CONTEXT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RIGHT AGE LEARNING PROGRAM (PAIC)

CONTEXTO DE IMPLEMENTAÇÃO DO PROGRAMA DE APRENDIZAGEM NA IDADE CERTA (PAIC)[1]

CONTEXTO PARA LA APLICACIÓN DEL PROGRAMA DE APRENDIZAJE DE LA EDAD ADECUADA (PAIC)

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ABSTRACT: This article analyses the context of Paic/Ceará's implementation, which improved performance and equity among students. Literature review denotes a lack of research on the subject, with sparse discussions of the meaning of contextual dimensions. This qualitative research made use of previous categories: political context (intentionality and behavior of the ruling elites), institutional (characteristics of the bureaucracy; profile and experience of leaders and implementing agents) and economic (scarcity of financial resources). From these, based on a literature review and forty interviews with leaders and implementing agents of the Programme, it contributes to the literature by uncovering eleven subcategories that underlie its success. Further studies can test such subcategories in other public policies. In the Paic, the political dimension denoted inheritance of actions after the 1988 Constitution, continuity, support of high and medium-level decisions by the governor, republican commitment, demonstration of the value of education to mayors by the governor. In the

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institutional dimension, it was observed the expansion of state capacity with bureaucratization, use of leadership and the experience of agents and distribution of knowledge acquired as a means of policy incrementation. As for the economic dimension, the context was and still is one of low revenue collection, but with a good level of exploitation and negotiation for the distribution of public resources.

KEYWORDS: Public Policies. Educational policies. Implementation of educational policies. Context of public policy implementation. Ceará.

RESUMO: Este artigo analisa o contexto de implementação do Paic que melhorou desempenho e equidade educacional. A revisão de literatura denota inexistência de investigação sobre o assunto, com parcas discussões das dimensões contextuais. Esta pesquisa qualitativa utilizou categorias prévias: contexto político (intencionalidade e comportamento das elites dirigentes), institucional (características da burocracia; perfil e experiência dos dirigentes e agentes implementadores) e econômico (escassez de recursos financeiros). A partir delas, baseado na literatura e em 40 entrevistas, desvenda subcategorias. A dimensão política denotou herança de ações pós Constituição de 1988, continuidade, sustentação das decisões de alto e médio escalão pelo governador e demonstração do valor da educação. Na institucional, observou-se ampliação da capacidade estatal com burocratização, aproveitamento de lideranças e experiência de agentes e distribuição do conhecimento para incrementar a política. Na econômica, o contexto foi e é de baixa arrecadação, porém com aproveitamento e negociação para a distribuição dos recursos públicos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Políticas públicas. Políticas educacionais. Implementação de políticas educacionais. Contexto de implementação de políticas públicas. Ceará.

RESUMEN Este artículo analiza el contexto de la aplicación del Paic/Ceará, que mejoró el rendimiento y la equidad entre los estudiantes. La revisión de la literatura denota una falta de investigación sobre el tema, con escasas discusiones sobre el significado de las dimensiones contextuales. Esta investigación cualitativa hizo uso de categorías a priori: contexto político (intencionalidad y comportamiento de las élites gobernantes), institucional (características de la burocracia; perfil y experiencia de los líderes y agentes ejecutores) y económico (escasez de recursos financieros). A partir de ellas, y basándose en una revisión bibliográfica y en cuarenta entrevistas con líderes y agentes ejecutores del Programa, contribuye a la literatura descubriendo subcategorías que subyacen a su éxito. Otros estudios pueden poner a prueba estas subcategorías en otras políticas públicas. En el Paic, la dimensión política denota la herencia de las acciones después de la Constitución de 1988, la continuidad, el apoyo a las decisiones de alto y medio nivel por parte del gobernador, el compromiso republicano, la demostración del valor de la educación a los alcaldes por parte del gobernador. En la dimensión institucional, se observó la expansión de la capacidad estatal con la burocratización, el uso del liderazgo y la experiencia de los agentes y la distribución del conocimiento adquirido como medio de incremento de la política. En la dimensión económica, el contexto era y sigue siendo de baja recaudación, pero con un buen nivel de explotación y negociación para el reparto de los recursos públicos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Políticas públicas. Políticas educativas. Aplicación de las políticas educativas. Contexto de la aplicación de las políticas públicas. Ceará.

Introduction

Inspired by an educational policy initiated in Sobral/CE, in 2001, the Right Age Learning Program (Paic in the Portuguese acronym/Ceará) originated from a civil society mobilization in 2004, through an initiative of the Legislative Assembly and institutions such as the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), the Association of Municipalities of the State of Ceará (Aprece) and the National Union of Municipal Education Officers (Undime). Institutionalized by Law 14.026/2007 (CEARÁ, 2007a), focusing on literacy in the second year of elementary school (EF), later expanded to cover the other years, aimed at establishing conditions for students to reach the 9th grade without age/grade distortion and with mastery of reading, writing and calculation skills appropriate to their age and level of schooling.[5].

Paic establishes that the State, in compliance with the collaboration scheme, can provide technical and financial cooperation to the municipalities of Ceará, with a view to improving their learning outcomes. Gusmão and Ribeiro (2011) point out that the Secretary of Education (Seduc) created the Coordinator of Cooperation with Municipalities (Copem) and, under its aegis, the Program was initially organized into five axes: a) Municipal Management; b) Literacy; c) Reader Training; d) Early Childhood Education and; e) External Evaluation. Copem operates through 20 Regional Coordinators of Education Development (Credes), in which the Regional Centers of Cooperation with Municipalities (NRCOMs) have been established. Paic was organized with municipal teams responsible for guidance to schools, led by a manager, with a division similar to that of Copem: three or more people, depending on the size of the municipality and the structure of the Municipal Education Secretary.

