

As políticas de formação de professores na Educação de Jovens e Adultos (EJA): agruras e conquistas da disciplina EJA nas licenciaturas do Instituto Federal de Goiás (IFG)

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Resumo

O presente artigo analisou os desafios e as conquistas formativas da inserção da disciplina EJA nas licenciaturas do IFG a partir do trabalho desenvolvido pelas docentes. É uma pesquisa de natureza qualitativa, fundamentada no materialismo histórico e dialético, pois buscou apreender as contradições históricas da formação inicial dos professores voltadas para a EJA. Foram entrevistadas cinco docentes, responsáveis pela disciplina de EJA, tendo como base um roteiro inicial de questões. Os dados levantados foram confrontados com as orientações sobre a formação de professores instituídas pela legislação e as formulações teóricas sobre a temática da EJA. Apreendeu-se que há um apagamento da EJA nas últimas políticas educacionais instituídas para a formação inicial do docente. Contudo, observou-se que, onde é realizada, há um grande ganho formativo, segundo as docentes.

Palavras-chave: Trabalho docente. Educação de Jovens e Adultos. Formação Inicial. Formação Continuada.

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Teacher training policies in the Education for Young People and Adults program (EJA): challenges and achievements of the EJA subject in the undergraduate courses at the Federal Institute of Goiás (IFG)

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Abstract

This article analyzed the challenges and educational achievements of including the EJA discipline in undergraduate courses at IFG based on the work developed by teachers. This is a qualitative study, based on historical and dialectical materialism, as it sought to understand the historical contradictions of initial teacher training focused on EJA. Five teachers responsible for the EJA discipline were interviewed, based on an initial set of questions. The data collected were compared with the guidelines on teacher training established by legislation and the theoretical formulations on the theme of EJA. It was learned that there is an erasure of EJA in the latest educational policies established for initial teacher training. However, it was observed that, where it is carried out, there is a great educational gain, according to the teachers.

Keywords: Teaching work; Education for Young People and Adults; Initial training; Continuous Education.

Las políticas de formación de profesores en la Educación de Jóvenes y Adultos (EJA): Agruras y conquistas de la disciplina EJA en las licenciaturas del Instituto federal de Goiás (IFG)

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Resumen

El presente artículo analizó los desafíos y las conquistas formativas de inserción de la disciplina EJA en las licenciaturas del IFG a partir del trabajo desarrollado por las docentes. Es una investigación de naturaleza cualitativa, fundamentada en el materialismo histórico y dialéctico, ya que investigó las contradicciones históricas de la formación inicial de los profesores dedicados al EJA. Fueron entrevistadas cinco docentes, responsables por la disciplina del EJA, teniendo como base una lista inicial de preguntas. Los datos levantados fueron confrontados con las orientaciones sobre la formación de profesores instituidos por la legislación y las formulaciones teóricas sobre la temática del EJA. Se aprendió que hay una supresión del EJA en las últimas políticas educacionales instituidas para la formación inicial de docente. Sin embargo, se aprecia que, donde es realizada, hay un gran beneficio formativo, según las docentes.

Palabras-clave: Trabajo docente. Educación de Jóvenes y Adultos. Formación Inicial. Formación Continuada.

Introduction

The demand for teacher training has been one of the major challenges presented to improve the quality of Brazilian education. This statement is made both by those who seek an instrumental quality and by those who advocate for an emancipatory education. The dialogue in this work aims, from the perspective of the latter, to analyze teacher training policies in Adult Education (EJA) in the post-institution of Law No. 9.394, dated December 20, 1996, which establishes the Guidelines and Bases of National Education, Opinion CNE/CEB No. 11, dated May 5, 2000, and, specifically, the current legislation. Given this context, the work also aims to grasp the most recent possibilities and challenges posed by teachers who teach the EJA discipline in the initial teacher training of undergraduate students at the Federal Institute of Goiás (IFG).

