


NEST EGG PROGRAM: A FINANCIAL-EDUCATIONAL INCENTIVE FOR PERMANENCE AND COMPLETION IN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

The Pé-de-Meia Program, by Decree No. 11,901, addresses challenges of public high school with financial incentives for low-income students. The research, descriptive and analytical, reviews legislation and literature on dropout and inequalities, including statistical data. The effectiveness of the Pé-de-Meia in various phases of high school is highlighted, acting in the entry, permanence and conclusion of studies. It responds to the need for work, correlating family context and school attendance to promote equality. It identifies the lack of financial incentives as a determinant for dropout and addresses barriers to access, adopting an integrated approach. Recognizing the disconnection with the students' reality, the program offers personalized incentives. It is concluded that the Pé-de-Meia is a proactive measure, strengthening the educational system and advancing towards educational equity in Brazil.

Keywords: Public education, Financial inclusion, Equal opportunities, School dropout, Pé-de-Meia Program.

INTRODUCTION

School dropout in Brazilian public high schools is a complex challenge that crosses several spheres, including socioeconomic inequalities, the scarcity of financial stimulus, gaps in the education system, and the personal challenges faced by students. Socioeconomic inequalities play a crucial role in this scenario, disproportionately affecting low-income students, whose access to key resources such as teaching materials and adequate living conditions is often limited. This reality contributes to the perpetuation of the cycle of poverty, transforming education from a potential tool for social ascension into another barrier.

Faced with this challenging scenario, the Pé-de-Meia Program emerges as a government response aimed at mitigating these obstacles. Resulting from Decree No. 11,901, this initiative aims to offer financial incentives to low-income students enrolled in public high school, addressing the issue of dropout from an economic perspective. Pé-de-Meia seeks to reduce the financial barriers that often lead students to drop out of school, recognizing that school dropout is more than a reflection of students' individual deficiencies; It is a consequence of a system that does not always meet the specific needs of those in situations of socioeconomic vulnerability.

In the Brazilian educational context, dropout from public high school represents a challenge that compromises equal access to education. The Pé-de-Meia Program, regulated by Decree No. 11,901, emerges as a government strategy to mitigate this dropout, offering financial incentives to low-income students. The research proposes an in-depth analysis of the Pé-de-Meia Program, evaluating its effectiveness as an instrument to combat school dropout and its contribution to the promotion of equality in access to education.

The relevance of this study lies in the need to critically understand the Pé-de-Meia Program as a strategic response of the government to overcome educational challenges. Dropout, influenced by socioeconomic inequalities, lack of financial incentives, and barriers to access, requires a comprehensive approach. Understanding the role of Pé-de-Meia in this context is essential to support future educational policies and promote a more inclusive system.

The main objective of the research is to analyze the effectiveness of the Pé-de-Meia Program in reducing school dropout and promoting equal access to education in Brazilian public high schools. To achieve this purpose, it seeks to understand the goals of the program, evaluate its implementation, and examine how financial incentives impact student permanence.

The structure of the article follows sections that explore school dropout in Brazilian public high schools, the legislation of the Pé-de-Meia, issues related to socioeconomic inequality, and the effectiveness of financial incentives. The subsequent section discusses the results of the survey, highlighting the correlation between inequality and dropout, as well as the importance of the Pé-de-Meia. The conclusion emphasizes the main findings and highlights the need for effective collaboration between the Ministry of Education and education systems to optimize the distribution of incentives and strengthen the program as a transforming agent in Brazilian education.

METHODOLOGY

The research on the Pé-de-Meia Program, originated by Decree No. 11,901, was carried out through the application of the document analysis technique as a method of data collection, in line with the qualitative approach. Following the perspective of Lüdke and André (2015), document analysis seeks to identify factual information in documents based on questions or hypotheses of interest. The documents, rich in information, can be exploited for a specific purpose, providing fundamental evidence for the researcher's claims.

