

## Research articles

# Educational policy and the new conservatism: beliefs mobilized in the discussion of the National Education Plan

## Política educacional e o novo conservadorismo: crenças mobilizadas na discussão do Plano Nacional de Educação

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### Abstract

This article examines the beliefs of the National Confederation of Associations of Parents of Students (CONFENAPAS) in the context of the development of the new National Education Plan (PNE). CONFENAPAS is a nongovernmental organization with national coverage, with representation in the National Education Forum and in the 2024 National Conference on Education. Using Sabatier's defense coalition model (DCM) (1998), this qualitative research focuses on the documents and discourses of CONFENAPAS. The results indicate that the organization supports the agenda of the new conservatism, emphasizing traditional moral values, control through "social order", "freedom of educational choice" that favors private models, "local autonomy" that can weaken inclusive guidelines, and deregulation to reduce state interference. The research reveals significant ideological tensions in the Brazilian educational field, underlining the need for ongoing debate on the role of education in promoting an inclusive and pluralistic society.

**Keywords:** Education Plan; CONFENAPAS; defense coalitions; new conservatism; educational policy.

### Resumo

Este artigo analisa as crenças da Confederação Nacional das Associações de Pais de Alunos (CONFENAPAS) no contexto da elaboração do novo Plano Nacional de Educação (PNE). A CONFENAPAS é uma organização não governamental de abrangência nacional, com representação no Fórum Nacional de Educação e na Conferência Nacional de Educação de 2024. Utilizando o Modelo de Coalizões de Defesa (MCD) de Sabatier (1998), a pesquisa qualitativa examina documentos e discursos da CONFENAPAS. Os resultados indicam que a organização apoia a agenda do novo conservadorismo, enfatizando valores morais tradicionais, controle através da "ordem social", "liberdade de escolha educacional" que favorece modelos privados, "autonomia local" que pode enfraquecer diretrizes inclusivas, e desregulamentação para reduzir a interferência estatal. A pesquisa revela tensões ideológicas significativas no campo educacional brasileiro, sublinhando a necessidade de um debate contínuo sobre o papel da educação na promoção de uma sociedade inclusiva e pluralista.

**Palavras-chave:** Plano de Educação; CONFENAPAS; coalizões de defesa; novo conservadorismo; política educacional.

### INTRODUCTION

The National Education Plan (PNE) is a state policy conceived as a strategic planning instrument to guide educational actions in Brazil for a period of ten years.<sup>1</sup> It covers all levels and modalities of education, ensuring coordination between the various education

<sup>1</sup> The National Education Plan (PNE) was instituted by Law No. 13,005 on June 25, 2014. It established guidelines and goals for Brazilian educational policy with a ten-year term, that is, until June 25, 2024. In view of the proximity of the end of this period and to prevent a hiatus in educational policies, the federal government sanctioned Law No. 14,934, on July 25, 2024, which extends the validity of the current PNE until December 31, 2025.

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systems in all regions of the country. The purpose of the PNE is to construct the national education system in a collaborative manner and establish guidelines, objectives, goals and strategies to ensure the maintenance and development of education at its various levels, stages and modalities.

Legally, the PNE is supported by the Federal Constitution of 1988 (Brasil, 1988) and by the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education (LDB) in force (Brasil, 1996), which establish the regime of collaboration between federative entities and ensure shared responsibility in educational management. This legal aspect reinforces the role of the PNE as a form of federative cooperation, which is essential for uniform educational quality.

Based on article 214 of the Federal Constitution, the aims of the PNE include the elimination of illiteracy, universalization of school attendance, improvement in the quality of education, training for work, humanistic, scientific and technological promotion in the country, and the establishment of goals for the application of public resources to education as a proportion of the gross domestic product (Brasil, 1988). These actions, which are integrated by the public authorities of the different federative spheres, aim to ensure inclusive, equitable and high-quality education for all.

Updating the PNE is a complex and indispensable process for aligning educational policies with contemporary social, economic and technological facets of transformation. However, there are significant challenges associated with this process, such as financial adequacy and the development of effective management strategies. In addition to outlining educational goals, the PNE engages multiple social actors—academics, educators, politicians and members of civil society—in the formulation and updating of its guidelines, reflecting the dynamic needs of society and shaping future directions for education in Brazil.

Historically, the development of the PNE is marked by intense debates and ideological confrontations, reflecting the sociopolitical dynamics of Brazil. Each revision takes place in a distinct historical context, requiring flexibility and adaptability to handle varied economic and institutional conditions. This constant update highlights the relevance of the collaboration regime between the different levels of government—federal, state and municipal—that the PNE aims to strengthen, ensuring the effective implementation of educational policies in an equitable manner throughout the country.

Discussions about its revision and renewal are fundamental because they reflect the values, hopes and concerns of the nation regarding the future of education. In this regard, the National Conference on Education (Conferência Nacional de Educação - CONAE) guarantees the representativeness and diversity of perspectives in the process of further developing the PNE. Through lectures, round tables and working groups, participants analyze the challenges and opportunities of Brazilian education and discuss solutions and alternatives for the next decade. It is a democratic space for debate and deliberation that brings together various social actors to discuss the country's educational policies. CONAE takes place after the regional, municipal, state and district conferences, allowing discussions and proposals at the local level to be taken to the national event. During the national conference, the guidelines, goals and actions that will compose the PNE are debated and defined, considering the demands and needs of Brazilian society. Thus, the National Conference on Education significantly contributes to the development of a PNE that is more aligned with the reality and challenges of education in Brazil.

