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## ITINERANT EDUCATION AS A STRATEGY FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE: CHALLENGES, POTENTIAL, AND PATHS TO A SCHOOL IN MOTION

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### ABSTRACT

Itinerant education emerges as a concrete response to the demands of populations in situations of mobility, proposing a flexible, democratic, and contextualized school model. This article analyzes the challenges and potential of itinerant education as a strategy for promoting social justice and educational equity. Using a qualitative and bibliographical approach, aspects such as teacher training, assessment, curriculum, and public policies are discussed. It concludes that the consolidation of this modality depends on institutional recognition, active listening to communities, and the valuing of local knowledge. Itinerant education is, above all, a movement of resistance against exclusion and school standardization.

**Keywords:** Itinerant education. Social justice. Inclusion. Diversity. Public policies.

## INTRODUCTION

Education, as a fundamental right, should reach all individuals, regardless of their social, cultural, or geographical condition. However, populations in mobility—such as migrant rural workers, circus performers, Roma people, and riverside communities—historically face difficulties accessing and remaining in school. Itinerant education emerges as an alternative to traditional schooling, proposing a pedagogical model that accompanies the movements of these populations, respecting their rhythms, cultures, and ways of life.

This article seeks to reflect on itinerant education as a strategy for social justice, based on a literature review of authors such as Arroyo (2006), Caldart (2004), Fleuri (2001) and Molina (2012), as well as official documents. The aim is to analyze its challenges, advances and possible paths to guarantee the right to education in contexts of vulnerability and exclusion.

In recent decades, the expansion of the debate on the right to education and social equity has led to questioning traditional school models, especially regarding the care of populations in situations of vulnerability or territorial mobility. In this context, itinerant education presents itself as a concrete and necessary alternative to the limitations of the fixed and standardized school, seeking to guarantee access to and retention in school for individuals historically excluded from formal schooling processes. It is a model that challenges the structural rigidity of the educational system, demanding innovation, social sensitivity, and a political commitment to diversity.

In this article, itinerancy is understood not only as physical displacement, but as a way of life for multiple populations—such as seasonal workers, circus performers, Roma, riverside, and indigenous communities—who move between territories and possess their own rhythms, cultures, and needs. These populations often live on the margins of public education policies, whose legal frameworks do not always consider the specificities of these realities, leading to school dropout, educational failure, and the denial of the right to learning.

According to Arroyo (2006), the Brazilian educational system has historically been designed to serve an urban, fixed, and homogeneous population, disregarding the multiple ways of existing, living, and learning present in the national territory. This limited conception of education generates profound inequalities and demands the construction of pedagogical proposals that are rooted in the social, cultural, and territorial realities of the individuals who make up the country. It is in this sense that itinerant education gains relevance: it breaks with the paradigm of the fixed school as the only legitimate form of schooling and proposes an education in movement, which walks with the individuals, recognizes their histories, and values their knowledge.

It is important to highlight that itinerant education is not merely an alternative methodology, but a strategy for social justice, seeking to include those who, for various reasons—economic, geographic, or cultural—cannot access conventional schools. Its existence is linked to the fight for equity, the valuing of diversity, and the combating of the invisibility of certain populations in the Brazilian educational landscape. However, despite its social and pedagogical value, itinerant education still faces significant challenges related to infrastructure, teacher training, assessment, funding, and, above all, the discontinuity of public policies.

This article aims to critically analyze itinerant education from the perspective of social justice, discussing its challenges, its potential, and possible paths for its consolidation as a permanent public policy. The research was constructed based on a qualitative approach, through a bibliographic review grounded in authors such as Molina (2012), Fleuri (2001), Caldart (2004), and in the legal frameworks that support rural education and differentiated teaching modalities.

Throughout the text, aspects such as the cultural and territorial diversity of itinerant subjects, the structural weaknesses that limit the effectiveness of this modality, the importance of actively listening

to communities, the need for contextualized curricula and flexible pedagogical practices, as well as the urgency of state policies that ensure the permanence and expansion of itinerant education in all regions of Brazil will be discussed.

