

## Rural education and public policies: analysis of national programs in the valorization of rural identity

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**Abstract:** This paper investigates how public educational policies focused on rural areas, specifically the National Program for Education in Agrarian Reform (PRONERA), the Higher Education Support Program for a Graduation Course in Rural Education (PROCAMPO), and the National Program for Rural Education (PRONACAMPO), effectively contribute to the valorization of local knowledge and the strengthening of rural cultural identities. Based on their proposals and educational projects, it becomes relevant to examine how these initiatives impact rural communities. The study draws on the legislation that implemented and regulated these programs, as well as complementary documents such as ordinances and resolutions. Additionally, a literature review was conducted, from the perspective of historical-dialectical materialism, grounded in authors such as Caldart (2002, 2012), Molina (2010, 2012, 2014), and Ribeiro (2012), who supported the critical analysis of the public policies discussed. It is argued that the discussion of these public policies is essential, given their direct impact on the educational project for rural populations and their promotion of actions that seek recognition of rural people as subjects of rights, across all educational levels. However, the results indicate that challenges persist, hindering the full implementation of these policies, whether due to objective or subjective obstacles. Therefore, the importance of expanding the debate and deepening discussions about these programs is emphasized, considering the advances made their limitations. The study points to the need for an education that addresses rural reality and, above all, meets the specific demands of rural communities.

**Keywords:** rural education; public policies; rural identity.

### 1 Introduction

In recent years, the discourse surrounding rural education has seen a marked intensification, particularly within the context of a society characterized by escalating social inequalities and the propagation of agrarian frontiers and subsistence agriculture. In this scenario, education for rural populations faces the challenge of promoting a formative process that respects and values the cultural and socioeconomic specificities of rural communities. The originality of this study lies in its analysis of public education policies aimed at rural areas, with a specific focus on the PRONERA, PROCAMPO, and PRONACAMPO programs, which stand out as central

initiatives for democratizing access to education, strengthening rural identity, and promoting education that directly addresses the reality of these populations.

These programs were conceived as a response to the historical educational exclusion experienced by rural populations, thus establishing themselves as essential mechanisms for social inclusion and sustainable development. The National Program for Education in Agrarian Reform (PRONERA), the Higher Education Support Program for a Graduation Course in Rural Education (PROCAMPO), and the National Program for Rural Education (PRONACAMPO) have been identified as fundamental components in the establishment of an educational system that not only addresses the educational requirements of rural communities but also values indigenous knowledge and cultural practices, thereby providing an alternative to conventional pedagogical approaches that frequently overlook the rural context.

The objective of this study is to investigate the trajectory and challenges of these programs to understand how such policies contribute to the valorization of rural knowledge and identities. Additionally, the study will reveal the limitations and contradictions inherent in the process of their implementation. The present analysis of these three programs is especially relevant in the current context, in which educational policies for rural areas face threats of discontinuity and reduced resources. Consequently, this research is part of a broader initiative to comprehend and fortify the struggle for an education that acknowledges rural areas as sites of resistance and cultural creation, recognizing the residents as rights-holders and active participants in their own educational processes.

The research was conducted through a literature review, using books, annals, articles, and academic papers to analyze the highlighted programs. The sources were prioritized based on their direct address to rural education and public policies aimed at rural populations. To facilitate a comprehensive discussion on the subject, this analysis will draw upon the seminal contributions of key authors such as Caldart (2002, 2012), Molina (2010, 2012), and Ribeiro (2012). In addition to these insights, this analysis will also draw upon relevant legislation and decrees, including Decree nº 7.352/2010, which established PRONERA and underscored the necessity of establishing PRONACAMPO. This initiative was subsequently formalized through Law nº 12.695 of July 25, 2012, and further codified in Ordinance nº 86 of February 1, 2013. The analysis

of PROCAMPO, a program aimed at implementing undergraduate courses in Rural Education, was also included.

This study employs a dual approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Theoretical underpinnings provide a foundation for the study's objectives, which include conceptual clarification, facilitated discourse, and data synthesis. Throughout the study, the perspective of historical-dialectical materialism will be employed, with consideration given to elements such as contradiction, conflict, dynamism, and the movement of class relations established with the capitalist mode of production. Consequently, the analysis commences with a focus on tangible objective material reality.

Considering all these questions, the following research question is posited: How do PRONERA, PROCAMPO, and PRONACAMPO, as public education policies aimed at rural populations, contribute to the valorization of local identities, knowledge, and culture through the promotion of education? To that end, the objective of this study is to conduct a reflective analysis that engages in a discussion of democratic and quality education. This discussion is based on the specificities of rural life and in dialogue with the reality and social context of rural subjects.

## **2 Countryside Education and Rural Education: disputed projects**

To understand the specificity of education aimed at rural population and the complexity of related public education policies, it is essential to distinguish between two narratives that clash due to their opposing characteristics: Countryside Education and Rural Education. Marx and Engels (2007), in presenting an analysis of the material conditions of capitalist society and the process of alienation, assert that the ideas of the ruling class, which holds material power, that is, the modes of production, also control the spiritual power of society. All production in the realm of ideas typically reflects the prevailing ideology, with the intention of preserving existing social or cultural structures. From the perspective of historical-dialectical materialism, this translates into the idea that “it is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness” (Marx; Engels, 2007, p. 94).

