

Educational Policy in Ceará: strategic processes

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ABSTRACT – Educational Policy in Ceará: strategic processes. The article discusses strategic processes for the formulation and implementation of educational policy in Ceará, Brazil in the period 1995-2015, based on the theories of governance and path dependence. The text analyzes aspects related to the state fiscal balance, meritocratic recruitment practices and monitoring mechanisms associated with management by results. In this scenario, three strategic processes were instrumental in creating favorable conditions for improving education: collaboration, mobilization and accountability. Evidence is presented that such processes, historically constructed in Ceará education, paved the way for the institution of a favorable institutional culture for change, such as the improvement of the results obtained by the state in external evaluation processes.

Keywords: Educational Policy. Ceará State. Governance. Path Dependence. Collaboration Regime.

RESUMO – Política Educacional no Ceará: processos estratégicos. O artigo discute processos estratégicos à formulação e implementação da política educacional no Ceará no período 1995-2015, tendo por referencial as teorias da governança e da dependência da trajetória. O texto analisa aspectos relativos ao equilíbrio fiscal do estado, práticas meritocráticas de recrutamento e mecanismos de monitoramento associados à gestão por resultados. Nesse cenário, três processos estratégicos foram determinantes para criar condições propícias à melhoria da educação: a colaboração, a mobilização e a responsabilização. São apresentadas evidências de que tais processos, construídos historicamente na educação cearense, abriram caminho para a instituição de uma cultura institucional favorável à mudança, a exemplo da melhoria dos resultados obtidos pelo estado em processos de avaliação externa.

Palavras-chave: Política Educacional. Estado do Ceará. Governança. Dependência da Trajetória. Regime de Colaboração.

Initial Considerations

In recent years, the Ceará experience of *Programa Alfabetização na Idade Certa* – PAIC [The Proper Age Literacy Program] has aroused the interests of policymakers and scholars of various nuances (Gusmão; Ribeiro, 2011; Fonseca, 2013; Costa; Carnoy, 2015; Sumiya, 2015; Sumiya; Araujo; Sano, 2017). Originally created in the city of Sobral, PAIC became known for solving learning problems in the early years of elementary school. Subsequently, its principles were incorporated into the country's educational policy agenda, inspiring the *Pacto Nacional pela Alfabetização na Idade Certa* – PNAIC [National Pact for Literacy at Proper Age] – (Brasil, 2012). Adopted as a state policy from 2007 on, the improvement of the Basic Education Development Index (Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica – IDEB) in the initial and final years of elementary school in Ceará between 2005-2017 has been attributed to this initiative. During this period, the state has the highest growth of IDEB (117.9%) in the early years and the second largest growth (75%) in the final years of elementary school among the Brazilian states. In relation to the states of the Northeast in 2005, in the early years of elementary school, the public network of Ceará has an IDEB of 2.8 with a passing rate of 79.2%, being the best in the region; in 2017, its results are taking off from the region, reaching the IDEB of 6.1 with 96.5% approval rate. There is, however, a long track record of efforts to expand access and improve quality pursued by the state's educational policy before the adoption of such experience as a strategic state policy in 2007.

Without intending to deepen this initiative, the text aims to analyze reasons that contributed to the continuation of some principles of Ceará's educational policy, creating favorable situations to improve student outcomes in large-scale national assessments. To this end, the explanatory potential of the relationship between processes and outcomes in the educational policy of that state is explored, using a framework derived from governance theories and path dependence.

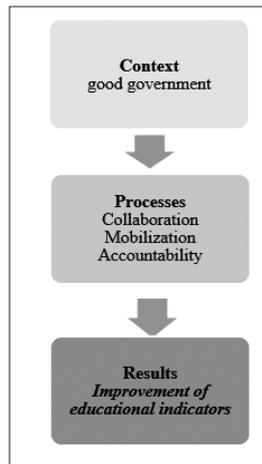
In a scenario marked by the discontinuity of public policies and the scarcity of innovations, it seems appropriate to state that the continuity of certain principles and practices has contributed to ensuring favorable conditions for the improvement of the quality of education in the referred federated unit. Several studies conducted over the last decade (Abrucio; Seggatto; Pereira, 2016; Fonseca, 2013; Calderón; Raquel; Cabral, 2015; among others) have focused on the case of Ceará, analyzing some of its educational advances. It has also emerged studies that point to tensions and contradictions arising from policies adopted by the state (Camarão; Ramos; Albuquerque, 2015; Mota, 2018).

This paper deepens the trajectory of the construction of such policies, placing them in a broader context of government and governance over a period of twenty years (1995-2015). During this period, at the head of the executive branch of the state were four governors affiliated with political parties with distinct programmatic lines and ideological principles. This situation, however, did not prevent, at least in educational

policy, the permanence and consolidation of some management processes, of collaborative work among government instances, efforts to mobilize governments and communities around actions and accountability for the results achieved.