## **DEVELOPMENT**

### **Method**

This research adopted a qualitative approach with a bibliographical emphasis, based on contemporary authors in the fields of rural education, popular education, and school inclusion. The analysis was guided by the principles of critical hermeneutics, seeking to understand the meanings attributed to itinerant education from different theoretical perspectives. Scientific articles, legal documents, technical reports, and classic and current works on the subject were consulted.

The methodological choice is justified by the interest in understanding the social, political, and cultural meanings of itinerant education, considering it a dynamic, territorialized, and constantly evolving phenomenon.

This study is based on a qualitative, bibliographical approach, understanding that the phenomenon investigated—*itinerant education as an expression of social justice*—requires an interpretative, critical, and contextualized analysis of the meanings, practices, and policies involved. The methodological choice of a qualitative perspective is justified by its capacity to reveal the complexities, contradictions, and subjective dimensions of the educational reality experienced by itinerant populations and the education professionals who work with them.

According to Gil (2002), bibliographic research consists of the systematic examination of relevant publications on a given topic, with the aim of analyzing, reinterpreting, and constructing new understandings based on already established theoretical references. In the case of this article, the investigation focused on books, scientific articles, dissertations, theses, and official documents that address rural education, differentiated teaching modalities, social justice in education, and public policies aimed at populations in mobility.

The selection of the theoretical framework prioritized authors who discuss education as a social and political practice, such as Paulo Freire (1996), Miguel Arroyo (2006), Roseli Caldart (2004), Reinaldo Fleuri (2001), and Mônica Molina (2012). Relevant legal and institutional documents were also consulted, such as the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDBEN nº 9.394/96), Resolution CNE/CEB nº 1/2002, the Operational Guidelines for Rural Education, the National Education Plan (PNE 2014–2024), as well as technical reports from the Ministry of Education and state and municipal secretariats that implemented experiences with itinerant education.

The analysis of the texts followed the principles of critical hermeneutics, which seeks to understand the meanings attributed to discourses on education, taking into account the historical, social, and cultural contexts in which they were produced. This interpretative approach made it possible to identify lines of force and tension in debates on inclusion, mobility, curriculum, assessment, and public policies, as well as to illuminate innovative pedagogical practices developed in itinerant contexts.

This is not, therefore, an empirical study with fieldwork, but a theoretical-documentary investigation that aims to understand, in depth and critically, how itinerant education has been conceived, defended, neglected, or promoted in Brazilian educational policies. The method adopted also allowed for a comparative analysis between different authors and experiences, highlighting points of convergence and recurring challenges to the effective implementation of this teaching modality.

The choice of this methodology reflects an ethical and epistemological commitment to a dialogical and reflective approach, aligned with Freire's proposal of education as a liberating practice and the conception of school as a space for social transformation. By interpreting discourses on itinerant education and confronting them with legal frameworks and concrete challenges experienced in the territories, this study seeks to contribute to the production of critical knowledge aimed at defending a public, pluralistic school committed to human rights.

In short, this methodology allows not only mapping existing academic contributions on the subject, but also highlighting the gaps, contradictions, and invisibilities that still permeate the discussion about itinerant education. Based on this critical analysis, it becomes possible to propose viable paths for the consolidation of lasting public policies and for the construction of pedagogical practices that are more sensitive to the realities of individuals in movement.

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## **Observed Results**

### **Itinerant Education as a Practice of Social Justice**

Social justice in education is related to guaranteeing rights, ensuring equitable access, and valuing diversity. Itinerant education, by proposing a break with the rigidity of the urban-industrial school model, represents an affirmative action aimed at including subjects historically marginalized by the educational system.

Inspired by Freirean pedagogy and the social struggles of rural areas and minorities, this approach promotes dialogue between different forms of knowledge, recognition of cultural identities, and the construction of curricula that emerge from local experiences. It is, therefore, an education that reaches out to the people, respecting their territorialities and temporalities.

### **Structural and Pedagogical Challenges**

Despite its transformative potential, mobile education faces several challenges:

- Poor infrastructure: lack of transportation, teaching materials, and adequate spaces.
- Discontinuity of public policies, with a lack of funding and institutional recognition.
- Inadequate teacher training, often lacking specific preparation to deal with diversity and flexible teaching practices.
- Rigid and exclusionary assessment that does not take into account the particularities of learning processes in mobility.

