


Actors, Institutions and Ideas: explaining the approval of 10% of GDP for education in Brazil

Atores, Instituições e Ideias: explicando a aprovação dos 10% do PIB em Educação no PNE 2014-2024

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Abstract: The article tests the explanatory power of three models of public policy analysis to understand the approval of a minimal 10% of GDP spending on education during Congress consideration of the 2014-2024 National Education Plan (PNE, in Portuguese). The pluralist theory and the neoinstitutionalist approach focus on actors in the decision-making arena while the multiple stream model helps understanding the setting of governmental agenda and its political context. This is an interesting case to study as there was a long process of deliberation involving disputes among alternatives supported by different social and political actors, including the government. Given the fact that the 10% was an old demand presented by the education policy community and that it had been rejected in previous governments, the central question of the article is: how was it possible to approve the 10% of GDP spending on education in 2014? By mobilising some analytical categories from the three analytical models, it is argued that all three models are useful for explanation, but they shed different light on the process.

Keywords: National Education Plan; Pluralism; Neoinstitutionalism; Multiple Streams; 10% of GDP on Education.

Resumo: O artigo testa a capacidade explicativa de três modelos de análise de políticas públicas para o entendimento da aprovação do gasto de 10% do PIB em educação durante a tramitação do Plano Nacional de Educação (PNE) 2014-2024. Os modelos pluralista e neoinstitucional observam principalmente a arena decisória e seus atores ao passo que o de múltiplos fluxos foca na entrada do problema na agenda governamental a partir de seu contexto político. Trata-se de um caso interessante, pois houve um longo processo de

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discussão que refletiu a disputa de propostas por diferentes atores sociais e políticos, inclusive o governo. Tendo em vista que a definição de um patamar com base no PIB era uma demanda antiga da comunidade de políticas educacionais e que já havia sido rejeitada anteriormente, a pergunta central do artigo é: como foi possível aprovar os 10% do PIB em educação? Ao mobilizar categorias analíticas dos três modelos teóricos, argumenta-se que há ganhos de explicação nos três casos, pois iluminam-se aspectos diferentes do processo.

Palavras-chave: Plano Nacional de Educação; Pluralismo; Neoinstitucionalismo; Múltiplos Fluxos; 10% do PIB em Educação.

1. Introduction³

In June 2014, a new National Education Plan was sanctioned by President Dilma Rousseff (from the Worker's Party) and valid for the period 2014-2024. The plan sets clear and measurable goals for national education at all levels and modalities of education. Among the several debates that occurred during Congress consideration of the proposal, one stood out for having been quite conflicting: increasing public spending on education to a minimum level of 10% of GDP. However, some actors did not see the need for this level of spending.

Indeed, even nowadays there is a dispute over whether or not 10% would be needed to increase the quality of Brazilian education. In July 2018, for example, during President Michel Temer (from the MDB party) administration, the National Treasury Secretariat (STN), subordinated at the time to the Ministry of Finance, released a study showing that Brazil was among the countries that spent more on education and that, given demographic dynamics pointing to a decrease in school age population, the expenditure of that time, estimated at 6% of GDP, was understood as sufficient to ensure school attendance without compromising fiscal rules, such as the constitutional minimum application in education or the spending cap on all public expenditure, approved in 2016. The report, written by government bureaucrats, asserts that the problems of Brazilian education was not related to the level of spending, despite being boasted as such:

Despite the strong social pressure to increase spending in education, there is evidence that the current low quality is not due to insufficient resources. This observation is not specific to Brazil, considering that it is already established in the literature on the subject the view that policies based only on the

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expansion of educational "inputs" are, in general, ineffective (STN, 2018, p. 2).

Nearly a year later, members of the Ministry of Education (MEC) of the new elected government of Jair Bolsonaro adopted the same rhetoric as the STN document, but take a step further: they make public their disagreement over the 20 goal set in the National Education Plan, which aims to achieve 10% of GDP in public investment in education. In the words of The Minister of Education, Abraham Weintraub, the goal 20 deserved to be reviewed by the National Congress, because, although Brazil "is already spending 7% of GDP on education", the increase in spending would not guarantee the improvement of education. The undersecretary of Basic Education, Jânio Endo Macedo, also shares the understanding that the current resources allocated for education are enough:

"(...) the money largely we have here. What we want is to create more efficiency. If there is a need to complement, we will. But there is no need to reach 10% of GDP, I can assure you that."