Several studies have focused on Paic, given the educational results it has been achieving. Mamede et al. (2021) show that the proficiency of 5th grade students in public schools, in Prova Brasil, practically reached the proficiency of private schools in Ceará. Costa and Carnoy (2015) and Kasmirski, Gusmão, and Ribeiro (2017) point to the growth in student performance and Paic's ability to generate equity. A variety of authors, especially from Political Science, state that, to understand public policy, investigating its cycle (agenda, formulation, implementation, evaluation) is relevant, even if this division is more didactic than real (FARAH, 2011, 2021; HILL, 1997; LOTTA, 2019; SARAVIA; FERRAREZI, 2006). For Oliveira *et al.* (2021, p. 88), one must look at "the dynamics of implementation" in order to understand the results achieved (or not)." But there are also many researchers such as Santos (1979), Arretche (2001), Viana

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[5] With the increase in the scope of services and actions, it is now called the Program for Learning at the Right Age (Mais Paic). However, in this text it will be referred to as Paic, as it has been known since its creation.

(1996), Lotta (2014), and Lima and D'Ascenzi (2013) who claim that the context of a policy is a key element for understanding its results and how its processes come about. However, no dedication to making the contents of these implementation context dimensions explicit was found in these studies. Bravo, Ribeiro, and Cruz (2021) show a set of research studies that seek to understand the Paic and its relationship with educational outcomes in the early years of elementary education. The studies focus on formulation and learning outcomes and addressing inequality (assessment). No study was located that analyzes the context of Paic implementation specifically. This article aims to offer contributions to fill this gap.

The text consists of four sections in addition to this introduction and the conclusion. The first presents education in Ceará (early childhood education and elementary school). The second deals with how the literature addresses the context of public policy implementation and is the basis for the selection of our previous categories of analysis. Next, the text discusses the methodological procedures for data collection and analysis and indicates the previous categories. A section is devoted to the results. A conclusion summarizes the course and findings of the research.

Education in Ceará

Ceará organized a collaboration scheme with its 184 municipalities and achieved positive results in literacy, permanence, approval and learning of elementary school students after the creation of Paic in 2007. Ceará is one of the poorest states in the country, with 9,132,078 inhabitants (IBGE, 2019). There are 7,702 schools, 5,363 of which are municipal (88% of which are public) (QEDU, 2019). In 2018, there were 2,175,664 students enrolled in early childhood education and elementary school. The majority in municipal networks. In 2007, only 39.9% of children were literate in the 2nd grade, a percentage that rises to 89.6% in 2018 (CEARÁ, 2016, 2018), a rate higher than that of the country (IPECE, 2018). The Basic Education Development Index (Ideb) of the Ceará public network of early years, in 2005, was 2.8, below Brazil. After ten years of Paic, the Ideb reached 6.3 in 2019, above the national average for the 5th grade. Ceará is the state whose 5th grade students' performance has most advanced, according to *Prova Brasil*, and has already reached, in 2015, the target set by the Ministry of Education for 2021. Mamede *et al*. (2021) state that the Ideb of public schools in Ceará practically reached that of private schools in 2019. Cruz, Farah, and Ribeiro (2020) made a broad presentation of Paic's strategies and their results.

Kasmirski, Gusmão, and Ribeiro (2017) highlight the expansion of equity. Paic explains, according to them, part of the equity results. The results of the Program, the quantity and variety found in the articles published about it, show its importance for educational policies. Most of the articles consider this policy to be an advance in a country whose tradition is to exclude the least advantaged from access to knowledge, as Cury states (2002).

The context of public policy implementation: bases for the previous categories of analysis

Contextual issues, according to the literature, are relevant to understand the implementation of a public policy: the political, institutional, economic, and cultural contexts influence implementation. For Santos (1979), the implementation of public policies is variable dependent on several factors that refer to the political, institutional and economic context such as: the behavior of political elites, which in turn depends on the strength of the implementing institution itself (having or not having more access to resources, for example, can generate more or less power); the knowledge and intentionalities they possess; the structure of scarcity (referring to budgetary resources and the quality of physical and human resources); conflicts between groups, classes, and estates; the mediation of organizations in relation to the interests of groups and classes; social complexification (strength of organizations); the bureaucracy internal to the state machine and its political strength; demographic situations. For this author, the scarcity structure is of particular relevance, since it is related to economic factors, available financial resources, and the need for the state to be able to provide the necessary financial resources for its development.

Silva and Melo (2000) highlight the relevance of the political dimension in the implementation process: for these authors, the existence, among managers, of a realistic and positive perspective influences the ability to realize the policies. They consider that the institutional capacity in which the implementing agents act, the information exchanges, the negotiations among the multiple actors, are factors that interfere in the implementation. Viana (1996) and Oliveira (2014) state that the success of a policy depends on the ability to influence the behavior of the implementing agents and their beneficiaries. Lipsky (2010) throws light on the cultural dimension of the public policy implementation context: the values and beliefs of the agents who are on the front lines of the distribution of public goods and services matter. Lotta (2019) conceptualizes the implementation process as an act of interaction between different governmental and administrative levels, reinforcing the political, cultural, and institutional dimensions as actors in implementation. Arretche (2001) states that the same

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regulation produces impacts entirely in different regions due to contextual aspects. The author refers mainly to issues that can be classified in the political, cultural and institutional dimensions of the implementation context. She also points out the relevance of satisfactory institutional conditions to achieve the objectives of a policy, because when faced with inadequate conditions, the implementing agents may promote adaptations that are far from the expected design. Lima and D'Ascenzi (2013, p. 109, our translation) discuss the institutional, political and cultural dimensions of public policy implementation:

> [...] the trajectory and conformation of the implementation process are influenced by the characteristics and content of the plan, the structures and dynamics of organizational spaces, and the ideas, values, and worldviews of the implementing actors (our translation).