One of the needs, when EJA is assumed as an educational modality, is the establishment of policies and actions that promote the training of teachers to work with students who have interrupted their studies or who have never attended school at any point in their lives. In light of this reality, this modality requires breaking with various pedagogical practices and formulating and understanding an epistemology that supports the understanding of the specificities of these individuals, the experiences, and learning they have acquired outside of school. In this sense, the theoretical-practical accumulation of popular education and Freirean thought is an important contribution.

However, one of the main challenges is overcoming the association of Adult Education with a remedial, simplified, and instrumental approach. There have been legal advances in this regard, but it is known that, at the level of actions and management of educational policies, these still end up reestablishing such approaches, in a more palatable form, opting for the socialization of knowledge that is more humanistic and integrative. Predominantly continuing education models are reaffirmed, disconnected from the struggles for the establishment of initial teacher training in this area of knowledge and the expansion of courses and classes for students in this modality.

The article outlines the methodological path, based on materialist and dialectical principles, that allows for achieving the objectives of this investigation. These objectives are: to understand the contradictions presented by the development of teacher training policies for EJA in an educational institution, specifically focusing on the discussion about policies issued by international bodies and their relationships with national ones, particularly those linked to EJA; and finally, based on these

and other frameworks, to analyze the data obtained from interviews with teachers who taught the EJA discipline in undergraduate courses at IFG.

Methodological Paths: Places and Meanings

The method represents place and meaning, from which researchers organize and carry out the research. It is understood that the method initiated by Marx, Historical and Dialectical Materialism, provides basic elements for the analysis and interpretation of Adult Education (EJA) in the Brazilian historical and social context, our object of study.

In this method, totality, contradictions, and mediations of social relations emerge as categories capable of inquiring into the historical dynamics of human formation and their forms of action in the concrete (NETTO, 2011). This method, which aims to construct synthesis as the unity of the diverse, the "concrete thought," according to Frigotto (2010), has as its primary concern uncovering the multiple determinations of social reality, consisting simultaneously of a worldview, a method of analysis, and praxis.

As a worldview, historical materialist dialectics indicates that reality, specifically in capitalist society, which historically appropriates two institutions alienated labor and private property reinterprets them from the perspective of the triumphant bourgeois project. This project consists of a dispute centered on the systemic increase in the profitability of capital, subordinating human value through the commodification of labor and all aspects that explain social life, including education.

As a method of analysis, it warns that the particularities of the object must be understood in relation to the whole, with the goal of revealing its structure and development, grasping the transformations or continuities of social events.

As praxis, the method shows that reflection and action are articulated with the goal of understanding and transforming reality (FRIGOTTO, 2010). This movement integrates theory and transformative action: praxis.

Guided by this, the analysis of the trajectory and organization of the EJA (Adult Education) discipline in the formation of undergraduate students presents limits and possibilities in understanding this modality as a right and as an object of the struggle for education and the emancipation of workers. EJA, being an educational modality that seeks inclusion, justice, ethical existence, and deepening democracy, represents, in Brazil, an attempt to rethink and redo pedagogy, at this moment, from the dialogue with popular education and the foundations of Freirean thought. In contradiction, it is

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hegemonically understood that the education of Brazilians who did not attend school or had to leave it, despite all legal advances, continues to be implemented in a marginal, precarious, and simplified manner.

It is through this method that movements, processes, and explanatory structures of reality in its multiple determinations are historically reiterated and sought. And through its "nature" of understanding and emancipation, the explanatory categories of this work were organized.

The Population and Sample of the Research

The choice of IFG is due to its history in offering vocational education, being one of the oldest in Brazil. Furthermore, IFG stands out as the institution that offers the most Adult Education (EJA) in the Federal Network of Vocational and Technological Education, and it still maintains a mandatory discipline on EJA in the curricula of the undergraduate programs it offers.

The chosen institute has 14 campuses spread across the state of Goiás. In total, the institution offers 20 undergraduate courses across its campuses, providing approximately 750 vacancies annually.

