

## **The Quality of Basic Education in 2000s: The Brazilian Case**

**Professor Debora Cristina Jeffrey**

Education and Policy Education

State University of Campinas

Brazil

### **Abstract**

*From the analysis of official documents relating to federal national education, it became clear that the right to education has been legitimized with the expansion of schooling and guarantee of enrollment in basic education, with the establishment of its requirement in broader age range while the quality of education has been secured from the definition of educational objectives through monitoring indicators. The documentary research contributes to the analysis of the Brazilian educational context in the 2000s, from the perspective of the context of text production and the effects of these guidelines to the right to compulsory education and universalization of basic education in Brazil.*

### **1. The Quality of Education: a Plural Concept**

The quality of education has presented numerous definitions and interpretations, since the term can be understood as polysemous as it relates to and is shaped by political, social, cultural or economic importance it has in a particular educational context. This process can be understood by Brandão (1992), to understand that there is no single type education, but many educations that can serve different purposes in each society, community or group. To Fonseca (2009), the quality of education can be defined in different perspectives, with emphasis on: 1) State responsibility in guaranteeing the individual right, through the provision, access and retention of all in the education system; 2) Government policies in establishing initiatives to regulate the system (external evaluation), public financing, technological innovation, training of administrative staff and teachers; 3) The dynamics of educational institutions in the establishment of institutional management, self-assessment and curriculum.

These different aspects mentioned by Fonseca (2007), can be analyzed through the character given to the quality of education by the State Governments and educational institutions, Demo (2002) refers to as instrumental (through activities) or political (main activities). The instrumental character, according to the author, refers to material, structural and personal conditions offered to the educational system, serving as a basis for educational reforms, while political aims to fight injustice, inequalities through a democratic perspective, which aims ensuring quality of life.

Both the instrumental character as the political character provides on the quality of education, in addition to co-exist, can guide the actions, initiatives and educational policies established by governments, which for Oliveira and Araujo (2005) understand like a guarantee of the right to education through access, the conditions of service and permanence of the school population; to Enguita (1995), contribute in meeting the demands of the market, and Freire (1987) lead to awareness and social transformation of the subject.

Although each author, above, highlight the different perspectives and possibilities for setting the quality of education, by its character, Gadotti (2009) considers that the term represents a new paradigm of education, and, therefore, should be reconstructed. Gadotti (2009, p. 7), when analyzing, the meaning of the term, emphasizes the social, political, and that involves understanding its complexity and polysemy cultural dimension.

However, while this author discusses the quality of education as a complex, international ideas to understand how something linked to economic and productive context, as well as emphasize the Delors Report (2004, p. 72), referring to the educational object to be achieved by several countries, including Brazil. The report said that should form guides for innovation, people able to evolve to adapt to a rapidly changing world and able to master this information.

This educational object expressed in an International Report, which had the support of UNESCO, was broadcast worldwide by the end of the 1990s, as a fundamental basis for lifelong learning (lifelong learning). So the spotlight of the quality of education of educational processes, terms of infrastructure and human resources to educational outcomes, especially learning that is expected by Macedo (2002, p.142), enhance personal skills and promote, according to Delors (2004, p 90.)

In the analysis of Miranda (1997, p. 41), this proposition leads to the establishment of a new pattern of knowledge, that is no longer the primary school as a learning space, as knowledge, knowledge and information can be accessed, searched and acquired through the new technological resources. For this, the author believes that individuals should learn to seek information and use it as the new standard of knowledge is: "[...] less discursive, more operational, less individualized, more interactive, communicative; less intellectual, more pragmatic; less sectorial, more global, not just strongly cognitive, but also evaluative "(Miranda, 1997, p. 41).

Given this analysis, it is understood that the quality of education is no longer an aspect report as a local issue, involving the guarantee of rights and care of educational demands, and shall have global dimensions. For Dale (2004, p. 423), this educational ideology is characterized by the configuration of a global structured agenda resulting from economic forces that are operating transnationally, to break or exceed national borders, while remake the relations between nations.

Certainly, this process is not linear and does not follow, according to Ball (2001, p. 112) with a transposition of the global education agenda, in which nation-states would lose total control over their political decisions, but the convergence of paradigms that express the invocation policy with a base of common principles and technologies, identical operating mechanisms and effects of first and second similar orders.