Cunha, Dantas, and Verhine (2018) point out the relevance of the representations and interests of the policy actors, the economic context, and the organizational structures (which can be linked to the institutional context). Oliveira (2019a) and Oliveira (2019b) make considerations about the importance of interaction among implementers, as a neuralgic point for public policy. Oliveira (2019b, p. 7, our translation), after analyzing North American research, "highlights how the relationships between people (district/directors/teachers) influence the different ways in which policy is implemented." Giusto and Ribeiro (2019) state that the literature indicates the existence of cultural, economic, institutional, and political factors as intervening in the implementation of public policy. Considering the analysis by Giusto and Ribeiro (2019), these four intervening factors are taken here as dimensions. Chart 1 presents the studies analyzed in this text, explaining which dimensions each of them claims to interfere in the implementation of public policy. It is noted that not all studies indicate the same dimensions.

Chart 1 – Authors who deal with context in implementation, by dimension of the context that interferes in the implementation of public policy.

Dimensions	Analyzed Studies
Politics	Santos (1979); Viana (1996); Silva and Melo (2000); Arretche (2001); Lima and D´Ascenzi (2013); Lotta (2014); Giusto and Ribeiro (2019)
Institutional	Santos (1979); Viana (1996); Silva and Melo (2000); Arretche (2001); Lotta (2012, 2014); Lima e D´Ascenzi (2013); Cunha, Dantas and Verhine (2018); Giusto and Ribeiro (2019); Oliveira (2019a); Oliveira. (2019b)
Economic	Santos (1979); Lotta (2014); Cunha, Dantas and Verhine (2018); Giusto and Ribeiro (2019)
Cultural	Viana (1996); Silva and Melo (2000); Arretche (2001); Lipsky (2010); Lotta (2012, 2014); Lima and D´Ascenzi (2013); Cunha, Dantas and Verhine (2018); Giusto and Ribeiro (2019)

Source: Literature review. Own elaboration (2022)

Of the authors listed in chart 1, only Santos (1979) tries to detail in a more categorical way the dimensions that interfere in public policy (chart 2). However, this author did not deal with the cultural dimension.

Chart 2 – Contents of the dimensions that influence public policy in the light of Santos (1979)

| Dimensions	Contents of the Dimensions
Politics	Behavior of political elites Knowledge and intentions of the ruling elites Political strength of the leaders Strength of the implementing institution itself (having or not having more access to resources, for example, can generate more or less power) Conflicts between groups, classes, and strata Mediation of organizations in relation to the interests of groups and classes Social complexity (strength of the organizations)
Institutional	Scarcity structure: Quality of physical and human resources Existence of bureaucracy within the state machine and its political strength
Economic	Scarcity structure: referring to budgetary resources

Source: Santos (1979). Own elaboration (2022)

In the literature above, it is noted that the distinction between what is policy and what is context is sometimes fluid. For example, is training of implementers part of the context or part of the policy? To discern what is the context of implementation from what can be called public policy, a concept of public policy was sought:

> a system of public decisions that aims at actions or omissions, preventive or corrective, destined to maintain or modify the reality of one or several sectors of social life, through the definition of objectives and strategies of action, and the allocation of the necessary resources to reach the established objectives (SARAVIA, 2006, p. 29, our translation).

Based on this concept, it is stated that, in the implementation of a policy, there is a context that favors or does not favor public action, but policy actions and strategies should not be treated as equivalent to its context. The literature refers us to the existence of context dimensions. Four were detected (but there may be others): political, institutional, cultural, and economic. Figure 1 seeks to express this idea of distinction.

Figure 1 – Differentiation between Context and Public Policy
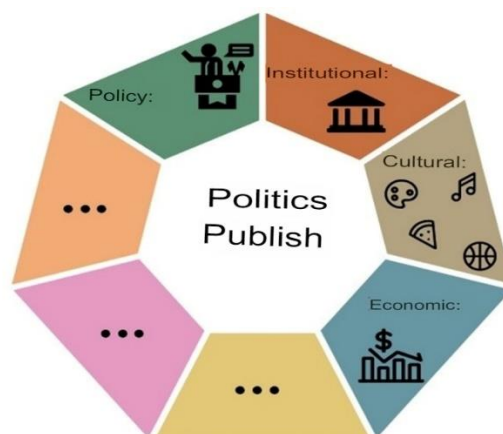
Source: Literature review and workshop between the authors. Own elaboration

This search for delimitation of phenomena in the scope of distinct dimensions considered relevant as factors that interfere in the implementation of public policies was the basis for the elaboration of the previous categories of analysis.

Methodological Procedures

This article is based on qualitative research through content analysis with previous categories. According to Breches *et al.* (2018), when seeking to interpret a certain phenomenon, one can, based on literature, elaborate previous categories, expressing their recurring contents. The procedure for electing the categories is summarized in tables 1 and 2. The corpus of analysis is composed of the results of the literature review on Paic, legislation, Seduc documents, materials found on the institutional website of the Program, and 40 interviews conducted, from 2018 to 2020, with its implementing agents and its main leaders, based on a semi-structured script, prepared by four senior researchers in the field of education[6], in light of the discussion on public policy implementation that has been ongoing since 2014, within the framework of the Network for Studies on the Implementation of Public Education Policies (REIPPE[7]). The interviews, transcribed and then read, brought messages that were classified into the a priori categories of analysis adopted, following Breches' procedures *et al.* (2018).