Out of the 20 undergraduate courses, 11 are located in the metropolitan region of Goiânia. Given the amount of information and the feasibility of conducting the research within the proposed timeline, the courses offered in the metropolitan region of Goiânia were selected as the focus of this investigation.

Out of these 11 courses, due to the institution's course offering dynamics, 10 had already offered the Adult Education (EJA) discipline, which constituted the sample universe addressed in this work.

Information Gathering Techniques

In this investigation, two information-gathering techniques were used, namely: interviews and document analysis.

The interviews, as well as their analysis, allow for identifying the meaning that the subjects attribute to the facts and knowledge they relate to. As Severino (2007, p. 124) points out, this is a technique for collecting information on a given subject, "directly solicited from the subjects being researched. It is, therefore, an interaction between the researcher and the researched [...] The researcher aims to capture what the subjects think, know, represent, do, and argue."

Thus, we opted for individual interviews guided by a semi-structured script, previously prepared, which ensured the necessary flexibility to access the themes and objectives of the investigation.

The interviews were then conducted with five teachers from IFG who taught the Adult Education (EJA) discipline in undergraduate programs. The teachers' statements will be indicated by the letter "D," followed by numbering from 1 to 5.

Since they took place during the Covid-19 pandemic, between 2020 and 2022, all procedures were conducted remotely, using a web conferencing platform.

The interviews were recorded through notes taken by the researchers during the sessions and through digital recordings made by the web conferencing platform itself. Subsequently, the researchers transcribed the data, which was then submitted for approval by the participants. Using this instrument, we sought to identify how the curricular component in question, the EJA discipline, was organized.

The document analysis focused on the most recent national regulatory frameworks concerning teacher training. The following documents were selected:

- Opinion CNE/CP No. 22, of November 7, 2019, which discusses the National Curriculum Guidelines for the Initial Teacher Education for Basic Education and establishes the National Common Base for Initial Teacher Education for Basic Education (BNC-Formation).
- Resolution CNE/CP No. 2, of December 20, 2019, which defines the National Curriculum Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education for Basic Education and establishes the National Common Base for Initial Teacher Education for Basic Education (BNC-Formation).
- Opinion CNE/CP No. 14, of July 10, 2020, which discusses the National Curriculum Guidelines for Continuing Teacher Education for Basic Education and the National Common Base for Continuing Teacher Education for Basic Education (BNC-Continuing Education).
- Resolution CNE/CP No. 1, of October 27, 2020, which deals with the National Curriculum Guidelines for Continuing Teacher Education for Basic Education and establishes the BNC-Continuing Education.

Teacher Education: The Political-Pedagogical Context of Teacher Training Policies and the Omission Regarding Adult Education (EJA)

It is understood that the political relations that shape the regulatory frameworks for teacher training place it in a contradictory context, largely influenced by the socio-economic and cultural dynamics of contemporary capitalism. As Marx pointed out in the 19th century, in his *Theses on Feuerbach*, in the 3rd thesis:

The materialist doctrine about the modification of circumstances and education forgets that circumstances are modified by humans and that the educator themselves must be educated. Therefore, it must divide society into two parts - the first of which is placed above society. The coincidence between the alteration of circumstances and human activity or self-modification can only be understood and rationally grasped as a revolutionary practice
(MARX; ENGELS, 2007, p. 533, grifo dos autores).

From this perspective, it is understood that the educator needs to be constantly educated, as they are characterized as an intellectual worker. Thus, they may face a professional training that constantly requires a (re)education to align them with the demands of the contradictory and/or adversarial contemporary society to humanistic emancipatory demands; or, on the other hand, face a training that seeks to overcome the form of education that reproduces contemporary contradictions. It is understood that this second form of education, understood as educational praxis, perhaps revolutionary, in the explanation cited by Marx and Engels (2007), provides teachers with the necessary elements to be committed to the humanization of individuals through educational work and to the construction of a new hegemony. Thus, through collective construction, the unilateralities that separate workers from capital holders can be overcome by critical reason.

