

## EDUCATION AND CONTRADICTION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE: HOW ARE THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

### *EDUCAÇÃO E CONTRADIÇÃO NO CAMPO: E AS ESCOLAS PÚBLICAS?*

### *EDUCACIÓN Y CONTRADICCIÓN EN EL CAMPO: ¿Y LAS ESCUELAS PÚBLICAS?*

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**ABSTRACT:** This article presents the results of a research carried out in ten municipalities of great territorial extension in the state of Paraná, with the aim to understand the educational policy in relation to rural public schools. In this text, we selected eight municipalities considered extremely rural to expose contradictions present in the field and in education, based on documentary studies and interviews. The aim is to problematize microregions whose territory has the presence of large properties and agribusiness, alongside the work of the diverse peoples of the countryside. In these contexts, there are challenges regarding the guarantee to the right to education. They are marked by school closures, precarious roads that give access to the municipal headquarters, centrality of school transport for students, difficulty with the continuity of teachers in schools, among others. It is possible to conclude that the contradiction that generates exclusionary processes in the countryside resides in the concentration of land, in agricultural production for exportation that generates few job opportunities, and results in the policy of closing schools due to the low population density. When studying such regional contexts, it is evident the need for another project for the countryside, agrarian reform and public policies for the subjects to remain in the countryside.

**KEYWORDS:** Education. Contradiction. Countryside. Public school. Rural education.

**RESUMO:** Este artigo apresenta os resultados de uma pesquisa realizada em dez municípios de grande extensão territorial no estado do Paraná, com o intuito de compreender a política educacional em relação às escolas públicas rurais. Neste texto, selecionamos oito municípios considerados extremamente rurais para expor contradições presentes no campo e na educação, a partir de estudos documentais e entrevistas. O objetivo é problematizar microrregiões cujo território tem a presença de grandes propriedades e do agronegócio, ao lado do trabalho dos diversos povos do campo. Nesses contextos, há desafios na garantia do direito à educação. São marcados pelo fechamento de escolas, precariedade das estradas, centralidade do transporte escolar, dificuldade com a continuidade dos professores nas escolas etc. Conclui-se que a contradição que gera processos excludentes no campo reside na concentração da terra, na produção agrícola para exportação que pouco gera empregos, e decorre na política de fechamento de escolas que se fundamenta no reduzido número de estudantes. Ao estudar tais contextos regionais, evidencia-se a necessidade de outro projeto para o campo, de reforma agrária e políticas públicas para permanência dos sujeitos no campo.

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**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Educação. Contradição. Campo. Escola pública. Educação do campo.

**RESUMEN:** Este artículo presenta los resultados de una investigación realizada en diez municipios de gran extensión territorial en el estado de Paraná, con el objetivo de comprender la política educativa con relación a las escuelas públicas rurales. En este texto, seleccionamos ocho municipios considerados extremadamente rurales para exponer las contradicciones presentes en el campo y en la educación, a partir de estudios documentales y entrevistas. El objetivo es problematizar las microrregiones cuyo territorio tiene la presencia de grandes propiedades y agroindustrias, al lado del trabajo de los diversos pueblos del campo. En estos contextos, existen desafíos en la garantía del derecho a la educación. Están marcadas por cierres escolares, precarias carreteras que dan acceso a la sede municipal, centralidad del transporte escolar para los estudiantes, dificultad con la continuidad de los docentes en las escuelas, entre otras. Es posible concluir que la contradicción que genera procesos excluyentes en el campo reside en la concentración de la tierra, en la producción agrícola para la exportación que genera pocas oportunidades laborales, y resulta en la política de cierre de escuelas por lo bajo número de estudiantes. Al estudiar estos contextos regionales, se evidencia la necesidad de otro proyecto de campo, reforma agraria y políticas públicas para que los sujetos permanezcan en el campo.

**PALAVRAS CLAVE:** Educación. Contradicción. Campo. Escuela pública. Educación rural.

## Introduction

Countryside Education has left its mark on Brazilian education since 1998, with the formation of national and state collectives, conferences, struggles and resistance to the construction and continuity of educational policies, experiences of initial and continuing educator formation, manifestos in favor from public and free education, collective and individual bibliographic production, the defense of a project for society that values work in the field, waters and in forests, which has different subjects as protagonists of educational policies and practices. It is a process of resistance and the proposition of collective agendas for the broad educational formation of countryside peoples, from Basic Education to stricto sensu postgraduate courses. It is not reduced to public schools, however, it places it at the center of the debate by questioning policies, curriculum, the organization of pedagogical work, the school's identity and its link with issues inherent to countryside, water and of forest people.

In this article, the objective is to describe municipalities with a wide territorial extension and identify their main educational challenges. Results of the research entitled *Realidade das escolas públicas localizadas no campo no estado do Paraná: políticas educacionais, ruralidades e a efetivação do direito à educação* (Reality of public schools

located in the countryside in the state of Paraná: educational policies, ruralities and the realization of the right to education), carried out from 2015 to 2017, with funding from CNPq, Universal Notice of 2014. Demographic, agrarian, economic and educational data were updated in 2020, through a study of the reports produced by the Paraná Institute for Economic and Social Development (Ipardes), especially the municipal notebooks.