According to Melo and Souza (2024), Document Analysis favors the maturation or evolution process of the group studied. This valuable technique of qualitative approach uses original documents, not yet submitted to analytical treatment, such as letters, telegrams, photos, interview transcripts, among others, characterizing primary sources.

In addition, we cover secondary sources, which have already been analyzed, such as statistics and periodicals.

We started with a detailed review of the legislation, focusing on Decree No. 11,901, to identify the guidelines and objectives of the Pé-de-Meia Program. Subsequently, we reviewed and analyzed literature on school dropout, socioeconomic inequality, lack of financial incentives, and barriers to access to education.

The critical interpretation of the legislation and the data allowed an in-depth analysis of the challenges faced by low-income students. We also incorporated the vision of experts in the educational field, such as Paulo Freire, to contextualize socioeconomic inequality in the educational environment.

The methodology concluded with the discussion of the results obtained, relating the information collected with the objectives of the Pé-de-Meia Program. We include reflections

on the effectiveness of the program in promoting equal access to education and mitigating the factors that contribute to school dropout.

NEST EGG PROGRAM: A STRATEGIC RESPONSE TO MITIGATE SCHOOL DROPOUT IN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS

Basic Education in Brazil, as established by the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB), Law No. 9,394/96, comprises the first stage of school education and covers Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education and High School. This educational structure aims to provide the integral development of the student, ensuring him a common education indispensable for the exercise of citizenship and providing him with the means to progress in work and in further studies.

Early Childhood Education, the first phase of Basic Education, is intended for children up to five years of age and has a complementary character to the family's action. On the other hand, Elementary Education, compulsory and free, serves the age group from 6 to 14 years old and aims at the basic formation of the citizen, providing him with the development of the ability to learn, the strengthening of family ties and the construction of ethical and social values.

High School, the concluding phase of Basic Education, includes the age group of 15 to 17 years. Its primary function is to consolidate and deepen the knowledge acquired in the previous educational stages, enabling students to participate fully in society and to continue their studies, whether in higher education, technical or vocational courses. Law No. 12,061/09 instituted a new responsibility for the State, seeking to ensure the universalization of secondary education. This conception assumes that all people of school age, or even beyond this age group, must attend school or, at least, have access to a vacancy offered by the State. It is worth noting that the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA) stipulates that adolescents must be enrolled and attending educational institutions.

In the context of the right to Education, the assertion of Silva and Leal (2022, p. 424) highlights that "[...] it is up to the State to create objective conditions that provide full access to the educational system." This perspective emphasizes the responsibility of the State to ensure equitable opportunities for all citizens in the educational field.

Integrating with this understanding, the Pé-de-Meia Program establishes fundamental goals, such as the democratization of access to secondary education, the encouragement of student permanence and the reduction of retention, dropout and school dropout rates. In

addition, it aims to promote social inclusion through education, human development, and social mobility. The program is aimed at students regularly enrolled in public high school, aged between 14 and 24, and grants benefits to members of families enrolled in the Unified Registry for Social Programs of the Federal Government (CadÚnico). It is worth mentioning that priority is given to students who receive Bolsa Família, thus avoiding duplication of financial-educational benefits. These initiatives converge to the construction of a more inclusive and egalitarian scenario in the Brazilian educational sphere.

In the context of school dropout, conceptualized by Riffel and Malacarne (2010), it is the act of dropping out, running away, abandoning, giving up or not staying somewhere. Specifically in the context of school dropout, the term refers to running out or dropping out of school in search of other activities. To properly understand this problem, it is vital to apprehend the differentiation between school dropout and dropout, as elucidated by the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira/Inep (1998), from this perspective, "dropout" denotes the situation in which a student disengages from school, but returns in the following year, while "dropout" suggests that the student leaves school without returning to the educational system.