Given that previous governments have also resisted increasing the federal minimum expenditure on education, being even the subject of a presidential veto in the past, the central question of this article is: how was it possible to enact the goal of 10% of GDP in education in the PNE 2014-2024? What explanatory factors were present (or absent) that allowed the approval of a audacious target of 10% of GDP in public investment in education? To answer this question, we mobilise some public policy analysis models in order to attempt an explanation.

The National Education Plan 2014-2024 had a long process in the National Congress. The bill was submitted at the end of 2010 and enacted into Law in 2014, four long years of discussions involving many social and institutional actors in the debate. One of the main controversies that largely explains the delay in its approval was exactly the issue of financing. The original bill forwarded to Congress by the Executive stipulated 7% of the application of GDP in education, but the final result was the definition of a minimum level of 10% of GDP in educational spending.

This text, therefore, will test the capacity of some theoretical and analytical models to explain the result. We chose three analytical models that mainly observe the decision-making arena that involves public policies, seeking to understand why the policy was approved in this way and not in another (Sabatier, 2007). Pluralist theory places great

emphasis on the groups that participated in the debates, so in this analytical perspective, it is central to identify which social groups had access to the decision-making arena. Its limitation, on the other hand, refers to the conception that the State would have a neutral role, of mere processor of organized demands (see, for example, Milliband's criticisms, 1995 [1969] or Bachrach and Baratz, 2011 [1962]).

In the neo-institutional approach (Peters, 2005; Shepsle, 1989; Shepsle and Boncheck, 1997; Immergut, 1996 and 1998), institutions are understood as central because they generate effects on behaviour and, therefore, on the choices of individuals who participate in the decision-making arena. In this case, the State (or the institutional configuration of the decision-making arena) is not neutral. One limitation we found in this model is that, although institutions matter, different actors, at different times, can occupy the same institutional space. Thus, there may be new actors in place and their values or world views may differ and influence the formation of preferences and, thus, choices. For this, the multiple stream framework (Kingdon, 2003; Cairney and Jones, 2016) was mobilized in which the ideas or solutions advocated by groups (or people) are incorporated into the analysis so that the interaction (or even coincidence) of the contextual conditions of the political environment with the available alternatives and the ability to make the problem public may produce the opening of a political window that increases the chances of approval of a public policy.

The next sections present, in this order, brief notes on the PNE, the applications of pluralist theory, the neoinstitutional model and the multiple streams. In conclusions, we make an overall evaluation of the explanatory capacities of the models and speculate how these findings could explain the chances of a paradigm shift in education that is in place in the current political scenario.

2. The PNE, its Actors and Visions of the Problem of National Education

All National Education Plans are a law that have to be approved by Congress and sanctioned by the President of the Republic. It establishes guidelines, goals and strategies for education in a period of ten years. The PNE is a constitutional mandate.

For a better organization and development of this exercise, we chose the discussions surrounding the current 2014-2024 PNE target number 20 which establishes:

"to increase public investment in public education in order to reach at least 7% (seven percent) of gross domestic product - GDP of the country in the 5th (fifth)

year of this Law and, at least, the equivalent of 10% (ten percent) of GDP at the end of the decade" (PNE, target 20).

The first PNE in the country was for the period 2001–2010, a law sanctioned with nine vetoes by President Fernando Henrique Cardoso. The first PNE was the result of mobilization of organized civil society, after a process of discussions through conferences and forums (Bodião, 2016) which, as we will see, will also happen in the case of the current PNE.

With regard to financing in the previous PNE 2001-2010, there were two proposals: the increase in investments in GDP in education to 7%, present in the bill forwarded by the Executive, and another legislative bill of popular initiative, which already suggested, at that time, the investment of 10% of GDP in education. It can be observed that already in the 1990s there were groups discussing about investment for education, believing that the amount invested was little to achieve a quality education comparable to other countries. One of the presidential vetoes at the time was precisely on the financing of education, which established the target of 7% of GDP in education as it was approved by Congress (Saviani, 2007). There are no records of lawmakers attempting to overturn the presidential veto. For many analysts and members of the educational policy community (Rocha, 2011, p. 194-196), this veto would compromise the execution of the plan itself as there would be not enough funding for its implementation (Bodião, 2016).