We investigated the ten most extensive municipalities in Paraná. They are: Guarapuava, Tibagi, Castro, Ortigueira, Guaraqueçaba, Prudentópolis, Lapa, Cascavel, Ponta Grossa and Pinhão, according to Ipardes (2020). The municipalities of Cascavel and Ponta Grossa, whose demographic density exceeds 150 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>, were not considered in this article. Therefore, the eight distinctly rural municipalities are considered, with small urban centers and socioeconomic relations characterized by work in the field and in the waters, with quilombola, *faxinalenses*, indigenous, campers, settlers, *cipozeiras*, small farmers, fishermen communities, among others, in contrast with monoculture activities in large territorial extensions. These are territories with low population density, family farming, areas of environmental protection and cultural aspects marked by sociability and religiosity, in addition to the expressive concentration of land and agro-export production. There are land conflicts in them and what Fernandes, Welch and Gonçalves (2014) call paradoxical agrarian Brazil is evident.

The research, of a documentary nature, was enriched with interviews carried out with municipal management teams. Municipal education plans, master plans and reports provided by municipal education secretariats were analyzed. Theoretically, the parameter of analysis was Countryside Education, its achievements, regulations, manifestos, and the conception of the field as a place of life, diversity, work and culture, moved in the contradiction of the capitalist mode of production, expressed in the concentration of wealth and in the political-pedagogical disputes around education.

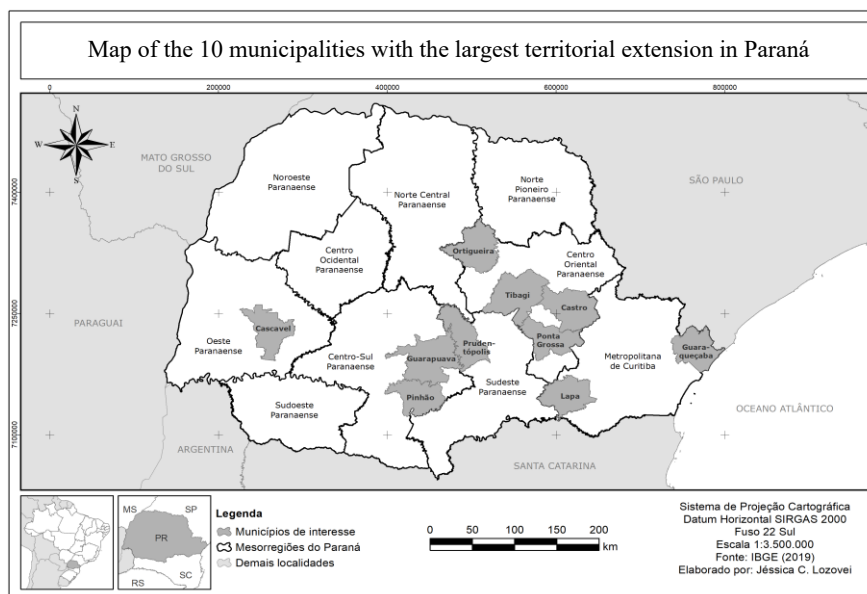
The article is structured in three parts, the first being an explanation of the ten municipalities surveyed. The second presents a territorial panorama of eight large municipalities, pointing out their rurality and educational aspects. The third deals with education and contradiction in the countryside, with the problematization of public schools. The parameter for problematizing educational aspects is the set of Countryside Education principles built in social movements.

### The countryside in municipalities with large territorial extension

Brazil comprises 5,570 municipalities, with a total of 8,510,295,914 km<sup>2</sup>. In the country, there are municipalities with a territorial extension of 3.5 km<sup>2</sup>, as is the case of Santa Cruz de Minas/MG, and with an extension of 159,000 km<sup>2</sup>, as is the case of Altamira/PA, according to data from IBGE (2020). The territorial extension of the eight municipalities studied in Paraná varies between 2,000 and 3,163.44 km<sup>2</sup>. The state of Paraná is formed by 399 municipalities, grouped into ten geographic regions characterized by Ipardes (2020).

Territorially extensive municipalities tend to have concentration of land and property, which are added to the production of grain and livestock for export. Register low population density. The land concentration and the fragile support policy for family farmers reinforce the migratory processes towards the cities, especially on the part of countryside youth, as well as intensify agrarian conflicts. In addition, other factors, such as the absence of leisure spaces and the closing of schools, have contributed to the departure of young people from the countryside. High School, for example, has a reduced offer in the countryside. Students face school transport, which, in turn, has complex networks in the municipalities, with long routes and local business domain. Figure 1 allows the visualization of the ten regions and ten municipalities of Paraná with the greatest territorial extension.

**Figure 1** – Map of the 10 municipalities with the largest territorial extension in Paraná



Source: IBGE (2019)

It is possible to observe that the Center-Eastern and Center-South regions have the largest number of municipalities with great extension. In them, there have been land conflicts and the action of the MST, in the struggle for agrarian reform.

Table 1 below registers the extension, demographic density, rural and urban population, urban and rural public schools. With the exception of Cascavel and Ponta Grossa, the municipalities are characterized by low population density and agricultural activities centered on family farming, agroforestry and grain production. The analysis of rural territories requires looking at the subjects, work, land use, demographic density and land conflicts, in addition to other factors such as local politics, sociocultural and socio-environmental dimensions.

The municipality of Guaraqueçaba, as shown in Table 1, is the one with the lowest demographic density, rich in socio-environmental diversity, but ranked 396th in the Human Development Index (HDI), that is, the fourth worst index in the state. It is the second municipality with the highest number of schools in the countryside and in the waters, given that it comprises several islands. It is the only one in which the predominant agricultural production is permanent farming, with emphasis on bananas and palm hearts.