CONAE 2024, which took place from January 28 to 30, 2024, resulted in contributions and deliberations that were used to prepare the Base Document of the National Education Plan (Brasil, 2024b). This document is intended to serve as a strategic guide and will be used as a reference for the formulation and implementation of the PNE, planned *a priori* to cover the period from 2024 to 2034.

The National Confederation of Student Parents Associations (CONFENAPAIS)—a nonprofit national nongovernmental organization founded on March 15, 1988—has taken a position contrary to the guidelines proposed for the National Education Plan 2024–2034. On its website, in virtual meetings and through social networks, the organization has articulated its opposition to what it identifies as a trend of “ideological indoctrination” in schools (Confederação Nacional das Associações de Pais de Alunos, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c, 2024d, 2024e). Specifically, on its

official website, the confederation has dedicated a page entitled “CONAE 2024 transforming education into an indoctrination machine”, where it provides materials contrary to the PNE as well as guidelines for its members to address the issue (Confederação Nacional das Associações de Pais de Alunos, 2024a).

In addition, on April 23, 2024, during a public hearing organized by the Education Committee of the Chamber of Deputies, CONFENAPAS presented its criticisms and perspectives on the proposal for PNE 2024-2034 articulated in CONAE (Brasil, 2024a). The theme of the hearing was “Control and strategies for validating education as empowerment”. The audience was guided by the base document entitled “National Education Plan 2024-2034: State policy to guarantee education as a human right, with social justice and sustainable socio-environmental development” (Brasil, 2024b) and provided a stage for the organization; among other topics, the contributions of CONAE 2024 to the National Education Plan were discussed. CONFENAPAS used this opportunity to present its perspective on educational policies and legislative decisions in Brazil.

Because it is a national organization that brings together parents, educators, community leaders, lawyers and political activists, with a political *lobby* and representation in the National Education Forum, and that has actively participated in the process of formulating the PNE, the organization clearly represents a voice that reflects the concerns of a segment of the population. Thus, analyzing its positions contribute to the identification of the challenges and tensions in the field of education, revealing how different views on the role of education and the ideal design for educational policy can influence decisions in the field. Thus, the objective of this study is to analyze the beliefs that shape the perspective defended by CONFENAPAS. For this purpose, the framework of the defense coalitions model (Sabatier, 1998), created by Paul A. Sabatier in the 1980s, was employed. This model can be used to explain the movements that occurred within public policy subsystems, such as the field of educational policies in Brazil.

This article is organized into seven sections. Following this introduction, the second section examines the influence of the conservative movement on Brazilian educational policy. In the third section, we present the theoretical model that underlies our analysis. The fourth section then describes the methodological approach and ethical issues involved in the research. Next, we apply the model to examine the beliefs of the institution in focus, followed by a discussion of these beliefs in light of the principles of Brazilian educational legislation, including the Federal Constitution of 1988 and the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education. The seventh and final section presents the conclusions and final considerations of the study.

## NEW CONSERVATISM IN EDUCATION

The new conservatism is a political current that rearticulates historically conservative elements. These elements include the following: the defense of a traditional family with rigid and unequal gender roles; the imposition of Christian religious moral values, which often exclude other perspectives; the valorization of hierarchy and authority, which can perpetuate inequalities; exacerbated nationalism and patriotism; the preservation of cultural traditions to the detriment of diversity; the uncompromising defense of the free market and private property, often at the expense of social equity; and severe punitivism that favors repressive policies. This political current aims to maintain and strengthen traditional social structures, particularly in opposition to progressive social changes that are considered threats to their ideological foundations.

Michael Apple (2003) defined the new conservatism as a contemporary ideological and political alliance that differs from traditional conservatism but that still maintains elements of its roots. This new form of conservatism is marked by a fluidity in the borders between neoliberals, neoconservatives, authoritarian populists and the new professional middle class, allowing for strategic collaborations and changes in focus as necessary. It is characterized by a significant increase in authoritarianism and the influence of ultraconservative religious groups, which advocate strict policies against addressing issues such as systemic racism, sexual

diversity and gender in schools, often justifying their actions based on biblical interpretations (Apple et al., 2022).

This form of conservatism is notable for its ability to mobilize the popular feelings and concerns of the people, using pedagogical strategies that may resemble progressive practices but with the objective of rearticulating social and cultural demands to align with their conservative agendas. In essence, it is a dynamic and complex alliance that combines elements of neoliberalism, religious conservatism and authoritarian populism to maintain and expand the reach of its power. Although it has global characteristics, the new conservatism adapts to local specificities, such as in Brazil, where it incorporates the country's historical and cultural dynamics (Apple et al., 2022).