As the date of expiration of the 2001-2010 PNE approached, on December 20th, 2010, the Executive forwarded to Congress a bill to renew the plan. However, as the procedure took almost four years, the final plan ended up covering the years 2014 to 2024. Several discussions arose about the original proposal, among them the most controversial one, which provided for the financing of 10% of GDP in education.

After several discussions, in October 2012 the PNE is approved in the Lower House. It is then forwarded to the Federal Senate, where some changes were analysed and made. In January 2014, the bill returns to the Lower House and in June of the same year it was approved and sanctioned without any veto by the then President Dilma Rousseff.

3. Analysis from the Pluralist Perspective: the actors who participate

In defence of common interests, individuals unite and organise themselves into associations, trade unions, political parties, among others. These organizations seek to

participate and influence the decisions of governments, a larger institution that holds the decision-making power. In the pluralistic model of analysis, actors are central to explain what kind of public policy will be approved (output) and, provided they have access to power (Dahl, 1961), they can influence the decision-making process by defending their interests (Rocha, 2006; Hill, 2005, p. 28). Power, from Dahl's (1961) perspective, is divided into multiple centres, different actors may have more or less power of influence depending on the sector area in dispute (Schlosberg, 2008). In democratic and pluralistic systems, there would be a multiplication of free associations, therefore, widening political participation. In democratic pluralism theory, the groups that have access to the decision-making arena and the power to convince or more pressure ability will achieve the approval of the public policy they defend (Vasconcelos, 2005). In this sense, the outcome of the policy would be explained by organized groups that managed to influence the decision-making process and, in this perspective, the State would be neutral, that is, it would be a political stage that can be occupied by different actors and interests at different times. In other words, Dahl, the most famous of the pluralists, starts from the premise that, in Western industrial societies (i.e., in democracies), any group can influence government or access power, and therefore no group is, a priori, dominant, in clear opposition to Mills' elite theory (1956 apud Schlosberg, 2008, p. 145). This is how the pluralist theory is applied in the analysis of public policies in which the identification of groups – that is, of the actors who participate – their interests and what they defend is central. As pointed out, this theory is applied to democratic regimes, because it starts from the premise that the participation of any social group is possible. Different groups can participate in the debate and each can play a role at different times, depending on the public policy under discussion, and not necessarily the same groups will have access to or participate in all areas (Dahl, 1961; 1995).

Applying to the case of the 10% of GDP for public education, the most relevant explanatory factor, from a pluralistic perspective, would be the identification of interest groups that had access to power and what they defended (or represented).

In the case of the current PNE, several actors, groups, social movements and policy communities were mobilized and united on several fronts of the discussion on the minimum level of spending on education, bringing together researchers and specialists in educational issues, education professionals, trade unionists, organizations focused on educational actions and social movements.

Among the actors or organizations involved in the discussions it can be highlighted: the National Campaign for the Right of Education, the All For Education Movement, the actors involved in the Basic Education Conference and the National Education Conference, the National Association of Researchers in Education Financing (FINEDUCA), the National Confederation of Workers' Education (CNTE), the National Students Union (UNE) and the UBES (Brazilian Union of Secondary Students).

The National Campaign for the Right to Education is the union of several civil society organizations, with the aim of joining forces to press for the promotion of the right to education. The Campaign was created in 1999 with civil society organizations that attended the World Education Summit in Dakar in 2000. These organizations came together joining various political forces, mobilising and exercising political pressure in the defence of the right to education (Simielli, 2008). The Campaign also played an important role in the preparation, discussions and mobilization of the 2014-2024 PNE. It worked actively and strategically during the 2010 National Education Conference (CONAE) (Bodião, 2016).

The general coordinator, Daniel Cara, was one of the main articulators in the defence and approval of 10% of GDP for education. He actively participated in the public hearings in Congress (Silva, 2015), and also acted as a national mobilization agent, traveling around Brazil to discuss with teachers, parliamentarians and education associations advocating the importance of the approval of the PNE. Recognized by the Lower House as an exemplary representative in the fight for the approval of the PNE, Cara was awarded the Darcy Ribeiro award in 2015 (CD, 2015). Among the public hearings held in the House of Representatives, on 20/march/2012, Daniel Cara, presents a fiscal estimation for "CAQi" - Student Cost for Quality of Education -, amounts that would be necessary, as argued, to provide quality education. As Cara puts it: "any careful study on student cost-quality and the overall cost of the PNE will reach a level close to 10% of GDP".