**Table 1** – The ten municipalities of Paraná with the largest territorial extension

Paraná – Greater territorial extensions	Territorial extension - km <sup>2</sup>	Demographic density - hab./km <sup>2</sup>	Population		Public schools - active	
			Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
1º Guarapuava	3.163,441km <sup>2</sup>	57,74	152.993	14.335	92	5
2º Tibagi	2.973,369 km <sup>2</sup>	6,93	11.668	7.676	14	0
3º Castro	2.526,147 km <sup>2</sup>	28,43	49.266	17.818	44	11
4º Ortigueira	2.429,083 km <sup>2</sup>	9,03	9.587	13.793	10	19
5º Guaraqueçaba	2.300,572 km <sup>2</sup>	3,30	2.683	5.188	4	28
6º Prudentópolis	2.257,711 km <sup>2</sup>	23,26	22.463	26.329	23	46
7º Lapa	2.098,442 km <sup>2</sup>	23,07	27.222	17.710	27	17
8º Cascavel	2.086,990 km <sup>2</sup>	159,24	270.049	16.156	142	17
9º Ponta Grossa	2.042,673 km <sup>2</sup>	173,96	304.733	6.878	187	7
10º Pinhão	2.003,726 km <sup>2</sup>	16,25	15.317	14.891	17	16

Source: MEC/INEP (2020)<sup>2</sup>

Most rural public schools belong to the municipal education network. State schools function predominantly in administrative duality. All municipalities mentioned in Table 1 had schools closed in the countryside, from the 1990s onwards. The closing of schools in the countryside, more than a political decision, is an expression of the contradiction between a highly mechanized field project, with land concentration and grain production, and a

<sup>2</sup> Number of schools: Available: <https://www.gov.br/inep/pt-br/aceso-a-informacao/dados-abertos/inep-data/catalogo-de-escolas>. Access: 30 Nov. 2020. Demographic density and population data: Available: <http://www.ipardes.pr.gov.br/Pagina/Cadernos-municipais>. Access: 29 Nov. 2020

sustainable field project, as a place of work and housing, with the production of diverse crops, most of which for the domestic market. In the field of agro-export production there is no space for rural youth or for the diversity of peoples, although social movements and communities remain firm in the processes of resistance and struggle to remain in their place of work, housing and life.

The countryside of production of agricultural, livestock, and tourist wealth is the same as for the lowest schooling rates. Dozens of educational researches indicate the inequalities in the countryside, as there are schools that do not have libraries, laboratories and internet access, greater age-grade distortion, less education of the population, etc. Such inequalities are an expression of contradictory and historical social processes in Brazil, of the accumulation of wealth and poverty, of the construction of compensatory or palliative public policies, which do not modify the socioeconomic and political structural conditions.

We understand the countryside, in agreement with what Verde (2004) writes, about the four dimensions to be considered in the territorial analysis. The spatial, which refers to a continuum of rural-urban relations, agricultural and non-agricultural activities, new possibilities for obtaining income and reorganizing work in the field. The environmental, which is articulated with agricultural activities and with the areas of environmental protection; places that do not carry out agricultural production can develop rural tourism activities. The demographic density, which establishes the number of inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup> to say the rurality of the territory; municipalities with up to 20 thousand inhabitants or with up to 80 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup> can be considered rural in Paraná. And the cultural, which concerns the cultural heritage built in a given space by the community that lives in it, the actions, manifestations, the way communities live their daily lives, which cross times and spaces.

In addition to these elements, we add the diversity of countryside, water and forest peoples. The state of Paraná has a trajectory of conflicts over land, struggles for agrarian reform, against the construction of dams, and has strengthened the identity of traditional peoples such as the *Quilombolas* and the *Faxinalenses*. Fernandes, Welch and Gonçalves (2014, p. 21) understand that “Agrarian Brazil is paradoxical because 74% of farmers receive only 15% of agricultural credit, have only 24% of the arable area [...]”. In contrast, “[...] agribusiness keeps 85% of agricultural credit, controls 76% of the arable area [...]”.

Therefore, to talk about the countryside, it is necessary to highlight the subjects that resist in it, in contrast to the advance of agrarian capitalism, through the exploitation of forests and grain production, in particular.

## **Territorial overview of the eight largest rural municipalities in Paraná**

The eight municipalities investigated can be understood considering the work in the field, with emphasis on the number of rural establishments and their occupation. We selected some categories used by Ipardes (2020) to demonstrate rurality, namely: number of agricultural establishments, their extension, the condition of the producer and the type of product cultivated. Agricultural establishments are occupied with temporary farming, horticulture and floriculture, permanent farming, production of seeds and seedlings, livestock and raising other animals, production of planted forests, forestry production of native forests, fishing and aquaculture.

The municipality of Guarapuava, the largest in territorial extension in the state, is located in the Center-South Region of Paraná. It ranks 78th in HDI (0.731) in the state. It has 2,134 agricultural establishments, in an area of 207,561 hectares (ha). There are 116,492 ha containing 890 establishments occupied with temporary crops, mostly soybeans, corn, barley and wheat. There are 44,991 ha containing 873 livestock and other animal husbandry establishments. It has 33,708 ha with 105 establishments of planted forest production. There are 1,893 landowners who own 191,305 ha. There are 105 settlers without a definitive title. The remaining 136 establishments have tenants, partners, a free loan system and occupants. In the municipality, permanent farming is concentrated on fruits and mate herb. It is a rural municipality, although the IBGE (2010) records the degree of urbanization as 91.43%. There are 5 districts in it, which are: Atalaia, Entre Rios, Guairacá, Guará and Palmeirinha. The municipality has indigenous communities, rural settlements and Quilombo communities.