These obstacles reveal the need for lasting educational policies committed to genuine inclusion.

### **Pedagogical Potential and Innovations**

On the other hand, itinerant education opens up space for innovative pedagogical practices, such as:

- A contextualized curriculum, based on local experiences, traditions, and knowledge.
- Participatory methodologies, such as discussion circles, thematic workshops, integrative projects, and oral narratives.
- Critical interculturality, promoting dialogue between different cultures and combating prejudice.
- Flexible assessment records, through portfolios, logbooks and self-assessments.

These practices contribute to a more vibrant school, connected to reality and promoting autonomy.

## Possible Paths for Strengthening Itinerant Education

To consolidate itinerant education as a permanent public policy, it is necessary to:

- Creation of specific legal frameworks;
- Guaranteed funding under municipal, state, and national plans;
- Continuing education programs for itinerant teachers;
- Integration between different departments (education, transportation, culture, social assistance);
- Active listening to the communities served, with the subjects taking a leading role in the construction of pedagogical projects.

Only through political and social commitment will it be possible to implement a transformative itinerant education.

## CONCLUSION

Itinerant education is not just a pedagogical alternative, but a concrete expression of resistance to educational exclusion. It proposes a school that walks with the people, that respects their territories and ways of life, that educates through listening and affection. More than bringing education to those who cannot reach school, it is about building educational processes truly rooted in social justice, dignity, and diversity.

Strengthening itinerant education means affirming that school can and should be plural, democratic, and in motion — because learning is also about walking.

Itinerant education represents a concrete expression of the commitment to equity, social justice, and respect for diversity that is so desired in the Brazilian educational field. Throughout this article, it has been possible to understand that its existence transcends the technical and organizational dimensions of teaching: it is, above all, a political and ethical stance in the face of the historical inequalities that permeate education in Brazil.

The reflection presented demonstrated that the traditional school model—fixed, urban, and standardized—still constitutes a barrier to access and retention for thousands of individuals whose lives are organized around territorial, cultural, and economic mobility. These individuals, historically rendered invisible by public policies, reveal the urgent need to rethink school formats, pedagogical schedules, curricula, and, above all, the meaning of school as a space of belonging, identity, and emancipation.

Theoretical and documentary analysis revealed that itinerant education is a strategic instrument for inclusion and resistance against school exclusion. However, its consolidation faces significant obstacles, such as the discontinuity of public policies, the lack of adequate teacher training, the scarcity of structural and pedagogical resources, and the absence of evaluation systems sensitive to itinerant realities.

These challenges highlight that, although there have been regulatory advances and promising specific initiatives, a solid and continuous political-educational project that recognizes itinerant education as a state policy is still lacking.

At the same time, the study highlighted the transformative potential of this modality: the possibility of a contextualized curriculum, the strengthening of active listening to communities, respect for traditional knowledge, the valuing of interculturality, the use of participatory methodologies, and the construction of more meaningful educational bonds. Itinerant education,

when conceived from the concrete needs of the territories and the subjectivities of the individuals, reveals itself as a fertile space for the reinvention of public schools.

Defending itinerant education is, therefore, defending the right to difference, to territory, and to dignity. It is recognizing that there is no educational justice without territorial justice. It is affirming that the school needs to move, transform itself, and open itself to the movement of the populations that are part of the real Brazil—the one that often doesn't fit on school maps, but that pulsates in the paths, the journeys, and the stories of struggle of itinerant communities.

In light of this, the importance of school systems effectively incorporating itinerant teaching as an integral part of their educational policies is reaffirmed. This requires the training of teachers with a critical and sensitive perspective on diversity, the production of pedagogical materials appropriate to the territories served, the creation of suitable assessment tools, the strengthening of democratic management, and, above all, continuous public investment.

Finally, this article argues that itinerant education should not be seen as an exception or a logistical challenge, but as an opportunity to rebuild the foundations of schooling in a more humane, inclusive way, committed to social transformation. The right to education must accompany the individual wherever they are, with respect, dignity, and recognition. Only in this way will it be possible to build a truly dynamic education, anchored in justice and hope.

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