Thus, the central argument of the actors who mobilized to increase spending on education is put into place: without the 10% of GDP it would not be possible to achieve a quality education in Brazil. The Campaign, with the support of trade union organizations representing education professionals, presented the document entitled "Why 7% for education is not enough?" and distributed it to the then president of the Education Committee in the Lower House, Fatima Bezerra (from the Worker's Party and a public

school teacher and union leader) and to the deputy secretary of MEC and coordinator of the FNE (National Education Forum), Francisco Chagas, with a history of acting in the trade union movement, including on the board of CNTE.

The “All For Education Movement”, on the other hand, was launched in 2006, and brought together institutes and foundations with the support of private sector business. This movement aims to "improve Brazil by boosting the quality and equity of basic education". During the discussions of the PNE, the representative of the movement who participated in the public hearings in the Lower House was Professor Mozart Neves Ramos, post-doctor in chemistry, professor and ex-dean of the Federal University of Pernambuco, had also been secretary of education of the state of Pernambuco. In the Senate, Priscila Cruz was the representative of the movement, one of the founders of the Movement All For Education, and its executive director, holds a master's degree in public administration, and develops projects in the third sector. Currently the partners of the movement are financial institutions such as Bradesco Foundation, Itaú Social, Telefonica Vivo Foundation, Unibanco Institute, Lemann Foundation, Natura Institute, among others. Despite being a group that acted strongly in the debates of the PNE it is interesting to note that Mozart Ramos, speaking in a public hearing in the Lower House on behalf of the movement, does not mention the defence of 10% of spending on education. It presents and defends Caqi, but at the same time argues that the problems of education are not only lack of resources. In other words, although there are no records of the Movement All for Education opposing the adoption of 10% of GDP in education, there is also no open advocacy to it either.

Another important event in terms of mobilization of actors was the holding of the Conference of Basic Education and the National Conference of Education (CONAE), held between 2009 and 2010, and organized by the government, with the participation of several entities from all over Brazil. Conferences were held at the municipal, state and federal district levels, delegates were elected representing their respective municipalities and states at the national conference and the central theme of the conference was: Building an Articulated National System: The National Education Plan, Guidelines and Action Strategies. According to the final document of the National Education Conference, about 3.5 million Brazilians were mobilized during its debates, about 2% of the population, involving various entities, associations, education professionals, managers, parents and all those concerned with education (CONAE, 2010). One of the

recommendations expressed in the final document of the national conference was the suggestion to increase spending on education by 10% of GDP.

Another important actor in the debate was the National Association of Researchers in Education Financing, FINEDUCA, which aims to contribute to "the public authorities guaranteeing quality public education for all", linked to the National Campaign for the Right to Education. Its importance in the process was through the publication of technical notes explaining the importance of PNE target number 20, such as the note "Why should the Federal Union complement CAQi in the PNE?", launched in 2011. There was also participation in public hearings held in the Lower House and the Federal Senate (Silva, 2015), always based on discussions related to the financing of education and the importance of the approval of the 10%.

The National Confederation of Education Workers, CNTE, brings together several education unions in the country and within the discussion process of PNE was present, holding seminars with the presence of the actors mentioned above, participation in several public hearings, publications on education that contemplated the PNE, proposals for several parliamentary amendments in the two legislative houses, participation in the sessions, among other actions.

Finally, the Student's Union (UNE) and the Secondary School Students Union (UBES) mobilized on several occasions during the consideration of the bill in the National Congress, taking students to the galleries and, in some interpretations, it was a presence that put pressure on the rapporteur of the matter in the Special Committee that, at the last minute, accepted the suggestion to insert the proposal of 10% of GDP in its report to be sent to floor consideration.

In short, many groups accessed and tried to influence the decision-making arena, especially the members who dominated the debate: the All for Education Movement, the National Campaign for the Right to Education and FINEDUCA. Associations and trade unions also supported and participated in public hearings. In this sense, pluralist theory is useful to identify groups that had access to the decision-making arena in a specific sectoral area (education) and that will not necessarily be the same in other discussions.

Thus, expressing what the pluralistic theory predict: civil society groups that were best organized and pressured were the ones that obtained the desired result and thus the approval of their preference in an effectively democratic order.