As the largest municipality in territorial extension has only 5 schools in the countryside, according to Inep (2020)? The explanation lies in the concentration of land, as noted in the previous description: more than half of the arable area is occupied by temporary crops, mainly grain. There are countryside peoples dispersed in the territory, who resist agriculture with production in small areas, a factor that should be considered in the construction of public policies.

Tibagi is the second largest municipality in terms of territorial extension in Paraná, located in the Central-Eastern Region. It ranks 338th in HDI (0.664). It has 1,040 agricultural establishments, in 228,252 ha, of which 557 are temporary farming establishments (predominantly soybean, wheat, corn and beans), occupying 150,120 ha. There are 366 livestock and other animal breeding establishments on 33,101 ha. There are 64 forest plantation production establishments in 43,826 ha. The permanent crop occupies around 700

ha, which contain 21 establishments that produce oranges, apples, peaches and tangerines. Of the 1,040 establishments, 928 belong to owners, with a total of 214,311 ha; 30 belong to settlers without a definitive title, in an area of 549 ha, and 82 establishments are in the condition of lease, partnership, lending and occupation. It is noted that more than 50% of production is temporary farming, which occupies more than 60% of arable land. The municipality has 2 administrative districts in the countryside, which are Alto do Amparo and Caetano Mendes. It has Quilombo communities and rural settlements. It is an eminently rural municipality, although for IBGE (2010) the degree of urbanization is 60.32%. The same question asked for the municipality of Guarapuava is reiterated: How does Tibagi not register school in the countryside, according to data from INEP (2020)? How long countryside youth stay on school transport?

In an interview with the municipal pedagogical team, in 2015, it was informed that there are students who spend three hours in school transport. There are 75 lines for school transport, 39 of which belong to 21 outsourced companies and 36 municipal transport lines. There are 10,000 km of daily intra-campus journey, with 4,741 km covered by outsourced transport. During long periods of rain, students do not reach school as the roads are impassable. The team also reported that there are 5 rural schools, 3 of which are municipal and 2 state. The municipality has 4 rural settlements organized in the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST, Portuguese initials). Children from 2 settlements attend urban school. There is a difficulty regarding the identity of countryside schools. City departments tend to classify district schools as urban. However, through the discussion consolidated in the national guidelines and in the national movement of Countryside Education, the field's identity is given by the school's link with community issues, with the subjects of the countryside. It appears that countryside peoples are made invisible amid large-scale agricultural production and local political relations.

Castro is the third largest municipality in territorial extension, located in the Central-Eastern region of Paraná. It ranks 220th in the state's HDI ranking, with an index of 0.703. It has 2,603 agricultural establishments, in a total area of 140,569 ha. The temporary crop (soybean, wheat, beans and corn, primarily) is in 807 establishments and occupies an area of 65,980 ha. Livestock and other animal husbandry establishments total 1,536, in an area of 54,956 ha. The forest production of planted forests is in 98 establishments, in an area of 17,776 ha. Temporary farming is present in 89 establishments, covering a total area of 1,270 ha, and horticulture and floriculture production in 53 establishments, with an area of 336 ha. There are 2,232 owners, in a total area of 126,862 ha; 41 settlements without definitive title,



in an area of 1,766 ha; 78 tenants, in an area of 5,090 ha; 35 partners, in an area of 3,292 ha; 191 lending, in an area of 2,874 ha; and 6 producers without area. It integrates a region known as the dairy basin in the state. Livestock and temporary farming occupy an area of 120,000 ha, practically 85% of the land use is destined to such economic activities.

The municipality has 2 districts in rural territory, Abapã and Socavão. In it, there are Quilombola communities, small farmers, MST settlers and camps. It is an eminently rural municipality, although for the IBGE (2010) the degree of urbanization is 73.44%. In the 1990s, the municipality had more than 120 schools in the countryside. With the policy of nucleation of schools, approximately 100 schools were closed in the countryside, thus expressing that the countryside lost population and/or that the policy of school transport began to have an emphasis within the countryside and from the countryside to the city. Inep (2020) registers 11 rural schools, being 9 municipal and 2 state. School transport, according to the education secretary in an interview in 2015, has an annual investment of R\$8,300,000, of which R\$482,226.28 comes from the Federal Government, through the PNATE (National Program for Support to School Transport), R\$2,000,000 from the Government of the State of Paraná, through PETE (State School Transport Program), and R\$5,817,773.72 from the municipality itself. In 2015, school transport served 4,000 students.

The pedagogical team highlighted that the criterion for the school to be considered “from the countryside” is the inexistence of a principal, while urban schools are registered this way because they have principals. Again, there is a difficulty in building the identity of the countryside school and, therefore, in recognizing the diversity of peoples existing in the territory.

