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# EFFECTS OF BOLSA FAMÍLIA ON EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITIES FACED BY ITS BENEFICIARIES

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## ABSTRACT

*Programa Bolsa Família has multiple connections with education, and possibly reduces the numerous dimensions of educational inequality faced by its beneficiaries. Based on the idea that the right to education presupposes the guarantee of something common and thus equal for all, this study adopted the conception of educational inequality of Marcel Crahay (2002), who defines three dimensions of educational equality: access, treatment and knowledge. It analyzed how the program aims to reduce and has effects on the reduction of the numerous dimensions of educational inequality drawing on a literature review. It concludes that the main effects of Programa Bolsa Família are on the dimension of access, even though it has potential and incipient effects on the dimension of treatment and learning, mainly through sectorial integration.*

**KEYWORDS** EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS • EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES •  
PROGRAMA BOLSA FAMÍLIA • EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITIES.

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## EFEITOS DO BOLSA FAMÍLIA NAS DESIGUALDADES EDUCACIONAIS ENFRENTADAS POR SEUS BENEFICIÁRIOS

### RESUMO

*O Programa Bolsa Família tem múltiplas conexões com a questão educacional, possivelmente reduzindo as inúmeras dimensões da desigualdade educacional enfrentadas por seus beneficiários. Partindo-se da ideia de que o direito à educação pressupõe a garantia de algo comum e, portanto, igual para todos, adotou-se a concepção de desigualdade educacional de Marcel Crahay (2002), que define três dimensões necessárias de igualdade educacional: acesso, tratamento e conhecimento. Analisou-se como o programa busca e tem efeitos na redução das inúmeras dimensões da desigualdade educacional a partir de uma revisão de literatura das produções acadêmicas da área. Conclui-se que os principais efeitos do Bolsa Família são sobre a dimensão do acesso, ainda que ele tenha efeitos potenciais e incipientes sobre a dimensão do tratamento e do aprendizado, principalmente via integração setorial.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE** AVALIAÇÃO DE PROGRAMAS • OPORTUNIDADES EDUCACIONAIS • PROGRAMA BOLSA FAMÍLIA • DESIGUALDADES EDUCACIONAIS.

## EFFECTOS DE BOLSA FAMÍLIA EN LAS DESIGUALDADES EDUCATIVAS ENFRENTADAS POR SUS BENEFICIARIOS

### RESUMEN

*El Programa Bolsa Família posee múltiples conexiones con el tema educativo, tal vez por reducir el sinnúmero de dimensiones de la desigualdad educacional enfrentadas por sus beneficiarios. Partiendo de la idea de que el derecho a la educación presupone la garantía de algo común y, por lo tanto, igual para todos, se adoptó la concepción de desigualdad educativa de Marcel Crahay (2002), que define tres dimensiones necesarias de igualdad educacional: acceso, tratamiento y conocimiento. Se analizó el modo en que el programa busca y ocasiona efectos en la reducción de las diversas dimensiones de la desigualdad educativa a partir de una revisión de literatura de las producciones académicas del área. Se concluye que los principales efectos del Bolsa Família se refieren a la dimensión del acceso, aunque tenga efectos potenciales e incipientes sobre la dimensión del tratamiento y del aprendizaje, sobre todo vía integración sectorial.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE** EVALUACIÓN DE PROGRAMAS • OPORTUNIDADES EDUCACIONALES • PROGRAMA BOLSA FAMÍLIA • DESIGUALDADES EDUCATIVAS.

## INTRODUCTION

This article analyzes possible impacts and effects of Programa Bolsa Família (PBF) on the educational inequality faced by children and youth who participate in the program. The study adopted a multiple concept of educational inequality based on the work of Marcel Crahay (2002), considering three dimensions of educational inequality: access, treatment and learning.

PBF consists of conditional cash transfers to families living in poverty or extreme poverty. Families are categorized according to their monthly family income, calculated from the data of Cadastro Único [Single Register] (CadÚnico);<sup>1</sup> in February 2017,<sup>2</sup> families whose monthly family income per capita ranged from R\$ 85.01 to R\$ 170.00 were considered poor, and families with incomes of up to R\$ 85.00 were considered extremely poor. In February 2017, 13.6 million families received benefits from the program.

**1** Cadastro Único is the instrument for collecting and organizing the data and information of Brazilian low-income families (whose income is up to half a minimum wage per person).

**2** Information consulted on the website of Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome (MDS - Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger). Available at: <https://mds.gov.br/assuntos/bolsa-familia/o-que-e/beneficios>. Access on: 16 Feb 2017.

In the same month, the total amount transferred to the families was R\$ 2.4 billion.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to combating the situation of vulnerability of families through cash transfers, PBF establishes some conditionalities, which beneficiaries have to comply with: families ensure that their children have access to certain fundamental health and education rights, which in the future can break the intergenerational cycle of poverty. In the educational area, the conditionality is that children and adolescents aged 6 to 15 years are enrolled in a regular school, have school attendance rates of 85% or higher, and that young people between 16 and 17 years of age attend at least 75% of classes. If the beneficiaries fail to comply with these conditionalities, their benefits are affected and, in extreme situations, they are excluded from the program.

This article discusses the impacts and effects of Programa Bolsa Família on three dimensions of educational inequality, drawing on the concept of Crahay (2002). The author defines three main concepts of educational equality: opportunities, treatment and knowledge. The first conception, equality of opportunities, brings with it the meritocratic conception of justice. According to this conception, access to school must be guaranteed to all, but the pedagogical action is proportional to the merits and potentialities of individuals. It accepts that outcomes are unequal and so are treatments, since students with greater potential should receive more.

Equal treatment is associated with distributive justice and presupposes that education must be equal and homogenous for all. Nevertheless, this conception accepts that the results obtained are unequal, because it does not incorporate in its scheme the initial inequalities and the internal mechanisms of exclusion and selection of the school system, which are those denounced by Bourdieu (2007).