In the current context of formulating social policies aimed at education and teacher training, and with Brazil being part of the globalized context of capital, the orientations of international organizations become significant norms in the formulation of educational policies. These guidelines contain important values for the formation of a flexible society, which is at different times discursively called: the knowledge society, the information society, the network society, etc. It is not without reason that these various terms populate, with some constancy, the documents of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), among other international organizations.

Various authors, such as Dias-da-Silva (2005), Lessard (2006), and Maués (2009), point out that the focus on teacher training has been constant in several documents and discourses due to the understanding that the quality of education is directly linked to this training.

This may be a truth questioned when doubts are raised about which perspective underpins this direction. Lessard (2006) points out that there are global articulations legitimized by OECD and UNESCO studies about the kind of teacher desired. For example, the OECD report (Teachers matter: attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers)⁴ on teaching efficiency comes to three conclusions: 1 - variations in knowledge acquisition are largely due to the background students have before entering school, and this is a variable over which one cannot act; 2 - on variables that can be acted upon, undoubtedly, teaching action is directed at the quality that must be intervened in; and lastly, 3 - indicators of teacher quality are controversial and difficult to measure.

Thus, the OECD study, conducted in 25 countries, proposes some actions that give us clues about the development of teacher training policies:

- 1) Develop teacher profiles to adapt teacher training and performance to the needs of schools;
- 2) Consider teacher development as an ongoing process;
- 3) Make teacher training more flexible;
- 4) Improve selection and recruitment during teacher training;
- 5) Modify the balance of teacher training;
- 6) Improve training within the school environment;
- 7) Accredite teacher training programs;
- 8) Certify new teachers;
- 9) Strengthen professional insertion programs;
- 10) Integrate professional development throughout the career (OCDE *apud* LESSARD, 2006, p. 207).

In search of supposed efficacy, some American authors point out, in their research, that in places where more is invested in teacher qualification, higher levels of efficacy in education are achieved (LESSARD, 2006). This dynamic leads the state to increasingly pressure teacher educators in pursuit of greater efficacy and performance, directed towards what the state itself, increasingly subjected to the determinations and perspectives of the market, desires.

In this dynamic, the state invests in the professionalization of teachers in order to improve the efficacy of education, subjecting it to unilateral external stimuli and interests, whether from the

⁴ Subject of Teachers: Attracting, Developing, and Retaining Effective Teachers – OCDE – 2005.

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market or from local, regional, and national productive arrangements. In this way, the results, especially those of failure, point to teacher training, placing certain demands on it.

Thus, it is not uncommon to state that the role, and even the place, of the teacher in contemporary education is undergoing a profound process of questioning and change. Reflective, competent, researcher, and critical are some of the attributes and demands that various teacher training movements place on curricular guidelines for teacher training and on the teacher as a worker, either reinforcing or opposing processes aligned with the policies of international organizations.

Therefore, the challenges of teacher training in Brazil, in general, are mainly related to the lack of higher education training; the theoretical-conceptual fragility of training; the simplification of teacher training programs; the lack of solid continuing education programs; and fragmented initial training (BRZEZINSKI, 1996; SILVA, 2008). In particular, given these weaknesses, the specificities of different levels and teaching modalities are often omitted from initial teacher training programs, as is the case with EJA.

Despite some advances, it is important to highlight that the extreme marginalization of the education of students from the most impoverished and discriminated social strata of the country is also reflected in undergraduate programs. Few courses offer mandatory subjects related to this topic, and some offer them as optional or elective curriculum components. Regarding initial teacher training, Ventura and Bomfim (2015, p. 221) emphasize that “Adult Education still occupies a relatively insignificant place, not only in initial teacher training curricular proposals but also in academic scientific production. Many studies have analyzed this scenario in the last ten years.”