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[6] Cynthia Paes de Carvalho and Alicia Bonamino, from Puc-Rio, Claudia Lemos Vóvio, from Unifesp; and Vanda Mendes Ribeiro, then from Unicid.
[7] REIPPE was born out of the need detected by some researchers in the field of education for a space where they could expand their research capabilities, reflection and dialogue with other areas of knowledge. It is a forum for the articulation of researchers, open to the participation of public policy makers, education professionals, students, and others interested in the production of socially relevant knowledge about the implementation of educational public policies. Available at: https://www.reippe.com/.

Exploring, therefore, 1) the differentiation between what is policy and what is the public policy context; 2) the aforementioned literature on policy implementation; and 3) Santos' (1979) specifications regarding the contexts that influence public policy, this study adopted, for the analysis of the Paic implementation, the following prior categories: (a) **political context**: intentionality and behavior of the ruling elites; (b) **institutional context**: characteristics of the bureaucracy; and profile and experience of the ruling elites and implementing agents (c) **economic context**: scarcity of budgetary resources. The analysis allowed the elaboration of categories a posteriori.

Although the cultural dimension is mentioned by several authors, it will not be treated in this article. Sumiya and Sano (2021) write brilliantly about the values of the Paic leaders.

Presentation of Results

Political context: intentionality and behavior of the ruling elites

For Gondim (1998), the Paic has a legacy of governments prior to its creation constituted by ruling elites with intentions and behaviors that sought greater rationalization of public action, guarantee of rights through laws and the organization of the State. According to her, the re-democratization of the country allowed a group of businessmen to organize themselves politically and take power in the state government, for economic and social development. For the author, the management of the government from 1987 to 1991 denotes the efforts of these politicians in financial, fiscal, and administrative reforms. For Vieira, Plank, and Vidal (2019), it was these new efforts that in our view can be interpreted as an increase in state capacity and government rationality through "concretized intentionalities" that allowed for a financial balance in the state, favoring the succeeding administrations. As an example, the authors cite advances in the quality of services offered and the creation of cooperation mechanisms between the State and the municipalities, mobilization and accountability. Vieira (2007) states, however, that until the late 1980s, the ruling elites were concerned with institutional capacity, but public basic education was not a priority. From 1991 to 1995, specific actions were taken in educational policy, such as the creation, in 1992, of the state system of evaluation (for a sample of state schools and the municipality of Fortaleza). Naspolini (2001) and Vieira (2007) consider that after 1995 the governments developed actions that generated a transformation in the state management of education.

The actions developed by the state government after 1995 until 2007 are recognized by one of the creators of Paic, Maurício Holanda Maia, former Secretary of Education of Sobral

and of the State of Ceará, as an important political basis for the implementation of the Program. The interviewee highlighted the intentionalities (agendas) of previous administrations that ensured more republican attitudes:

> *[1995, the two major agendas [...] were: education for all and democratic education [...] there was the law on the election of principals, and that was the moment when there was the technical selection for regional coordinators [...].*
> *[...] It was a moment of a lot of partnership with the municipalities to try to guarantee this idea of education for all.*
> *[...] (the former secretary of education in 1995) believed a lot in mobilization. So his history of making partnerships, of talking to municipal managers was very interesting. [...]*
> *[...] Naspolini had already inaugurated a supra-partisan attitude [...] For example, in the small experiment of the single network, in 1995, you had an important, big municipality that was the Governor's base there; but you also had Icapuí that was a small municipality - and one of the first PT administrations in Brazil [...]. The guy who came to coordinate the WG (working group) of municipalization, had been Secretary in Icapuí [...]. Naspolini inaugurated an attitude [...] much more republican* (Maurício Holanda Maia, 2020).

Still in the field of the political context, it is important to mention that there was, at the base of the educational experience in Ceará, the presence of three politicians from the same family - the Gomes - who knew how to come to power in Sobral, keep it and, later, expand it to the government of the state. These politicians gathered a set of professionals with commitment and knowledge in education: Izolda Cela, Márcia Campos, Ceiça Avila, Maurício Holanda Maia, all university professors, among others, such as the already deceased Edgar Linhares Lima, from the Federal University of Ceará, recognized Ceará intellectual for his knowledge about the literacy process (BECSKEHAZY, 2018). The data collected indicate that the above group has, over time, been concretizing their intentions regarding what they believe to be the improvement of the quality of public education. These leaders, gathered in the Sobral experience, developed strong professional and friendship bonds and, since then, have occupied different directive positions in the government of Ceará: governor, secretary of education, assistant secretary of education, coordinator of Copem, secretary and assistant secretary of education of Fortaleza. The interviews show that they are people with self-confidence, willingness to make changes, initiative, and capacity to work together and face problems. It is, therefore, a cohesive group that has worked together for more than 20 years and that shares close values and personal and professional bonds.

> *I came back to Sobral after a few years [in Fortaleza], I went to college here at the federal university, when I got married my husband was already there,*