According to the Federal Constitution, which establishes that "Education, a right of all and a duty of the State and of the family, shall be promoted and encouraged with the collaboration of society, aiming at the full development of the person, his preparation for the exercise of citizenship and his qualification for work" (Brasil, 1988), the Brazilian constitutional commitment is based on the guarantee of the right to education as an essential pillar for full individual development, the exercise of citizenship and preparation for the job market.

However, even with the constitutional provision of this right, data from the Brazilian Yearbook of Basic Education 2020 reveal a worrying reality. Only 65.1% of Brazilians completed high school at the expected age, up to 19 years old, and this percentage is even more alarming, reaching 51.2% among low-income students. In addition, 12% of Brazilians between the ages of 15 and 17 are out of the classroom. These statistics highlight the magnitude of the challenge faced by the Brazilian education system, highlighting the urgent need for effective strategies to combat dropout, especially among the most vulnerable socioeconomic groups.

The numbers from the National Household Sample Survey (PNAD - 2019), conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics in 2019, corroborate these concerns by finding that 7% of the population between 15 and 17 years old was out of the school

environment. These data highlight the persistence of the high school dropout rate in Brazil, a complex phenomenon influenced by several factors, including socioeconomic inequalities, lack of financial incentives, and access barriers.

The significant numbers of young people who drop out of school indicate the urgent need for government actions and specific programs, such as the recently regulated Pé-de-Meia Program. School dropout not only compromises the educational and professional future of students, but also negatively impacts the social and economic development of the country. The program, by instituting financial incentives for low-income students in public high school, seeks to directly address the causes of dropout, considering socioeconomic inequality, lack of financial incentives, access barriers and the individual reality of students. Recognizing and addressing the specific challenges related to school dropout in Brazil, the Pé-de-Meia Program presents itself as a crucial initiative in the collective effort to build a more inclusive and equitable educational system, promoting an educational environment more favorable to the integral development of Brazilian students. The regulation of the program is a concrete response to the need to mitigate school dropout and contribute to the construction of a more just and egalitarian society.

COMBATING SOCIAL INEQUALITIES AS A RESPONSE TO SCHOOL DROPOUT

Social inequalities represent significant disparities in various aspects of people's lives, such as access to opportunities, education, health, work, and participation in public life. These differentials are often deeply rooted in historical, economic, and cultural structures, perpetuating cycles of advantages and disadvantages over generations.

In contemporary times, social problems are increasingly present, which is directly linked to the implementation of neoliberalism, increasing the number of people in conditions of poverty, exclusion and subordination, increasing social inequality to a great extent and the consequences of the current economic recession promote an even more aggravating volume of marginalized people. (Meira, 2017, p. 25).

Currently, there is a significant increase in social issues. As pointed out by Iamamoto (2010), the "social question" is not restricted to individual problems, but rather reflects expressions of the social contradictions inherent to the capitalist system. This scenario is linked to the implementation of neoliberal policies. This results in an increase in the number of people living in conditions of poverty, exclusion and subordination. In addition, social inequality is significantly expanded, and the effects of the current economic recession contribute to an even more aggravating scenario of social marginalization. The understanding

is that the neoliberal orientation in economic policies may be exacerbating social challenges, widening socioeconomic disparities and generating negative consequences, especially in periods of economic recession.

Social inequality is a persistent challenge that permeates various aspects of society, extending its influence to the educational system and significantly shaping the trajectories of students. In the education landscape, this disparity often translates into significant obstacles for low-income students, preventing them from devoting adequate time and resources to their studies, which in turn can result in high dropout rates. According to Costa et al. (2003, p. 12), in their study they point out that:

It was found that the need for work is the main responsible for school dropout between the ages of 14 and 29 years. In the background there are social and economic factors, such as lack of interest, lack of money or even pregnancy. In all cases that are responsible for 80% of the students' departure, or even more, such as in cases that reach the level of 86% of the justifications, socioeconomic factors are seen as the main motivators for the dropout process.

The finding that the need for work is pointed out as the main reason for dropping out of school between the ages of 14 and 29 highlights the direct influence of socioeconomic factors on this phenomenon. This reality underscores the urgency of addressing the economic issues that impact young people's continuity in education.

