorial realities is evident. When detached from the students' life contexts, the school tends to reproduce exclusionary practices, reinforcing the distance of the subjects from EJA. On the other hand, when guided by a critical and democratic perspective, it can constitute a space for welcoming, recognition and resistance, contributing to the construction of fairer educational trajectories.

Therefore, the limits of access and permanence in EJA cannot be understood as individual failures of the students, but as an expression of the structural inequalities that cross educational policies and peripheral territories. Facing these limits implies rethinking the place of EJA in public policies, overcoming its use as a compensatory mechanism and affirming it as an educational policy committed to social justice and the effective guarantee of the right to education.

## **5 TERRITORIAL VIOLENCE, THE STATE AND THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION IN YOUTH AND ADULT EDUCATION**

The analysis of Youth and Adult Education (EJA) in the territories of favelas and urban peripheries requires the recognition of the multiple forms of violence that cross the daily lives of the subjects who demand this modality. Violence, far from being restricted to specific episodes, constitutes a structural dimension of social life in these territories, manifesting itself in a physical, symbolic, institutional and political way. Such forms of violence directly impact the exercise of the right to education, compromising the access, permanence and learning processes of EJA students.

In peripheral and favela territories, the presence of the State occurs in an ambiguous and selective way. While essential public policies — such as sanitation, health, urban mobility, and quality education — have historically been insufficient or absent, state public security actions tend to materialize through police operations marked by the logic of confrontation and

repression. These interventions, often violent, directly affect school routines, interrupting classes, making travel unfeasible and producing fear, insecurity and emotional suffering among students and education professionals.

In addition to state action, many of these territories are crossed by the presence of parallel powers, such as drug trafficking and militias, which impose their own forms of social and territorial control. The coexistence between these powers and the State produces a scenario of permanent instability, in which the residents' right to come and go is constantly threatened. For EJA students, this reality often means the need to negotiate their permanence in school on a daily basis in the midst of concrete risks to physical and emotional integrity.

The consequences of this violence for educational processes are profound. Irregular attendance, constant interruptions in the school calendar, and physical and emotional exhaustion resulting from experiences of violence compromise learning and reinforce trajectories of school failure. As Arroyo (2017) points out, the subjects who arrive at EJA carry marks of unjust lives, crossed by systematic denials of rights, which requires the school to have an ethical and political posture committed to understanding these trajectories.

In this sense, violence cannot be understood only as a factor external to the school, but as a constitutive element of the conditions in which the educational process develops. The school located in these territories is crossed by the contradictions of the social context, being, at the same time, a space of protection and exposure to inequalities. The absence of integrated policies that articulate education, social assistance, health and public safety shows the fragmentation of State actions and the fragility of institutional responses to the demands of EJA subjects.

The reflection proposed by Freire (1997) contributes decisively to understanding the relationship between violence and education. By denouncing the multiple faces of violence — economic, racial, class, gender, and symbolic — the author highlights the need for an educational practice committed to humanization and the construction of critical consciousness. For Freire, education cannot be limited to the transmission of content, but must be constituted as a practice of freedom, capable of problematizing the historical conditions that produce oppression and dehumanization.

In the context of EJA, this perspective implies recognizing students as historical subjects, bearers of knowledge built in the midst of adversity. Instead of blaming them individually for school failure, it is necessary to understand how territorial and institutional violence affects their educational trajectories. Such recognition requires from the school and educators a pedagogical posture sensitive to the realities experienced, capable of transforming the school space into an environment of welcoming, listening and resistance.

On the other hand, it is also essential to consider the working conditions of the teachers who work in EJA in these territories. Teachers and managers face, on a daily basis, the precariousness of working conditions, the lack of institutional support and the emotional impacts resulting from living with contexts of violence. Even so, many build pedagogical practices committed to the defense of the right to education and to the appreciation of life, reaffirming the role of the school as a space of resistance in the face of multiple forms of oppression.

Thus, the relationship between territorial violence, the State and the right to education in EJA highlights the urgency of integrated public policies, guided by the principle of equity and the centrality of human rights. Overcoming the limits imposed by violence requires recognizing that the right to education cannot be implemented in isolation, but depends on the guarantee of dignified living conditions, security and social justice for the subjects who inhabit popular territories.

## **6 IMPLICATIONS FOR AN EMANCIPATORY YOUTH AND ADULT EDUCATION: EQUITY, CURRICULUM AND RESISTANCE**

The analysis of the living conditions, school trajectories and the multiple forms of violence that the subjects of Youth and Adult Education (EJA) living in favelas and urban peripheries go through imposes the need to rethink the political, pedagogical and curricular foundations of this modality. In the face of structural inequalities that limit access, permanence and school success, EJA cannot be conceived only as a compensatory strategy or as a mechanism for correcting the flow, but as a public policy committed to equity, social justice and human emancipation.

The principle of equity assumes centrality in this debate, since recognizing the right to education implies considering the concrete inequalities that subjects go through. As Paiva (2019) argues, formal equality is not enough to guarantee the right to education in contexts marked by deep social asymmetries. Equity, in this sense, requires the provision of differentiated conditions, capable of responding to the specific needs of EJA students, especially those who live in territories historically neglected by the State.