On the other hand, there are some limitations of pluralist theory to explain the case of 10% of GDP in education. First, it is assumed that the State is neutral and, therefore, there would be no institutional filters or state actors influencing the final result. Secondly, considering that many of these same groups had already participated in the same decision-making arenas in previous governments and had not succeeded, the mere presence or participation of these actors, as expected by pluralist theory, does not seem to be sufficient to explain the final choice. After all, why could not this proposal have been approved in previous settings if the groups were organized and participated in the decision-making process in the past? In the next section, we introduce the institutional configuration of the decision-making arena to increase the explanatory capacity.

4. An Analysis from Neoinstitutionalism: the configuration of the decision-making arena

The neoinstitutionalist model considers the institutional configuration of the decision-making process of public policies, emphasizing that institutional rules are an important factor in the process. It is important to emphasize that this model continues to consider the preferences of society, however, it emphasizes that institutions will filter these preferences and the final choices will depend on institutional rules. In other words, the institutional configuration of the decision-making arena will create incentives and constraints for the behaviour of individuals (Hall and Taylor, 2003; Arretche, 2007; Gomes, 2006; Peters, 2005; Shepsle, 1989; Shepsle and Boncheck, 1997; Immergut, 1992 and 1998).

In the construction of the PNE there was the participation of several segments of society, previously described in this article. But there are particularities of the decision-making arena that influence behaviour and, therefore, the decision-making process. Unlike other public policies (such as decisions in health or social assistance that decide many policy action in inter-management forums or ministerial ordinances), many of the educational policies are (or should be) mandated to be considered by Congress, a arena of public debate and great exposure for parliamentarians and the government itself with potentially a much higher number of participants.

In the Lower House, the government bill was initially forwarded for consideration in the committees of education and culture, finance and taxation, constitution and justice and citizenship. Subsequently, in June 2011, a special committee was set up, composed

of twenty-five members, and with MP Ângelo Vanhoni (PT-PR) as rapporteur, an institutional position with agenda powers and - not coincidentally - a member of the President's party. As we know, the rapporteur has the prerogative to analyse all proposed amendments and suggestions for amendments, guided by the political consensus possible to be achieved, including the interests of the government and, finally, suggest an updated version of the proposal for the consideration of lawmakers. After holding several public hearings with experts and civil society organizations and several requests for extension of deadlines for the completion of the committee's work, parliamentarians were able to suggest amendments to the bill. A total of 2,915 amendments were submitted, of which 445 were accepted by the rapporteur.

Several amendments by various parties proposed an increase in the percentage of spending on education in GDP. MP Pauderney Avelino (DEM-AM) even proposed the level of 20% of GDP. It is noticeable, therefore, that even opposition parties to the government used the strategy of putting the rapporteur and the government under the delicate political situation of having to reject suggestions of increases in spending on education. In the first report, the Worker's Party rapporteur informs that he had rejected amendments that increased spending because there would have been an agreement to establish the level of 7% from the fifth year of the PNE and 8% in the last year. In the second report presented in June 2012, the target of 10% public spending on education is finally inserted. According to newspaper articles at the time, the rapporteur would have made a last-minute change and the Ministry of Education would have positioned itself with caution on the decision to approve the 10%: "In terms of federal government it is the equivalent to putting [the budget] of the Ministry of Education within the Ministry of Education, that is, it means to take R\$ 85 billion from other ministries [to allocate] to Education. It is a political task difficult to perform", explained the Minister of Education at the time.

Then the bill was forwarded to the Senate. In this house, some modifications were made that Bodião (2016) considers relevant, such as the expansion of the understanding of what would be "public spending" by incorporating the possibility of computing expenses or subsidies to philanthropic and similar institutions. However, the level of 10% was maintained.

Upon returning to the House for its final vote on the floor, on April 22nd, 2014 the final vote approves the bill on the floor by almost unanimity of the members present. The

exception was the complementation of separate votes, registered by two Members of Parliament who criticized the "gender ideology" contained in the proposal, that is, even in these two cases there was no question of the level of 10% of GDP spent on education.