An analysis of the documentary corpus of this research reveals that the limited incidence of Adult Education in undergraduate curricula remains a constraint on teacher training for this modality (SOARES; PEDROSO, 2016). This modality is mentioned only three times in the selected documents, one of them being in Opinion CNE/CP No. 10, of December 7, 2021, in which the modality is mentioned through a verbatim transcription of Goal 10 of the National Education Plan (PNE) 2014-2024. The other mentions can be found below:

It is also necessary to consider the peculiarities of Continuing Education for teachers working in specific modalities, such as Special Education, Rural Education, Indigenous Education, Quilombola Education, Vocational Education, and Adult Education (EJA), so that these fields of practice require contextualized knowledge and practices. This leads to the need for the organization of training programs to

meet the respective norms of the National Education Council (CNE) that regulate them, in addition to what is prescribed in this Resolution (BRASIL, 2020a, p. 8).

Art. 8º Continuing Education for teachers working in specific modalities, such as Special Education, Rural Education, Indigenous Education, Quilombola Education, Vocational Education, and Adult Education (EJA), which constitute fields of practice requiring contextualized knowledge and practices, must be organized in accordance with the respective regulatory standards of the National Education Council (CNE), in addition to what is prescribed in this Resolution. (BRASIL, 2020c).

The excerpts highlighted reinforce that Adult Education (EJA) still occupies a rather marginal place in the initial teacher training. As a historically necessary modality for guaranteeing the right to education, sporadic and repeated mentions do not do justice to the recurring and urgent needs of this modality. Thus, in continuing education, the national policy merely reinforces the need without providing any clear guidance on the issue.

The strongest indication of the need for a specific training policy for EJA is found in the guidelines for the continuing education of teachers. Entrusting teacher training for EJA to continuing education moments could lead to an even greater disconnection with the foundations worked on in the initial training. This indication arises from the fact that the everyday practice of teaching in EJA has a very precarious dynamic in Brazil, making the moments of continuing education typically lighter, pragmatic, and often disconnected from scientific knowledge.

In an article discussing teacher training for Adult Education (EJA) in Resolution CNE/CP No. 02/2019, Albuquerque, Santos, and Andrade (2023) emphasize the invisibility of teacher training for EJA. They also highlight that "Article 16, which refers to undergraduate courses aimed at the modalities of education, empties the main characteristic of training these teachers, which is the recognition of the specificities and complexities of this teaching modality" (ALBUQUERQUE; SANTOS; ANDRADE, 2023, p. 12).

The documents discussed above reflect the current stage of political dispute in the context of initial and continuing teacher training and have still been strongly questioned by civil society organizations. The *Movimento Revoga BNC-Formação*, through a manifesto released in April 2023, emphasizes that they were approved by the National Education Council (CNE) hastily and irresponsibly, bypassing the ongoing implementation of Resolution CNE/CP No. 2/2015 (ANFOPE, 2023).

The current guidelines for teacher training, ultimately, adopt the principles, orientations, and prescriptions of international organizations, foundations, and movements linked to the Brazilian

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bourgeoisie, reiterating the centuries-old disregard for the education of the working class that has failed to enter or remain in educational institutions. They reaffirm the educational duality in its most dramatic form, expressed in Adult Education (EJA), whose potential demand for schooling is neither invisible nor residual. In this sense, the history of Adult Education in Brazil is marked by intense struggle carried out by individuals and collectives who seek to implement the right to education for all, for those 51.1% of workers aged 25 and over who did not complete Basic Education (BRASIL, 2020b).

As a challenge for this given scenario, actions aimed at the training of teachers for EJA fall on teacher training courses in Higher Education institutions and on the networks and institutions of Basic Education. In Higher Education institutions, teacher training for EJA faces various challenges and opportunities. This research deepened the analysis of the configuration of this training in a Vocational and Technological Education institution in Goiás.

The following outlines the limits and possibilities of incorporating a mandatory curricular component on EJA in the undergraduate courses of the Federal Institute of Goiás.