When analyzing the specificities of the new conservatism in the Brazilian context, Marina Basso Lacerda (2018) created the concept of "periphery neoconservatism", highlighting the unique characteristics that distinguish it from traditional neoconservatism observed in countries such as the United States. First, this movement in Brazil is less imperialist and more focused on hemispheric insertion, reflecting a less autonomous and more regionalized approach. In addition, despite the influence of neoliberal principles on the new global conservatism, in Brazil, this adhesion is less pronounced, in part owing to the needs of the electorate of neoconservative parliamentarians, which are often composed of poorer segments of the population, thus requiring greater intervention and state protection. These particularities of periphery neoconservatism in Brazil highlight its adaptation to local socioeconomic and political complexities, specifically by shaping its policies and influence according to the educational and social context of the country (Lacerda, 2018).

In Brazilian education, the conservative movement is a dynamic and multifaceted phenomenon, bringing together a variety of groups with convergent goals in the preservation and promotion of traditional values within the educational system. This alliance is deeply connected to the global rise of conservatism and aims to respond to contemporary social changes, reaffirming the norms and values that it perceives as threatened by progressive trends in current education. Lima and Hypolito (2019) offered a critical perspective on the expansion of the new conservatism in Brazilian education, highlighting it as part of a broader strategy to reconfigure the public and private space according to conservative ideals. This expansion is driven by a rhetoric that values traditional morals and vehemently opposes the welfare state and progressive agendas, especially those linked to gender equality and human rights.

When mapping the lines of force and action of the new Brazilian conservatism in education, Teixeira and Henriques (2022) highlighted four central dimensions: moral, economic, security and social. In terms of morality, conservatism reinforces an education that promotes traditional family values and opposes discussions about gender and sexuality. In the economic dimension, it favors a market-oriented approach, encouraging privatization and the reduced role of the state. This technical and utilitarian perspective prioritizes efficiency and preparation for the job market to the detriment of more holistic and critical education. From a security point of view, this new form of conservatism is manifested in policies that reinforce authority and order in the school environment. Socially, it is revealed in intolerance to diversity and resistance to inclusive educational policies. The rights and identities of minority groups are often questioned and marginalized, thereby reinforcing exclusion and inequality (Teixeira; Henriques, 2022).

In line with these dimensions, conservative policies are manifested in four main initiatives highlighted in the current literature in the field of education: 1) the Escola sem Partido (School without a Party) program, which aims to promote political and ideological neutrality, imposing restrictions on the freedom of expression of educators and limiting the inclusion of topics considered controversial; 2) the defense of the National Curricular Common Base (BNCC), which is considered a strategic tool for advancing the conservative agenda, standardizing pedagogical contents and practices at the national level and reinforcing a vision of education aligned with traditional values; 3) *homeschooling*, which is promoted as an alternative for parents who want an education based on traditional moral and religious values, without the influence of progressive ideologies; and 4) the militarization

of schools, which involves the introduction of military practices and norms in the school environment, including the presence of the military in the administration of schools, with the objective of imposing a school culture based on hierarchy and discipline (Lima; Hypolito, 2019; Lima; Golbspan; Santos, 2022; Teixeira; Henriques, 2022).

In addition, neoconservatives intensify their strategies in the educational context through the formation of networks and pressure groups that act together with school principals, educational councils and policy-making bodies, aiming to disseminate their ideas and shape the educational environment according to their principles (Lima; Hypolito, 2019). The influence of this alliance on Brazilian educational policy has direct implications for the development of educational policies and practices with the potential to significantly remodel the educational environment, affecting all aspects, from curricula to teaching methodologies and school management.

Thus, investigating the beliefs and strategies of the actors involved in the conservative movement in education is crucial to understanding the complex network of motivations that influence its goals. More specifically, this analysis allows us to understand how the conservative movement seeks to reconfigure education according to its principles, identifying points of consensus and conflict with current educational principles. In addition, this understanding facilitates the development of effective responses and approaches that integrate and address different perspectives.

## THE DEFENSE COALITION MODEL

The defense coalition model (DCM), or advocacy coalition framework (ACF), developed by Paul A. Sabatier (1998), is a robust theoretical framework for the analysis of public policies. This model was developed to capture the complex and multifaceted dynamics that characterize the formulation, implementation and changes of policies. However, it departs from the traditional policy cycle concept, which is based on the idea of heuristic stages, and from the limitations of *top-down* and *bottom-up* perspectives in the study of policy implementation. Another key aspect of the model is the understanding that there are significant conflicts between groups with different beliefs and interests (Sabatier, 1998).

A fundamental principle of the defense coalition model is the premise that humans have bounded rationality. Although they are endowed with rational capacity, they cannot fully grasp the complexity of reality through reason alone (Carvalho, 2019; Moreira, 2023). Consequently, they rely on their beliefs to interpret the observed phenomena, resorting to simplifications and cognitive biases. These beliefs function as heuristic filters that mediate the perception and analysis of events, significantly influencing the formation of agendas and strategies within the scope of public policies.

To obtain a general understanding of the DCM, it is essential to explore four main concepts: the policy subsystem, advocacy coalitions, the belief system and political learning. These concepts are based on the assumptions of the DCM and provide a methodological and analytical framework that helps explain how coalitions are formed, operate and influence public policies.