In turn, the notion of equality of knowledge is accompanied by the concept of corrective justice. This notion admits the existence of initial inequalities and that the leveling of educational conditions is not enough to eliminate them. Therefore, it incorporates affirmative and compensatory actions for the least favored. Initially, it advocates equity in learning, which means that students should have the same probability of educational success and good performance regardless of their social group.

**3** Information consulted on the Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger website. Available at: <https://mds.gov.br/area-de-imprensa/noticias/2017/fevereiro/governo-federal-repassara-r-2-4-bilhoes-aos-beneficiarios-do-bolsa-familia-em-fevereiro>. Access on: 16 Feb. 2017.

Nevertheless, there is criticism of the idea of equity, since rather than aiming to eliminate the hierarchy and selectivity of the school system, it aims to ensure that the chances of school success are equivalent for members of different social groups. Critics of the idea of equity argue for the educational system guaranteeing a common cultural minimum that all students must acquire, below which inequality is not acceptable. Therefore, the organization of education can be differentiated according to the objectives to be achieved by all.

One can thus separate educational inequality into three dimensions, based on the conception of educational equality associated: inequality of access, treatment and knowledge. Gabriela Thomazinho and Romualdo Oliveira (2015) analyze each dimension of educational inequality in Brazil.

Although the access dimension alone is a more direct objective of PBF, through its education conditionality, in some institutional actions it is possible to observe the concern with the other dimensions. Thus, this article intends to observe the attention given by its managers to each of the dimensions, how PBF could affect such dimensions, and whether it actually generates positive effects. It analyzes possible impacts and effects of PBF on the inequality of access, learning and treatment of the beneficiary students. The analysis is based on a non-exhaustive review of the literature that seeks to assess these impacts of PBF.

### **EVALUATION OF PUBLIC POLICIES: IMPACTS AND EFFECTS**

Before analyzing the impacts and effects of PBF on the dimensions of educational inequality, it is necessary to briefly introduce some concepts of policy evaluation. According to Sônia Draibe (2001), the purpose of these evaluations varies, focusing on the most appropriate use of resources, accountability to society, identification of difficulties and obstacles to the program. Evaluations may thus generate recommendations that enable changing the course of the program.

Draibe divides the evaluation of programs in *ex-ante* and *ex-post*. The former evaluates the design of the program before its implementation, producing guidelines and strategies for implementation. *Ex-post* evaluations are performed concomitantly or after the implementation of the program and aim to verify the efficacy, efficiency and/or effectiveness of the program. Efficacy evaluations look at the quality of processes and results whereas efficiency evaluations assess results against costs.

The evaluation of effectiveness, according to Draibe, can be divided into the verification of the results, impacts and effects of the policy. The former assesses whether the predetermined objectives of the program goals have been achieved, and whether the target groups have been reached. The impact assessment focuses on the effective changes brought about by the program in the target group. For this evaluation, a counterfactual is established to compare the situation with and without the program. Effects are other impacts of the program on the social and institutional environment beyond the target group, such as program implementation agents and participating institutions.

The three types of evaluations can be exemplified using PBF. An indicator of results would be the number of beneficiaries of the program against the estimated population below the poverty line defined by the program, or the percentage of children who complied with the conditionalities. The assessment of the impact of PBF may refer to several indicators, including the impact on access to school or on the learning of beneficiary students. These two impacts are the object of this article, which will analyze the literature that evaluates the impacts of PBF on the children and adolescents who participate in it regarding the inequality of access and learning. The evaluation of effects can be analyzed by the changes generated in the governmental institutions that manage PBF, and a possible effect that can be looked at is intersectoral action. This is the approach that will be taken in the discussion of the effects on inequality of treatment.

As far as the impact assessment is concerned, it is necessary to discuss a little more the importance of isolating non-program effects. As argued by Draibe, one of the methodological requirements is to define a counterfactual in which there is no performance of the program, which is used to make the comparison with the treated group (benefited by the program), so that one is able to measure net effects. This can be done in some ways: Draibe cites the before-after type of comparison (in which the subject is confronted with him/herself), and also experimental methods (in which control and treatment groups are randomly defined), as well as quasi-experimental methods.

The evaluation of PBF imposes the challenge of it not being an experimental program, which means that there is no control group that can be used to make the comparison with the beneficiary group. Because the selection of beneficiaries is not random, quasi-experimental designs are needed for the evaluation of PBF. The studies mapped here use different methodological strategies to isolate the effects of PBF on the children and adolescents who are beneficiaries. Some researchers have used observable

selection methods, among which the propensity score, which avoids bias due to selection treatment (in this case, PBF), allied or not to the difference-in-difference method, a method of selection on unobservables which compares the trajectory of the treatment group (which participates in PBF) with that of a control group (which does not participate in PBF) before and after entering the program. Taking these precautions, the authors interpret the difference of results between treatment and control groups as impact of PBF. Another methodology used by researchers is discontinuous regression, which looks at the indicators of families close to PBF cutoff point. In other words, the control group is composed of families whose income is only marginally above the cutoff point of the benefit.

### Impacts on access

Education conditionality requires that the beneficiary population between 6 and 17 years old be in school and have a minimum attendance. A first expected result of PBF is an increase in the school attendance of this population, reducing inequality of access to the school system. Studies indicate that PBF has a positive impact on this dimension of educational inequality.

Using several databases, methodologies and reference years, the following studies indicate that PBF has had a positive impact on access to educational services: Pellegrina (2011), Chitolina, Foguel and Menezes-Filho (2016), Duarte and Neto (2010), Costanzi, Souza and Ribeiro (2010), Glewwe and Kassouf (2010), Fahel *et al.* (2012), and Silveira, Campolina and Horn (2013). The only study that does not identify significant effects on school attendance indicators is Ribeiro and Cacciamali (2012).