EJA in Initial Teacher Training: Necessary Considerations

The National Education Guidelines and Framework Law of 1996 and Opinion No. 11 of 2000 from the Basic Education Chamber of the National Council of Education express political projects that suggest overcoming a conception of adult education based on remediation. This traditional model is rooted in the compensation of regular education through supplemental courses and exams and in remediation, i.e., the completion of unfinished education through improvement and refresher courses (BRASIL, 2000).

The perspective outlined by this new legal framework refers to the understanding that Youth and Adult Education (EJA) is an educational modality within Basic Education, at both the fundamental and high school levels, with its own specific characteristics that should guide the construction of formative processes. Equating EJA with regular schooling, moving away from a parallel offering to this system, while simultaneously recognizing its unique characteristics, ensures equal rights for those students who were able to remain in school (BRASIL, 2000).

In light of this break from a restrictive and marginal conception of Youth and Adult Education, a new configuration of the formative process for these students is required, including the initial and

continuing training of teachers for this modality. Opinion No. 11, of 2000, from the CNE/CEB, provides the following consideration:

All the more so, it can be said that the preparation of a teacher dedicated to Youth and Adult Education (EJA) must include, in addition to the formative requirements expected of any teacher, those related to the specific complexities of this educational modality. Thus, this teaching professional must be equipped to interact empathetically with this group of students and to establish the practice of dialogue. This cannot be a hastily prepared teacher or one motivated solely by goodwill or idealistic volunteerism, but rather an educator who draws from both general and specific knowledge that systematic training and certification demand (BRASIL, 2000, p. 56).

The context from 1996 to the present involves, on one hand, the struggle to intensify actions aimed at ensuring the right to education for EJA worker-students, and on the other, reflections on the implementation of these policies, considering the historical continuities that still place EJA in a secondary position within Brazilian education. Here, the contradictory nature of reality is acknowledged, driven by the disputes over societal and educational projects rooted in the interests of the social classes that shape capitalism.

The current context highlights the importance of understanding and socializing the teaching work related to the EJA discipline when it is included as a mandatory component in teacher education programs, that is, as part of initial training. Based on the statements of the five educators interviewed and considering the legal documents and theoretical framework presented, explanatory summaries about the teaching of the EJA discipline in IFG's teacher education programs were developed. These include: 1) the initial and continuing education of the teacher who teaches the EJA discipline in teacher education programs; 2) the relevance of initial training in EJA, the place of the discipline in the curriculum, and the relationship between theory and practice; 3) the perception of students about the theme of EJA during the course.

The five interviewed educators reported that, during their undergraduate studies, they did not take a specific course on Youth and Adult Education (EJA), which made their work more challenging when they began teaching classes in this modality. According to some of the interviewees:

[...] I received training on EJA only after teaching three or four classes. I only began to understand this educational modality when I started reading about the subject. Watching colleagues work in EJA while treating those students as if they were from regular education, you realize how we can harm others with our pedagogical actions because we fail to consider their specificities (D2).

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[...] that was my first shock! I wasn't prepared for it, and no one warned me, no one explained it to me, no one gave me a heads-up, a conversation, or any training—nothing! So, I always point this out as a flaw of the IF, because I think all teachers who start working in EJA should be prepared for it! After that, I sought knowledge on my own. So, to say that I took a formal training course on EJA I didn't. But I went to research, study, read, watch videos, and participate in events, you know? And that's how I built my training on my own, self-taught. I adapted to the methods, understood them properly, read and studied, and that was it.

So, my training was more of an action/reflection process, let's say combining theory and practice. I observed in practice, then researched and studied, and that's how I improved. When I teach the EJA discipline in the teacher education program, I always bring my experience to explain to them that [this modality] is not the same as regular education(D5).

The two accounts highlight, on one hand, the need for teacher training to develop work in EJA, indicating that this requirement remains largely confined to the legal framework; and, on the other hand, when there is individual initiative by the teacher, she takes on the task of self-training. While these initiatives are promising and demonstrate their importance for building quality education for EJA worker-students, they are insufficient, as they consist of individual actions rather than collective efforts driven by policies and management that enable and implement teacher training. Without this, the understanding and actions that continue to consider EJA as a marginal topic in Brazilian education will prevail.