A policy subsystem is the primary unit of analysis in the DCM; it is the area of activity where the actions and interactions of coalition members occur over time. It is composed of actors from various public and private organizations that are intensely engaged with a specific problem or issue of public policy. The continuous and systematic interaction of these actors within a given geographical and thematic context forms the basis of the policy subsystem (Vicente; Calmon, 2011; Carvalho, 2019).

These dynamic structures capture the diversity and complexity of interactions between actors with varied resources, interests and levels of influence. Within a policy subsystem, actors may perform different functions and interact in a complex way to influence the decision-making process and the outcomes of public policies. Each coalition is formed by individuals or organizations from different sectors and with different levels of influence, such as parliamentarians, public officials, activists, journalists, community representatives, and academics, who share common beliefs and values and work in a coordinated manner to promote their agendas. Through these interactions, coalitions seek to shape the political and institutional environment, directly influencing the formulation and implementation of public policies.



A defense coalition is composed of diverse actors who hold different positions in society but who share a common belief system and work together to influence public policies. These beliefs, which encompass values, goals and interpretations of political problems, are manifested in the actions of actors over time and constitute the basis for the formation and operation of coalitions (Vicente; Calmon, 2011; Carvalho, 2019; Oliveira; Sanches Filho, 2022). Through the sharing of beliefs within the various political subsystems, the strategies and actions of the coalitions are outlined, thus promoting the interests shared by the members in the formulation and implementation of public policies. Through ideological cohesion, coalitions articulate themselves in defense of their positions, directly influencing the decision-making process and the direction of public policies.

The belief system of coalitions is structured in three hierarchical levels: deep core *beliefs*, political *core beliefs* and secondary *beliefs*. Communication across different levels of beliefs in the DCM is marked by an interactive process and the consequent influences. The deep core directly influences the political core, which in turn shapes secondary beliefs. Understanding the interrelationship between these levels is essential for understanding the dynamics of coalitions in the context of public policies.

The deep core incorporates fundamental beliefs about human nature, priority values and ideological principles that are highly resistant to change (Vicente; Calmon, 2011; Carvalho, 2019; Moreira, 2023). These beliefs are deeply integrated into the individual convictions of the actors and are stable over time, as they are rarely influenced by specific events. Examples of deep core beliefs include views about justice, equity, freedom, and the nature of the common good. Because they are so entrenched, these beliefs form the basis on which the other levels of the belief system are built, providing a solid normative foundation that guides the decisions and actions of actors within coalitions.

The policy core includes policy goals and specific preferences on public issues. These beliefs are directly related to the subsystem in which the coalition is created. Although these beliefs are more susceptible to change than those of the deep core are, they still tend to be relatively stable (Vicente; Calmon, 2011; Carvalho, 2019; Moreira, 2023). The beliefs of the political core shape the strategies and priorities of defense coalitions, directly influencing their actions and advocacy campaigns. These beliefs are crucial for the cohesion of the coalition, corresponding to the central element that keeps the actors united around common goals. The beliefs of the political core encompass assumptions about the causes of problems, the best approaches to solve them and the main goals to be achieved.

Secondary beliefs encompass the technical and practical aspects of policy implementation and are more flexible and adaptable in response to new information or changes in the political context (Vicente; Calmon, 2011; Carvalho, 2019; Moreira, 2023). These beliefs include details about the application of policies, such as specific intervention methods, resource allocation and technical regulations. Owing to their practical and specific nature, secondary aspects are more susceptible to adjustments and negotiations, allowing defense coalitions to adapt their strategies and tactics to changing conditions. Flexibility in secondary aspects is essential for the resilience of coalitions, as it allows them to respond quickly to new data, technological innovations or changes in political circumstances.

Political learning is a crucial process that refers to the way in which actors within defense coalitions adapt their beliefs and strategies in response to new information, experiences and changes in the political environment, including the beliefs of individuals or groups (Oliveira; Sanches Filho, 2022). This learning process occurs both within a coalition and among competing coalitions, influencing the evolution of public policies over time. Political learning is essential for the resilience and effectiveness of coalitions, allowing them to adjust their approaches and maintain relevance in a dynamic political landscape.

In this context, resilience can be understood as the ability of coalitions to adapt to adverse changes and recover from challenges, ensuring the continuity of their objectives and strategies, even in the face of external and internal pressures. This adaptability is essential for coalitions to remain influential with respect to the formulation and implementation of public policies.

The political learning process can result in significant changes to policies, especially when new evidence challenges secondary beliefs, which tend to be most impacted, and, in some cases,

the beliefs of the political core (Oliveira; Sanches Filho, 2022). Mechanisms such as discussion and debate forums facilitate this learning process, providing structured opportunities for interaction and the exchange of information between different coalitions. These interactions can lead to a better understanding of policy issues and the identification of more effective and innovative solutions.

However, even with changes and new information that confront the beliefs of the political core, antagonization bias (*devil shift*), a phenomenon whereby actors from different coalitions perceive their opponents in an antagonistic way and overestimate their political power (Carvalho, 2019), can prevent significant changes in the beliefs of the political core, effectively maintaining the stability and cohesion of coalitions despite external pressures (Moreira, 2023). The phenomenon of antagonization encourages the pooling of efforts and resources between actors who share similar beliefs, aiming to strengthen the defense and search for the legitimacy of their ideas in the policy subsystem in which they act.