Education, as a social practice, is a process that develops in a specific context and becomes a tool at the service of the ruling class, expressing its ideas and creating a false class consciousness (Lopes, 2012). It is the result of the material conditions

expressed in the production model and power relations in a logic marked by contradiction. From this perspective, Rural Education and Countryside Education, as two strands that express a particular pedagogical model and their own educational purpose, emerge as narratives in confrontation with a peasant reality marked by secular struggles. This allows for the observation of the alignment of certain perspectives with the perpetuation of the condition of domination faced by the peasant population, as well as the attempt to overcome a dehumanizing capitalist model through education.

Rural education, as Ribeiro (2012) states, is offered in rural areas, but which has the practices and approaches of urban schools, without any changes that consider the specificities of rural people. It is a school that seeks to offer basic knowledge, such as writing, reading, and simple basic operations, in a reality of multigrade classes. To the author, it is more about empowering students to perform jobs in rural areas. The focus is on productivity and preparation, since the goal is to generate profit. Thus, the school has become a place to learn how to use agricultural tools and techniques, without genuinely caring about the work done by the peasants.

It is important to highlight that Rural Education, according to the cited author, was born as a capitalist project for the modernization of the countryside, so that new technologies could be introduced in rural areas. For this, there was a need to prepare the workforce, which should be educated through schooling. It was a process that began in 1930 in Latin America, intensified in the 1950s and 1960s, and continued until 1990. In Brazil, the projects were influenced by the United States, through development agencies, as they were considered the most advanced at the time. In these projects, there was no participation or interference from peasant communities in these projects. In this way,

[...] Rural education functioned as an instrument to train both a disciplined workforce for rural wage labor and consumers of agricultural products generated by the imported agricultural model. For this, there was a need to annul the knowledge accumulated by experience about working with the land, such as knowledge of soils, seeds, organic fertilizers and pesticides (Ribeiro, 2012, p. 299).

From this perspective, the concept of work acquires an alienated and fetishized bias, ceasing to function as a vital activity and a potential avenue for subject emancipation, as Antunes (2009) has observed. Consequently, work becomes a

commodity whose objective is to generate new commodities, thereby facilitating the integral valorization of capital through the generation of profit. As posited by Engels (1990), work constitutes a condition of social existence and humanization. However, when work is denied to the subject, it impedes the subject's ability to recognize themselves in this process, thereby engendering a state of estrangement and alienation from themselves. As a result, "what should be a source of humanity becomes the de-realization of the social being, alienation, and estrangement of working men and women" (Antunes, 2009, p. 232).

Regarding the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next as a legacy of peasant communities, Ribeiro (2012) asserts that this knowledge is often denied to individuals who are not part of the rural cultural milieu, a practice that is imposed upon them. Consequently, a significant proportion of illiterate peasants have been educated with disconnected knowledge that does not align with their actual experiences. This pedagogical approach, characterized by its vertical nature, is implemented with a high degree of rigidity, often disregarding the voices and needs of the subjects. The formation of a "[...] disciplined workforce for rural wage labor and consumers of agricultural products generated by the imported agricultural model" is a prospect that merits consideration (Ribeiro, 2012, p. 299). The project under consideration is one that aims to affect a shift in the nature of the bond between peasants and the land, as well as the meaning attributed to that bond. The objective is to transform the land from a source of subsistence to a means of exploitation. The following text is intended to provide a comprehensive overview of the subject matter.

Santos and Miranda (2017) argue that the advent of Rural Education can be attributed to the interests of capital itself, which prioritizes development for its own sake, with the ultimate objective being the maximization of profit, rather than the enhancement of the quality of life for those residing in rural areas. Accordingly, "the genesis of rural education can be traced to the prevailing mindset of the landed gentry, encompassing their welfare and political dominance over the territory and its inhabitants" (Fernandes; Molina, 2004, p. 37). The project under scrutiny exhibits a conspicuous disregard for the authentic character of the countryside, characterized by an alienating foundation. It perceives rural areas as inferior and antiquated, a perspective that merits critical scrutiny. These policies are characterized by their vertical orientation, focusing on the education sector rather than on the broader societal

context. They are designed to align with the needs of the labor market and are primarily focused on the pursuit of profit. Rural education is regarded as a form that can be seen as alienating, exclusionary, and aimed at erasing the histories, struggles, and the very identity of rural populations, including their local knowledge and wisdom.

Rangel and Carmo (2011) assert that the pedagogical and didactic process of education based on the Rural Education model does not consider the specificities of the individuals and the places where they live, as it considers all individuals to be equal. This phenomenon is reflected in the curriculum and school calendar, both of which are guided by urban determinations. Consequently, from the vantage point of Rural Education, the formation of the identity of rural subjects is inextricably linked to the “logic of invisibility”. This notion, as posited by the authors, signifies the absence of recognition for their distinct characteristics, even in instances where they are present within the context of an educational environment. That way, “[...] rural people remain absent from the history of their own culture, as their language, social origin, and knowledge are disqualified in the name of a hegemonic model of social valorization” (Rangel; Carmo, 2011, p. 208).

This phenomenon, as described by Freire (1994, p. 86), is characterized as a form of Cultural Invasion. This term refers to “the process by which invaders penetrate the cultural context of the invaded, imposing their worldview while impeding the expansion of the latter's creativity”. This phenomenon is regarded as both a tactic of domination and the act of domination itself, whether economic or cultural in nature. One of the ways this occurs is through the implementation of school programs that are imposed on these communities, thereby disrespecting their worldview and imposing a worldview that is foreign to their culture. This phenomenon can be understood as an attempt to shape the dominant class, wherein the invaders impose their hegemony, thereby creating a false class consciousness.

