


YOUTH AND ADULT EDUCATION AS A VARIABLE FOR THE REDUCTION OF CRIME RATES IN BRAZIL

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ABSTRACT

The present work aims to investigate whether there is a relationship between education and the reduction of crime rates in Brazil. The problem of the research is, then, to verify whether Youth and Adult Education has the potential to influence crime rates in Brazil. As a hypothesis, it is suggested that youth and adult education has the potential to influence crime rates in Brazil for at least two reasons: i) as a matter of logic, the time in which the student will be in class will not be available for criminal activities; ii) education allows for better placement in the labor market, changing the opportunities and costs of involvement

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in criminal activities. To confirm or refute the hypothesis, it was necessary to understand the historical construction of youth and adult education in Brazil, identify the profile of the prison population and verify how education has the potential to influence crime rates. At the end of the research, the hypothesis was confirmed.

Keywords: Youth and Adult Education. Crime. Análise Econômica do Direito.

INTRODUCTION

According to a survey carried out by the Federal Government, Brazil, in December 2020, had a prison population of 807,145 people, a number that places the country in 3rd place in the ranking of nations with the highest number of people imprisoned in the world, behind only the United States and China.

The literature related to the economics of crime suggests that education rates are associated with criminality (Lochner; Moretti, 2004; Buonanno; Leonida, 2006). This premise can be verified in Brazil by analyzing the National Survey of Penitentiary Information report, from which it is possible to identify the education rates of prisoners.

From the report, it can be seen that most of the prison population is made up of young people, with 29.9% made up of people between 18 and 24 years old and 24.21% between 25 and 29 years old. Also, in relation to education, the report points out that 51.3% of the prisoners have incomplete elementary school and 14.9% incomplete high school.

Although it is not possible to infer the relationship between education and crime from this information alone, it represents, at least, that there is a large number of people in prison with low education and that most of these people are between 18 and 29 years old.

If this is the panorama of the relationship between the trinomial: criminality – age – schooling, on the other hand, there is the Youth and Adult Education (EJA) project as an opportunity for the formal education of young people and adults, which, in addition to providing training as an individual and citizen, enables access to better professional placements.

Youth and Adult Education helps to provide formal education to people who are sometimes discredited by this alternative, many of whom end up entering the "world of crime" because they do not have job opportunities due to lack of schooling. It is not being stated that crime is directly and exclusively related to lack of education, notably due to the various news related to white-collar crime, practiced by businessmen, politicians and people with a high level of education, as well as the existence of studies that relate crime to poverty and inequality (Fajnzylber; Lederman; Loayza, 2002), unemployment (Steven; Rudolf, 2001), culture and social values (Messner; Rosenfeld, 2007), among others.

In common sense, it is known that education is one of the ways to distance oneself from crime, but is there a scientific basis for this? Is it possible to identify, from a theoretical and empirical basis, that access to education has the potential to result in a reduction in

crime rates? From these questions, the hypothesis of this article arises, that the education of young people and adults has the potential to influence crime rates in Brazil.

The problem is of great importance when one considers that, if the potential for reducing crime in Brazil is identified through the education of young people and adults provided by EJA, the result of the research can support public policy decisions.

This is because the easiest solution is always to increase penalties to combat crime, as well as to build more prisons and hire more public security elements (Garland, 2001). The alternative of solving the problem, or at least reducing it, based on education is the empty discourse of a minority (Wacquant, 2009).

In this way, once the potential for reducing crime rates through formal education of young people and adults is scientifically evidenced, it will be possible to support policies to promote EJA.

METHODOLOGY

This article aims to verify the potential of the Youth and Adult Education (EJA) program to influence crime rates in Brazil, although they cannot be taken as the exclusive cause, given the influence of other factors that will not be analyzed in this work.

The question that is intended to be answered with this work is whether Youth and Adult Education has the potential to influence crime rates in Brazil, and this research also serves as a reference for public policy decision-making.