In summary, the defense coalition model is a relevant theoretical and methodological framework that enables the analysis and understanding of the complex dynamics of public policies, highlighting the centrality of beliefs in the political process.

For the purpose of this study, the organization chosen for analysis is CONFENAPAIS, an educational political subsystem in Brazil that contributes to the coalition of the new conservatism that is present and active in this subsystem. Our objective is to understand the set of beliefs that originates and sustains this coalition. Thus, this study uses the analysis category of the “belief system” of the defense coalition model as a theoretical lens, with the purpose of identifying the set of beliefs that make up CONFENAPAIS and how these beliefs influence its actions in relation to the National Education Plan.

## METHODOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL ASPECTS

This investigation aims to identify the beliefs that drive attacks on the National Education Plan carried out by CONFENAPAIS, an organization active in the educational policy subsystem. The confederation brings together parents, educators, community leaders, lawyers, teachers and political activists from across the country who seek to influence the formulation and implementation of educational policies.

The National Confederation of Associations of Parents of Students stands out among the groups aligned with the new conservatism, as it has played a crucial role in mobilizing these same groups to influence the debate concerning the PNE (Motoryn, 2024). A series of reports reveal that these groups have articulated intense task forces, using more than 40 *WhatsApp* groups to coordinate efforts and promote their agendas (Aquino, 2024; Motoryn, 2024; Queiroz; Correia, 2024), seeking to shape the goals of education according to their beliefs.

The study is qualitative and uses documentary sources for the analyses. The analyzed materials were collected from the confederation’s official website, including general information and two specific documents on the PNE: an e-book on the PNE/SNE (Confederação Nacional das Associações de Pais de Alunos, 2024b) and the “Manifesto for Education: Analysis and Proposals for the Future of Brazilian Education” (Confederação Nacional das Associações de Pais de Alunos, 2024d). In addition, the posts on the confederation’s social networks and speeches made during a public hearing organized by the Education Commission of the Chamber of Deputies on April 23, 2024 (Brasil, 2024a), and a public hearing organized by the Education Commission before the Legislative Assembly of the State of Santa Catarina on May 23, 2024 (Assembleia Legislativa do Estado de Santa Catarina, 2024), were analyzed.

After the material collected from the identified sources was reviewed, the perspectives defended by the confederation were analyzed. The ideas were organized and classified according to the different levels of belief established by the defense coalition model, following the proposed structure.

The documents used in the analysis are public policy documents that are freely accessible on the internet, thus ensuring transparency and ease of access to information. In addition, all the references and sources used were duly cited and acknowledged in accordance with

academic standards. Given this adherence to ethical and citation standards, this study is fully compliant with the ethical criteria for conducting scientific research.

## ANALYSIS OF CONFENAPAIS BELIEFS

From the analysis of the materials produced and speeches given by representatives of the National Confederation of Associations of Parents of Students, regarding the PNE and the National Education Conference, a structure of beliefs was identified that shapes the organization's approach to education. Using the defense coalition model, we explored these beliefs in terms of the observed dimensions.

The beliefs of the deep core of CONFENAPAIS include a strong appreciation of "family traditions" with a conservative bias and of "social order" as a control mechanism, which are considered essential for cultural stability and continuity. Lacerda (2018) noted that the ideal of family for groups aligned with the new conservatism is based on the logic of privatization. In this sense, there is a search for the maintenance of family and, especially, patriarchal power and individualism, to the detriment of a logic based on collectivity and social welfare. This perspective causes what Brown (2019) referred to as the expansion of the sphere to be protected; the family, or the private sphere, begins to assume more responsibilities and to influence the public sphere based on its values and convictions. Such characteristics result in an intimate relationship with neoliberal principles since the traditional family, for these groups, should perform functions that were previously attributed to the welfare state and thus guarantee certain social rights. This dynamic is described in the following excerpts:

They also intend, eh, to force education from zero years of age, see, Deputy? Zero years old. What is the purpose of this? To separate our children from the influence of the family? Because we bring it to the center. We pass on values, we pass on principles (Assembleia Legislativa do Estado de Santa Catarina, 2024, 1:20:59 – 1:21:20).

What they intend is to take our children away from us, to take them from our family, to leave them in charge, from an early age, from zero years of age, of state control and indoctrination of this power project (Brasil, 2024a, p.16).

I would like to suggest to the thinking heads of this project of power that they retreat from this attempt, because, as fathers and mothers become aware of what is behind it, they will end up causing a disturbance in the country. there is the most important and sacred thing in our lives. So, rethink this; rethink about risk; [and] rethink the intellectual dishonesty of this proposal (Brasil, 2024a, p.17).

This perspective emphasizes the importance of maintaining traditional family values for social cohesion. Such beliefs support the defense of policies that promote the teaching of traditional and moral values and advocate resistance to educational reforms that could introduce progressive ideals perceived as destabilizing.