As noted, the quality of education presents different concepts, objectives and propositions, which in this current scenario, it is legitimated, much more for their functionality in educational systems, than its real meaning in a local, national, regional and the transnational context. What is common in all propositions is that the quality of education shall be construed as a commitment of many governments and expressed the role that education to society. Therefore, despite its polysemy, currently, the term must be analyzed by the current political, social, economic and cultural context, what Ball (2001), called the convergence of paradigms.

## **2. The Brazilian Case**

The debate about quality of basic education in Brazil, is not new, since the ideas of primary education constitutes the promulgation of the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB), number 9.394/96.

Although this law states that basic education comprises the following levels: kindergarten, elementary and middle school, which will aim to develop the learner, ensuring fundamental to citizenship common training in order to provide you with the means to progress at work and in later studies (BRAZIL, 1996, Article 22), the integration between all levels pointed and cooperation among federal entities that access to care and the right to education would be assured if configured on challenging aspects in first decade of the 2000s.

The challenge brought in the first decade of the 2000s certainly contributed to a greater concern with improving the quality of education on the commitments made by Brazil as a signatory to international agreements (World Education Conferences - Jomtien (1990) and Dakar (2000); MERCOSUR (since 1991), among others) and meeting the educational demands resulting from the constitutional principles established in 1988 (Constitution of 1988), highlighting the compulsory enrollment of children from 7 to 14 years in elementary school, ensuring minimum standard of education; increase in the length of schooling of the population and reduce illiteracy.

The treatment of educational demands involved the federal, state and municipal initiatives that legitimize other political-educational, financial and normative, in view of the fulfillment of these concomitant improvement of basic education and ensuring the right to education. Faced with these prospects, the following reflections seek to highlight the dimensions: conceptual, normative and policy that shaped the debate about the quality of basic education in Brazil, in the first decade of the 2000s.

### 2.1 The Policy Dimension

Considering the convergence of paradigms involving the global education agenda, pointed out by Ball (2001), analysis of the quality dimension of education in Brazil in the 2000s, involves the recognition of the country as a signatory to multilateral agreements, especially in MERCOSUR (Common Market South - integrate Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguai and Venezuela), which since 1991 has signed several economic agreements and also the educational area.

In the 2000s, especially after 2003, a period that commences the administration of President Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva, educational policies are characterized, according to Jeffrey (2012) by the continuity of the educational policies of the previous decade, that were based on: the decentralization of management and financing; centralization: regulation system through reviews of scale; maintenance financing policy through funds and establishments Educational Goals. The cited author also points out that, in the indicated period, the emphasis of the actions of the Federal Government was given: a) The scope of the quality of education through social justice; b) The universalization of basic education, by increasing the supply of high school.

These aspects can be observed in Table 1, which shows the trajectory of educational policy between the years 2003 to 2010 in Brazil.

**Table 1: Trajectory of Educational Policy (2003-2010) – Brazil**

	Guideline	Featured Aspects	Strategy of Action	Areas of Change	Regulatory Changes	The Federal Actions
First Decade of 2000	Quality	Decentralization Priority Assessment Basic Education	Society mobilization Partnerships public and private organizations	Maintenance of the previous period (1995-2002)	Constitutional Emendation. 53/2007 Establishing FUNDEB Federal Law: n. 11.494/2007 FUNDEB Federal Law: n.1.109 / 2006 University for All Program - PROUNI Law: n.11.274/2006 Expansion of Basic Education to 9 years Federal Decree. 6.094/2007 Commitment Plan on Education for All - PDE Constitutional Emendation n. 59/2009 Establishing mandatory enrollment in basic education from 4 to 17 years* * Deadline for implementation in 2016	Evaluation System ENADE (2004) Prova Brazil (2005) ENEM (2009) PROUNI (2006) 9 years of Elementary School (2006) FUNDEB (2007) IDEB (2007) PDE (2007)

The guiding principle of education policy in Brazil at first decade of 2000s, remained the quality of education, but with a focus on basic education, emphasis on evaluation processes (Prova Brazil, ENEM, ENADE, IDEB), guaranteed funding at this level teaching (FUNDEB), creation of educational goals (IDEB) and expanding access to higher education (PROUNI).

All these aspects, although integrating the political agenda of the Lula government, represented demands of previous decades by several civil society groups since the 1980s, which were included in the National Education Plan 2001 (Law n. 10.172/2001), which was unsuccessful due to lack of allocation of public resources.