In contrast to this oppressive education, which is the result of large landowners and neoliberal policies, an educational project has emerged from social movements and struggles that aim to emancipate rural people and recognize their identity: the Countryside Education. Souza (2008) posits that this educational proposal aims to disrupt the prevailing notion that equates the countryside and peasants with being archaic and backward. This perspective presents a novel approach to understanding rural populations, perceiving them as right-bearing entities and the countryside as a



domain of potential for sustainable growth. This paradigm stands in contrast to educational policies and practices, which are rooted in models of Rural Education and are characterized by a capitalist basis. This ideological shift exposes contradictions and calls into question the interests of the ruling class.

It is important to note that the term “Countryside Education” emerged from the discourse during the National Seminar for Countryside Education. This seminar was held in Brasília, the nation's capital, in November 2002. The decision to adopt the name was confirmed at the Second National Conference for Countryside Education in June 2004. The process was punctuated by several events, including the First National Conference for Countryside Education in Luziânia, Goiás, in July 1998 and the First National Meeting of Educators in Areas of Agrarian Reform (ENERA), organized by the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) (Caldart, 2012).

According to Molina and Freitas (2011), the concept of Countryside Education emerged from a struggle by social movements defending the countryside, fighting and resisting the expropriation of land promoted by the logic of capital. Consequently, it establishes itself as a counterhegemonic force to the dominant capitalist model, thereby defending a new societal and national project in which peasant identity plays a pivotal role in the formation process. Caldart (2002) posits that this initiative encompasses two distinct dimensions: the promotion of education “in the countryside” and “of the countryside”. The term “in the countryside” signifies the entitlement of the peasantry to education without the necessity of migration. The term “of the countryside” denotes an educational approach that acknowledges and values the cultural identity of rural populations. This approach is characterized by a focus on the needs of these communities, particularly regarding social and human development. Consequently, the focus is on subjects of Countryside Education, compared to subjects of a vertical educational project that is divorced from their reality.

It is imperative to acknowledge that the defense of Countryside Education is intricately intertwined with the overarching struggle for land and agrarian reform. The countryside must be conceptualized as a site of ongoing struggles and contradictions. From this perspective, a social, political, economic, and cultural struggle to improve the living conditions of the peasant population in various spheres, including education, is evident. Countryside Education is perceived as a response to an imposed condition characterized by oppression and exploitation, hallmark traits of the neoliberal capitalist

system. The objective of this initiative is to facilitate constructive exchanges with the needs and characteristics of the peasant population, thereby fostering the development of class consciousness.

As a result, education is moving beyond traditional classrooms. Instead, there is now a recognition of the educational process in a more expansive context, encompassing both formal and non-formal settings. This perspective is supported by the insights of Batista and Euclides (2020). Similarly, Caldart (2002) posits that the concept of countryside education, as previously discussed, cannot be confined to the parameters of the school environment. Instead, the struggle for schools emerges as a pivotal focal point,

[...] the denial of the right to school is an emblematic example of the type of education project that is tried to be imposed on rural subjects; because the type of school that is or is no longer in the countryside has been one of the components of the process of domination and degradation of the living conditions of rural subjects; because the school has a fundamental educational task, especially in the formation of the new generations; and because the school can be an effective space to make countryside education happen (Caldart, 2002, p. 24).

Countryside education is understood as a project of “human emancipation and the transformation of the social relations that constitute capitalism” (Molina, 2010, p. 40). Therefore, it opposes the advance of capitalism's exclusionary processes, as its objective is to foster critical thinking. It is a struggle for education combined with the defense of land, promotion of agrarian reform, valuation of peasant culture, assurance of the right to work the land, and attainment of food and territorial sovereignty (Caldart, 2012). This is why it is linked to social movements that seek to acquire the knowledge necessary for their struggle, confronting the perverse relations promoted by capital in the process. This is essential because, as Caldart (2002) states, “there is no way to truly educate rural subjects without transforming the dehumanizing social circumstances and without preparing them to be the subjects of these transformations”.

From the point of view the Ziech (2017) and Caldart (2002), rural subjects are all groups with a direct link to the countryside who live or survive through work in rural areas. These groups include small farmers, family farmers, rural workers, landless workers, sharecroppers, peasants, riverine communities, fishermen, and settlers, among many others. Although they differ in terms of spatial organization and interpretation of reality, they are united in a common, secular struggle as victims of



oppression and exclusion, including in the field of education. For this reason, they reject any type of educational training and instead mobilize for an educational process developed in conjunction with them that focuses on their specificities, practices, and space. This process values local knowledge and understands the peasant movement as a site of resistance.

Additionally, Rural Education is considered a counter-hegemonic movement within the broader context of social movements. Williams (1979), based on his studies of Gramsci, defines hegemony as a system that includes values and meanings that become absolute reality for most of society. This phenomenon prevents people from moving away from it, becoming a form of domination and subordination from the moment it is experienced as practice. Thus, hegemony can be understood as the control that one class, the dominant class, exercises over another, the dominated class, with this control perceived as normal. Based on this concept, the author develops the notion of counter-hegemony as the resistance to this process and the pressure exerted in the face of domination that aims not to conform to the imposed order. Rural education challenges the dominant order by advocating for an educational process that respects and values the knowledge and culture of historically oppressed peoples.