In the sphere of the political nucleus, appreciation of "family traditions" with a conservative bias and of the "social order" is reflected in this nucleus by CONFENAPAIS in the defense of "freedom of educational choice". Based on the principle of liberty, the organization argues that parents should have maximum freedom to choose how their children will be educated. This freedom of choice includes the choice of schools, curricula or methodologies. This belief is aligned with a demand for a form of education that is supposedly neutral and impartial and free from the influence of educational programs that may introduce content considered inappropriate or divergent from the values defended by the family. This demand is directly related to the beliefs of the organization's deep core, which reflect values that uphold family traditions and the maintenance of a supposed social order. These beliefs can be identified in the different speeches of the studied coalition, as shown in the excerpts below:

Do you know the PNE–National Education Plan–2024 to 2034? Understand what will happen if it is approved by the National Congress. It will be prohibited: [...] the freedom of choice of parents [...] (Confederação Nacional das Associações de Pais de Alunos, 2024b, p. 1).



Understand what the National Education Plan is and why it can end civic-military schools, criminalize *homeschooling*, prohibit faith orientation in faith-based schools and promote, with public resources, [and] the WOKE agenda, which includes topics such as sexual orientation and gender identity in all educational units, including private institutions, because they are what parents turn to when they want to avoid this type of situation in public schools (Confederação Nacional das Associações de Pais de Alunos, 2024e).

What our children will be subjected to. They will be forced to: [...] they will be removed from the education of their families and will spend the entire day being indoctrinated by the government [...] (Confederação Nacional das Associações de Pais de Alunos, 2024b, p. 2).

Families and employers aim to educate the next generation, form human capital to develop the economy and ensure that state resources are used effectively [...] to advance a neoliberal ideology = less state, less state regulation/power and more individual freedoms (Confederação Nacional das Associações de Pais de Alunos, 2024d, p. 6).

This position promotes support for choice policies and the reduced role of the state in education, influencing resistance to educational programs understood as progressive. CONFENAPAI argues that greater freedom of choice allows parents to select institutions and programs that best reflect their beliefs and values, ensuring that their children's education is aligned with their convictions.

Notably, according to Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999), the perspective of freedom is a belief that, because it is a fundamental value, tends to be located in the deep core. However, as discussed by Moreira et al. (2022, p. 2824-2825):

The principle of individual freedom is translated into the political nucleus [...] [T]here is [...] a process of "ontologization" of the beliefs of the political nucleus, which, by nature, tend to be more empirical than the beliefs of the political nucleus...[the] deep core. [...] [W]hat occurs is an expansion of the limits of the deep core, which begins to encompass certain beliefs of the political core, with a decrease in the permeability of these beliefs. This process tends to reduce the perspective that political consensus is a necessary element for the production of public policy.

In secondary beliefs, the valorization of local autonomy and the deregulation and decentralization of educational norms are central. CONFENAPAI considers local autonomy as crucial, ensuring that education reflects the needs and values of the community and allowing greater local control over education. The beliefs in local sovereignty and autonomy can be understood by both ideological and strategic bias, allowing the organization to expand its influence in environments where it can exert direct control. These beliefs can be identified in the following passages:

Do you know the PNE–National Education Plan–2024 to 2034? Understand what will happen if it is approved by the National Congress. It will be prohibited: [...] the autonomy of states, municipalities and school directors [...] (Confederação Nacional das Associações de Pais de Alunos, 2024b, p. 1).

PNE–How it is being designed–Centralization of the decision-making process with the National Education System (SNE\*): combating compartmentalized federalism, [placing] municipalization and the autonomy of federated entities in the management of education and concentration of binding decisions in very few hands, without any social control (Confederação Nacional das Associações de Pais de Alunos, 2024d, p. 5).

So, for example, they defined there that every school will start to adopt neutral language, for example. Everyone will have to comply; there is no longer competent legislation at the municipal or state level. All schools will have to integrate neutral language (Assembleia Legislativa do Estado de Santa Catarina, 2024, 1:15:38 – 1:15:53).

This approach facilitates the implementation of educational policies that reflect traditional values, as opposed to progressive trends at the national level. By focusing on the local level,

these groups adjust educational policies according to their perspectives, resisting contemporary curricular inclusion, such as sex education and gender discussions. Local influence is reinforced by support networks such as schools, churches and community organizations mobilized to support conservative ideologies in elections and other forms of civic participation.

These beliefs and the resulting policies not only reflect a complex network of values but also indicate potential areas of conflict and collaboration between different interest groups in the National Education Plan and, consequently, in the educational field. Deep beliefs regarding the importance of the family and the distrust of external influences shape the action strategies of CONFENAPAI and directly influence the educational policies proposed and debated in the context of the PNE and CONAE. By identifying and understanding these dynamics, we can anticipate the challenges and opportunities that arise at the interface between education and public policy, thereby contributing to a more informed and constructive dialog about the future of education in Brazil.

## **DIVERGENCES BETWEEN CONFENAPAI BELIEFS AND BRAZILIAN EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLES**

To understand the influences that structure contemporary Brazilian educational policy, it is essential to analyze how the various organizations involved in the formulation and implementation of policies conceive education and position themselves in relation to values and social dynamics. In this context, understanding how the beliefs and strategies of these organizations relate to the principles of education is essential.