As a hypothesis, it is suggested that youth and adult education has the potential to influence crime rates in Brazil for at least two reasons: i) as a matter of logic, the time in which the student will be in class will not be available for criminal activities; ii) education allows for better placement in the labor market, changing the opportunities and costs of involvement in criminal activities.

To answer the question, in order to organize the research, the general objective was to verify how Youth and Adult Education in Brazil has the potential to influence crime rates. Also, as specific objectives to be achieved: i) to understand the historical construction, characteristics and purpose of EJA; ii) to identify the profile of the prison population in Brazil; iii) to verify how Youth and Adult Education has the potential to influence crime rates in Brazil.

The achievement of these objectives was possible, as to the method of procedure, with the use of bibliographic and documentary research. Bibliographic because it was

prepared from material already published, such as books and scientific articles (Gil, 2008). Documental for analyzing data from the prison system that did not receive analytical treatment (Cellard, 2008).

The method of approach was deductive, since it is necessary to systematize the research by a decreasing chain of reasoning: i) most of the prison population in Brazil is made up of young people and adults and has low levels of education (major premise); ii) people with higher levels of education potentially get better placements in the labor market (minor premise); iii) EJA, by providing formal education to young people and adults, has the potential to reduce crime rates (conclusion).

As for the research, from the point of view of its nature, it was pure because it aimed to generate new knowledge for the advancement of science without foreseen practical application. The problem was addressed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitatively, due to the need to analyze the data that result from the current Brazilian prison policy; qualitatively due to its descriptive nature, specifically with regard to the presentation of the Youth and Adult Education - EJA policy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

YOUTH AND ADULT EDUCATION – EJA: PATH TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

If with the education of children there is a whole world that is unveiled with the advancement in the literacy process, with young people and adults the world is not unveiled, but several lights are turned on and allow the student to see clearly what were just figures.

Although there are some points that bring the two moments of education closer together, there is a peculiarity in the formal educational development of young people and adults: the student arrives in the classroom with an enormous baggage of life and, not infrequently, motivated by a strong feeling of life change.

In a young country like Brazil, it is possible to analyze the path taken by youth and adult education over the years. To begin with, it should be remembered that in the colonial period, not only children were the target of missionary actions of catechesis. Adult indigenous people were subjected to intense processes of cultural and educational insertion (Stephanou, 2005).

Still in this context, history allows us to see the appropriation of formal education by the economic elite. For a long time, formal education, which is now available to a huge

number of the Brazilian population, was reserved for the children of Portuguese colonizers (Schwartzman, 2020; Nogueira, 2018).

This was the reality even though the Constitution of the Empire, of 1824, in article 179, XXXII, signaled a future that would take a long time to arrive: free primary education for all citizens. It is true that for that time the definition of citizen was a little different from what we have today, but the text demonstrated the flourishing of a path of no return.

Over the years, society imposed severe barriers on those who were not literate; they were considered incapable, incompetent, dependent. Practically the entire society was placed on the margins of society (Freire, 2020).

It didn't take long for illiteracy to be seen as a problem to be fought. Perhaps not for the most generous reason, but to boost the country's development. Brazil needed to develop based on everyone's efforts, but the illiterate were not contributing to this goal.

Taking a great leap in history, in 1934 the National Education Plan was created, an important advance in relation to the education of young people and adults. This plan provided for compulsory comprehensive primary education for adults.

During this period, another important milestone was the creation of the National Institute of Pedagogical Studies (INEP). It was from the studies carried out by INEP that the National Fund for Primary Education was founded in 1942. One of the main missions of the FNEP was to carry out supplementary education programs for adolescents and adults (Medeiros, 1999).

It is considered that the 40s were one of the most important decades for the education of young people and adults. In 1946 the Organic Law of Primary Education was created. This law provided for supplementary education. The following year, in 1947, the Adult Education Service – SEA was created. The SEA functioned as a great nucleus for the coordination of the work developed within the scope of the annual plans for supplementary education for adolescents and adults.

An important point to be highlighted in this walk is that as adults were seen as ignorant and incapable, this brought them closer to children. Illiterate adults were considered as incapable as children. If they were the same as children, they could be taught to read and write with the same techniques used for children.