Regarding the concept of work, Rural Education offers a different perspective, viewing it as an educational principle. Frigotto and Ciavatta (2012) argue that this entails viewing work as essential to human development. Thus, work becomes a producer of the means of life in material and cultural aspects, as well as in relation to nature, promoting transformations within itself. Soares (2012) corroborates this by understanding that human emancipation occurs when education is linked to the world of work, though not in the fragmented, alienating bourgeois conception. As the foundation of social movements, work becomes

[...] a process between man and nature, a process in which man, by his own action, mediates, regulates, and controls his metabolism with nature. It confronts natural matter as with a natural potency [*Naturmacht*]. To appropriate natural matter in a form useful to his own life, he sets in motion the natural forces belonging to his corporeality: his arms and legs, head and hands. By acting on external nature and modifying it by means of this movement, he at the same time modifies his own nature. It develops the powers that lie latent in it and submits the play of its forces to its own domination (Marx, 2013, p. 327).

Understanding the distinction between rural education and countryside education is fundamental to formulating public education policies for rural areas. This analysis allows us to comprehend the societal proposals on which projects are based, their objectives, and whether they value local knowledge and peasant culture. According to Caldart (2012), rural education exists within a conflictual framework, permeated by advances and setbacks in the struggle for public space. A clash exists between neoliberal policies based on mercantile logic that defend rural education focused on preparing the workforce and the process of homogenization. Given this differentiation, we highlight policies developed over time that focus on rural people. We question the assumed bias, especially regarding the valuation of local knowledge and its specificities. This is examined considering the contradictions of capitalist and neoliberal societies.

### **3 Main public educational policies for the countryside:** an overview of PRONERA, PRONACAMPO and PROCAMPO

When discussing public education policies aimed at rural areas, it is important, according to Lima and Bezerra Neto (2013), to consider a historical process characterized by contradictions and opposing views, as well as the imposition of a hegemonic project that served the interests of a dominant elite. Throughout Brazilian educational history, a utilitarian and practical approach to education was implemented with the aim of preparing the workforce to serve the interests of capital. Peasant populations were oppressed and exploited in a process of silencing, as they were considered backward and an obstacle to the nation's development. Before 1980, rural education policies aimed to prepare workers to deal with new technologies, sometimes encouraging rural exodus and, at other times, encouraging them to remain in the countryside. Education was objectively linked to large landowners and the agricultural sector, serving the interests of capital.

The first changes came with the 1988 Federal Constitution, following struggles by social movements for quality basic education that met the needs of the rural population. From this point onwards, as the country began to open following the dictatorship, there was a greater expansion of civil struggles seeking affirmation and recognition of rights. However, the situation is still marked by contradictions and tensions, primarily due to capitalist interests, which create deadlocks and conflicts

(Lima; Bezerra Neto, 2013). Therefore, it can be concluded that the design, implementation, and approval of public education policies for rural populations occurred amid clashes of conflicting interests, resulting in hybrid policies that, despite making significant progress in certain areas, face challenges that hinder their complete implementation. Three programs stand out as examples: PRONERA, PROCAMPO, and PRONACAMPO.

PRONERA (The National Program for Education in Agrarian Reform) is one of the main educational policies aimed at rural populations. It resulted from a historical struggle by social movements and peasant unions. According to the Report of the Second National Survey on Education in Agrarian Reform (IPEA, 2015), it was established in 1998 by the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA) and implemented by the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA). Initially, it was aimed exclusively at beneficiaries of the National Agrarian Reform Plan (PNRA). However, it later promoted the inclusion of beneficiaries of the National Land Credit Program (PNCF).

Santos and Carvalho (2014) believed that PRONERA emerged from collective debates and social mobilizations that occurred at the First National Meeting of Educators in Areas of Agrarian Reform (ENERA). This event was attended by numerous civil society organizations, including the Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST), as well as governmental organizations such as the University of Brasília (UNB) and the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), among others. It was officially created through the publication of Ordinance n° 10/1998 of the Extraordinary Ministry of Land Policy. Silva and Silva Júnior (2012) point out that although PRONERA was established as a government policy, it became a state policy in 2010 through Decree n° 7.352. Its objective is to

[...] ensure an expansion of rights along with the right to land, territory, production and life; represents for social and trade union movements in the countryside an instrument of struggle to seek better living conditions in the countryside, and education contributes materially and immaterially to the achievement of this objective (IPEA, 2015, p. 9).

In this context, PRONERA was created, Molina and Rocha (2014), seeking to promote education through methodologies specific to rural reality. Initially, its central focus was on literacy and the initial and continuing training of educators from settlements. Expanding its reach, it began to teach literacy to young people and adults,

offering the final grades of elementary and high school. PRONERA then launched projects focused on technical courses and higher education, including undergraduate and graduate programs for rural workers settled through partnerships with public institutions and federal universities. The authors argue that this policy has been guided by social and union movements throughout its development. Incorporating principles of Rural Education, the program aims to democratize education and connect reality, including concrete material conditions, with the educational process.

Based on results published in the Report of the II National Survey on Education in Agrarian Reform (IPEA, 2015), since 1998, the year of its creation, until 2011, PRONERA promoted the implementation of 320 courses through 82 institutions in the country, including 167 in Youth and Adult Education at the elementary level, 99 at the secondary level, and 54 at the higher education level. In total, 164.894 students in 880 municipalities across the country participated in this project. In 2024, updating the overview with data provided by Agência Gov (Brazil, 2024), PRONERA has a total of 27 courses, serving 3. 200 students, demonstrating its expansion over the years.