From this perspective, this section presents an analysis of how the beliefs of CONFENAPAI align with or diverge from the fundamental principles of education in force established by the Federal Constitution (Brasil, 1988) and the Law of Directives and Bases of Education (Brasil, 1996), to which the base document for the PNE 2024-2034 is linked. This comparison will make it possible to identify significant convergences and divergences, offering a deeper understanding of the tensions and challenges present in the formulation of the PNE.

In the process of defending the legitimacy of its beliefs, CONFENAPAI presents an argument with respect to the cultural, economic and security spheres. Culturally, the confederation promotes traditional and conservative values, emphasizing the importance of the family and morality in education, which reflects resistance to social changes perceived as threats to the traditional family structure. For example, the institution's defense of autonomy in educational choice and decentralization of educational decisions echoes the agenda of minimizing the role of the state in education. This perspective not only favors a market-oriented approach but also enhances the implementation of policies that favor private institutions and public-private financing mechanisms. The defense of the militarization of education can be understood as a strategy to strengthen parental control based on hierarchy and discipline, which are fundamental principles of militarism. These beliefs originate both from the deep core, which sustains the coalition's basic values and principles, and from the political core, which defines its specific strategies and priorities.

The LDB (Article 3) and the Federal Constitution (Article 206) emphasize diversity as a crucial educational value, promoting education that respects cultural plurality and that is capable of adapting to the different realities of the country. However, CONFENAPAI's emphasis on maintaining traditional values and resistance to content that it perceives as progressive may limit students' exposure to the diversity of thoughts and experiences, which is essential for the development of a democratic and tolerant society. Prioritizing a worldview rooted in a specific conception of morality and tradition risks promoting an education that is not only less inclusive but also less capable of preparing young people for participation in a multicultural society.

Both the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education and the Federal Constitution establish that the objective of education should be the development of students, preparing them for the job market and for citizenship committed to human solidarity (Brasil, 1988, 1996). In contrast, the vision of CONFENAPAI focuses strictly on the employability and qualifications of the workforce to develop the economy, thus prioritizing preparation for the market to the detriment of training that also integrates social and civic aspects (Confederação Nacional das

Associações de Pais de Alunos, 2024d). This view translates the beliefs of the deep core into the subsystem of educational policies, which constitute the beliefs of the political core of the organization. By reducing the importance of education that values social and civic aspects, the organization thus seeks to maintain this responsibility within the family and preserve family traditions and the supposed social order.

This perspective can restrict the full development of students, limiting the diversity of experiences and openness to new ideas and transforming education into a space of conformity where questioning and innovation are discouraged. In addition, by protecting against external influences perceived as threatening, education becomes an environment of compliance with specific values, compromising the diversity of thought and critical capacity of students.

The strong resistance to the inclusion of topics such as gender and sexuality in school curricula, considered by the confederation as elements of an “ideological indoctrination”, is also indicative of a broader concern with the preservation of specific (traditional) cultural and moral values. This stance is in line with the conservative approach that perceives such discussions as a threat to the moral integrity of society and therefore seeks to limit their presence in educational institutions. Opposition to addressing these issues can deprive students of access to adequate sex education and a more comprehensive understanding of human diversity, thus deviating from the ideals of inclusion, pluralism of ideas and diversity established by Brazilian educational legislation (Brasil, 1988, 1996).

Upon examining the base document for the NPE for 2024-2034 (Brasil, 2024c), its alignment with the principles and ideals enshrined in Brazilian educational legislation, which is discussed here, is evident. This plan incorporates a vision that emphasizes the importance of inclusion, diversity, social justice and sustainable socioenvironmental development. These guidelines not only reinforce the commitment to education as a universal right, as stipulated by the Federal Constitution and the LDB, but also seek to promote a more just society that is adapted to the diverse cultural and social realities of Brazil.

On the other hand, CONFENAPAIIS adopts a stance that excessively values the role and control of the traditional family in the educational process. It maintains that education should be guided by traditional moral values and supports the concentration of autonomy in the educational choice of families. This position may inadvertently neglect the interests and integral development of children and young people as subjects of law.

In the context of the defense coalition model, this stance reflects the beliefs of the deep core of the confederation. As a member of the conservative coalition, the confederation emphasizes the preservation of traditional family values and the supposed social order. By translating these beliefs into the political core, CONFENAPAIIS promotes policies that reinforce parental autonomy and resistance to progressive educational reforms. These policies include, for example, the option for *homeschooling*, which is considered an alternative to protect children from negative external influences, making it impossible to materialize the right to pluralism of ideas and diversity.

The analysis of the materials produced by CONFENAPAIIS on the proposal for the PNE 2024–2034 discussed in CONAE reveals significant divergences from the base document, indicating a distortion of information that may serve strategies to mobilize its support base. For example, the confederation alleges that the PNE will prohibit faith-based schools and remove the freedom of choice of parents and the autonomy of states and municipalities (Confederação Nacional das Associações de Pais de Alunos, 2024b). However, such prohibitions or restrictions are not present in the base document of the PNE. Hence, CONFENAPAIIS's strategy is to generate fear and misinformation amplifying alleged threats to family traditions and educational autonomy. In this way, it aims to strengthen its conservative agenda by mobilizing parents and supporters to pressure parliamentarians and disseminate these allegations through social networks and other media.