In the curricular sphere, this perspective implies overcoming homogeneous and decontextualized proposals, which disregard the knowledge, experiences and identities of the EJA subjects. A curriculum committed to emancipation must dialogue with the sociocultural realities of students, valuing their previous knowledge and promoting problematizing pedagogical practices. As Freire (2004) argues, education needs to start from

the critical reading of the world in order to then enable the reading of the word, building formative processes that articulate knowledge, political awareness and transformative action.

The valorization of the knowledge built in popular territories is also a central element of an emancipatory EJA. The experiences of work, struggle for survival, community organization and resistance to violence configure legitimate forms of knowledge, often made invisible by traditional school curricula. Recognizing this knowledge does not mean romanticizing poverty or exclusion, but affirming the dignity of the subjects and their right to actively participate in the construction of knowledge.

In this process, the role of educators assumes strategic relevance. Teachers who work in EJA in contexts of favelas and peripheries face challenges that go beyond the pedagogical field, requiring sensitivity, ethical commitment and political positioning. Arroyo (2017) highlights the importance of reinventing educational identities capable of understanding the human and inhuman paths of students, recognizing them as subjects of rights and protagonists of their stories. Teacher training, therefore, must contemplate critical reflection on social, racial, territorial and class inequalities, strengthening pedagogical practices committed to social transformation.

In addition, thinking of EJA as a space of resistance implies recognizing the school as a territory of dispute. In contexts marked by the presence of parallel powers and institutional violence, the school can be one of the few spaces for protection, dialogue and collective construction. This function, however, cannot be sustained only by the individual effort of educators and managers, but requires integrated public policies that guarantee material conditions, institutional support and appreciation of teaching work.

Emancipatory EJA, therefore, demands a break with the utilitarian logic that has historically subordinated education to the demands of the labor market. Although the dimension of professional qualification is relevant, it cannot override the right to integral human education. Education, in this sense, should contribute to the strengthening of critical awareness, to the recognition of inequalities and to the construction of collective projects guided by social justice.

Thus, the implications for an emancipatory EJA point to the need for educational policies that articulate equity, critical curriculum and pedagogical practices committed to human dignity. By affirming EJA as a space of resistance and production of meanings, education is reaffirmed as a right and as a social practice capable of tensioning the structures that produce and reproduce inequality.

## 7 CONCLUSION

This article aimed to critically analyze Youth and Adult Education (EJA) from the living conditions and experiences of subjects living in favelas and urban peripheries, understanding this modality as a public and subjective right tensioned by deep social, territorial and educational inequalities. Throughout the text, it was sought to show that the interrupted school trajectories of these subjects cannot be explained by individual factors, but must be understood in the light of historical and structural processes of exclusion produced within the Brazilian capitalist society.

The analysis developed showed that, although EJA is legally guaranteed as a right, its materialization occurs in an unequal way, marked by policies of a compensatory and utilitarian nature and, in many cases, guided by the logic of flow correction and rapid certification. Such a configuration limits the formative potential of the modality and contributes to the reproduction of inequalities that have historically distanced young people and adults from regular school trajectories.

By considering the territories of favelas and peripheries as central analytical categories, the article highlighted the impact of territorial inequalities, structural violence, and the selective presence of the State on access, permanence, and school success in EJA. The multiple forms of violence — physical, symbolic, institutional, and political — cross the daily lives of students and educators, compromising the full exercise of the right to education and revealing the need for integrated public policies that articulate education, human rights, security, social assistance, and decent living conditions.

In this context, EJA was defended as a strategic space for resistance and dispute of educational projects. An EJA committed to human emancipation requires the strengthening of the principle of equity, the construction of critical and contextualized curricula and the recognition of the knowledge produced in the life experiences of the subjects. Valuing this knowledge not only reaffirms the dignity of students, but also contributes to the construction of pedagogical practices capable of promoting critical awareness and social engagement.

The role of educators thus emerges as a central element in this process. Teachers who work in EJA, especially in contexts of favelas and peripheries, face challenges that go beyond the pedagogical field, requiring critical training, sensitivity to territorial realities, and ethical-political commitment to the defense of the right to education. However, such responsibilities cannot fall exclusively on school subjects, and it is essential to strengthen public policies and institutional conditions that sustain the teaching work.

Finally, it is recognized that this study, as it is a theoretical essay, does not exhaust the complexity of the experiences lived by the subjects of EJA in popular territories. As a result,

the need for empirical research that deepens the listening of students and educators is pointed out, contributing to the construction of educational policies and practices that are more sensitive to territorial inequalities and committed to social justice.

It is concluded that strengthening EJA as an emancipatory public policy implies breaking with reductionist perspectives and reaffirming education as a right, as a social practice and as an instrument for transforming the conditions that produce exclusion. By recognizing the subjects of EJA as protagonists of their stories and bearers of legitimate knowledge, the possibility of building an education guided by equity, human dignity and the struggle for a socially just society is reaffirmed.

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