The significant advantage of PRONERA, according to Diniz and Lerrer (2018), is that it seeks to serve different levels of education by establishing pedagogical guidelines directly aligned with the sociocultural reality of the countryside, aiming to meet the real needs of the settled peasant population. Based on the principles of transdisciplinarity, praxis, and dialogue, it centers around respect for the culture of groups, the valorization of local knowledge, and an understanding of knowledge production as a collective process. For this reason, it draws on the life situations of students and their concrete material reality to structure its educational project. Thus, it addresses social, cultural, economic, generational, gender, political, and ethnic aspects related to sustainable development.

Therefore, it presents itself as an innovative and reactionary program from a counter-hegemonic perspective to the interests of agribusiness and capital. According to the PRONERA Operations Manual (Brazil, 2016), the project is based on the critical education of students, in a teaching-learning process that aims at theoretical deepening, which is fundamental for transformative action on reality. The objective is for rural people to recognize themselves as subjects of rights, affirming their identity in the face of dominant models that exclude and attempt to recharacterize peasant social struggles. For this reason, it articulates formal knowledge and knowledge born from

the actions, experiences, and practices of the peasantry. So, “PRONERA is an instrument of resistance that, through education, schooling, and training, builds collective subjects aware of their historical and social protagonism” (Brazil, 2016, p. 9).

Another noteworthy program in the field of public education policies aimed at rural populations is called PROCAMPO. The Higher Education Support Program for a Graduation Course in Rural Education, PROCAMPO, is defined by the Ministry of Education (MEC) (Brazil, 2007) as an initiative developed by the MEC through the Secretariat for Continuing Education, Literacy, and Diversity (SECAD) in 2007. Its focus is to support the implementation of courses aimed at the specific training of teachers for the final years of elementary and high school in schools located in rural areas. This would be achieved by establishing Licentiate degrees in Rural Education in public institutions, aiming to “[...] respond to the formulation of public policies to combat the historical educational disadvantages suffered by rural populations and to value diversity in educational policies” (Brazil, 2007, p. 1).

Molina and Rocha (2014) state that PROCAMPO is the result of demands by social movements that required the State to implement a specific public policy for the training of teachers from rural areas. This discussion is based on the First National Conference: For Basic Education in Rural Areas (CNEC), which took place in 1998, and the Second National Conference: For Basic Education in Rural Areas, which was held in 2004. As a result of pressure from these groups, a Working Group was established to present a project for the training of rural educators to the Ministry of Education (MEC). Since this was a collective demand, before the final version was presented, debates and meetings were held to evaluate the proposal, which was later approved.

According to the authors cited, when it was designed, PROCAMPO was based on PRONERA, with the aim of defending a project that focused on the specificities of rural areas. Bicalho (2018), corroborating this, highlights that one of the focuses is to break with the fragmented and disciplinary perspective of teaching through the triad of research, teaching, and extension. As initial experiences, PROCAMPO was implemented in federal universities in Brasília, Bahia, and Minas Gerais. It has an organization focused on alternating pedagogy, divided into periods of classroom attendance and periods in the field, termed University Time (TU) and Community Time (TC). This dynamic between the institution and the field aims to articulate the

educational aspects addressed in the courses with rural reality, considering the specificities of the rural population and aspects related to their concrete material reality.

Bicalho (2018) emphasizes the training of educators, specifically in rural areas, is essential when reflecting on the demands of rural people, given that pedagogical practices must address the realities they face, which are permeated by conflict and oppression. For this reason, it becomes a means of valuing rural people, their identity, and their forms of organization. It is a policy that aims to train educators to understand reality, as they become essential agents in the process of struggling and search for social transformation. When discussing the importance of teacher training, Caldart (2002) makes the following statement:

That is why we defend so insistently the need for policies and projects for the training of rural educators. Also, because we know that a good part of this ideology that we are building is something new in our own culture. And that there is a new identity of educator that can be cultivated from this movement by a rural education. Building rural education means training educators from and from the people who live in the countryside as subjects of these public policies that we are helping to build and of the educational project that already identifies us (Caldart, 2002, p. 25).

It should be noted that PROCAMPO plays a fundamental role in valuing the local knowledge, identity, and culture of rural communities. Since its inception, it has advocated for contextualized, comprehensive education involving a wide range of knowledge areas that can establish strong ties with rural communities and address their challenges due to demands and pressure from social movements. PROCAMPO affirms rural communities as subjects of rights who possess traditions, histories, and memories being erased at all costs because they do not surrender to the demands of capital and the pursuit of surplus value. PROCAMPO rejects capitalist ideals that promote the destruction of the peasantry. The bachelor's degree in Rural Education aims to go beyond traditional content and establish a necessary link between rural struggles and education. These two categories must align for social transformation.

Legally, this is supported by Resolution/CD/FNDE nº 06, dated March 17, 2009. This resolution establishes guidelines and general directives for supplementary financial assistance for educational projects aimed at promoting access to, and retention in, universities for low-income students and socially discriminated groups. PROCAMPO was created in 2007 through SECAD; this resolution is from 2009. Its legal basis includes documents such as the Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988



(Article 208) and the Law on Guidelines and Bases for National Education (Law nº 9.394, December 20, 1996) (Brazil, 2009).

In addition to PRONERA and PROCAMPO, PRONACAMPO is another noteworthy public education policy for rural areas with a broader scope and focus than the programs. PRONACAMPO was established by Decree nº 7.352 on November 4, 2010, while PRONERA was established by Ordinance nº 86 on February 1, 2013. Both programs aim to support the implementation of public education policy in rural areas by coordinating actions within various education systems (Brazil, 2013). According to the legislation, the program should be developed by the federal government in collaboration with other entities of the federation (i.e., states, municipalities, and the Federal District) in accordance with the goals established in the National Education Plan (PNE). The program aims to expand the access to basic and higher education for rural populations and improve the quality of education offered.