> *organized at work there and I ended up coming back... then I started with this connection to education, both in private schools for young children and also soon after at the University of the Acaraú Valley (UVA) and this invitation to the Secretariat... My husband Veveu [Arruda] who later became mayor of Sobral as well, he was already more of this line, he already had a history more linked to politics, be it student politics, at the time he was a militant, very active, in student politics, then as a lawyer for rural workers and he was linked to the experience of municipal management when Cid [Gomes] was elected mayor because there was an articulation, a coalition that elected Cid. (former secretary of education of Sobral and the State of Ceará - Izolda Cela, 2018).*
> *Well, I was a professor at the Federal University and Mauricio [Holanda Maia] and I started talking because Izolda [Cela] was our friend and she had taken over the Secretariat as an adjunct in Sobral and she asked for help. One of the initial measures they wanted was for the selection of principals, first for pedagogical coordinators and then the selection of principals we advised. And my husband already worked with selection and he suggested we introduce behavioral observation, right? (Consultant in Sobral and former head of Copem - Márcia Campos, 2018).*
> *Izolda was the Deputy Secretary and Ceiça [Avila] was the great coordinator of the literacy strategy. And I was a professor at the University and Izolda [Cela] invited me to make a technical selection for pedagogical coordinators. Both Izolda and Ceiça were professors at UVA. At the same moment that I entered UVA, they also entered. So, I made this meritocratic selection of coordinators. I said: "Look, we are not going to appoint so-and-so. We will make a selection. And so, the first selection I had made, one of the people who had helped me was Márcia Campos. In the second selection, she said: "Maurício, Pado, my husband, works with organizational psychology, and he really likes this area of selection, and we could exchange some ideas with him. And we formatted this selection with his support as well...* (former secretary of education of Sobral and the State of Ceará – Maurício H. Maia, 2020).

Ribeiro, Bonamino and Martinic (2020) mention, based on analysis of interviews conducted within the scope of Paic [8], the state governor's "protection" of Seduc's decisions, allowing for the strengthening of meritocratic criteria in the composition of the teams. According to the former deputy secretary of education of Ceará (2007-15) and to the macro-level implementing agent, former coordinator of Copem (2007-14), the Program's team was assembled without political interference in the nomination of positions, due to the governor's protection. Copem and Paic also benefited from the decision of Seduc's leaders that the teams would be assembled following a logic of commitment and work results. For these interviewees, something contrary to the usual logic of "you were nominated by so-and-so or so-and-so, or by the councilman, deputy or brother of politician A or B". The former coordinator of Copem, Márcia Campos (2018) also stated that the governor (Cid Gomes) never *"messed with our team,*

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[8] This article was written within the scope of the research "Implementation of educational policies and equity in contexts of social vulnerability". Thus, the interviews conducted about Paic for the preparation of this article are the same ones that allowed us to write this text about the context of Paic implementation.

he was always that person to support what was right, to support what was necessary to make the work happen. So he politically bankrolled everything that was necessary.".

According to the former secretary of education of Sobral and the State of Ceará, Izolda Cela, the experience of Paic showed that, from the point of view of political behavior for the implementation of public policy, Sobral taught that the leaders and implementing agents have the capacity to face adverse situations.

> *I think that the great learning was the experience of knowing that it is possible even in situations that seem unavoidable, it is very impressive how people who commit themselves, decide to do it, make it happen. It is not a magic wand, a magic trick, but it is very real, I saw it, people facing very adverse situations* (Izolda Cela, 2018).

This same interviewee also states that governor Cid Gomes used to meet with mayors to discuss issues that he considered relevant and, among them, was always education, the implementation of Paic and the educational results.

> *One element that I consider very important was the governor's militancy in history, especially with the mayors. I like to call it militancy, really. The government had a program called "itinerant government": three days a month the government moved, mainly to the regions of Cariri and center south, which are the most distant regions from Fortaleza. [...] During the morning there was a program of the governor and then it wasn't only that municipality that was there, but the municipalities of that whole region, the mayors and so on. During the morning it was usually a time for the governor [to make more general speeches], he presented the teams, [gave] service orders and so on. In the afternoon each secretary had his agenda [alone with the governor]. At that moment, half an hour, it was a rule, it was always education, literacy, explaining [to the mayor] the importance and so on.* (Izolda Cela, 2018).

Costa and Ramos (2020) call attention to the attitude of the governments in Ceará of continuing the educational policy, which led to the restructuring of the state and established a new modus operandi in intergovernmental relations. Despite the heterogeneity of governors and parties from 1987 onwards (Tasso Jereissate - PSDB, 1987-1991, 1995-1998, 1999-2002; Cid Gomes - PSB/PROS, 1991-1994, 2007-2014; Lúcio Alcântara - PSDB, 2003-2006; Camilo Santana - PT, 2015-2018, 2019-2022), it is inferred from the literature and interviews, a political behavior, which allowed the continuity of relevant strategies in education, such as that of technical and financial cooperation with municipalities. Note to the fact that these governments acted in the face of the new guidelines of the 1988 Constitution.

Institutional context: characteristics of the bureaucracy

According to Naspolini (2001), the management from 1995 to 2002 began with a planning, with goals of access to basic education, improvement of the qualitative performance profile of students, valorization of the teaching staff and encouragement of democratic management. For him, the focus was on state schools. In his view, the state began a process of democratization of the public school with the implementation of school councils, election of principals, valorization of the school as a social space and the understanding that the promotion of quality should come "from the classroom and led by the actors who remain in school - the teachers" (NASPOLINI, 2001, p. 184, our translation). In other words, one can infer from this text that, in this period, the political elites sought changes in the previous pattern of action in the educational area.

Seduc documents inform that it was during this administration that there was the municipalization of elementary education, with pacts on the responsibilities of the municipalities and the State and intergovernmental cooperation actions (unified competition between the State and the municipalities based on unified criteria, technical and financial support, continuing education, quality assessment, among others), leading Ceará to expand, above the other states, the municipal enrollments. A pupil-costing system was also established and a state fund created to distribute resources, so that the state would contribute to the cost of municipalities and avoid inequality among schools. The transfer of primary schooling from the state to the municipalities was an important step in the construction of the intergovernmental pact that has been built in Ceará since the 1970s to become a state policy with mutual cooperation among the federative entities and their leaders and agents implementing public policy, with continuity and governance created (VIEIRA; VIDAL, 2013; VIEIRA; PLANK; VIDAL, 2019).