Rosana Ribeiro and Maria Cristina Cacciamali (2012) use the propensity score matching method to analyze the impacts of PBF on school attendance, school absence and age-grade distortion using 2006 Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios (PNAD – National Household Sample Survey). The authors did not find significant results from PBF on these indicators, which were statistically equivalent in the treatment group and the control group. They suggest that the program be articulated with actions aimed at improving these indicators.

Heitor Pellegrina (2011) researched the effects of PBF on the educational dimension of children and young students, but restricted his research to the beneficiaries of São Paulo state, because he used the databases of Sistema de Avaliação de Rendimento Escolar do Estado de São Paulo (Saresp – School Performance Evaluation System of the State of São Paulo) of 2007, 2008 and

2009. In order to decide on the hypotheses to be tested, the author analyzed the theoretical implications of PBF. The decision to enroll children in school depends on the opportunity cost of educating, that is, on the income that a child could generate if s/he worked instead of studying. This can generate heterogeneous effects depending on the age and gender of the students. Using matching estimation differences in differences techniques, the author constructed control groups that can be used as a comparison parameter for the group treated, and thus estimated the effects of the program. The results suggest that PBF reduces dropout by at least 20% and school absence by 3%. The study identified heterogeneous effects, since the impact is greater on the individuals who have the lowest opportunity costs: women and students aged 10 years or less.

Lia Chitolina, Miguel Foguel and Naercio Menezes Filho (2016) sought to evaluate the impact of extending PBF to 16 to 17-year-olds on their school attendance, on the rate of labor market participation, and on weekly working hours. The researchers used the difference-in-differences method to compare the treatment group with the control group using PNAD from 2006 to 2009. As a result, they found positive effects on 16-year-olds, because receiving the benefit increases by 1 percentage point the probability of a young person in the treatment group going to school. The effect is greater for young males who are the youngest children in the household. In addition, they identified positive effects on youth activities, since receiving the benefit increased the likelihood that the young person would choose to study and work instead of not studying or working, thus decreasing the idleness of young people.

Gisléia Beninia Duarte and Raul da Mota Silveira Neto (2010) analyze some impacts of PBF on indicators of school attendance of students of rural Northeast by propensity score, which enabled constructing a control group using observable characteristics equivalent to those of the beneficiaries. Using 2005 Pnad and primary field survey data, the authors find positive impacts on school attendance, which rises by 5.6 percentage points. However, when considering the effects separately on girls and boys, they observe that the impact on boys is not statistically significant, possibly due to the higher opportunity cost of studying given the gender structure and the labor market of Brazilian society.

Positive effects on access to school are also found by Rogério Costanzi, Frederico Souza and Hélió Ribeiro (2010). The researchers performed binary logistic regressions to understand the impact of participating in PBF on access to education using PNAD 2008 data. PBF beneficiaries were identified as those



who receive typical program values in the variable that identifies transfer incomes. Positive impacts were observed both for children aged 6 to 15 years and for adolescents aged 16 or 17 years.

Paul Glewwe and Ana Lúcia Kassouf (2010) aimed to assess the impact of PBF on total enrollment and dropout and pass rates of primary and lower secondary education<sup>4</sup> using data from the School Census from 1998 to 2005. The authors used the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) methodology,<sup>5</sup> adding fixed effect to schools and time trends. They applied regression by school, in which they analyzed the impact of the school having at least one participant in PBF, and by municipality, a level in which there is an approximation of the percentage of students participating in PBF. The authors identified positive effects of the program, which was able to increase enrollment, reduce dropout rates, and increase the pass rate.

Fahel *et al.* (2012) analyze the impact of PBF on net enrollment rates<sup>6</sup> of the school-age population (6 to 17 years) in Minas Gerais state by propensity score matching using data from Pesquisa por Amostra de Domicílios [Household Sample Survey] of Minas Gerais state. The overall finding of Fahel *et al.* is that PBF has a positive impact on the beneficiaries, and that the difference in the proportion of students enrolled is 2.1% to 2.6%, depending on the pairing method used. The authors also looked at heterogeneous effects within disaggregations by age, sex, race/color, locality, and identified greater effects on black, rural adolescents aged 15 to 17 years, and on the male population, groups that generally have higher dropout rates. The impact was also significant for children aged 6 to 14 years.

Based on data from the 2010 Demographic Census, Fernando Silveira, Bernardo Campolina and Ross van Horn (2013) analyze the impact of PBF on the decision of the beneficiaries to study and/or work. They used the propensity score weighting, which applies weights to balance the characteristics of the beneficiaries and those of a specific set of non-beneficiaries used for comparison. The decision to allocate time to study and work is separated into four groups: only studies; studies and works; only works; and does not study

4 Translator's note: using the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), in Brazil, primary education is provided to children aged 6 to 10 years and lower secondary education to children aged approximately 11 to 14 years when there is no age-grade distortion.

5 The Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) method is used to establish a relationship between a set of variables from the minimization of the sum of the squares of the regression residuals.

6 The net enrollment rate corresponds to the percentage of the population of an age group that is enrolled in the appropriate level for their age.

or work. Results suggest that receiving the benefit increases the chance of studying, largely due to the combination of work and school, and decreases the probability that beneficiaries will not study. In other words, besides increasing the number of those who only study, PBF increases mainly the number of those who study and work. Another study pointing in the same direction was conducted by Andressa Vasconcelos *et al.* (2017), and shows that PBF reduces the likelihood that young people between the ages of 18 and 29 years will be “nem-nem” [neither-nor], a concept that refers to young people who neither study nor work.

What, then, can be said about inequality of access to the school system and PBF? Firstly, non-access is no longer the main problem faced by the beneficiary population, especially in the case of primary and lower secondary education (THOMAZINHO, 2017). In any case, PBF has been effective in increasing access to school. That sometimes this effect is small may be due to the fact that this population would go to school even without PBF.