In addition to this individual and "self-taught" action, training, when it occurs within institutions, often takes place through extension projects, internships occasionally conducted with EJA classes, and research within scientific initiation programs, reinforcing what has already been stated. Again, these efforts emerge sporadically, without cohesion or enduring formative purpose, as isolated training opportunities within the context of EJA. Regarding this, some interviewees stated:

I worked on the EJA Project, developed by the Training Center of the Municipal Department of Education in Goiânia. I was a coordinator and literacy teacher. We had direct support from the Federal University of Goiás, so we participated in several extension courses with a substantial workload, specifically focused on EJA (D1).

There wasn't a specific EJA course in the pedagogy program curriculum. However, the professors teaching foundational courses discussed it extensively. For example, at the Faculty of Education at UFG, those enrolled in the evening program completed their internship in EJA. I was in the morning program, so I did my internship with children. But my undergraduate thesis (TCC) connected EJA and rural education, studying the Basic Education Movement (D3).

Given this formative trajectory, the interviewed educators emphasized the importance of including an EJA-specific course in the curriculum of teacher education programs as part of initial training.

From this perspective, I believe that making it mandatory is a positive step, because training a teacher who does not at least minimally understand the specificities of education is not ideal... So, the fact that it is mandatory gives us the opportunity to train a teacher who views emancipation as a goal and who promotes the education of others in a respectful and qualified manner (D2).

I think it's essential; it has to be mandatory. Students need to understand the reality of EJA, which is different and has its own specificities. The students have their own particularities; it's not the same. This is to avoid what happened to me and happens to many EJA teachers. At my campus, when substitute teachers are assigned, they don't know how to deal with EJA students, and it leads to conflicts. So yes, it has to be mandatory, and I completely agree (D5).

It's extremely important, both for me and for the students. I'll take a risk and say that if I were to ask the students who completed the course today whether they think this subject should be optional or mandatory, I'd wager that 99.9% of them would say it needs to be mandatory (D1).

The experience of teaching the EJA course led these educators to evaluate other dimensions related to offering this curricular component. One issue raised was the need to consider its placement within the curriculum. They highlighted that it is positioned at various points in the academic program, depending on the Political-Pedagogical Project of each teacher education course. The impression is that there is no thorough analysis of which period is most suitable and how this placement might enhance the teacher candidate's training in EJA. For example, if placed at the beginning of the program, understanding this educational modality might encourage students to choose internships or develop research, extension, or teaching projects on this topic, envisioning the integration of theory and practice. If placed at the end of the program, such opportunities are less likely to occur. These are subtleties, ultimately, but they reinforce the marginal position of EJA in Brazilian education and in teacher training. According to some educators:

In the History program, since EJA is offered in the eighth semester, students reflect that EJA should not be placed in the eighth semester. It should be introduced earlier in the program, precisely to spark their interest in choosing EJA as the focus of their undergraduate thesis (TCC), research in the Pibid (Institutional Teaching Initiation Scholarship Program), or other projects, fostering a stronger connection with this teaching modality. In the Music program, EJA is also offered near the end, while in Mathematics and Physics programs, it is in the third semester, and in the Literature program, it is in the fifth semester, where I hear fewer such critiques. But this is

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always the point: students reflect on the theoretical depth of the course and the limited or almost nonexistent opportunities to connect it with practice (D4).