To achieve this goal, PRONACAMPO's actions are divided into four areas, as outlined in the program's document published by the Ministry of Education (Brazil, 2012). The first axis, "Management and Pedagogical Practices", involves developing specific textbooks for rural populations (National Textbook Program [PNLD] for Rural Areas), making books addressing rural life available in libraries (National School Library Program [PNBE]), and promoting comprehensive education by offering various training activities (More Education in Rural Areas Program). It also includes support for schools with mixed-age classes (Escola da Terra) and the inclusion of *Escolas dos Centros Familiares de Formação por Alternância* (CEFFAS) in the Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and the Valorization of Education Professionals (FUNDEB) through public networks.

Axis II, "Initial and Continuing Teacher Training", aims to offer bachelor's degrees in rural education through the PROCAMPO project, which has been discussed in this study. It also aims to expand open universities, offer specialization and continuing education courses, and finance specific areas of knowledge related to rural and quilombola education. This financing is based on the Education Observatory and the University Extension Program (PROEXT), according to demand (Brazil, 2012). Axis III focuses on "Youth and Adult Education and Vocational Education," which aims to expand courses related to rural development, professional qualification courses for rural areas through e-Tec, and scholarships for rural students through Pronatec. It also

aims to provide youth and adult education based on the *Saberes da Terra program* and implement new Youth and Adult Education (EJA) classes based on the availability of resources (Brazil, 2012).

Axis IV, the final axis, is called “Physical and Technological Infrastructure” and seeks to provide new architectural projects, such as classrooms, sports courts, and housing; install computer labs with laptops and computers, projectors, and digital whiteboards; and provide financial resources for facility repairs, equipment maintenance and conservation, and water supply maintenance and acquisition through the Direct Money for Schools Program. It also aims to provide electricity to schools and rural buses to serve the population, as well as motorboats, bicycles, and helmets (Brazil, 2012). Regarding the implementation of PRONACAMPO, the Ministry of Education (MEC) will coordinate with the Secretariat for Continuing Education, Literacy, Diversity, and Inclusion (SECADI) and the National Fund for Education Development (FNDE). The National Commission for Rural Education will monitor the program through the states and Federal District collegiate bodies. In summary, the objectives and actions of PRONACAMPO are as follows:

Objective: To provide technical and financial support to the States, Federal District and Municipalities for the implementation of the rural education policy, aiming at expanding access and qualification of the provision of basic and higher education, through actions to improve the infrastructure of the public education networks, the initial and continuing training of teachers, the production and availability of specific material to rural and quilombola students, in all stages and modalities of education. Actions: Aimed at access and permanence in school, learning and valuing the cultural universe of rural populations, being structured in four axes: Management and Pedagogical Practices - Initial and Continuing Training of Teachers - Youth and Adult Education and Professional Education - Physical and Technological Infrastructure (BRASIL, 2012, p. 1).

Recognizing the value of local knowledge and culture, PRONACAMPO promotes policies and educational initiatives that address the unique needs of rural communities. These efforts expand training opportunities for students and teachers in rural areas across various fields. PRONACAMPO therefore covers everything from elementary school to higher education. As a broad policy that guides initiatives not directly related to the countryside but general in nature, it aligns with the needs and context of the rural population. Examples include the Direct Money for Schools Program (PDDE) and the National Textbook Program (PNLD), which was transformed into PNLD Campo.

Although new programs and public policy initiatives aimed at rural education that value local peasant culture and knowledge are emerging, it is essential to critically analyse these projects after their presentation. One of the main reasons for this analysis is the significant debate among authors, the rural community, and social movements about the intentions of these policies and the purpose of the education they provide. Are these policies based on the principles of rural education, or do the tenets of rural education, sustained by capitalist logic, remain in place despite their discourse of inclusion and respect for rural people?

From this perspective, we question the extent to which such policies promote citizenship and defend quality education for rural people, considering the context of the tensions, clashes, and conflicts that permeate the peasant struggle in all its aspects. Additionally, we seek to understand the real possibilities of implementing actions that address the challenges historically faced by rural education that still affect Brazilian society today.

#### **4 Public educational policies for the countryside: contradictions and challenges**

An analysis of selected public policies for rural education, PRONERA, PROCAMPO, and PRONACAMPO, considering historical-dialectical materialism reveals that the origin and implementation of these policies have been marked by significant challenges and tensions. These challenges and tensions reveal the contradictions inherent in the capitalist state. Although these programs are fundamental to defending the expansion and quality of rural education that meets the specific needs of rural populations, they encounter challenges reflecting tensions between emancipatory educational projects and the exclusionary logic of capital. These challenges include ideological conflicts, issues with resource distribution, and resistance from certain groups and sectors of society.

These factors highlight the difficulties in educational policy, particularly in establishing measures that value rural communities. Instead of promoting the recognition of their identity and affirming peasants as subjects of rights, the policies dehumanize and alienate them from their own reality. Thus, the alienating and exclusionary logic is reaffirmed once again.

Regarding the National Program for Education in Agrarian Reform (PRONERA), Souza (2023) emphasizes the numerous challenges it has encountered. The most

notable challenge was the restructuring of INCRA (the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform), which took place in 2019. Previously, PRONERA had a dedicated coordination team that managed it specifically. With the changes, however, PRONERA was transferred to another division responsible for additional public policies and is now addressed within a broader framework. Souza (2023) argued that this change might hinder resource distribution and program implementation, impacting efforts to improve rural education quality. Another challenge is the management of civil servants, as PRONERA lacks the resources to support all Brazilian settlements. This means many individuals, even those interested, cannot register for and access the program.