Another positive effect that can be included in the access dimension is the increase in school pass rates. This means that the beneficiary students will attain higher levels of schooling in the medium term, having access to more advanced levels of education.

### Impacts on learning

Although not a direct goal of PBF, some authors point out that PBF may have an effect on learning thanks to the increase in family income and other actions induced by the existence of the program. What are the mechanisms by which PBF can promote greater student learning?

Pellegrina (2011) suggests that PBF may have positive impacts on student learning since it leads to an increase in socialization in the school environment, increases the demand for quality of education and can generate a rise in classroom attendance. As for attendance, Pedro Camargo (2011) also considers it one of the mechanisms that can contribute to better student performance, since PBF requires a minimum classroom attendance. But Camargo also suggests another mechanism: the beneficiary's increase in income enables better nutrition, purchase of school materials and access to other goods and services that may contribute to school performance. Therefore, at the individual level, PBF probably affects students positively.

In fact, some qualitative studies indicate that the income transferred by PBF is often used in a way that has a high potential to positively affect students' learning. For example, the study by Flávia Pires and George Jardim (2014),

conducted in the municipality of Catingueira (Paraíba state), indicated that the expansion of consumption made possible by the cash transfer prioritizes the needs of children. In the families surveyed, food expenses are a priority, mainly the feeding of children, because of families' understanding that the transfer is made possible thanks to the efforts of children to comply with educational conditionality, and that therefore children should be rewarded.

In the analysis of the impacts of PBF on student performance, researchers face two main difficulties. The first one is the difficulty in finding a control group that allows comparison, which leads to the need to use methods that eliminate the treatment group selection bias. Another problem faced is that the students who are PBF beneficiaries are not identified in Prova Brasil (a large-scale evaluation carried out every two years in all public schools in Brazil). Nevertheless, there are some studies that seek to overcome these challenges.

Camargo (2011) analyzes how an increase in the proportion of students benefiting from PBF influences the performance of schools and dropout and grade retention rates using data of School Census, Sistema Frequência [Attendance System] and Prova Brasil. As the school level is considered, PBF may possibly have negative effects on performance, because low-income students who would drop out of school may remain in it because they participate in the program and wish to continue receiving the benefit. Consequently, the average performance of these schools may decline.

The author then calculates the effect of the proportion of PBF students in schools on pass and dropout rates, and on the average grade in mathematics and Portuguese. The results suggest that an increase in the proportion of students participating in PBF in a school reduces the pass rate by an average of 0.019 percentage points, the dropout rate by 0.014 and the score on the proficiency exams by 0.17.

However, robustness tests to verify whether these schools already showed these differences before the creation of PBF, using 2001 Census data, revealed that the schools with a higher proportion of PBF students in 2008 already had lower average grades in 2001. However, dropout and pass rates were similar. The result concerning the average grade that suggests that there is some non-randomness that was not captured in the first tests, and preexisting differences were incorporated.

Pellegrina (2011) also studied the effects of PBF on the learning dimension of São Paulo state students. The researcher aimed to identify the impact of PBF both on the students' grades assigned by teachers and in standardized

tests, and found null effects in both cases. However, this result may have been generated by the negative effect that PBF may have on the aggregate level of the school, since:

As there are beneficiaries who would not attend school if they did not participate in the program, this additional number of students may congest the school if it is unable to offer space for this group, and thus generate a negative effect on school performance. Also, the inclusion of students increases classroom heterogeneity, which can hinder teachers' work.<sup>7</sup> (PELLEGRINA, 2011, p. 9, free translation)

The impact on the individual level of the students may be positive. Nevertheless, as students who were out of school start attending it – assuming that they tend to perform below the average performance of the school –, the effect on school performance may be negative.

Cireno, Silva and Proença (2013) analyze the impacts of PBF also on indicators of performance in Prova Brasil, using the databases of CadÚnico [Single Register], Sistema Presença [Presence System], School Census, and Prova Brasil. The data of Presence System and of School Census was crossed by a comparison of strings (student's name, parents' name, date and place of birth, school where s/he studies, etc.), and it was possible to find 86% of the students that appeared in the Presence System at least once between 2008 and 2012 in the School Census.

First, the authors compare the results of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries without controlling for other variables, and find that beneficiaries of 5th and 9th grades have worse proficiency than non-beneficiaries. However, the difference between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries drops from the 5th to the 9th grade, which may indicate positive effects of PBF throughout the school trajectory of students. The impact of PBF on the performance was calculated by means of an OLS regression with control for other variables. The results found suggest that participating in the program has a negative effect

7 In the original: "Se há beneficiários que não frequentariam a escola caso não participassem do programa, esta quantidade adicional de alunos poderá congestionar a escola se ela não tiver condições adequadas para oferecer espaço para este grupo, gerando um efeito negativo sobre o desempenho escolar. Ainda, a inclusão de alunos aumenta a heterogeneidade da sala, o que pode dificultar o trabalho do professor".

on performance in the 5th grade, and a positive effect on performance in the 9th grade, both of which are statistically significant. Therefore, Cireno, Silva and Proença do not identify a clear trend of PBF effects on student learning.

The results obtained through these three analyzes suggest that the impact of receiving the benefit on student performance does not follow a clearly positive trend, and that there is a need for further studies on these effects. While performance is not a direct goal of the program, its absence may be an obstacle to its main purpose: breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

### **Effects on treatment inequality**

The dimension of inequality of treatment is very relevant in Brazil. Brazilian public schools are precarious and, in general, the poorest population study in institutions with the worst conditions. The poor quality of the schools where PBF beneficiaries study may be one of the obstacles to breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty. This section deals with how PBF could have effects on the educational treatment given to its beneficiaries, based on a propositional literature of specific actions for the educational issue of PBF. Next, based on a literature review, it analyzes whether PBF had some type of institutional effect on the integration of the bodies of social assistance and education and on the quality of the schools where these students study.