The municipality of Ortigueira is the fourth largest in terms of land area in Paraná, located in the Central-Eastern Region. It has an HDI of 0.609, ranking 391st in the state of Paraná. There are 2,968 agricultural establishments and occupy an area of 208,814 ha. Livestock activities and raising other animals are in 1,801 establishments, in an area of 105,088 ha. The temporary crop (soybean, wheat, corn and beans) is in 932 establishments, in an area of 59,617 ha. The forest production of planted forests is in 112 establishments, in an area of 41,698 ha. There are 90 horticulture and floriculture establishments and 25 permanent farms, occupying 2,012 ha. There are 2,465 land owners, with a total of 189,803 ha; 83 tenants, in an area of 4,252 ha; 116 settlers without definitive title, in an area of 2,075 ha; 220 occupants, in an area of 10,895 ha, with the rest in lending, partnership or producer status without registered area. The municipality has 4 districts, which are: Barreiro, Lajeado Bonito, Monjolinho and Natingui. It has communities of rural and indigenous settlers. It has 26 school

institutions in the countryside, however it is also the one with the largest number of closed schools in the last decade, around 120 institutions. There are 19 rural schools in operation, 10 of which are municipal and 9 state. They are organized in administrative duality. The municipality's pedagogical team reported that 7 schools in rural communities carry out their activities in a multigrade manner, where the teacher teaches, cleans the school and cooks for the students. The municipality has 2 schools located in the Settlement Libertação Camponesa, one of which is a municipal educational institution and the other a state one; 2 state administration institutions located in indigenous lands: Posto Indígena Queimada and Mococa. R\$5,000,000 are invested a year in school transport, with 237 lines and 96 vehicles that transport 4,391 students daily, from both municipal and state schools, and university students to Telêmaco Borba, Apucarana, Jandaia do Sul and Araçongas. The lines are operated, for the most part, by outsourced companies. The data show that there are 13 outsourced companies responsible for 212 lines, with an estimated daily expense of R\$15,599.41. The municipal fleet operates on 25 lines. These data, provided by the Municipal Department of Education, refer to the year 2011. It is the second municipality, according to IBGE (2010), with a degree of urbanization below 50%, being registered at 41.01%. The pedagogical team demonstrates knowledge of the principles of Countryside Education and a close relationship with the settlement communities organized in the MST.

Guaraqueçaba is the fifth municipality in territorial extension, located in the Metropolitan Region and Coast of Paraná. It has an HDI of 0.587, in the 396th position, the fourth worst index in the state of Paraná. The municipality has 493 agricultural establishments, in an area of 20,140 ha, of which 203 permanent culture establishments (mainly palm and banana), in an area of 9,618 ha; 92 livestock and other animal breeding establishments, in an area of 5,808 ha; 78 temporary farming establishments (predominantly cassava), in an area of 2,552 ha; 95 fishing establishments, in 135 ha; 20 aquaculture establishments, with no defined area; 2 establishments of native forest and 1 of planted forest, with no defined area. There are 450 owners from a total of 17,569 ha; 23 lending, in 1,894 ha; 10 establishments of tenants, settlers and partners with no defined area, and 10 occupants of 128 ha. The municipality has the districts of Ararapira and Serra Negra. It is formed by islands, has traditional countryside, Quilombolas, indigenous people, fishermen, caixaras, among others. The degree of urbanization is 34.09% according to IBGE (2010). It registers 21 municipal schools, all in sustainable use units, and 7 state schools in the countryside, 6 of which in conservation units. During the administration of the Requião government (2003 to 2010), the political-pedagogical projects of the schools on the islands in Paraná were built,

with the participation of the *Articulação Paranaense por a Educação do Campo* (Paraná Articulation for a Countryside Education).

Prudentópolis is the sixth largest municipality in territorial extension and is located in the Southeast region of Paraná. It is in 312th place in HDI in the state, with an index of 0.676. It has a total of 6,625 agricultural establishments, in an area of 143,313 ha. There are 5,145 establishments with temporary crops (priority soybeans, beans, corn and wheat), cultivated in an area of 97,005 ha. There are 895 livestock and other animal establishments in an area of 33,531 ha; 274 establishments with permanent crops (yerba mate as a priority), in 4,207 ha; 83 horticulture and floriculture establishments, in an area of 476 ha; there are 147 establishments of forest production from planted forests, in an area of 6,974 ha. The others are establishments of native forest production and aquaculture. There are 5,967 owners of 134,321 ha; 277 are lessees of an area of 4,840 ha and 192 are on loan, with an area of 1,419 ha. There are settlers without a definitive title, partners and occupants without an area. There are settled communities, indigenous, Quilombolas and faxinalenses. There are 2 districts in rural territory, Jaciaba and Patos Velhos. The municipality has 46 schools in the countryside, 35 of which are multigrade. All schools are registered as “from the countryside”, given that they reformulated their political-pedagogical projects in 2014. The degree of urbanization is 46.04%, according to IBGE (2010).

The municipality of Lapa is the seventh in territorial extension, located in the Metropolitan Region of Curitiba. It has an HDI of 0.706, and is ranked 199th in the state of Paraná. It has 2,290 agricultural establishments, in an area of 116,743 ha. There are 1,457 establishments with temporary crops (priority soy, beans, wheat and corn), in an area of 83,469 ha; 608 livestock and other animal husbandry establishments, in an area of 20,917 ha; 43 establishments producing planted forests, in an area of 8,988 ha. The others are establishments with permanent crops, native forests, aquaculture, horticulture and floriculture. There are 1,983 owners of an area of 104,276 ha; 96 tenants in an area of 6,500 ha, and 87 settlers without definitive title, in an area of 2,568 ha. In the municipality, there are 2 districts in rural territory: Água Azul and Mariental. There are dozens of countryside communities, distributed among settlers, Quilombolas, traditional faxinalense and indigenous peoples. The Contestado settlement is located in the municipality, organized in the MST, with the Latin American School of Agroecology. For IBGE (2010), Lapa has a degree of urbanization of 60.58%. According to Inep (2020), the municipality of Lapa has 12 rural municipal schools and 5 rural state schools. Of these, 2 school institutions operate in a settlement.