If this was a consequence of the approximation created, the other went in the opposite direction. It was considered that, to some extent, adults were easier to be literate.

This implied that any literate person could be a volunteer able to lead the literacy process of young people and adults, without requiring further qualification.

Still in this period, Brazil began to know the pedagogy of Paulo Freire, who called attention to the fact that the literacy process considered the contextualization of the essential needs of educated people.

Adult literacy and education should always start from a critical examination of the existential reality of the students, from the identification of the origins of their problems and the possibilities of overcoming them. An education that would provide him with reflection on his own power to reflect and that would have his instrumentality, for this very reason, in the development of this power, in the explanation of his potentialities, from which his capacity for choice would derive (Freire, 1985, p. 59).

During the military government, more precisely in 1967, the Brazilian Literacy Movement (Mobral) was created. This movement was the result of a paradigm shift. The advances achieved over the last few years, since the 40s, with regard to the education of young people and adults, were left aside.

In this sense, one of Mobral's slogans was the following: "you are also responsible, so teach me to write, I have my tamable hand". This quote reveals the ideological direction of adult education policy.

Mobral was in force until 1985, when it was extinguished and replaced by others, such as the Educar Foundation, of the Ministry of Education. However, from 1990 onwards, a new nebulous period in the history of youth and adult education emerged, manifested by the absence of participation of the federal government in youth and adult education.

In 1988, the Citizen Constitution gave a new look to the theme. Education has come to be considered a right of all and a duty of the State and the family, in addition to guaranteeing free and compulsory education to all. There was no distinction, therefore, between those who would be targeted by the education programs.

In this sense, article 37 of the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (Law No. 9,394/1996), establishes that:

Youth and adult education will be aimed at those who did not have access to or continuity of studies in elementary and secondary education at the appropriate age and will constitute an instrument for education and lifelong learning (Brasil, 1996).

It was along this path that the education of young people and adults developed over the years in Brazil. What can be observed, however, is that it is a debt with those who, due to lack of opportunity, had to dedicate themselves to work before being given the opportunity for regular education.

In this sense, the National Council of Education pointed out that the education of young people and adults has three elementary functions: reparative; equalizer; and qualifier (Brasil, 2000). The reparative function concerns not only the correction of a denied right, which is access to education. More than that, it seeks to repair the equality that constitutionally must exist between all individuals.

By providing education to people who, for various reasons, did not have the necessary opportunities to access it, it seeks to raise the individual to the level of equality with others, a mission that is enhanced by education (Gillard, 2022).

Therefore, the mission of the EJA is not simply to supply, since it would be a very simple objective for the greatness that the project has. As much as education, dignity is delivered through the appreciation of equality among people. In this, the program's reparative function is observed.

It is known that the just and equal society sought by Brazil will not be obtained exclusively by reducing illiteracy rates. But it is necessary that this objective be faced seriously, at the same time that organized and institutional society promotes other fronts of action to reduce inequality.

It is necessary that the same indignation generated by the disproportionality in the distribution of income in the country be evidenced in the poor distribution of knowledge and opportunities for access to formal education. Just as the lack of financial resources harms individuals, the lack of education steals various forms of social interaction (Gates, 2023).

Although the reparative function is evidently important, EJA would still be small if it had only this objective. In addition to repairing, it is necessary to equalize. By returning the stolen opportunities, the provision of formal education balances and equalizes society.

This is because EJA reaches workers and people with the most diverse social experiences and delivers the opportunity for a new "leveling", giving back to the person not only education, but the opportunities that were removed by their absence. The idea of equity, in this context, is exactly this: the distribution of social goods in search of greater equality.

Furthermore, promoting formal education to repair and equalize would still not be enough if the program were not intentional in the sense of enabling a constant qualification of the various members of society. Youth and adult education aims to instigate human potential, whether the individual is at any stage of his or her life. It is a constant process and, therefore, only started or continued with EJA.