Schools with the highest percentages of PBF beneficiaries have the poorest infrastructure, as demonstrated by Gabriela Thomazinho (2017). From the databases of the School Census and the Presence System, the author divides public schools into four groups, by percentages of students who are beneficiaries of PBF: i) up to 25%; ii) from 25 to 50%; iii) from 50 to 75%; iv) more than 75%. The author finds that schools with higher percentages of beneficiary students have worse conditions in all the items considered. Such inequality was found both in items of elementary infrastructure, such as access to water, energy and sewage, and in more advanced items such as internet access, board room or court.

The direct objective of PBF is not to change the quality of the service provided to its beneficiaries. However, this is an important factor for one of the broader objectives of the program, namely breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty. And this may be an indirect effect of the program: proposing a policy that identifies and proposes actions for a population under great social vulnerability may generate – as an institutional effect – integration with other sectors of public management. In the educational area, this means policies of positive discrimination focused on the population participating in PBF. The

fact that one looks at schools with a large number of PBF beneficiaries as schools in vulnerable situations enables proposing specific actions.

Célia Kerstenetzky (2009) analyzes the political economy of PBF to understand how it can not only address its two main objectives (immediate alleviation of poverty and breaking its intergenerational cycle) but also obtain society's political support. For the author, PBF should become a policy of development of equalization of opportunities, for which the improvement of public services is a necessary condition.

In order to make the rise in the quality of the public services provided to the population participating in PBF be politically sustainable, Kerstenetzky suggests a hybrid policy of quality expansion, that is, only partially focused. In a hybrid policy, the beneficiaries are prioritized, for example, because the needs of the schools where there are several beneficiaries of the program are met first, but the needs of other students of these schools are also met.

The author suggests this type of policy because of her analysis of the political stability of PBF. Focused social policies run the risk of being less supported due to the principle of segregation on which they are based, and thus depend on a sense of identification or sympathy with the beneficiaries on the part of those who are not the program's target group. The strategy suggested by Kerstenetzky is to gain the adhesion of the middle class to PBF by an only partially focused policy, in which the poor population is prioritized, but the middle class is not excluded. This rule of prioritization by school or community with a large percentage of beneficiaries gains greater political support than a selective focus approach, in which only beneficiaries of the program obtain better educational services. In the author's words, it would be necessary to:

[...] re-orient Bolsa Família's services towards a hybrid social policy - partially focused, partially universal - in order to gain the adhesion of the middle class that the program risks losing, providing universal services with a priority rule. At the very least, greater clientele heterogeneity may be instrumental in achieving the political and financial support that the program needs, something like "I may not benefit from it, but I know someone who does". Thus, for example, investments in education and health associated with the program would be open to all, but would be provided so as

to impact the poorest first, providing, for example, daycare centers and early childhood education and the extension of the school day (including extracurricular activities and preparatory courses for advancing the school flow), beginning with public schools attended mainly by beneficiaries because they are located in areas where those beneficiaries are concentrated. Paradoxically, it may be easier to gain support for the program if it is more expensive – for its expanding in the dimension “opportunities” – than if it remains a cheaper program, focused only on transfers to the poor.<sup>8</sup> (KERSTENETZKY, 2009, p. 72, free translation)

However, as argued by Bichir (2010), PBF should not be held individually responsible for solving the other dimensions of poverty besides the monetary one, as is the case of the educational dimension. It is through the articulation of the program with other policies that the State must attack the multidimensionality of poverty, articulating the program with the areas of health, education, generation of employment and income, among others. Therefore, the integration of the public management sectors then appears as a possible solution to the multiple challenges of the fight against poverty.

Maria Silva (2007) also advocates the articulation of income transfer programs with structuring policies and programs for overcoming poverty, due to the fact that the author uses a conception of complex and multidimensional poverty, of structural nature, rather than one just equivalent to insufficient income. In this view, breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty requires not only the quantitative and qualitative expansion but also the democratization of basic social services, such as health, education and labor systems.

**8** In the original: “reorientar o componente de serviços do Bolsa Família na direção de uma política social híbrida – parcialmente focalizada, parcialmente universal – a fim de ganhar a adesão da classe média que o programa arrisca perder, provendo serviços universais com uma regra de prioridade. No mínimo, a maior heterogeneidade da clientela pode ser instrumental para alcançar o apoio político e financeiro de que o programa precisa, algo como ‘eu posso não me beneficiar, mas conheço alguém que se beneficia’. Assim, por exemplo, investimentos em educação e saúde associados ao programa estariam abertos a todos, mas seriam providos de modo que impactassem os mais pobres primeiro, como a provisão de creches e educação infantil e a extensão da jornada escolar (incluindo atividades extracurriculares e cursos preparatórios para o avanço no fluxo escolar), começando com escolas públicas frequentadas sobretudo por beneficiários por estarem localizadas em áreas onde eles se concentram. Paradoxalmente, pode ser mais fácil ganhar apoio para o programa se ele for mais caro – por se expandir na dimensão “oportunidades” – do que se ele permanecer como um programa mais barato, focalizado apenas nas transferências para os pobres”.

According to Daniel Ximenes, Jaqueline Moll and Juliana Macedo (2014), the concept of intersectoriality corresponds to the integration between different sectors to find solutions to common problems that cannot be solved within the confines of an area. Intersectoriality aims at an integral solution, which addresses the multiple causes of the problem. This way, it avoids the fragmentation of state action, as evidenced by Lucas Silva:

Intersectoriality would be an emerging principle, given the recent political orientations and great fragmentation of the state performance and its institutions, which leads to a disjointed set of public policies.<sup>9</sup> (SILVA, 2013, p. 330, free translation)

For Ximenes, Moll and Macedo, the articulation of public policies must be effective since the design, and also in the implementation and evaluation of the policy. In the fight against poverty, articulation not only emerges as a global strategy for human development but also enables sharing financial and human resources, which reduces the costs of the policy.