By observing that, in many cases, socioeconomic factors represent 80% or more of the justifications for the departure of students, it is evident that effective measures are necessary to mitigate such influences. The Pé-de-Meia Program, regulated by the Decree in question, arises as a response to this need, seeking to encourage the permanence of students through financial benefits.

The decree, by instituting financial-educational incentives, seeks to act directly on the socioeconomic challenges that permeate school dropout. Providing financial aid to low-income students can be an effective strategy to mitigate the pressure of the need for work as the main driver of dropping out of school. In addition, it is in line with the vision expressed in the Brazilian Constitution of 1988, which establishes the promotion and encouragement of education as a right of all and a duty of the State.

Equitable access to education is crucial to fostering equal opportunities for all members of society. However, socioeconomic inequality creates discrepancies that directly impact the educational journey of students, leading to harmful consequences, such as school

dropout. The lack of adequate financial resources is one of the main barriers faced by low-income students.

Paulo Freire (1987), a renowned Brazilian pedagogue and philosopher, in his work "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", highlights the importance of education as an instrument of social transformation. Freire explores how social inequalities influence access to education and how a lack of adequate resources can be a form of oppression. Its in-depth analysis contributes to the understanding of the complexity of the barriers faced by low-income students, thus strengthening the proposal of the Pé-de-Meia Program by offering financial incentives to mitigate such obstacles.

Bourdieu (1970), a French sociologist, is another author who contributes significantly to the understanding of social inequalities, especially in the educational context. In "The Reproduction", he examines how social structures influence and perpetuate inequality in the education system. Bourdieu argues that educational institutions often reproduce existing social hierarchies, contributing to the maintenance of privileges and exclusions. Highlighting the conditions of class, culture, and symbolic capital, he explores how these elements influence the success or failure of individuals in the education system.

Socioeconomic inequality, as discussed by Freire and Bourdieu, not only restricts access to material resources but also creates an unfavorable environment for academic development. Many low-income students face challenging living conditions, such as poor housing, limited access to health services, and a greater exposure to adverse socioeconomic contexts. These additional challenges can make it difficult to concentrate on studies and actively participate in school life.

Thus, tackling socioeconomic inequality is essential for building a fairer and more inclusive educational system. The Pé-de-Meia Program, by seeking to provide significant financial incentives for low-income students, is an initiative that aims to mitigate the economic barriers often associated with dropout. By understanding and addressing socioeconomic inequality, the program seeks to create an environment conducive to the promotion of equal opportunities in access to education, thus contributing to the construction of a more just and equitable society.

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES IN EDUCATION: OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO SCHOOL PERMANENCE

The absence of financial incentives is one of the determining factors that can discourage students from staying in school, especially for those who face significant economic challenges. This scenario reveals a reality in which the lack of adequate financial resources becomes a significant barrier, compromising the engagement and continuity of students in the educational environment.

Education is a fundamental investment in the development of a society, and continued access to this education depends, in large part, on the ability of students to overcome economic barriers. In many situations, the lack of financial incentives can demotivate students, leading to school dropout and negatively impacting their educational development.

The issue becomes even more critical when we consider students in situations of socioeconomic vulnerability. These students often face additional difficulties, such as the need to contribute to the household income, lack of access to adequate teaching materials, and limitations in participating in extracurricular activities. The absence of appropriate financial incentives can intensify these challenges, hindering not only school retention but also academic performance and future prospects.

According to data from the Continuous National Household Sample Survey - PNAD, IBGE (2019),

When the student's family context is from a family headed by a white man, with at least complete high schooling, high income and living in an urban area, the chance of this student attending school normally is at least 79%. When it comes to families headed by black, illiterate and rural women, the maximum rate is 65% in the State of Maranhão and 21.7% in Santa Catarina (Education Observatory).