The municipality of Pinhão is the tenth one in territorial extension, located in the Center-South region of Paraná. It has an HDI of 0.654, occupying the 354th position in the state of Paraná. It has 2,852 agricultural establishments, in 134,909 ha. The temporary crop (soybean, corn, barley and wheat as a priority) occupies 65,422 ha, distributed in 1,047 establishments. In 51,205 ha there are 1,351 establishments with livestock and other animals; 23 permanent farming establishments occupy 1,500 ha. There are 11,496 ha with forest production from native forests, in 362 establishments, and 30 establishments of planted forest production, in 5,672 ha. The other establishments are occupied with aquaculture, horticulture and floriculture. There are 2,234 owners of 121,893 ha, with the remainder distributed among 209 settlers without definitive title, in 4,468 ha; 175 partners, in 2,681 ha; 120 lending, in 3,012 ha; 92 occupants on 2,140 ha; and 22 tenants, in 714 ha. The municipality has 3 districts, which are Bom Retiro, Faxinal do Céu and Pinhalzinho, and traditional communities, Quilombolas and indigenous peoples. According to IBGE (2010), the urbanization rate is 50.71%. The municipality has 10 municipal rural schools and 6 state schools, of which 3 are multigrade.

The pedagogical team reported the existence of a school in an MST settlement and areas of occupation of land and settlements, which are the Assentamento do Rocio and Salete, which form a single settlement. It has 2 faxinalense communities: Faxinal dos Ribeiros and Faxinal dos Coutos. School transport has an investment of approximately R\$5,000,000, R\$907,000 of which from the Paraná state government, through PETE, and R\$450,000 from PNATE, the federal government. The municipality contributes with R\$2,980,000 annually for school transport. For the pedagogical team, the municipality of Pinhão is eminently rural and even urban schools could have a countryside identity, given that the students belong to different rural communities.

In summary, research that focuses on micro-regions allows us to identify aspects of the territory that are made invisible in statistical and large-scale analyses. In the eight municipalities mentioned above, it was possible to record the concentration of land and property; the centrality of agricultural production in temporary crops such as soybeans, corn, beans, wheat and barley, produced for export and highly mechanized. Only one municipality (Ortigueira) has a predominance of cattle raising and the creation of other animals, and another is central to the production of permanent crops (Guaraqueçaba). The lowest municipal HDI are in regions with land concentration in Paraná, expressing contradiction and inequality, historical marks of the territory and of Brazilian society.

There are different subjects from the countryside, such as Quilombola communities, settlers and campers, faxinalenses, indigenous people, family farming practitioners and fishermen. The low demographic density and the extensive rural school transport network are hallmarks of all municipalities, with a reduced number of schools in the countryside. Most school institutions are municipal and have a reduced presence of secondary education, which is therefore harmful to countryside youth.

The IBGE record on the degree of urbanization does not match the socio-economic and socio-environmental reality, given that, for the Institute, only 3 municipalities among those surveyed have less than 50% of the degree of urbanization. The diversity of peoples from the countryside, waters and forests is masked with numbers that exalt the urban in the country. The extremely resistant subalternized class of the countryside and the city is made invisible or criminalized, in the name of maintaining the relations of domination inherent in the capitalist mode of production.

Education funding is largely used for school transport, with a predominance of outsourced companies in the execution of this service. Road conditions are mentioned as difficult and impassable on rainy days, leaving students without access to school, among other characteristics. In these geographic regions that have immense municipal territories, what are the main challenges to educational policies and Countryside Education?

### **Education and contradiction in the countryside: what about public schools?**

In the state of Paraná, according to INEP (2020), Catalog of Schools, 828 rural municipal schools are registered, 125 in areas of settlements, quilombolas, quilombola and indigenous lands, totaling 1,250 rural schools, between municipal and state. Between 2014 and 2020 around 1,000 rural schools were closed in the state. There are several determinations that lead to the closing of schools, among which the following stand out: the exclusionary field project that is advancing in the country, centered on mechanized agricultural production, in large areas and destined for export; the land concentration that strengthens the low demographic density in countless Brazilian municipalities; the lack of technical, economic and legal support for rural peoples and youth, generating countryside>city migration; local policies aimed at large economic investments and guided by clientelist relationships, etc. Thus, the apparent reason for the closing of schools is the reduced number of students. The root of the problem is in the countryside and country project, which continues the

reproduction of inequalities and also the confrontations and social resistance in the countryside.

There is an expressive academic production in Brazil and Paraná on education and public schools in the countryside. In Brazil, according to Souza (2016a; 2020), there are hundreds of theses and dissertations on Countryside Education. Santos (2020) analyzes the production on Countryside Education in the northeast region of Brazil and demonstrates the growth of the area, which is explained by the increase in the number of *stricto sensu* graduate programs and research groups. In Paraná, recent works are added to those mentioned in Souza (2016a; 2020), namely: Festa (2020) analyzes the interfaces special education and Countryside Education; Lima (2020) investigates programs linked to companies and para-state state that are directed to public schools in the countryside; Paula (2019) investigates the meanings of school for a community on one of the islands in the municipality of Guaraqueçaba; Reichenbach (2019) and Pereira (2017) analyze the policy of closing schools in the state of Paraná and Cruz (2018), Pianovski (2017) and Rodrigues (2017) study public countryside schools, learning in multigrade classes and project restructuring political-pedagogical; Mariano (2016) analyzes the work with study complexes in itinerant schools in Paraná, among others. These are research that announce challenges in the scope of educational policy and potential of pedagogical practices in schools in/from the countryside.