In view of the criticisms and proposals suggested by Kerstenetzky, Bichir and Silva, a good strategy for the improvement of school provision for the beneficiaries of PBF is the articulation of the program management with educational policies. This can be done by Kerstenetzky's proposal, according to which the educational policy prioritizes schools with high percentages of beneficiaries of PBF. This would promote an equitable policy, in which schools with many beneficiaries receive special attention from educational policy. This way, the percentage of students benefiting from PBF in each school could indicate the most vulnerable schools in the country, and specific actions could be proposed.

In the literature review, no studies were found with econometric analyzes of the impact of PBF on the quality of school provision. However, there was evidence of the poor quality of the schools attended by beneficiaries and analyses of how the effect of PBF on educational outcome variables is heterogeneous according to school conditions. Probably quantitative studies that analyze the impact on school conditions are non-existent because this

<sup>9</sup> In the original: "A intersectorialidade seria um princípio emergente, dadas as orientações políticas recentes e o cenário de grande fragmentação da atuação estatal e de suas instituições, que leva a um conjunto desarticulado de políticas públicas".



is not a direct objective of the program. But it may be an indirect effect, and there is a need for studies that analyze this relationship.

Given the lack of quantitative studies of the effects of PBF on unequal treatment, these effects are discussed first from the perspective of the analysis of federal educational policy. In a second moment, the effects of the program captured by the literature reviewed are analyzed.

In the context of the federal education policy, I sought to understand the extent to which there is an integration with PBF and a prioritization of its beneficiaries, as suggested by Kerstenetzky (2009). The integration of PBF with Programa Mais Educação (PME – More Education Program) has been done since 2011, making it possible to prioritize students who are beneficiaries of PBF.

Ximenes, Moll and Macedo (2014), managers of the program, discuss the importance of the articulation of PBF with PME given the multidimensional nature of the situation of poverty of the beneficiaries of PBF. The authors argue that the very concept of social development is multidimensional and dynamic, and has the ultimate goal of people's well-being and freedom. It incorporates social rights, opportunity, equity, and freedom.

Within this vision, the prioritization of PBF majority schools to access PME, done since 2011, arises with a government strategy to promote equity as it makes it possible to address the situation of these families by differentiated strategies, both pedagogically and financially. For the authors, equity should play a central role in intersectoral policies, and an articulated agenda that goes beyond PME should be developed.

In PME expansion strategy, the main criterion for the preparation of the list of schools eligible for membership is to be “PBF majority”. Thanks to the identification and prioritization of these schools it is possible to implement an equity policy, because these schools are the ones with the greatest vulnerability. Next, Ximenes, Moll and Macedo explain how these schools are identified and the importance of prioritizing them:

These schools are identified from the nominal school attendance records of PBF students, prepared every two months by the sectors responsible for the education conditionality of the Program. Such records make it possible to identify the schools in which the beneficiaries of PBF are enrolled and, as a result, calculate the number of beneficiaries per school. By crossing this figure with the total number

of students per school, using the data of Educacenso (school census conducted annually by the Ministry of Education), it is possible to know the proportion of beneficiaries per school. The identification of the “PBF majority schools” thus enables mapping the schools and territories where those in greater vulnerability are (in poverty and extreme poverty settings), because, although the income condition is only one of the indicators of poverty, there is a direct relation of poverty with other situations of vulnerability.<sup>10</sup> (XIMENES; MOLL; MACEDO, 2014, p. 89, free translation)

As a result of the partnership between PBF and PME, 65% of the schools included in PME in 2013 were PBF majority schools, which corresponds to 32 thousand schools. However, some studies indicate that the PME does not have a significant impact on the participants’ learning. This is the case of the research conducted by Luís Felipe Oliveira (2017), which found no improvement in either learning or income rates in schools participating in PME. A study by Fundação Itaú Social (2015) also failed to measure positive impacts of PME on the learning of students from schools participating in this integral education program.

As a consequence, it is necessary to consider that educational policies that seek a differential treatment to the beneficiaries of PBF should also be concerned with the educational outcomes of the beneficiaries, in order to reduce inequality of learning. According to Ximenes, Moll and Macedo, the articulation of PBF with educational policies should expand in the coming years as a strategy to face the multidimensionality of poverty and educational inequalities:

It should be noted that the partnership does not end with the inclusion of “PBF majority schools” in Integral Education, through Programa Mais Educação

**10** In the original: “Essas escolas são identificadas a partir dos registros de frequência escolar nominal dos estudantes do PBF, realizados bimestralmente pelos setores responsáveis pela condicionalidade de educação do Programa. Tais registros possibilitam identificar as escolas em que estão matriculados os estudantes beneficiários do PBF e, com isso, calcular a quantidade de beneficiários por escola. Ao cruzar esse dado com o número total de estudantes por escola, a partir dos dados do Educacenso (censo escolar realizado anualmente pelo Ministério da Educação), é possível saber a proporção de estudantes beneficiários por escola. A identificação das ‘escolas maioria PBF’ viabiliza, assim, o mapeamento das escolas e territórios onde estão aqueles em maior situação de vulnerabilidade (pobreza e extrema pobreza), pois ainda que a condição de renda seja apenas um dos indicativos de pobreza, há uma relação direta desta com demais situações de vulnerabilidade”.

[PME – More Education Program]. In order to address the issues related to the multidimensionality of poverty, it proposes to develop an articulated agenda to strengthen the intersectorality between the areas, especially education, health and social assistance/PBF, at all federative levels, in line with the objectives of PBF conditionalities.<sup>11</sup> (XIMENES; MOLL; MACEDO, 2014, p. 94, free translation)

Based on a literature review on the institutional effects of PBF on schools, the departments of education and educational policy, here I analyze how PBF can cause changes in several aspects of educational policy, ranging from more practical aspects of management, such as the monitoring of student attendance, to issues of redirection of educational policy. The authors who consider these impacts are: Curralero (2012), Santos Junior (2012), Silva (2012), and Motta (2011).