I believe we should advocate for coherence in how these courses are distributed. I was so disappointed to see a teacher education program where EJA was offered as a distance-learning course. For me, this is a total disregard for the importance of the discipline within the curriculum. I was shocked; we can't let this happen because, once one campus does this, others may follow without realizing it. Depending on the group I teach, for example, students in the eighth semester already have better training to understand EJA. However, I don't know if EJA should be placed so late—maybe in the sixth semester, because by the eighth semester, students are solely focused on their TCC and not on anything else. I feel like they placed EJA there with the mindset: “Oh, this isn't that important; let's just put it here.” So, I don't think it's a good idea to leave it in that spot. On the other hand, my second-semester students are open to understanding these things, but they haven't yet taken several courses that could broaden their critical perspective. So, I'm also unsure if placing EJA in the second semester helps (D3).

Regarding the overall training, I feel the absence of EJA-related experience in some programs. For instance, in the Literature (teacher education) program, there is an internship specifically in the EJA modality, but in other programs, there isn't. This lack of practice can hinder the connection between the course content and their professional training (D2).

Finally, it is important to highlight the students' evaluations of the EJA course, according to the interviewed educators. D1 emphasized that “they understand that this is a modality that has not been addressed in its specificity, that this is an audience that deserves respect and has the right to education, which is legitimate.” D3 pointed out that “they value the course, and at the end, they are very grateful. Many who were already teachers say they changed the way they work because they used to just take high school content and replicate it in EJA classes.” D5 noted that “they are very open. All the students I've worked with so far have always been very open and staunch defenders of EJA”.

The statements highlight the need for initial teacher training in EJA, as well as the recommendations made by legislation and research. They emphasize the importance of understanding what constitutes an educational modality and its specific characteristics. In the case of EJA, it involves the interrupted or nonexistent educational trajectories of its students. This characteristic requires the restructuring of schools, their formative schedules, pedagogical and administrative organization, and teaching practices. In this regard, Arroyo (2005, p. 36) states,

[...] we have reached an important point in the history of EJA: it has become a rich field for innovation in pedagogical theory. The Popular Education Movement and Paulo Freire did not limit themselves to rethinking the methods of education and

literacy for young adults but redefined the foundations and theories of education and learning. EJA has become a field of inquiry for pedagogical thought. What prompted this inquiry? Recognizing the specificity of the trajectories of young adults.

In the initial training process of teacher candidates, it is noteworthy that EJA has provided them with openness to alternative perspectives on educational development and the political advocacy of this modality. On this subject, Arroyo (2005, p. 24) also emphasizes: “In this broader view of youth, public policies and educational policies for youth, such as EJA, acquire much more comprehensive configurations. They radicalize the legitimate right to education for all”.

Final considerations

The 2023 School Census report revealed that the number of Brazilians who have not completed Basic Education remains high, totaling 68,036,330. At the same time, enrollment numbers in the modality that serves this population, Youth and Adult Education (EJA), have decreased. In 2018, there were 3,545,988 enrollments, but by 2023, this figure had dropped to 2,589,815. These two phenomena represent the greatest challenges for national education. Thus, no discussion about educational levels, modalities, or epistemologies should take place without considering this unjust and ongoing historical situation. Failing to understand this reality means beginning a reflection without addressing the foundational condition underlying schooling in Brazil: the exclusion of millions of workers from the right to education, a legal entitlement achieved through intense social struggles. This is a discussion that has yet to fully uncover the historical totality of schooling and its foundations, failing to address the significant decline in the number of students across all educational stages. A "full" class in high school or higher education is, paradoxically, "empty" when we consider the vast number of Brazilians who have not completed Basic Education.

When receiving worker-students in EJA, new challenges arise that must be overcome. These challenges aim not only to ensure the retention and completion of Basic Education but also to promote quality education with an emancipatory foundation for individuals who have experienced many forms of exclusion. One such challenge is teacher training.

The goal, therefore, is to foster an understanding of the specificities of these individuals and to develop teaching and learning processes capable of simultaneously addressing their immediate survival needs and building a life full of opportunities provided by art, science, culture, and technology. In this sense, revisiting legislation on teacher training and analyzing what educators have

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said about their work with the EJA discipline is deemed important. Drawing inspiration from progress and confronting challenges seems to be a promising path toward fully democratizing Brazilian education.

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