This approach can be understood as a form of antagonization within the defense coalition model, where CONFENAPAIIS portrays the PNE and its defenders as exaggerated and harmful threats to education and family values. By distorting information about the proposal for the PNE, CONFENAPAIIS directs the perceptions of its support base, which amplifies the confederation's control over the educational narrative, thus reinforcing its positions.

To consolidate these beliefs, the confederation also guides its members to pressure parliamentarians not to approve the PNE and to support the extension of the current education guidelines. This action aims to materialize the deep core of beliefs of the confederation by maintaining the *status quo* and preventing the progressive changes proposed by the PNE. In addition, CONFENAPAIIS encourages its members to pass on these guidelines as a strategy for expanding the coalition, thus reinforcing the mobilization and dissemination of its beliefs and values.

From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that CONFENAPAIIS's opposition to the PNE is not merely a reaction to specific aspects of the plan but rather the manifestation of a more fundamental ideological dispute over the role of education in the cultural and moral formation of citizens. This clash reflects fundamental differences in the understanding of what education should be, who should control it and what values it should transmit. This understanding is based on the beliefs of the deep core of the confederation, which emphasize the preservation of traditional family values and the supposed social order. By translating these beliefs into the political core, CONFENAPAIIS advocates policies that emphasize freedom of educational choice and remove the centrality of the state in promoting education.

The ideas and proposals defended by CONFENAPAIIS are intrinsically aligned with the principles of the new conservatism that were presented in the previous section. This alignment is evidenced by the promotion of traditional moral values, by the resistance to gender diversity, by the emphasis on the freedom of choice of parents to maintain family traditions, even to the detriment of the rights of their children, and by the defense of the reduced role of the state in education. These conservative proposals are in sharp contrast to the educational principles enshrined in the Federal Constitution and the Law of Directives and Bases for National Education.

This tension between conservative proposals and established legal principles highlights a significant conflict in the field of education. On the one hand, there is an attempt to defend traditional values and to restrict the role of the state and the school in the formation of individuals. On the other hand, there is a republican, legal and constitutional commitment to promoting education that recognizes and values diversity and that seeks equity for all students, regardless of their origins or personal characteristics. In this sense, the adoption of the CONFENAPAIIS proposals would imply a substantial revision of the principles that currently guide Brazilian education, which could lead to a setback in the advances made in terms of inclusion and diversity.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study examined the beliefs of CONFENAPAIIS, an organization active in the Brazilian educational policy subsystem. Through the analysis of official and publicized documents, we identified how the confederation promotes traditional values that place the perspective of the family at the center of the educational process, often to the detriment of the right of children and young people to an inclusive and equitable education, as stipulated by Brazilian educational legislation.

The confederation uses its influence to mobilize parents and other interest groups, articulating its ideas and values through information campaigns and political pressure and seeking to modify or revoke aspects of the PNE that contradict its fundamental values. The analysis revealed that although CONFENAPAIIS positions itself as a defender of freedom of choice and local autonomy, its practices can, paradoxically, limit the diversity of educational experiences. In addition, the study showed how CONFENAPAIIS uses disinformation and fear to mobilize its support base, distorting aspects of the PNE to generate resistance to the plan and strengthen its conservative agenda. This strategy not only compromises the possibility of an informed debate on educational policies but also further polarizes society, making it difficult to build a consensus around an education that respects diversity and promotes inclusion.

One limitation of the study is that it was restricted to the analysis of only one organization among several organizations that make up the coalition of the new conservatism in the Brazilian educational policy subsystem. This organization may not represent all the beliefs

of the other actors that compose the coalition. In addition, because the analysis is based on official and published documents, it is linked to the perspective that the confederation aims to present and may not fully reflect the complexity and diversity of opinions within the conservative movement.

Despite these limitations, as noted above, it is important to emphasize the relevance of the analysis of the beliefs of the National Confederation of Student Parents Associations as one of the outstanding organizations among the groups aligned with the new conservatism because of the role it has played in mobilizing such groups to influence the debate concerning the PNE (Motoryn, 2024).

The analysis of the belief system and its manifestation in educational practices offers a basis for future discussions on the development of more inclusive and equitable educational policies. Thus, this study aimed to contribute to the understanding of how conservative values are being integrated into discussions concerning and in the formulation of educational policies themselves, thus offering a critical view of the interaction between ideology and education.

Regarding the development of the new PNE, the Senate Education Committee recently approved the extension of the deadline for the preparation of the document until December 2025 (Brasil, 2024c). The proposal is still awaiting analysis by the Chamber of Deputies, indicating that the debate on the future of the PNE remains open and subject to various political influences.

Finally, it is imperative to recognize that education, as a fundamental human right, must be treated as an essential public good for the development of a plural and democratic society. Educational policies must be formulated and implemented to ensure that all students, regardless of their origins, have access to quality education that promotes not only academic skills but also the values of citizenship, respect for diversity and critical thinking.

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WM: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data analysis, Writing, Review. JMAC: Review. HAM: Review.

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