Regina Curralero (2012), in a doctoral research that sought to analyze how Brazilian social policies address poverty, focusing on PBF, evaluates whether the management of PBF has interfered in the education area at the federal level. She states that, although there is an intensive process of cooperation for monitoring conditionalities:

There has been no deepening of the relations in order to seek, within the scope of the federal government, to solve the difficulties faced by the beneficiaries of PBF to remain in school, or to give greater attention to this public.<sup>12</sup> (CURRALERO, 2012, p. 175, free translation)

For the author, the identification of the beneficiaries who are out of school is carried out by monitoring the conditionalities, but it should be followed by a work of school inclusion of this population, which would

**11** In the original: "Cabe destacar que a parceria não se encerra na contemplação das "escolas maioria PBF" na Educação Integral, por intermédio do Programa Mais Educação. Propõe, de forma a dar conta das questões afetadas à multidimensionalidade da pobreza, desenvolver uma agenda articulada, a fim de fortalecer a intersectorialidade entre as áreas, sobretudo de educação, saúde e assistência social/PBF, em todos os níveis federativos, em consonância com os objetivos das condicionalidades do PBF".

**12** In the original: "Não houve aprofundamento das relações no sentido de buscar no âmbito do governo federal o equacionamento de dificuldades enfrentadas pelos beneficiários do PBF para permanecerem na escola ou para desenvolvimento de uma atenção maior para esse público".

require coordination with the area of education. According to the researcher, with regard to state and municipal administrations, PBF has stimulated an approximation between the areas of education and PBF in some places, but this has not happened in a generalized way.

Some authors sought to capture the effects of PBF on municipal educational policies. Wilson Santos Junior (2012) studied the municipal management of PBF in more depth, based on a field study in municipalities of Greater Vitória, in Espírito Santo state: Cariacica, Serra, Viana, Vila Velha, and Vitória. The author looked into the educational policies implemented by some municipalities in order to achieve the objectives of PBF conditionalities, that is, school services and minimum attendance. The author's hypothesis is that since Sistema Presença [Presence System] enables positive discrimination by identifying beneficiaries who fail to comply with the educational conditionality, this allows the formulation of public policies focused on this group. For him:

[...] it is expected that municipal managers become aware of failures to comply with the conditionality and that an intersectoral network is established to guarantee the basic social rights of the families who receive the cash transfer, which promotes the achievement of the basic objective of Programa Bolsa Família, which is the end of the poverty cycle.<sup>13</sup> (SANTOS JUNIOR, 2012, p. 166, free translation)

Santos Junior noted that, in general, the Presence System encourages the individual monitoring of the attendance of the beneficiary students, including the reasons for their absence, since it is necessary to address the causes of the failure to comply with the conditionality. Based on this control, the situation is referred to other institutions, such as the school, the social assistance network, and the health and sports departments. Therefore, the responsibility for interventions in the event of failure to comply with conditionalities is not assumed by the education departments, which only make the referral.

**13** In the original: "é esperado que os gestores municipais tomem conhecimento das quebras da condicionalidade e seja estabelecida uma rede de intersetorialidade para garantias dos direitos sociais básicos das famílias beneficiárias da transferência de renda, promovendo o alcance aos objetivos básicos do programa bolsa família que é o fim do ciclo da pobreza".

One effect on the school, observed in Cariacica municipality, is that, when looking for the reason for the low attendance of the beneficiary student, the school will have greater contact with the family. In addition, there is also increased contact between the education department and schools, because, when the conditionality is not complied with, the department's operator contacts the school to request educational measures. According to the operators, schools are encouraged to have projects aimed at addressing low school attendance and preventing students from dropping out, but the department does not have specific institutional programs or actions for these cases, and thus transfers responsibility to the school. In partnership with the Ministry of Education, Cariacica Education Department participates in some programs that prioritize the beneficiaries of PBF, such as Mais Educação [PME – More Education], Escola Aberta [Open School], Mobilização [Mobilization], ProJovem [ProYouth], and Prometec.

The partnership with the federal government, mainly through federal programs, is recurrent, and is also adopted in Vila Velha and Vitória municipalities. Intersectoral work can also gain importance, as it happens in Vitória, where work is done in a network involving the teams of education, health, social assistance, etc. For the master operator of PBF in the municipality, the work with the beneficiary students must go beyond verifying school attendance, and should influence pedagogical work. To this end, the education department develops partnerships with other departments, such as culture and sports ones, or focuses on PBF beneficiaries for programs such as PME.

In general, Santos Junior's research indicates that there is no systemic work after identifying beneficiaries who fail to comply with the educational conditionality. In municipalities, the school or other departments (mainly the social assistance one) are usually responsible for the actions in case of failure to comply with conditionalities; intersectoral cooperation is still incipient in most of the municipalities, but it is a possibility. Programs of the education departments themselves to prevent beneficiaries from not complying with the conditionality are practically nonexistent, although most departments recognize that work should not stop after student's attendance has been verified. Gislaíne Silva (2012) researched the importance of intersectorality for the management of PBF, analyzed how it is performed in practice in the municipality of Umuarama (Paraná state), and noted that intersectorality is incipient there, too.

Thalita Motta (2011) studied the repercussion of PBF on the school environment according to the perception of managers, teachers, as well as

parents and students who are beneficiaries of PBF in Caicó (Rio Grande do Norte state) and São João do Sabugi municipalities. The main modifications perceived were an improvement in the control of the students' attendance (including that of non-beneficiaries) and greater integration of schools with municipal departments.