According to Naspolini (2001), during this administration, actions were taken for the training, professionalization and valorization of teachers, competitive examinations for teachers, public selection for commissioned positions in the state network, creation of evaluation systems (Spaece) and management. A process of structuring the teams and professionals in education based on technical criteria and management rationalization has begun, seeking to break with the clientelistic mode of political appointment, creating instruments of public action towards greater bureaucratization, in the weberian sense of the term. This perception is shared by the former Deputy Secretary of Education - 2007 to 2014 - and former state secretary of education - 2014 to 2016, Maurício Holanda Maia (2020, our

translation): "[...] 1998, Naspolini built the idea of a single competition, a single test that, whoever took and passed, could be hired by the state or by any of the municipalities that had joined.

The intentionality and behavior of the state's political elites, presented above, seem to have reshaped the state structure, from 1991 to 1995, impacting the institutional context (VIEIRA; PLANK; VIDAL, 2019). Post 1995, reorganization in state education was initiated (NASPOLINI, 2001). These studies corroborate Lobato (2009) who considers that, in Brazil, there were important efforts, with new institutionalities created, to change the traditional pattern of carrying out social policies after the 1988 Constitution, which, for the author, transformed supermanely the guidelines for the implementation of social policy. And they also indicate that some actions were carried out before. This reinforces the trace of continuity of policies in this State, without, however, contesting the relevance of the new Constitution.

Seduc documents (CEARÁ, 2012) denote that the experience of Sobral, started in 2001, was relevant for the diffusion of models of institutionalization of governmental actions in education. In Sobral, it was observed that it was important that the procedures and criteria of the awards were set out in a detailed decree. This learning was also institutionalized in Copem, which started to guide all the municipalities in the state in this direction. It was identified that teacher training needed to be linked to the relationship between student learning and the teachers' way of teaching; this also became a component of Paic. Sobral's experience demonstrated the need for meritocratic selection and specific training and monitoring of school managers; this practice became a focus of orientation for all the municipalities. If, in Sobral, evaluation became a central instrument for the other actions of public policy, this also became a point of emphasis in Paic. In other words, Sobral's experience was fundamental for the establishment of Paic's institutional axes of action: evaluation, management, training of teachers and managers, among others.

Sumiya (2019) states that, effectively, the Seduc team to execute Paic, used the experience of managers and technicians of the municipality of Sobral that, since 2000, had already developed actions to promote the institutionalization of a new way of doing educational management for learning in the early years of Elementary Education, with a systematic preparation of the network diagnosis; Establish goals; reorganize the network and the secretariat; modify the pedagogical practice of the schools; train literacy teachers; distribute materials; pass on salary incentives; prepare the system for monitoring teaching and learning, among other aspects. For the author, the results achieved by Sobral, from 2001 to 2004, became a reference for the Seduc team, which, in the scope of this article, is taken as something that

contributed to the institutionalization of the program, created by Law 14.026/2007 (CEARÁ, 2007a).

The creation of a committee in the Legislative Assembly in 2004, by the then state deputy Ivo Gomes, together with Unicef, Undime, and other organizations, generated, in the municipalities, a set of initial institutionalities that were relevant for the arrival of Paic as a public policy. According to Sumiya and Sano (2021), a coalition was formed that led Paic to become a priority policy in the state, promoting the consolidation of the institutionalization of the intentionality of improving education in the state.

Negotiation processes and information exchange were led by this Committee in meetings with mayors and municipal leaders, favoring a common vision of the right to learning at the right age. Pacts were built that favored a culture of collaboration between municipalities and implementing agents in the State (MARQUES; AGUIAR; CAMPOS, 2009; SEGATTO, 2015). The data indicate that, gradually, there is a direction of state actions for the constitution of a stronger public network, with institutionalization of new standards, breaks with previous ways of doing management and prioritization for the improvement of reading and writing skills until the age of seven. The 184 municipalities of Ceará agreed on literacy until the second year, through a protocol of intentions, and the action mechanisms for the implementation of Paic were expanded. According to agents implementing the Program, the municipalities adapt the guidelines, but not all of them are properly followed, as in the case of the meritocratic selection of principals.

It is also worth mentioning that, in the larger research to which this is linked, of the 40 directors and implementing agents interviewed, only eight were not effective in the networks where they worked. This may be another indication of the expansion of Paic's bureaucratic implementation capacity, to be better verified by future research. Gomide and Boschi (2016) consider that bureaucratization processes are one of the elements that imply the expansion of state capacity, which the data presented here indicate is a phenomenon experienced by the State of Ceará after the 1988 Constitution[9], on a continuing basis.

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[9] Ribeiro *et al.* (2020), analyzing the educational policy implemented in Acre from 1999 to 2010, reached similar conclusions. Ribeiro, Bonamino and Carvalho (2020) reflect on learning from the implementation of public policies that addressed inequalities after 1988, based on the reports of nine public managers from three different areas - Social Assistance, Health and Education. This text ratifies the importance of studying the institutionalities created in the Brazilian states after the new constitutional guidelines because, according to the authors, in the three entities analyzed, the states, in their role as federated entities, in their relationship with the municipalities [? In view of the objective of improving the quality of [social] services, they have established themselves as inducers of processes, which can be considered, of the expansion of state capacity, based on the concept of Gomide and Bochi (2016).

Institutional context: profile and experience of leaders and implementing agents

Ribeiro, Bonamino and Martinic (2020) highlight the profile and previous experience of the leaders and technicians of Copem, the body that implements Paic: university professors, technicians and professionals who worked in Sobral or from other education networks that have excelled in the implementation of the Program. They emphasize that they have management experience and knowledge correlated to the functions they assumed.