Data from the 2019 Continuous National Household Sample Survey - PNAD (IBGE) highlight the correlation between the family context and a student's chances of regularly attending school. The discrepancy between households headed by white men with higher educational attainments, high incomes, and urban residence, compared with households headed by black women, who are illiterate, and live in rural areas, is alarming. This discrepancy illustrates the profound influence of socioeconomic and racial conditions on access to education, highlighting the urgent need for policies and programs that address these disparities. The Pé-de-Meia Program, regulated by the Decree, emerges as a crucial initiative in this context, by offering financial incentives aimed at students in vulnerable situations, aiming to reduce these educational inequalities and promote equal opportunities.

When addressing the lack of financial incentives, it is crucial to consider the implications of this gap in promoting educational equality of opportunity. Students who do not see tangible rewards for their educational endeavors may be more likely to drop out of school in search of opportunities that offer more immediate financial returns. This dynamic creates a harmful cycle of evasion and limitation of prospects for social progress.

The Pé-de-Meia Program, by instituting financial-educational incentives, emerges as a strategic response to this problem. Seeking to mitigate the economic challenges faced by low-income students, the program offers a proactive approach to encouraging retention in school and promoting successful completion of high school. By recognizing and combating the lack of financial incentives as a real obstacle, Pé-de-Meia contributes to the construction of a more inclusive and egalitarian educational environment, aligned with the fundamental purpose of providing educational opportunities for all, regardless of their socioeconomic status.

Access barriers represent substantial obstacles that often prevent students from achieving and maintaining their participation in the educational environment. Among these barriers, issues related to transportation and the scarcity of financial resources emerge as preponderant factors that can lead students to drop out of school.

Transportation, as a barrier to access education, is particularly significant in regions where schools are far from students' homes. The lack of accessible and reliable transportation infrastructure can result in difficulties for students to get to school regularly. The logistical challenge presented by this barrier can create a situation where students face long commutes, often spending considerable time and effort, which can negatively influence their commitment to education.

In addition, the scarcity of financial resources can manifest itself as a substantial barrier. Students facing economic hardship often deal with a lack of access to adequate teaching materials, school uniforms, sufficient food, and even the inability to afford transportation costs. These financial deprivations can make the educational experience challenging and demotivating, contributing to school dropout.

The lack of resources can also impact the quality of the learning environment. Schools that lack adequate infrastructure, modern equipment, well-provided libraries, and spaces for extracurricular activities may not provide an environment conducive to learning. These deficiencies can discourage students, making the educational experience less attractive and, consequently, leading to dropout.

The Pé-de-Meia, by addressing access barriers, seeks to create a more inclusive and equitable educational environment. By offering significant financial incentives, the program aims to mitigate the economic hardship faced by low-income students, contributing to overcoming transportation barriers, ensuring access to appropriate educational materials, and improving the overall conditions of schools. By doing so, Pé-de-Meia aims to create conditions that encourage students to overcome access barriers, thus promoting the permanence and successful completion of high school. This integrated approach recognizes the importance of removing both tangible and intangible obstacles to ensure that all students have equal opportunities in accessing education.

The disconnection with the reality of students represents a significant challenge in the educational context, being a factor that can contribute substantially to school dropout. The absence of programs that understand and address the individual realities of students, especially in the financial aspect, can result in a lack of adequate support, demotivation and, ultimately, abandonment of studies.

It is essential to recognize that each student brings with them a unique range of experiences, challenges, and needs. A lack of consideration for these individual aspects can create an educational environment that does not meet the specific demands of each student. When educational programs are not aligned with the reality of students, including their socioeconomic conditions, the effectiveness of these initiatives can be compromised.

In the specific case of public secondary education, the disconnection with the reality of students can manifest itself in the lack of financial support programs that take into account the specific needs of those facing economic difficulties. The absence of financial incentives can discourage students from staying and engaging, especially when they face challenges such as lack of resources for school supplies, transportation, or even basic issues such as food.