The *Articulação Paranaense Por Educação do Campo* (Paraná Articulation for a Countryside Education) has been problematizing the policy of closing schools in the countryside and providing guidelines for the fight against this policy. Despite the existence of Law No. 12.960 of 2014 (BRASIL, 2014), which inserts a single paragraph in art. 28 of LDB 9.394/96 (BRASIL, 1996), the practice of closing schools continues to be based on the discourse of the reduced number of students per school and on the expansion of the school transport network.

What is observed in most municipalities is the policy of nucleation of schools, which extinguishes small establishments and, therefore, recreates pedagogical relationships with students and communities. In smaller schools, there is a closer relationship between teachers, students and families. According to reports from elderly rural teachers, schools are an extension of the family environment, in addition to the relationships between families and teachers, which are close and form kinship ties. In the nucleation process, the school transport policy and the extension of the time students use to go to and from school come into play. In periods of rain, for countryside peoples, roads in precarious conditions make it difficult or

impede the circulation of school vehicles. On the islands, fog makes it difficult for teachers and students to access schools.

A contradiction that stands out in the analysis of municipal notebooks (IPARDES, 2020) is the presence of hundreds of rural establishments that produce grains and dozens that produce permanent crops, such as fruits and vegetables, for example. In this context, the ideology of the denial of municipal rurality and/or its identification with technological backwardness is identified. The activities related to agribusiness carried out in large rural establishments and for export are highlighted, while little visibility and incentives are attributed to countryside peoples and family farming.

Another contradiction refers to the educational right that takes effect through the displacement of most children and young people to cities or to nuclear schools in the countryside. The municipalities are rural, but all public services are centralized in the city. In this sense, countryside social movements have struggled against the policy of closing schools, for valuing the training of professionals, for the quality of education and for strengthening the identity of countryside people, for formation for agroecological production, for encouraging youth peasant woman and her permanence on the land, something that depends on agrarian reform and the set of public policies necessary for its implementation.

The denial of the countryside as a place of diversity and family farming, of working with water and forests, in contrast to the appreciation of agricultural activities in large properties and their favoring, constitutes another contradiction. The logic of favoring those who have technical, financial and legal support is reproduced.

Since 2002, guidelines, decrees and laws that are the result of the struggles of social movements for Countryside Education have been in effect. However, the collective experiences of educational formation are not known or recognized in most Brazilian municipalities, particularly in those that do not have the participation of countryside, water and forest social movements. As Machado and Vendramini (2013) write, advances are small in terms of financing Countryside Education, even in the face of arguments from social movements. There are few resources for countryside schools, infrastructure that is still precarious, roads with difficult access, instability of the staff of educators, etc. Despite there being “[...] willingness of educators and the community to structure an educational project that contemplates the aspirations of collective development, with work perspectives for young people and meeting the sociocultural needs of the community” (MACHADO; VENDRAMINI 2013, p. 6, our translation), it runs into the difficulties mentioned.

What can be seen in the municipalities is school infrastructure, technology and roads in precarious conditions. There are schools that have been without maintenance for years, as the resources for countryside schools, especially those with few students, are insufficient for their needs, such as libraries, computer labs, internet, teachers' lounge, telephone lines, audiovisual equipment, furniture etc. In these municipalities, it is common to see old school buildings, or what is left of them, on the roadsides or in the middle of the pasture. With the precariousness of infrastructure in schools, the question is: what about special education students?

Nozu, Bruno and Heredero (2016) launch inquiries about countryside schools in relation to special education. One of them refers to specialized care in multifunctional resource rooms, in which the authors question whether this care has been carried out based on the assumptions of the existence of countryside people or has it reproduced an 'urban-centric' special education model? On the same theme, Festa (2020) analyzes that the interface of special education with Countryside Education takes place in terms of social struggles, national policy and curricular guidelines, but they are still far from implementing the principles of Countryside Education. There are all kinds of weaknesses, from teaching materials to teacher formation, from school infrastructure to school transport, little or nothing adapted to special needs. The normative framework and legislation in the field of social rights are advanced, however, countryside subjects resist in their territories, create alternatives for studying their children and overcoming obstacles.

Regarding the didactic material, at the time of the survey, 2015, schools had received material from the National Field Textbook Program (PNLD-Campo), which, according to teaching teams, had little adherence to Countryside Education, was weak in content and activities. They highlight the presence of materials from para-statal entities, such as the National Service for Rural Learning (SENAR), known as the Agrinho Program, which is widely disseminated in the state of Paraná, but with content linked to a concept of development as synonymous with agribusiness, agricultural mechanization and production for export. Although the program is refuted by the Articulação Paranaense Por Educação do Campo and there is a recommendation from the Public Ministry of Paraná not to use Agrinho in schools, it is still present in the city and in the countryside. In the opposite direction of Countryside Education, as analyzed by Lima (2020), there are materials financed with public money and that give little or no value to countryside, water and forest peoples, and their sustainable way of dealing with nature. They are peoples with individual and collective



experiences in relation to nature, whose knowledge can enrich the pedagogical work, but they are still treated as “backward”.

The school pedagogical organization, especially in the municipal network, is multigrade. It is attributed to the idea of low quality teaching, however, in regions of low demographic density, there is a need to review the pedagogical work, in the sense of what Hage (2014) defends on the transgression of the paradigm of (multi) seriation as reference for the construction of the rural school.