The analysis of various initiatives that took place before 2007 aims to offer elements to unveil some of the reasons that contributed to making this state recognized for its results. By dwelling on historical processes that preceded recent initiatives, the study of the period in focus allows us to identify the existence of a favorable context in which collaboration, mobilization and accountability processes were implemented that generated favorable circumstances for results improvement. It is understood that Figure 1 summarizes the proposed analysis model.

Figure 1 – Policy formulation and implementation in Ceará



Source: Authors' elaboration (2019).

The adopted methodology, besides the analysis of the literature produced about the educational politics in the considered period (1995-2015) includes, from a conceptual point of view, elements derived from governance theories (Rhodes, 1997; Jessop, 1997; Mayntz, 2003; Hooghe; Marks, 2003; Stephenson, 2013) and of Path Dependence (Pierson, 2000; Mahoney, 2000; Greener, 2005; Hoff, 2011). In addition to understanding a historical course, the study seeks to identify how a set of specific circumstances facilitated the emergence of its own forms of government and governance in Ceará.

The thesis that processes not always perceptible to present observers generate conditions for certain results was approached in the nineteenth century, when, by dwelling on the origins of the French Revolution, Tocqueville (1997) will show that, sometimes, a multitude of small and seemingly disconnected occurrences contribute to creating circumstances conducive to changes that will materialize later in time. Thus, in order to know certain historical facts, one must dwell on

causes that may result in different combinations of models that originated them.

It is also worth remembering that the reform(s) that took place in Ceará's educational policy deserve to be understood in the light of a broader context and movement dating back to the late 1980s. With the end of the military civil dictatorship and the end of a political cycle under the aegis of three *colonels*, who since the 1960s had been alternating in state power, a young businessman (Tasso Jereissati) is elected with a campaign motto centered on *a government of changes*. According to Gondim (1995, p. 6):

[...] The management model initiated by Tasso Jereissati is characterized by a proposal of political modernization that configures a new paradigm in the relations between state, economy and society. Thus, contrary to the neopatrimonialism prevailing until then, this new paradigm demarcates a public sector managed by universalist principles, configuring a legal model of domination, with its related bureaucratic model of administration.

Changes in education, in this sense, are associated with processes that occur in the sphere of government, based on three closely associated factors: 1) the permanent pursuit of fiscal balance that has enabled efficient management of the public machine; 2) the presence of meritocratic principles of recruitment and occupation in state bureaucracy; and, 3) results-oriented management.

The text is organized as follows: the first part presents considerations on the theoretical-methodological framework adopted; the second one focuses on elements of the more general context of state government experience; and the third one discusses the strategic processes for the formulation and implementation of Ceará's educational policy: collaboration, mobilization and accountability.

Theoretical-Methodological Reference

To carry out the study, procedures associated with qualitative research methods were adopted (Ludke; André, 1986; Flick, 2009; Stake, 2011), more specifically bibliographic research, document analysis and interviews. From the point of view of the theoretical conception, the work has as a reference considerations coming from the debate on governance and contributions of the *path dependence theory*, a topic to be deepened in subsequent items. The time frame comprising the period of the last twenty years has been due to the fact that, in educational policy, a longer observation is necessary to verify how government actions are born, transmuted, stabilized and/or extinguished. Analyzing such a move requires a far-reaching look beyond the period of government management. More than that, a policy must be screened for changes of government so that it can stand the test of continuity.

Governance

The governance debate has different origins and nuances (Hooghe; Marks, 2003; Mayntz, 2003; Stephenson, 2013), referring to changes in the forms of interaction and management of public policies started about three decades ago (Diniz, 1996; Rhodes, 1997; Jessop, 1997; Mayntz, 2003). Such reflection is somehow articulated with the advent of neoliberalism between the 1980s and 1990s, when many state attributions were questioned and revised. On the other hand, the search for new forms of association between countries, as occurred in the case of the process of building the European Union, influenced the emergence of more horizontal relations in the forms of government.

Recognizing the participation of institutional actors outside governments, from the point of view of non-governmental organizations as well as social movements, has in turn contributed to the emergence of new pacts in policy formulation and implementation. In this scenario, the protagonism of transnational economic and political agents that began to guide development agendas stood out. This was the case, for instance, of international development banks, international cooperation organizations, among others. Finally, within nation-States, the articulations between different spheres of government and governance are conducive to the emergence of new ways of organizing the public sphere.

In the Brazilian case, it can be said that all these influences will cause significant changes in the State's functioning patterns, in the relations between the spheres of government and in their interactions with the productive sector and society.

It is interesting to note that while in certain contexts it is possible to speak of the decreasing role of national States in the face of the increasing influence of transnational governance levels on policy agendas (Migdal, 1988; Teodoro, 2012), others have seen their strengthening in shaping policy agendas (Evans, 1995; Evans, Rueschemeyer; Skocpol, n.d.). This would be the case in Ceará, where the subnational instance – the state government – played a central role in formulating and implementing policies, encouraging the participation of other actors and actors.