From the analyzed productions, it is possible to say that PBF has generated some changes in the Brazilian educational setting. The effects analyzed in the reviewed literature are summarized below:

- greater but still incipient intersectoral action between some departments – Santos Junior (2012) and Silva (2012);
- improvement in the control of the attendance of all students – Motta (2011);
- greater integration of departments with schools – Motta (2011);
- there are few municipal policies, programs and actions focused on beneficiaries who fail to comply with conditionalities – Santos Junior (2012).

These effects are still small and incipient. Despite not being the direct objective of the program, they can be considered positive effects of externality. These authors aimed to understand how PBF changed some aspects of educational management in several areas, from schools to the federal government, and noted that deeper changes have occurred in what is formally required, as in student attendance control. Few actions and changes in management have been made with a focus on the beneficiaries of PBF, aiming at reducing the failure to comply with conditionalities or increasing student performance. Given the shortage of literature on the integration of PBF with educational policies, it is fair to suppose that the number of actions and changes in educational management made with a focus on the beneficiaries of PBF is low.

Capturing differences in the treatment of resources, such as infrastructure or teacher education, is simpler thanks to the existence of a database that allows this diagnosis. But there are differences in the treatment of students that are not related to resources. Almost all the studies analyzed here were conducted with field studies in selected localities. Therefore, they deal with the effects of PBF specific to a certain context. It would be interesting to have access to more extensive research, with a larger number of municipalities, but the researcher would face several difficulties because this would require qualitative research.

It is important to seek to capture how municipalities address the inequality among their schools, especially because of the difficulties faced by the most vulnerable ones, which are also those with the highest number of PBF beneficiaries. As discussed in this article, when there is no such concern, educational inequality can widen. On the other hand, there are mechanisms that can reduce the inequalities faced by these schools, which require not only the integration of the public sectors but also actions that take into account the specificities of the most vulnerable schools. These mechanisms can be instituted in municipal management as an indirect institutional effect of PBF.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

Based on the understanding that educational inequality is multidimensional and that, consequently, access to education is not enough, this article has analyzed the integration of Programa Bolsa Família (PBF) with the educational area. This conditional income transfer program aims to act on poverty in Brazil based on a view that poverty is multifaceted, and cash transfers are not enough to solve it. In this sense, PBF proposes to act intersectorally, integrating with the educational area, and other sectors of public management.

The action of PBF is more direct on the issue of access to the education system, because the conditionality of education is that all children and adolescents who receive the transfer have to be enrolled and to have a minimum attendance in the classroom. Indeed, as pointed out in this article, several studies indicate that PBF has a positive effect on access and school pass rates. However, according to the educational literature, access to school is not enough to address the issue of educational inequality. Bourdieu pointed to the reproductive power of the educational system as early as the 1960s. The point is that educational inequality moves through the levels of education and through mechanisms of differentiation of the quality of school provision within the same level.

In this context, Crahay (2002) points out that it is also necessary to look at the dimensions of treatment and learning. The problem is that, in general, the educational treatment given is unequal, which widens inequalities: the students who already perform better have access to more school resources and greater teacher action. Nevertheless, for this author, treatment should be differentiated aiming at the equality of the knowledge acquired by the students. The perspective of reducing social inequalities should guide the actions of school and educational policy.

The literature that discusses the effects on the educational performance of the beneficiary students does not provide conclusive results. In general, the effects are statistically insignificant or very small. However, there are methodological difficulties in measuring the impact of performance. Large-scale exams generally fail to identify whether the student is a PBF beneficiary, which makes it difficult to calculate impact at the learner level. For this calculation, it is necessary to cross-check the microdata of large-scale examinations with databases that allow identifying the beneficiary students, which are not available on the websites of the Ministry of Education or of the Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger.

Some researchers rightly point out that the break of the intergenerational poverty cycle to which the beneficiary population of PBF is subjected must be obtained by considering the quality of the schools such population has access to. As long as the quality of the schools and the educational outcomes obtained by these students are below the national average, educational inequality will persist.

One of the purposes of PBF is the integration of the different sectors of public management. This integration, particularly of the bodies responsible for the management of PBF with educational bodies, may enable policies that address the educational dimension of poverty. Proposals such as Kerstenetzky's, which suggests that educational policy prioritize schools with high percentages of PBF beneficiaries, can reduce educational inequality.

As discussed by Bichir, it is not possible to hold PBF accountable for solving other dimensions of poverty, besides the monetary one, because a program only will not solve the poverty issue in Brazil, especially because poverty is structural. The best option is to articulate PBF with other sectors of public management that act on the other dimensions of poverty.

The integration of PBF with sectors of the educational area arises as a possibility to promote policies of positive discrimination that raise the quality of the schools where the beneficiaries of PBF study. Mais Educação (PME – More Education) is already done in this sense, insofar as it prioritizes the PBF majority schools. Such integration can have positive effects on the inequality of treatment and learning of beneficiary students. Although these are not direct objectives of the program, they may be indirect effects. The literature review on the effects of PBF was conducted from this perspective.

The literature review suggests that the institutional effects of PBF on the action of education departments are still incipient. PBF was able to generate a greater integration of the educational area with the others, but



the actions aim at solving the problems of the students who fail to comply with the conditionalities. There are few preventive actions aimed at reducing the inequalities faced by these students. Rarely is the mapping generated by the monitoring of the reasons for not complying with conditionalities used to plan strategic actions that reduce the rate of failure to comply with conditionalities. However, the municipality of Curitiba is a positive example in this sense, because, to define the schools participating in the Equidade [Equity] project, it uses the percentage of beneficiaries in the student body, as well as other indicators of school performance and vulnerability.

PBF works mainly on access to educational services. Nonetheless, as educational inequality is multidimensional, public policies must also consider other dimensions: treatment and learning. Beneficiaries face inequalities in these two dimensions because they have access to schools with more precarious resources and worse performances. The right to quality education must be ensured in the multiple dimensions of educational quality.

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