Oliveira and Gadelha (2010, p 26), after analyzing the trajectories and challenges of education in Brazil, between the years 2003 to 2010, pointed out the main commitments made by the Federal Government during the period:

1. Define quality standards established for the operation of public and private institutions, in order to ensure the adequacy and effectiveness on care;
2. Setting quality standards and assist the municipalities with worse results to improve their management and teaching quality;
3. Forming Education Professional competent, updated and number needed;
4. Promote the public schools of Elementary and Secondary Education, broad digital inclusion with appropriate training of teachers and administrators. Equipping schools with elementary and high school computer labs connected to the Internet broadband network;
5. Deploy program textbooks, covering all curriculum components of high school;
6. Continuing and improving national assessment programs Basic and Higher Education;
7. Achieving the goal of literacy to all children up to age eight;

Although the commitments established by the federal government between the years 2003-2010 (Oliveira and Gadea, 2010), the quality of education was highlighted as a key aspect of ensuring the right to education, access and retention of students in the system, is not a specific meaning to contribute to the definition of quality standards of education systems, intentions involving the management, structure, operation and regulation of the education system is indicated only.

These commitments were signed, by adopting a model of educational management, which according to Oliveira (2009), have set through: a) Direct partnership of the Ministry of Education (MEC) with municipalities and schools; without any mediation at any time with the states; b) Involvement of other institutions in the implementation of social programs at the local level, such as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Civil Society Organization of Public Interest (OCIP's), trade unions, and others; c) Fault of regular policies; d) Diversity of special programs; e) Actions and programs focused; f) Assistance or compensation programs.

From that educational management model, indicated by Oliveira (2009), among the major achievements of the Federal Government, between the years 2003 and 2010 were:

- Intensification of the municipalization process (early years);
- Universalization of primary education enrollment - net enrollment rate varies between 96% and 97%, population 7-14 years (Census 2007);
- Reduction in investment in education by the Union;
- National standardization (Prova Brazil) and state assessments ( like Saesp);
- Accountability of educational actors;
- Although the results obtained by the Federal Government in that period, it is important to note that three aspects configured both education policy and education management, contributing to the achievement of the results indicated: the adoption of an organizational rationality, the new management and performativity.

Regarding organizational rationality, Ellström (2007) understands that this model has some limitations such as the lack of ability of cognition of individuals involved in the process and unfavorable organizational conditions. This aspect can be evidenced when Oliveira and Gadelha (2010) points out that among the challenges of Brazilian education is to improve the quality of basic education through the formulation of educational policies systemic collaboration among federal entities, providing funding conditions education and transformation of the teaching profession like an attractive career.

When it comes to management, Ball (2006) points out that this model of organization focuses on people, whose value is given by the competitive success of the subjects, and the infrastructure, incentives and funding opportunities are established by performance and accountability of those involved with the organization. In the analysis of the author: Professionalism is replaced by accountability, competition and camaraderie for interpersonal comparison of performances. These are forms of power that are designed and reproduced through social interaction in everyday life of institutions. They exploit the insecurity of the disciplined subject (Ball, 2006, p. 15).

Thus, performativity is the basis for the management that concerning the Brazilian educational policies, between the years 2003 to 2010, is characterized by evidence, thus, the result obtained by educational institutions through the schools rated in external reviews (Prova Brazil) and performance of educational goals (IDEB) elements are valued and encouraged. But Oliveira and Gadelha (2010, p. 30), warns that although the Education Development Index (IDEB), has contributed to the establishment of educational goals for the country, educational systems and schools, this indicator monitoring can not be mistaken as an indicator of quality, "it does not synthesize all that is meant by quality education."

Thus, without the establishment or set a quality education, an important aspect still represents one of the biggest challenges of Brazilian education: the federal pact. To Abrucio (2009), this still was not effective on the uncertainty and establishing a system of collaboration, more balanced among federal agencies in order to contribute to the establishment of a national quality standard, able to tackle regional inequalities and municipalities.

The analysis of the quality of basic education in Brazil in the 2000s, covering the theoretical and political dimension that configure the period resulted from a process of reflection on the concept and actions that underpin. Conceptually, although the issue is portrayed in the national regulatory provisions: Constitution of 1988 and LDB n. 9.394/96, there are various interpretations of the term, relating it to issues of social, political, cultural and even economic.

However, regarding the educational policy in the period, priority is given to the quality of basic education with an emphasis on results and evidence on the educational system through the establishment of educational goals through the definition of a monitoring indicator.