The Pé-de-Meia Program seeks to address this gap by offering specific, targeted financial incentives to low-income students. By considering the reality of these students, the program recognizes the importance of offering financial support to overcome tangible obstacles that can negatively impact their educational journey. In this way, Pé-de-Meia seeks to create a more effective connection between educational policies and the reality experienced by students, contributing to the reduction of dropout and promoting a more inclusive education aligned with the individual needs of each student.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Pé-de-Meia Program, established by Decree No. 11,901, represents a government initiative to address the challenges in the educational scenario of Brazilian public high schools. In this analysis, we evaluate the effectiveness of the program in dealing with educational issues, reducing school dropout, and fostering equal access to education.

Pé-de-Meia, by providing financial incentives from enrollment to Enem, covers several stages of high school, not only encouraging entry, but also permanence and successful completion of studies. The survey highlights that, in 2019, 7% of the population between 15 and 17 years old was out of school, underlining the need for the program in the face of school dropout. This strategy seeks to achieve the crucial goals of democratizing access and encouraging students to stay.

Social inequalities, rooted in historical, economic and cultural structures, permeate various aspects of life. The Pé-de-Meia Program emerges as a concrete response to this disparity, offering financial incentives aimed at students in vulnerable situations. The research highlights the correlation between family context and a student's chances of regularly attending school, indicating the urgent need for programs such as Pé-de-Meia to address these educational disparities.

The absence of financial incentives is identified as a determining factor for school dropout, especially among low-income students. The survey highlights that the need for work is pointed out as the main reason for dropping out of school between the ages of 14 and 29. The Pé-de-Meia Program, by instituting financial-educational incentives, aims to mitigate this gap, aligning itself with the constitutional vision of promoting and encouraging education.

Access barriers, such as precarious transportation and scarcity of financial resources, are identified as obstacles to the effective participation of students in the educational environment. The Pé-de-Meia Program seeks to create a more inclusive environment by offering financial incentives to overcome economic challenges, improve school conditions, and ensure access to adequate educational materials. This reflects an integrated approach to promoting retention and completion of studies.

The disconnection with the students' reality is identified as a challenge, contributing to school dropout. Pé-de-Meia seeks to address this gap by offering specific and targeted financial incentives for low-income students. This personalized approach aims to create a more effective connection between educational policies and the reality experienced by students, contributing to the reduction of dropout.

In short, the Pé-de-Meia Program, resulting from Decree No. 11,901, proves to be a proactive and structured measure to strengthen the Brazilian educational system. By directing resources to students who need it most, it seeks to create a more inclusive and egalitarian environment. The analysis reveals the importance of the program in promoting equal access to education, mitigating socioeconomic disparities and addressing barriers that contribute to school dropout. Pé-de-Meia is a significant step in the construction of an educationally equitable future for all Brazilians.

CONCLUSION

The results of the research highlight the relevance of the Pé-de-Meia Program as a strategic response of the government to overcome the challenges present in the educational scenario of Brazilian public high school. By offering substantial financial incentives, the program seeks to meet the specific needs of low-income students, combating school dropout and promoting equal opportunities.

The analysis revealed the direct connection between socioeconomic inequality and school dropout, highlighting how the lack of financial incentives and access barriers negatively impact students' permanence in school. The Pé-de-Meia Program, by directing financial resources directly to students in vulnerable situations, is aligned with the constitutional mission of promoting and encouraging education.

The discussion about the disconnection with the reality of students highlights the importance of educational programs that understand and address the individual needs of students, especially in the financial aspect. Pé-de-Meia emerges as an initiative that seeks to create an effective connection between educational policies and the reality experienced by students, contributing to the reduction of dropout and promoting a more inclusive education. In summary, the results indicate that the Pé-de-Meia Program has significant potential in promoting inclusion and completion of high school. However, collaboration between the Ministry of Education and education systems is crucial to ensure the effectiveness of the distribution of incentives, making it essential to share information and the veracity of data.

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