The interest of the State should not be simply in reducing illiteracy rates. One cannot seek to give people only the ability to decipher the codes of reading and writing. More is needed. The reader and writer must be an inventor, someone who has the ability to solve practical problems, who can reproduce learning and, as a network, extend the benefits of education.

In addition, the declared functions of the EJA are an invitation to those who, for various situations, are in the position of being able to be promoters of the program, either by dissemination, direct contribution or simply by acceptance and recognition. There is no doubt that valuing the individual as a worker goes through his qualification and education. However, even though this is the direction given to the present work, it cannot fail to observe that teaching young people and adults to read and write is a mission that goes far beyond economic interests, it is a social and citizenship mission.

The fact is that, nowadays, the quality of job opportunities is directly related to the levels of regular education. Even activities that previously did not use literacy as a selection criterion do not give it up (Hanushek *et al.*, 2017). Precisely for this reason, it is intended to verify in the present work the potential of youth and adult education in reducing crime rates in Brazil.

EDUCATION AND CRIME: A POSSIBLE RELATIONSHIP

Brazil still lacks research that presents the relationship between education and crime (Soares; Nascimento, 2020). However, through research, it is possible to identify the relationship between income and education and, in other sources, the relationship between crime and income.

The objective of the present work, therefore, is to identify the existence of a relationship between the levels of education and the levels of crime. Once this relationship is identified, it will be possible to conclude that education has the potential to influence crime levels in Brazil. Although common sense answers positively to this question, it is intended to contribute with scientific bases to the problem.

One of the available surveys is the one made available by the Central Bank of Brazil in 2019, which related education levels to people's income. The survey used data from 1992 to 2018 from the National Household Sampling Survey (PNAD) and the Quarterly Continuous National Household Sampling Survey (PNADC-T).

The researchers found that "on average, the elementary level adds 38% to the hourly income, the average 66% and the higher education 243%, in relation to an uneducated worker." (Central Bank of Brazil, 2019, p. 71). It was considered that the length of experience has an influence on the results, being more evident in higher education occupations, corresponding to an increase of 1.7% in the income/hour and 1.0% in the other levels of education.

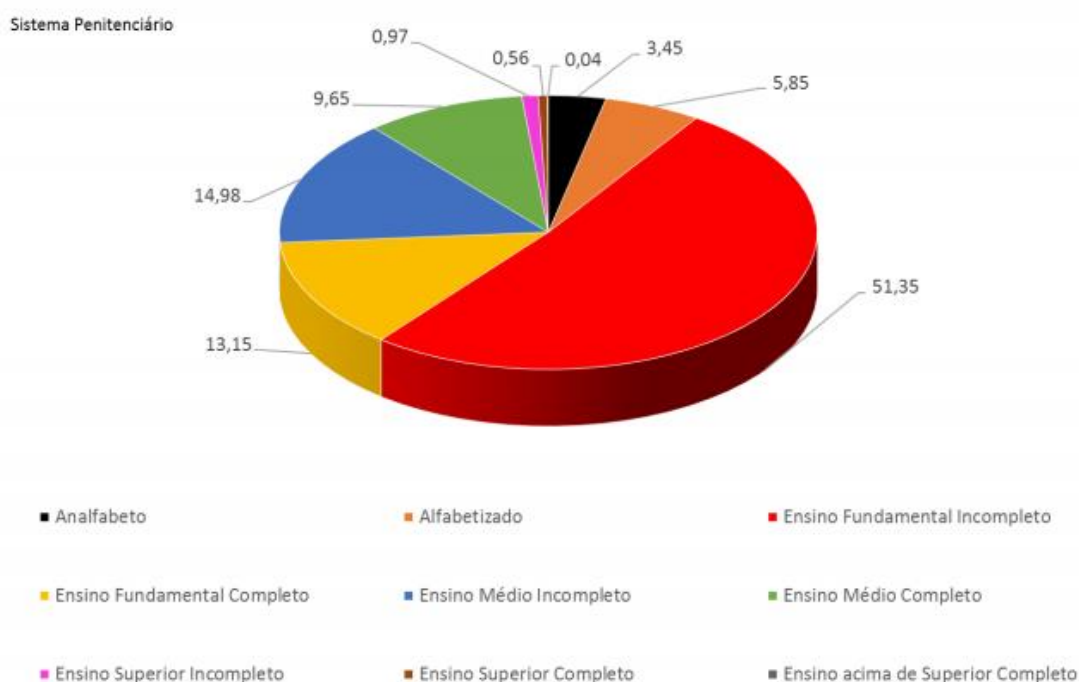
In a study that sought to identify how much the income differential between the Northeast and Southeast regions is explained by the difference in education of the population, Salvato, Ferreira and Duarte (2010) concluded that this cause corresponds to 12% to 36% and that the income dispersion of the poorest regions increases when they are provided with the level of education of the richer regions.