Unlike other public policies that can be decided in decision-making arenas with more restricted participation of actors – such as decisions inside Cabinets, as the ordinances that regularly the Ministers of Health and other collegiate bodies put forward – in the case of the PNE, the decision and debate were public and participation expanded. Thus, it is observed that the decision-making arena, the National Congress, exposed parliamentarians to a public debate of difficult opposition. The government, which would be the only one that could constitute itself as a veto group against increasing the spending, was in a delicate situation of having to oppose the expansion of education funding, being a party strongly linked to organizations, social movements and unions that have historically always advocated more resources for education. The rapporteur attempted a midway solution by establishing 8% of GDP application in his first report, increasing slightly, but leaving close to what the government suggested. But concerning voting, it did not create any mobilization rule, so the president's only option would be to exert a partial veto.

Additionally, 2014 was a year of national elections and the President's veto would be a high risky movement in electoral terms – the President was seeking re-election and a veto would be strategically used by the opposition in elections to show that the Workers' Party was against more resources for education – that is, the costs would be high and, still, riskin Congress to overturn a presidential veto which would thus receive the political credits of having guaranteed the increase in spending on education. If the President vetoed the 10% of GDP provision, she could be uneasy with her electorate and militancy, given the public image built with strong public support.

In short, the strong mobilization of specific groups, as presented in the previous section, combined with an institutional arena in which debates are public, dramatically raised the costs of the government to veto or oppose the proposal to increase spending even if its preference was to establish a lower level in the 20th goal of the PNE. But, as noted, these two elements – mobilization of interest groups and a decision-making arena of high public exposure – were not new so that it is not yet possible to answer the question of how it was possible to approve the target of 10% of GDP satisfactorily. In the next

section, we mobilize the analytical arsenal of multiple streams so that we can essentially incorporate context factors into the analysis.

5. Analysing from the lens of the Multiple Stream Framework: the context, ideas and opportunities explored by the actors

The role of ideas in decision-making, the coincidence of political moments marked by the political context and the role of actors within policy communities that defend a certain vision and solutions to problems in addition to the ability of certain actors to articulate interests and enable support for a given proposal are the central analytical elements of the multiple streams framework (Barcelos , 2013; Capella and Brazil, 2015; Rocha, 2011, p. 194-196). This framework is strongly critical of the rational model, because decisions in public policies would not be made rationally, but would be related to opportune moments when a "political window" opens to solutions that are waiting for problems based on the garbage can model. Ideas about problems do not come out of nowhere, they're long thought out, and they wait for the right time to increase their chances of getting on the government agenda.

Kingdon (2003) categorizes three dynamics (or streams) so that a problem increases its chances of becoming part of the government agenda: problems, public policies (alternatives), and politics. Problems must be identified and recognised as problems that deserve attention of the government. This is a stream that typically takes a long time to build the public image of a problem, maybe over several years or decades. Public policies or alternatives are proposals for solutions to a problem, presented by epistemic communities or specialists. Finally, the stream of politics refers to the level of political support for the recognition and priority of solving the problem. In this case, there are three important elements: the national mood, the campaigns carried out by groups or the change of government, which increase the chances of proposals entering the government agenda.

In this model, the opening of a "political window" of opportunity is considered a critical moment. This is the time when the three streams intersect (or coincide): the problems have been recognised as priorities, there are proposals for solutions and the political environment is supportive. This moment of opening this window - which opens and closes quickly - depends on a political entrepreneur with the task of exploring this moment, connecting people who have the same ideas and support.

This model seems quite appropriate to explain how the 10% of GDP could be approved at that moment, that is, by a combination of factors specific to that political context. Schematically, we can apply this model as follows.

5.1. Problems Streams: how the image of problem was built

The problem was built over time on the grounds that government investment in education was low or insufficient. In the early 1990s, Brazil invested less than 4% of GDP in education and the Brazilian educational reality was of high illiteracy rates, deteriorated schools, large numbers of children not attending school, among other problems. This image construction took a long time. History identifies the struggle and difficulties of public school since the 1930s with the New School movement. With the process of redemocratisation of the country in the mid-1980s, greater attention to education began to be paid as popular participation resumed. The constitution-makers of 1987-1988 were clear about education being a social, universal and subjective right (Menicucci and Gomes, 2018) and, since this moment, the debate around the need to increase and allocate more resources for education has been present as a demand of several organized groups of civil society. In the 1990s, there were forums and conferences to discuss education (Moura, 2013) that build a policy community. The perception of this group was that the investment in education by the government was not enough and with the increase in the amount invested a better quality education could be achieved. Thus, an image was built over the years in which the amount spent on education was too low and should be increased, that the raise in the amount invested per GDP in education would contribute to educational quality, improving school structures, educational indicators, and thus guaranteeing the right to quality public education for all. This culminates, during the 2014-2024 PNE, in the defence of investing 10% of GDP by the groups that have already been described previously.