There are municipalities that do not have their own curricular proposals and follow the National Curriculum Parameters (PCNs), while others outsource their proposals, that is, they hire companies to carry out this task. The contents discussed are far from social practices, as work in/of the field is hardly problematized in the classroom and, when debated, does not present the contradiction related to the Brazilian agrarian structure, the concentration of property, on the one hand, and the poverty and resistance of traditional countryside peoples, on the other hand. In 2020, municipalities have discussed the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) and some have asked questions about “what is there about education of rural peoples, diversity and interdisciplinarity in the BNCC?”.

A condition that remains in the municipalities is the process known as teacher turnover. Pedagogical teams mention that there are teachers who live in the city and travel to the countryside to work in more than one school; there are teachers who are not hired through public exams and who change schools every year; teachers who ask for mobility from school due to the difficulty of accessing the school and lack of allowances. They claim that precarious working conditions interfere in the teaching-learning process and in the establishment of a bond with the community. As teachers spend little time in schools, it is essential to have a continuing education policy that is offered differently from traditional specialization courses carried out at a distance and far from the reality of the countryside. Formation with professors mediated by research groups and centers at universities can be one of the ways to enhance the professional and knowledge. Research has revealed that teachers and administrators have little preliminary knowledge about the principles of Countryside Education, policies, historical contradictions and social struggles of countryside peoples. Two principles are fundamental: the identity of the school collectively built with the participation of the organized community and articulation with a popular project in the country.

In the field of Countryside Education, Caldart (2004, p. 28, our translation) writes about an essential feature of the political and pedagogical project of Countryside Education, that is, “it is an education of and not for the subjects of the countryside. Made, yes, through

public policies, but built with the subjects of rights that demand them”. Thus, the project with an emancipatory character requires the effective participation of countryside peoples.

Finally, two aspects that deserve attention in markedly rural municipalities are: on the one hand, Child Education and High School, whose supply is insufficient. Child Education, most of the time, happens together with Elementary School, early years. To attend high school, most young people have to leave the countryside. On the other hand, attention to the elderly in the countryside, given that there is an expressive number of retired people living in the countryside, in conditions of total insecurity and fragile health care, as well as transportation to urban centers. The contradiction is evident: in the countryside, where agribusiness predominates, the people who live there are “forgotten” by local, state and national public authorities. Technology for development is valued, but it is denied to countryside peoples when public policies and research aimed at the quality of life of peoples who have a whole life in the countryside, waters or forests are not encouraged.

It is important to note that the rural educational reality experienced in Brazil is similar in other Latin American countries, which have formed collectives that struggle to value the knowledge of countryside peoples, especially indigenous peoples. Micro-regional studies can strengthen local, national and international resistance. What social movements defend in Brazil as Countryside Education is related to the critical conception of rural education present in countries like Peru and Colombia, for example. Land concentration and the denial of knowledge of traditional countryside peoples are Latin American struggles. Knowing and recognizing local territories can strengthen the construction of another societal project, as well as the popular agrarian reform advocated by the MST and Via Campesina.

### **Final considerations**

This article aims to discuss the municipalities of Paraná with a wide territorial extension and highlight aspects of educational policy in the countryside. Its descriptive character, when dealing with the eight municipalities, seeks to provoke educational analyzes based on the agrarian structure, land uses and agrarian conflicts. For example, the struggles against closing schools are not limited to educational policy, they question the agrarian structure and the political-economic project that exclude countryside peoples. It was possible to verify that there are geographic regions that have several large municipalities, such as the Centro-Oriental, with Castro, Ortigueira and Tibagi. In them, the concentration of land, the low HDI and the low population density is visible. The lowest HDI is in the municipality of

Guaraqueçaba, a region of environmental conservation units, where there are fishermen and indigenous peoples. It is the second municipality with the largest number of schools in the countryside.

In all municipalities with a large territorial extension, there are problems with the education and identity of countryside schools. The predominant logic is that of rural education questioned by Countryside Education, as we discussed in Souza (2016b), in which the relationship between pedagogical teams and countryside communities is fragile, as well as the local government's strong incentive to countryside schools be closed, particularly those that are multigrade. School transport lines have thousands of kilometres traveled daily, with million-reais annual budgets. Therefore, the central problem is the historical structural condition, land concentration, which has determined social processes known as exclusion in the countryside, although they are an expression of the capital vs. labor contradiction and of the hegemonic political project in the country. There are municipalities in which the executive power is in the hands of those who own the land, and public affairs are treated as if they were private. Clientelistic relationships are common in these regions, and education and rural school transport policy are no exception.

Therefore, investigating the micro-regions, locating the subjects who live in them and the working conditions, conflicts, use of land and property is important to understand the processes that mark the agenda and local educational policy, in spite of being determined, in largely, by the state and national spheres, which are added to the international economic and financial determinants.

Public schools can be places of valorization of the local territory and the identity of the people who study in them. This is one of the struggles waged by social movements in Brazil, public, free and quality schools.

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### How to reference this article

SOUZA, M. A. Education and contradiction in the countryside: how are the public schools? **Revista Ibero-Americana de Estudos em Educação**, Araraquara, v. 16, n. esp. 2, p. 1231-1252, maio 2021. e-ISSN: 1982-5587. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21723/riace.v16iesp2.15123>

**Submitted:** 15/12/2020

**Required revisions:** 28/01/2021

**Approved:** 03/03/2021

**Published:** 01/05/2021