Throughout its years of operation, PRONERA faced resource constraints that limited the capacity of various courses, including basic, higher, and technical education. Additionally, it proved impossible to implement projects in partnership with public and private institutions, even those already approved, due to budget constraints. This was observed during the tenures of numerous government officials and sometimes reached critical situations, such as during the Fernando Henrique Cardoso administration when there were significant delays in releasing funds. At times, there was a considerable increase, as seen during the Lula administration when resources allocated to the program increased, although declines occurred due to issues with the Federal Court of Accounts. Another notable period was the 2016 coup and the Temer administration, which enacted a spending cap (Constitutional Amendment nº 95). This led to budget cuts that critically impacted the program (Souza, 2023).

Camacho (2024, p. 16) notes that the Bolsonaro administration promoted the reform and restructuring of INCRA. Additionally, they cut R\$2.39 billion from education and R\$1.7 billion from science, technology, and innovation in 2022 through Decree 11.216/2022. Furthermore, it reduced investments in federal universities by 94% during its four-year term. These measures have weakened PRONERA, resulting in a decline in the number of courses and students. Souza (2023) notes that PRONERA remains operational due to parliamentary amendments that have helped overcome various challenges, such as the lack of resources. However, this would not be possible without social struggles for the defense and continuation of the program. It is essential to remember that the program originated from the demands of popular classes and trade union movements for quality education for the rural population.

Regarding the National Program for Rural Education (PROCAMPO), Hage, Silva, and Brito (2016) found that program participants faced significant challenges. One of the most frequently cited issues is the lack of infrastructure for developing courses. Additionally, there is little interaction between the university and social movements. It is important to emphasize that social movements are the foundation of the struggle for the recognition of rural peoples' rights, including the right to education. The authors point out that higher education professionals, including teachers, administrators, and civil servants, do not understand the project to realize the course, nor do the students themselves. In this regard, there is a

[...] distance of certain teachers from the course proposal, the configuring intentionalities of their political-pedagogical project and its implications for the teaching work, such as the rigidity with which they position themselves regarding the schedule, the curricular content and the use of the methodological dynamics referenced by the Pedagogical Alternation, which demands collective work to achieve the objectives. The inconsistent positions of these professors trigger doubts and insecurities in the students about: the theoretical consistency of the training offered by the course; the relevance of the methodological proposal and its academic competence in relation to the training of students from other courses; and their performance as graduates in the labor market, in view of the fact that the pedagogical proposal is in the phase of recognition in the university and in society (Hage; Silva; Brito, 2016, p. 165).

Additionally, the cited authors affirm the presence of other challenges, such as the distance between universities, rural communities, and workplaces, as well as student dependencies. These factors become obstacles to access and retention for students participating in PROCAMPO. Molina and Rocha (2014) point out some difficulties that students in the Rural Education Degree program encounter during and after the program. These difficulties include: 1) the release of students who work as rural teachers in local communities so they can remain in universities during the University Time (TU) period without receiving financial support, forcing them to pay for substitutes or abandon the course due to the impossibility of giving up their profession, 2) the necessity of continuing education for graduates of Rural Education Degree Programs, and 3) the need for coordination and exchange between the various universities that offer Rural Education Degree Programs to stimulate research, reflection on the project, and teaching practices themselves.

Regarding the National Program for Rural Education (PRONACAMPO), Molina and Rocha (2014) state that with the approval of PROCAMPO through Decree nº 7.352/2010, the development and establishment of a national program for rural

education were required to implement the initiatives established in policy. The National Program for Rural Education (PRONACAMPO) was established, as previously mentioned. In 2012, a working group was formed to address this responsibility, distinct from the group established for PROCAMPO-related activities. França and Farenzena (2018) demonstrate that the program has been characterized by a hybrid policy since its inception due to disputes between groups with different interests regarding the approaches and concepts of a national program for rural areas.

The authors state that PRONACAMPO incorporates ideas from social movements with strong ties to family farming and agroecology, as well as from agribusinesses organized to defend rural entrepreneurship and promote technological advances to increase production and productivity (França; Farenzena, 2018). It should be noted that the agribusiness group is very influential in the National Congress, strengthening its influence on the program's projects and actions. For example, the National Program for Access to Technical Education and Employment (PRONATEC) Campo was established. This program focuses on technical education in rural areas and has a strong private sector presence, transforming the program's educational goals and the subjects to be taught. Thus, if

[...] reproduces an educational duality and maintains ideas and interests present in old educational programs aimed at the population living in the countryside, and which contributed to maintaining social inequalities. Thus, the school in rural areas would not be directed to the production of knowledge and the student does not have the right to choose respected. Therefore, we have a school focused on training in search of productivity and social assistance, with a minimum training. This characteristic contributes to the production, maintenance and reproduction of inequalities in the school system. Pronacampo aggregates disputes around conflicting political projects present in rural areas, which involve conceptions of agriculture, field projects and public education for the rural population (França; Farenzena, 2018, p. 17-18).

From this perspective, although PRONACAMPO has made advances through its actions, it has also highlighted contradictions harking back to the debate between Rural Education and Education in Rural Areas, as discussed here. Kuhn (2015) argues that the program is viewed as a policy that diverges from the principles of Rural Education, which were established through a process of struggle. More concerning is that amid this scenario, there has been no change in PRONACAMPO's guidelines despite pressure to alter the agrarian and capitalist model that characterizes it. According to the author, the program's overall objective is to meet the demands of



agrarian capitalism and the rural productive sector rather than the actual needs of the rural population.