5.2. Public policy stream: what are the alternatives to solving the problem existed?

Which groups defended what?

The existing alternatives were public investment of 7% of GDP in education, which subsequently changed to 8%, defended by the government, and the investment of 10% of GDP for education, defended by organized civil society. These alternatives were defined through parliamentary amendments during the public debate in various instances

within the National Congress and had already been presented in previous governments as discussed earlier. Additionally, during Congress consideration of the current PNE, there is a refinement of the (technical) arguments that would justify the increase in the level of public spending: based on a fiscal estimate that calculated the "Student Cost Quality of education" (CAQi) establishing how much each level, stage or modality of education would cost, compiling technical information that estimated how much it would be necessary to achieve a quality education. In other words, the argument was that it was no longer a question of repeating previous proposals to guarantee "a minimum" of expenditure, but rather of specifying what should be the expense required for effective quality education all over the country.

Thus, from the point of view of the discussion of alternatives, there was a proposal to solve the problem of low spending on education in Brazil with technical information defended by a community of experts.

5.3. The Streams of politics: what was the national mood? What is the political context?

The national mood was in support of the approval of the 10%. The groups were mobilised and present in the discussion process - entities linked to education, unions and social movements as we saw earlier. Add to this, that the theme education has traditionally had a high support of public opinion in general. Groups and parties to the left of the President's party defended the level of 10% of GDP, that is, potential competitors of the voters of the ruling party; as well as opposition parties (more to the right) also seized the political moment to advocate for the government to increase its commitment to public spending on education, exposing the President to take a position on this. Given that the Workers' Party government had links to trade unions and social movements that made up a community of educational policies and that the motto of the government at the time was "participation as a method of government," it would be politically risky for the President (or her economic team) to publicly oppose increasing resources for education. It is also possible to speculate that the demonstrations of June 2013, demanding improvement of public services - and that generated an increase in bad/low evaluation of the government - may have been additional elements taken into consideration by the President. The approval of 10% of GDP in education, close to national elections, dramatically raised the political costs of the President vetoing such a measure.

5.4. How do streams intersect and open a political window of opportunity?

There are two moments to the opening of the political window of opportunity. The first was the articulation and strategic action of civil society organizations during the Education Conference (CONAE), capable of mobilizing and articulating interest groups. A second political window was the proximity of the elections in 2014 (possibility of change of government), because a presidential veto to an old demand of the education community, many belonging to organizations and movements with historical links with the president's party, would be an extremely risky political movement to be exploited by opposition parties.

Parliamentarians historically linked to the educational theme and civil society organizations, including trade unions, join the already consolidated movements in order to convince the rapporteur of the proposal to approve the 10% of GDP for education. A political entrepreneur who worked strongly was Daniel Cara, coordinator of the Campaign for the Right to Education movement, which presented technical studies, justifying the need to expand resources for education. Together with other organizations or interest groups - entities, foundations, NGOs and student movement, among others detailed by BODIÃO (2016) around the idea of defending a quality public school to all Brazilians - they argued that the government's proposal of 7% of GDP was insufficient. As a political entrepreneur, Cara articulated key people from various organizations, parties, in addition to having a high public exposure in the media.

Although within this group, there were disagreements regarding the need to apply 10% of GDP as a solution to the problems of education, there were no public opposition to this position of the members of this community of specialists.

In short, factors of the political context or that specific political moment complete the analysis of the approval of 10% of GDP in education: the institutional and political conditions of that moment were favourable and, in fact, increased the chances of approval of the proposal with the opening of a political window, expertly explored by various social and political actors of the educational policy community.

6. A Summary of Explanatory Power: for the Past and for the Future

After the application of the models presented and considering the entire configuration of the decision-making arena of the public policy object of study of this

exercise, it can be considered that all three models analysed here explained well the choice of policy as it was approved, each presenting the specificities of the PNE, that is, each allows an interpretation that depends on the analytical and theoretical lens that is intended to be given.

One can observe that each analytical model contributed in its own way to the final explanation.