Through these researches, it is possible to conclude that there is a direct relationship between income and schooling in Brazil, so that greater access to education provides better job opportunities.

The latest complete survey on the diagnosis of the prison system in Brazil is from the first half of 2017. According to the report, in that period the country had 726,354 people in prison. Compared to the national population, it means that there were 349.78 people imprisoned for every 100 thousand inhabitants and represented a prison occupancy rate of 171.62%.

The graph below, reproduced from Infopen 2017, shows the level of education of the Brazilian prison population.

Graph 1 - Education level of the Brazilian prison population



Source: National Survey of Penitentiary Information - Infopen, June/2017.

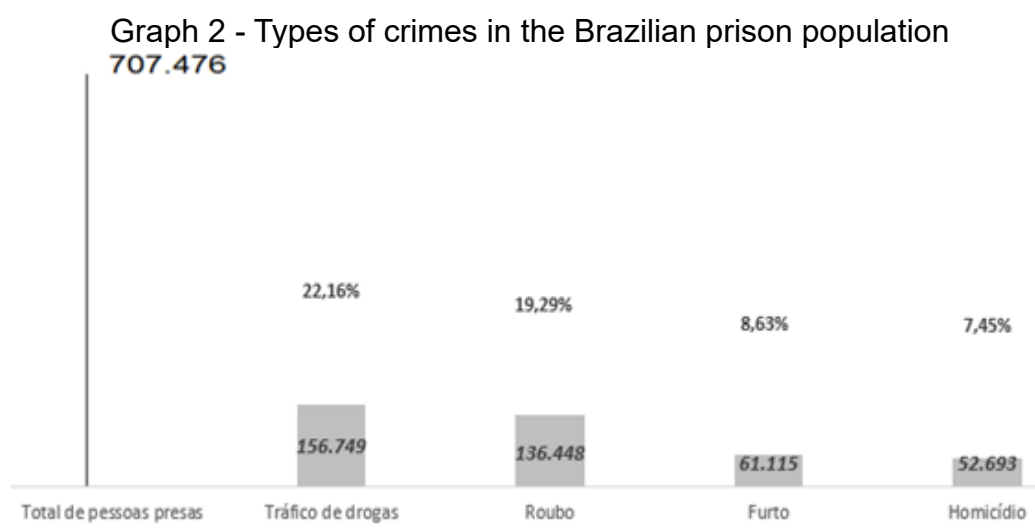
From the graph it is possible to see that 51.3% of the people deprived of liberty have incomplete elementary school, 14.9% have incomplete high school and 13.1% complete elementary school. Also, only 0.5% of prisoners have completed higher education.

The research also rejected the hypothesis that the level of education of the prison population is a sample of national education, which would deny the relationship between low education *and* the prison population. In this sense, the following analysis is extracted from the INFOPEN report:

When we analyze the schooling data of the Brazilian population, obtained from the Continuous PNAD 2017, we realize that there is no representation in the prison system of the same levels of schooling observed in Brazilian society. In the penitentiary system, more than half of the people in custody have a low level of education, while among the Brazilian population there is greater dispersion among all educational levels. (INFOPEN, 2017, p. 35).

Thus, from the conclusions of the research published by the Central Bank of Brazil, about the relationship between education and income, as well as the data made available by Infopen, about the level of education of the prison population, it is possible to conclude that most of the prisoners had low income and education before entering prison.