However, it conceals itself behind a discourse rooted in social struggle and affirming the rights of the peasant population. In summary, policies such as PRONERA, PROCAMPO, and PRONACAMPO are essential for promoting and expanding rural education and have the potential to contribute to the critical and emancipatory development of the rural population. Below is a comparative table of the policies mentioned, showing the main objectives, key advances, and challenges of each program addressed in this study.

Table 1 – Comparison between PRONERA, PROCAMPO and PRONACAMPO

PROGRAM	MAIN OBJECTIVE	MAIN ADVANCES	MAIN CHALLENGES
PRONERA	Democratize education at different levels of education in an articulated way with the reality of rural people.	Expansion of Rural Education with the institution of new courses at the elementary, secondary and higher levels, in numerous institutions throughout Brazil, integrating knowledge aligned with the sociocultural reality of the countryside.	Distribution of resources and the implementation of actions for the restructuring of INCRA. Coping with resource contingency and server management.
PROCAMPO	Support the implementation of courses for specific training of rural teachers, serving the final years of elementary school and high school in rural schools through the Degree in Rural Education.	Training of teachers specialized in the demands of the countryside through specific degrees for Rural Education. Institution of the Pedagogy of Alternation through "University Time" and "Community Time", based on praxis.	Lack of infrastructure for the development of courses. Little approximation of the university with social movements. Lack of a relationship of understanding between higher education professionals and students in relation to the program project itself.
PRONACAMPO	Provide technical and financial support to States, Municipalities and the Federal District for the implementation of policies for Rural Education, expanding access and qualification of the provision of basic and higher education.	Establishment of new educational policies for the countryside, promoting access to basic education, teacher training and scholarships for rural students.	The result of hybrid policies linked to agribusiness and entrepreneurship groups. Institution of programs aimed at technical education with a strong presence of the private sector.

Source: The Authors/2024

In view of these considerations, it is imperative to underscore the significance of policies that acknowledge the fundamental role of rural populations in the formation

of a counter-hegemonic movement. This movement challenges the homogenizing forces perpetuated by the capitalist and neoliberal model, thereby recognizing rural populations as subjects capable of contributing to a more diverse and equitable society. However, it is important to note that these policies contain certain contradictions and tensions, which may affect their capacity to fully address the specific features of rural areas and influence how Rural Education incorporates local and agricultural knowledge.

## **5 Final considerations**

After reviewing selected literature and analyzing relevant legislation, it became clear that the debate on public education policies for rural populations needs to be broadened, particularly regarding PRONERA, PROCAMPO, and PRONACAMPO. These programs have played an important role in promoting quality education for children, youth, and adults from rural areas, providing access to and ensuring permanence in the education system. These projects have been transformed into policies due to social movements and pressure to value rural people and their specific needs, as well as to affirm and recognize their rights.

Throughout these programs, significant progress has been made in promoting access and training for rural students at all levels, as well as in training rural teachers through the Rural Education Degree based on the Pedagogy of Alternation. This program divides academic semesters between University Time (TU) and Community Time (TC). This approach has been essential in engaging with the concrete material reality of the peasant population. Furthermore, these programs have fostered collaboration between the federal government, states, municipalities, and the Federal District to develop and implement measures that expand rural education initiatives. These actions involved working with pedagogical management, developing materials specific to rural areas, providing initial and continuing training, and introducing technology to rural schools.

However, analysing the historical context of these policies and the actions taken to regulate them reveal an area of tension permeated by conflicts and adversities that significantly affect rural education. These challenges limit the effectiveness of these policies by failing to establish a relationship between the needs of the rural population and what is offered, thus preventing the policies from reaching their full potential.

These challenges stem from various factors, including budget constraints, the absence of departments that regulate program activities (which occurred after INCRA's restructuring), the difficulty of forming partnerships between institutions to train rural students, and conditions that hinder the implementation of University Time (TU) and Community Time (TC) programs. Additionally, universities and higher education institutions often resist accepting students from rural areas due to a lack of understanding of their realities. This results in teaching that is disconnected from their specific needs and focuses on principles that diverge from Rural Education. Furthermore, there is a reductionist view of rural areas that focuses solely on economic aspects.

Moreover, hegemonic sectors, such as groups linked to agribusiness, constantly attempt to discredit these programs. They seek to either extinguish them or reform them to integrate them into the capital model. This model views Rural Education to prepare the workforce. Thus, they advocate for an educational process that prepares students to perform basic tasks sufficient for their work, rendering everything else dispensable. From this perspective, knowledge becomes fragmented, and reality and study, as well as action and critical theory—praxis—are separated. The market becomes the center that regulates relations, with surplus value as its goal rather than human development.

This is precisely the model that rural education opposes. Based on the defence of quality education that values local peasant knowledge, culture, and forms of organization, it is rooted in the struggle of social movements. Therefore, Rural Education works to advance these policies, so they reach more rural students. However, this expansion must be guided by an emancipatory perspective that provides students with the conditions for existence and empowers them as subjects of a class.

Although such policies have progressed significantly, it is impossible to assert that they can permanently transform education on their own and under current conditions while facing historical obstacles that are part of a broader struggle involving everyone. Therefore, it is necessary to broaden the discussion and promote a deep, comprehensive discourse that considers the advances and challenges faced in the search for a truly democratic education that meets the real needs of the rural population.

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