The pluralist theory presents the discussions around organized groups that pressure and have access to the decision-making arena. In the policy studied here, many groups have mobilised and made themselves present in the whole process of discussion of the PNE. It should also be emphasised that the approved proposal was suggested by these groups at the national education conference, not accepted by the government in the bill sent to Congress, the capacity to mobilize and pressure these groups is an important explanatory factor.

A limitation of this model is in relation to the role of the State, which would be neutral, a mere processor of demands. Considering this statement, the role of the institutions in the final decision was incorporated, with the neo-institutional model as analytical guide. Institutions matter. The high-exposure public decision-making arena, the National Congress, made opposition to the groups' demands highly costly to parliamentarians, especially those of the President's party.

Finally, the third model that helped explain the approval of the PNE was the multiple streams in which the aspects of context associated with the ideas that epistemic communities defend for years or decades on end are decisive to explain the approval. This point seems particularly relevant to us, because the actors involved in the defence of the increase of public resources for education and the institutional configuration of the decision-making arena (the National Congress) were present in previous moments, especially during the consideration of the previous PNE (2001-2010). However, in this case, these two factors were not sufficient to ensure the approval of the proposal of 10% of GDP in education. In fact, the image of the problem was already mature at the time of the current PNE consideration by Congress, having proposals for technical and politically viable solutions and the fact that the government is historically linked to the themes defended by civil society organizations, opened a "political window" of opportunity in which rejecting the proposal would bring high electoral costs for the President's party.

Finally, if it is possible to apply this same exercise as a way of speculating what would be the chances of the current government reversing the proposal of 10% of GDP in education, as it defends, we can say that the chances seem small. From the point of view of the groups that would mobilize to support the reduction of spending, these are small and restricted, essentially, to technicians and specialists linked to the fiscal area of the government, as actors of the former Ministry of Finance and the current Ministry of Economy, which are also the current managers and leaders of the Ministry of Education. On the contrary, groups that have the capacity to mobilize in favour of maintaining the status quo are not only majority but also include actors with organizational capacity – as seen recently in street mobilizations in the defence of education – in addition to education remaining supported by the vast majority of public opinion.

From the point of view of the institutional arena, as we have seen, Congress is an arena in which political actors have high public exposure, especially for their voters. Unlike, for example, a pension reform, on the grounds that "privileges" would actually be eliminated; in the case of education this argument is much more fragile, except, perhaps, for the expenditures on public higher education. In view of the support of public opinion in general for education, it would be quite difficult to position itself publicly in favour of reducing resources for education. A possible alternative would be the use of presidential decrees or other unilateral legislative instruments, which could change the status quo immediately, thus creating a new fact. Still, the chances of political and public opposition to such a strategy - in addition to possible judicial questions - seem, at the moment, quite likely.

Finally, with regard to context and from the multiple streams' framework, it can be speculated that:

- From the point of view of the problems, the arguments that Brazil already spends a lot on education and that the problem would be to make actions more efficient is certainly gaining ground in the current public debate. However, to date – in August 2019 – this argument does not seem to be widespread enough to get public support for a proposal to reduce spending. But it should be noted that this model of analysis informs that the circulation of an idea and its acceptance takes time and, perhaps, we are still at an early stage, but that it can grow over time.

- From the point of view of alternatives, that is, public policy proposals, the option of the current Ministry of Education is to invest in institutional designs that encourage

more efficient management models (i.e., more results with the same or fewer resources), greater flexibility in hiring staff and contracts and promoting a more active role of private educational institutions as an alternative provision of educational services. Maybe the proposal called “Future-se” for higher education is the most exemplary case of this attempt to change the paradigm of public funding in education as established since the Federal Constitution of 1988.

But conceivably, it is with regard to the flow of politics the less obvious speculation. On the one hand, the change of government signals the intention of major structural transformations of the Brazilian State as a goal (or ideal) of the new government as a whole, that is, in different sectoral policy areas. On the other hand, there is still no public support for the interpretation that enough is already spent on education and that the problem would only be a matter of better management or efficiency. On the contrary, the widespread feeling is still that education should be a priority for governments and that what it has been done to date remains insufficient. At least so far, there are few visible political actors who publicly and openly defend the thesis that increasing spending on public education is unnecessary.

Thus, at least in the current scenario of August 2019, what seems to be more likely is the maintenance of the status quo: the goal of 10% of GDP on public education is maintained, but in practice it is not achieved.

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