Despite the quantitative progress made in the last decade, some challenges remain to be addressed, so that the quality of basic education is constituted:

- Fulfillment of educational goals;
- Establishing the relationship between initiatives of correction school flow and improving the quality of education;
- Increased government investments in basic education;
- Meeting the educational requirements for high school;
- Reduction of existing educational inequalities between state and local public schools, after the implementation of FUNDEB.

## References

- Abrúcio, F.L (2010). A dinâmica federativa da educação brasileira: diagnóstico e propostas de aperfeiçoamento. In: OLIVEIRA, R. P; SANTANA, W. (org.). Educação e Federalismo no Brasil: combater as desigualdades, garantir a diversidade. Brasília: UNESCO, 2010.
- Ball, S.J (2005). Profissionalismo, Gerencialismo e Performatividade. Cadernos de Pesquisa, v.35, n.126, p.539-564, set/dez.
- Ball, S. J (2001). Diretrizes políticas globais e relações políticas locais em educação. Currículo sem fronteiras, v. 1, n. 2, p. 99-116, jul./dez.
- Brandão. C. R (1992). O que é educação. São Paulo: Brasiliense.
- Brasil (2012). Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil. Disponível em: [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/Constituicao/Constitui%C3%A7ao.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/Constituicao/Constitui%C3%A7ao.htm). Access 08/03.
- Brasil (2012). Lei n.º 9.394, de 20 de dezembro de 1996. Estabelece as diretrizes e bases da Educação Nacional. Disponível em: [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/leis/L9394.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/L9394.htm) Acesso em 08/03/2012
- Dale, R (2004). Globalização e educação: demonstrando a existência de uma “cultura educacional mundial comum” ou localizando uma “agenda globalmente estruturada para a educação”? Educação e Sociedade, Campinas, vol. 25, n. 87, p. 423-460, maio/ago.
- Delors, J (2004) et al. *Educação: um tesouro a construir*. Relatório para a UNESCO da Comissão Internacional sobre Educação para o século XXI. 9 ed. São Paulo: Cortez/ UNESCO/MEC.
- Demo, P (2002). Avaliação Qualitativa. 7 ed. rev. Campinas, SP: Autores Associados.
- Ellström, P. E (2007). Quatro faces das organizações educacionais. Revista Brasileira de Política e Administração da Educação, v. 23, n. 3, p. 449-461, set./dez.
- Enguita, M. F (1995). O Discurso da qualidade e a qualidade do discurso. In: Gentili, P; Silva, T.T. Neoliberalismo, Qualidade Total e Educação: Visões Críticas. Petrópolis: Vozes.
- Fonseca, M (2009). Políticas públicas para a qualidade da educação brasileira: entre o utilitarismo econômico e a responsabilidade social. Cad. CEDES, vol.29, n.78, p.153-177, ago.
- Freire, P (1987). Pedagogia do Oprimido. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.
- Gadotti, M (2010). Qualidade na educação: uma nova abordagem. São Paulo: Editora e Livraria Instituto Paulo Freire.
- Jeffrey, D. C (2012). A constituição do gerencialismo brasileiro: implicações na valorização dos profissionais da educação. Revista Êxitus, v. 2, n. 2 ,p.51-60, jul./dez.
- Macedo, L (2002). Sobre a idéia de competência. In: Perrenound, P. et al. As competências para ensinar no século XXI: A formação dos professores e o desafio da avaliação. Porto Alegre: Artmed, p.137-155.
- Miranda, M. G (1997). Novo Paradigma de Conhecimento e Políticas Educacionais na América Latina. Caderno de Pesquisa, n. 100, p.37-48, mai.
- Oliveira, D. A (2009). As políticas educacionais no governo Lula: rupturas e permanências. Revista Brasileira de Política e Administração da Educação, vol. 25, n. 2, p. 197-209, mai/ago.
- Oliveira, R. P; Gadelha, C. G (2010). Evolução da Educação e da Saúde. In: Bacelar, T.; Jatobá, J; Souza, A. V; Araújo, T. P. (org.). Projeto Brasil 2003-2010: Trajetórias e desafios. Brasília: Centro de Gestão e Estudos Estratégicos, v. 1, p. 59-126.
- Oliveira, R. P; ARAÚJO, G. C (2005). Qualidade do ensino: uma dimensão da luta pelo direito à educação. Revista Brasileira de Educação, n. 28, p. 5-23, jan./fev./ mar./ abr.