It was observed that all 40 professionals interviewed, regardless of their level of hierarchy in the implementation of Paic, had higher education degrees. Ribeiro, Bonamino and Martinic (2020) state that the analysis of the interviews denotes that Seduc technicians were professionals from the municipal education networks, especially from Sobral, who started working at Copem, by invitation, after having stood out as teachers, pedagogical coordinators, superintendents, education secretaries, technicians from Regional Coordinators for the Development of Education (Credes) and secretariats, with management experience and knowledge correlated to the functions they assumed in Paic.

The relevance of Sobral's experience and of the Committee for the Elimination of School Illiteracy for the implementation of Paic as a public policy is also expressed by the former secretary of education of Sobral (2005-6) and former state secretary of education (2007-2014):

> *[...] we had the experience of Sobral, in confronting school illiteracy, as a reality that we verified, in the case of Sobral, in 2001, and also the committee had already happened in the Legislative Assembly, which had been implanted when Ivo went to the Legislative Assembly as a state deputy. He proposed to the Assembly's board of directors the installation of the Ceará Committee for the Elimination of School Illiteracy, that is, this committee, I consider to be a very important seed for Paic* (Izolda Cela, 2018).

According to Mamede *et al.* (2021), Paic is the heir of two experiences in the institutional and cultural context: 1) the experience of Sobral/CE, initiated in 2001, which generated knowledge about how to implement a policy focused on literacy at the right age (INEP, 2005); 2) the institution of the Ceará Committee for the Elimination of School Illiteracy, created in 2004, after strong changes were initiated in Sobral, by the Legislative Assembly, which expanded the experience of these municipalities to others. In other words, it is an experience that started in a single municipality, which expanded incrementally to other municipalities in the state, and which only became public policy throughout the state in 2007. The interviews show that, in seven years, the same leaders and some of the important implementing agents had the possibility to improve strategies, reorganize and correct routes.

Cid Gomes was mayor of Sobral when the experiment began and, in 2007, he became governor of the State. Izolda Cela was Sobral's Secretary of Education and became Ceará State's Secretary of Education and, later, vice-governor. Maurício Holanda Maia was Sobral's Secretary of Education, Deputy Secretary, and later Secretary of Education for the State. Márcia Campos was one of those responsible for organizing the selection and training process for principals and pedagogical coordinators in the new policy implemented in Sobral and, in 2007, she became head of Copem.

While the design of Paic was being implemented in the state, other leaders linked, professionally and personally, to the above leaders were responsible for conducting the educational policy in Sobral, as is the case of Júlio A. da Costa. The lessons he learned in Sobral continued to inform Paic's actions at the state level. As time went by, these managers also went to Copem. And new leaders replaced them in Sobral. This chain of leadership formation, from Sobral and other municipalities, educational leaders and implementing agents, with training, commitment to work, ability to face problems and challenges, and experience in the implementation of Paic itself, can also be seen as one of the aspects of the institutional context of the implementation of this Program.

Economic context: shortage of budgetary resources

According to Vieira, Plank and Vidal (2019), the government's management from 1987 to 1991 allowed financial balance in the State of Ceará. The approval of the Constitutional Amendment 14 of September 1996 (BRAZIL, 1996) that established the Fund for Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and the Appreciation of Teaching (Fundef) expanded the financial resources for states and municipalities. It greatly favored the poorest regions of the country, expanding educational equity in terms of distribution of financial resources (PINTO, 2019). According to the former secretary of education of Sobral and the State of Ceará, the government in question favored negotiation and cooperation with municipalities[10]:

> *Naspolini, with our help, anticipated the concept of Fundeb by one year. In the beginning of 1996, we were doing an experiment that we called Single School, in which the state would give a pupil value to the municipality, so that the municipality would manage the whole network of schools in that territory: from kindergarten to high school. And then, when Fundef came along... I remember well that when people started talking about Fundef, Naspolini even went to the MEC to talk to Paulo Renato. So, it was a wave that passed over us, right? But it was a great wave because, with the state's own resources, our*

[10] Ratifying once again the previously mentioned interpretations about the expansion of state capacity in Ceará.

> *single network experiment had its limits, so to speak. But with Fundef, for each real that we had in the single network experiment, when Fundef came, it was ten times more for each... So, it was a very good wave.* (Maurício Holanda Maia, 2020).

According to Codes and Araújo (2018, p. 8) Ceará, in the Fund for Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and Valorization of Education Professionals (Fundeb in the Portuguese acronym),

> has always been dependent on the Union's complementation, evidencing its low financing capacity, given the number of enrollments observed. In 2017, for example, its student/year value was the sixth lowest (R$ 2,184.94) among the federal states, requiring a transfer of R$ 1.33 billion to reach the national floor (R$ 2.875,03).

In other words, based on the data above, we are faced here with an unusual implementation context: with low financing capacity (great shortage of budgetary resources), the ruling elites knew how to aggregate Fundef (and later Fundeb) to consolidate the implementation of the Paic in the context of the collaboration between state and municipalities.

Conclusion

This article analyzes aspects of the Paic implementation context, carried out in Ceará, offering contribution in terms of conceptual differentiation between public policy and public policy implementation context, as well as previous and a posteriori analysis categories that can serve as a research base for other educational policies. The corpus of analysis was composed of the results of the bibliographic review on Paic, Seduc documents, legislation, materials from Seduc's institutional site and from the Program, and 40 interviews with the Program's implementing agents and its main leaders, based on semi-structured scripts. The categories, *a priori*, selected were: political, institutional and economic context.

Regarding the political context - intentionalities and behaviors of the ruling elites - it was observed that Paic received a positive legacy from previous governments that, even before the 1988 Constitution, but with a greater focus on the guidelines of that Constitution, brought a new agenda, a more republican posture, with rationalization of State actions, search for fiscal balance and patterns of action more distant from the clientelistic forms that were in place until then. This situation corroborates the literature that deals with the expansion of state capacity in the country (LOBATO, 2009) and specifically in other states of the Brazilian federation (RIBEIRO *et al.*, 2020).