It is also important to note that most of the people arrested were arrested for property crimes, characteristic of people belonging to the lowest economic class.



Source: Prepared by the authors, based on data from the National Survey of Penitentiary Information

Common sense shows that crime is fought with education and opportunities. In order to confirm this popular knowledge, Leung (1995) developed research on what he called criminal inertia. According to the author, the more time the person spends in the crime situation, the lower the chance of leaving. This is because with the permanence in crime there is a decrease in human capital and loss of investment in qualification and specialization.

That is, the more time a person spends involved in criminal activities, the less likely they are to leave this situation. From this perspective, Youth and Adult Education, with the potential to reach these people, may result in a reduction in the time spent in criminal activities.

Lochner (2004) analyzed the relationship between education and crime, addressing the situation in which the decision of individuals should take place between work, education and crime. According to the author, investment in human capital increases the returns associated with work, as well as increases the opportunity costs of crime, generating a positive expectation in relation to the reduction of crime.

The conclusion reached by the author is easy to perceive and, when applied to EJA, helps to understand the program with a much greater function than the simple reduction of illiteracy rates. Education has the potential to promote changes in the most diverse areas of society.

Hjalmarsson and Lochner (2012) suggest that public policies aimed at greater access to levels of schooling combined with the improvement of the quality of schools may be elements capable of reducing the propensity of the individual to choose to work in the illegal sector of the economy.

An important concept for the present research is that of *trade-off*, which represents situations in which there is a conflict of choices. In practical terms, the choice of one situation to another is related based on the costs/consequences involved, that is: what I need to give up when choosing one situation over another (Samuelson; Nordhaus, 2020).

Using this concept, it is said that higher levels of education reduce the *trade-off* in the decision to commit a crime, since the cost of being arrested, for example, is higher when one has higher levels of education (considering that higher levels of education generate better jobs).

Thus, not only the social role of formal education, with the teaching of values, is sustained, but refers to practical terms: people with better levels of education have better jobs (as a rule) and it is easier to risk a criminal attack when there is no good job than when you are employed.

In addition, another logical issue must be considered: the time the student is in school, he is not committing crimes, although one can think of exceptional situations.

The data and research related throughout the work allow us to conclude that, as a rule, people with high purchasing power, well placed professionally, with high levels of education, would have a higher opportunity cost than those who do not have the same characteristics.

It is not suggested that only poor people commit crimes. What is being said is that poor people with low levels of education have a lower opportunity cost, which influences the decision to violate or not the legal norm.

CONCLUSION

Historically, youth and adult education was seen as the need to correct a problem that hindered the achievement of a desired goal. In the colonial period, the objective was the conversion of people to Catholicism, in the following years, economic development.

People without formal education did not enjoy the same rights as those who had the opportunity to access regular formal education. At times, they were compared to incapable

children. This understanding subjected young people and adults for a long time to teaching methodologies that infantilized them and disregarded their context.

Several programs were created, with the most diverse methodologies, until the Federal Constitution of 1988 defined education as a duty of the State and the family and a right of all, without making any distinction.

On the other hand, crime rates in Brazil are growing alarmingly, reaching the incarceration of people in numbers practically twice as many as the places available in prisons. The system, cruel by nature, reveals that it is far from serving to resocialize people who at some point in life become its audience.

Existing research on the profile of the prison population reveals that most inmates do not have completed elementary school. Another research presented throughout the text demonstrated the relationship between education levels and income levels, which allowed us to conclude that most people in prison have low levels of education and income.

The other point of the research referenced authors for whom education and income are directly related to crime rates, which allowed us to conclude that providing education to young people and adults has the potential to reduce crime rates in Brazil, either because while they are studying people are not committing crimes, or because of the fact that a higher level of education provides better employment opportunities and, consequently, increases the *trade-off*.

From all the arguments and data presented, it is concluded that the education of young people and adults not only serves to repair a social injustice, but has the potential to contribute to the reduction of crime rates in Brazil.

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