The commitment of the Gomes family to this new way of doing politics and the valuing of public education by these politicians led to the gathering of a group of professionals, in Sobral, after the 1988 Constitution, with commitment and experience in education. These professionals were also committed to change, able to face challenges and problems and to realize their intentions. They built strong personal, professional, and trusting ties among themselves, which was certainly relevant for mutual support in the face of adversity linked to the known difficulty of making changes in education and implementing public policies in general, as denoted in the literature.

The protection of the governor (Cid Gomes) to the decisions of the leaders allowed meritocratic selections for Copem, support to decisions that did not please the political bases, and the legitimacy of the leadership team. Moreover, the governor showed the mayors of the state that education was among his top priorities. This situation indicates the great capacity of those in power to influence the actions of the hierarchical chain of public policy. If Santos (1979) states that politics does not occur in a vacuum, intentions are not enough, because there is a context, this research indicates, in turn, that as stated by the same author, the intentionalities of the leaders are also relevant for change.

With regard to the institutional context - a characteristic of the bureaucracy - this research showed the huge range of new institutionalities created especially after the 1988 Constitution, but, in Ceará, focused on the area of education from the 1990s, corroborating Ribeiro, Bonanimo and Carvalho (2020). There were, effectively, new institutionalized forms of management that turn to new guidelines and working conditions for the implementing agents. The pioneering creation of a fund for distribution of resources between the state and municipalities, even before the arrival of Fundef, draws attention. This situation indicates that Ceará has created programs and institutions that serve as a reference for other localities in the country[11].

As for the institutional context - profile and experience of leaders and implementing agents - the survey showed the existence of a cycle of training of professionals and leaders that begins in Sobral, and expands to other municipalities that supply Copem and other areas of Seduc with an experienced team. These professionals all have higher education and a strong commitment to their work, as well as affective and trust bonds. Such findings corroborate the

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[11] To this end, Giusto, Ribeiro, and Vóvio (2021) show the influence of Paic on the creation of the National Pact for Literacy at the Right Age (Pnaic). The current form of distribution of resources from the Tax on Transactions regarding the Circulation of Merchandise and Services on Interstate and Intercity Transportation and Communications (ICMS) that is in the new formulation of Fundeb is also something created in Ceará in 2007 (CEARÁ, 2007b) and implemented from 2009.

literature that presents the interactions among implementers as a relevant contextual element for the success of a policy (LOTTA, 2014; OLIVEIRA, 2019a, 2019b; GIUSTO; RIBEIRO, 2019) and adds, that these interactions are also important among policy leaders, especially, when such interactions are long-lasting. In other words, this study indicates that the exchange, friendship, and professional and trust bonds between those who occupy the main positions of responsibility in achieving the policy, also interferes in the implementation of the public policy.

Another point pointed out by the research is that the Committee for the Elimination of School Illiteracy is considered relevant to Paic for several reasons: it allowed the gradual expansion of Sobral's design in the State, before the Program became official public policy; it brought together a set of important institutions that were essential for the institutionalization of the Program, especially in the beginning - Undime, Unicef, Aprece, among others; it allowed to disseminate in the State the notion of priority for learning at the right age.

The economic context showed that, despite the low financing capacity of the State, the ruling elites added Fundef and Fundeb to contribute to the implementation of the Paic and, then, they were able, with such resources, to make the negotiation with the municipalities more robust, establishing new modes of financial distribution, consolidating the collaborative regime in the State.

The findings of this research extend the subcategories of each of the dimensions of implementation context analyzed here, adding knowledge about Paic (chart 3).

Chart 3 – Fourteen *a posteriori* analysis subcategories

Context	Previous categories	Subcategories a *posteriori* (from the research)
Politic	Intentions and behaviors of the ruling elites	Legacy of previous governments: political agenda and behaviors.
		Profile and management skills of top-level leaders selected by the principal ruler.
		Longevity of professional and personal interaction among first level leaders.
		Ability of the principal governing body to sustain the decisions of the top-level leaders.
		Republican commitment of the principal ruler and top-level leaders.
		Ability of the principal governing body to show other governing bodies and officials the value of public education.
Institutional	Characteristic of bureaucracy	Degree and capacity of institutionalization of democratic and rational management standards.
	Profile and experience of leaders and implementing agents	Capacity to use in the implementation of the policy the first level leaders who participated in its design.
		Capacity to train and use new leaders and implementing agents.
		Gradual increase in the number of beneficiaries, leaders and implementing agents involved in the implementation of the policy.
		Use of knowledge to enhance the policy.
		Exchange, friendship, and professional ties of trust between the first and second level leaders.

Economic	Use of financial resources	Utilization of financial resources
		Negotiation and collaboration for the distribution and use of financial resources

Source: Interviews, literature review, documents. Own elaboration (2022)

This article has therefore offered an interpretation of aspects of the context of Paic implementation, making use of categories from the Political Science literature that point to the relevance of context for understanding policy implementation. In doing this analysis, this article explored contents of the aforementioned dimensions of context (previous categories mentioned above), also making suggestions that add categories that contribute to explain the context of implementation of the Paic and that can be tested in other researches that seek to analyze contexts of implementation of educational policies. It also contributed with the differentiation between what is public policy and its implementation context. Furthermore, we consider it relevant to prepare a future article to address the issue of beliefs and values of leaders and implementing agents as part of the context of Paic implementation, so that we can improve our understanding of it, but also to deepen research methodologies on the subject.

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