This study argues that Ceará represents an important case of multi-scale governance, helping to understand the “[...] interconnectivity of policy-making activities” (Stephenson, 2013, p. 817). The importance of multi-scale governance in Education has been highlighted by different studies (Borges, 2003; Dale, 2010; Reis, 2013; Wildoszewski; Sundby, 2014, 2016; Seggatto; Abrucio, 2016; Santos et al., 2016) and has special significance for those interested in the role of the state in different contexts, particularly in globalization scenarios.

Path Dependence

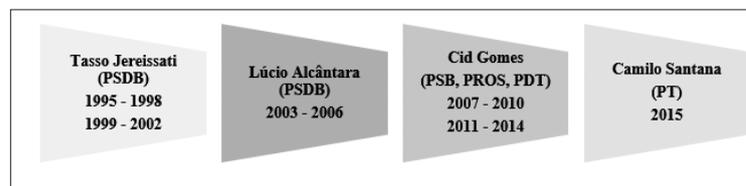
The analysis of the contemporary history of Ceará in the twenty years (1995-2015) focused in this study, shows that a set of circumstances have created favorable conditions for innovations in the government, not only in education, but also in other areas of public intervention. It seems appropriate to say that a policy sequence has helped to create a pathway for significant change at a later time. The *path dependence* theory (Pierson, 2000; Mahoney, 2000; Greener, 2005; Page, 2006), in this case, could help to explain how after considerable process innovations over time, results began to emerge.

Although the understanding that *history matters* (Hoff, 2011; Tilly, 2013) is the subject of some controversy among policy interpreters, in the case of education in Ceará it has played a significant role. Many traits attributed to current policies, in fact, originate in the past. A recent study suggests, by the way, that positive incrementalism contributed to creating the environment for the changes that took place in Ceará. According to the understanding of such interpreters, the construction of the collaboration regime in Ceará “[...] can only be understood as a long trajectory marked by a virtuous combination of continuity and change” (Abrucio; Seggatto; Pereira, 2016, p. 26). In addition, for reasons associated with its own conditions, Ceará was able to turn issues into policy agenda issues (Rua, 2009) creating favorable circumstances to seize *windows of opportunity*, as happened, for instance, in the case of PAIC (Sumiya et al., 2017). On the other hand, it should be noted that despite changes in state administration, important guiding principles of public management in the state have been preserved, contributing to the implementation of policies that have been consolidated over time. For this reason, it is appropriate to examine the more general context in which Ceará’s educational policy is inserted.

Context

As mentioned, the recent protagonism of Ceará education originates in an institutional environment conducive to good governance, as already detected in the second half of the 1990s by Tendler (1998). The adoption of fiscal austerity policies, combined with other measures, contributed to create fertile ground for the development of initiatives aimed at improving the living conditions of the population. This topic analyzes some aspects of such a context, considering the fact that during this period the state government was assumed by managers belonging to different party-political extracts, which at different times opposed each other, but had continued some principles built over time in educational policy. Figure 2 shows the timeline corresponding to the administration of different governors.

Figure 2 – Timeline – Governors of Ceará 1995-2015



Source: Authors' elaboration (2019).

Government Fiscal Balance

Although the focus of this article is on a range of twenty years, it can be stated that, with distinct emphases, all administrations over the last thirty years in Ceará have given priority to the state's fiscal balance, expressing common concern and a constant strict public finance management policy.

In the early years of such changes (1986-1994), measures were related to the adoption of strategies to ensure the maintenance of the administrative machine. Then, measures aimed at improving the collection and recovery of the state's operational capacity were gradually implemented. The ongoing project builds on a tripod supported by three-tier reforms: fiscal, financial and administrative (Gondim, n.d.). These processes, which began in the late 1980s, are evolving and improving, creating a favorable operational *ethos* that will enable the state to borrow from international agencies to finance priority projects – an alternative sought by different administrations within the range considered.

Being one of the states with the lowest per capita income in the country, Ceará has been impacted by the different crises and economic recessions experienced by Brazil. It should be remembered that since the beginning of the 1980s, in order to cope with inflationary uncontrolled situations, various economic plans have been adopted by federal governments. It was not until the first half of the following decade that, with the *Real Plan*, the country was able to resume its fiscal balance. For Ceará, which was already facing difficulties arising from problems of the state itself, such context had additional limitations. The constraints experienced by government management had impacts on some public policies, including education, during the first ten years of the *government of changes*.

In the face of a severe financial crisis, in 2003, the state government of Ceará initiated a reform of rigid fiscal adequacy. Analyzing state government initiatives in the period, Brandão (2014) records this situation:

The state of Ceará had been suffering from continuous declines in revenues, which, added to the deficits, curtailed its investment capacity. The national and inter-

national context of 2003 led to an economic slowdown; ICMS revenues fell in 2002 and 2003; There was a decrease in the share of the State Participation Fund (FPE) and in the constitutionally provided tax transfers. On the fiscal management side, to get out of the crisis without affecting the population's quality of life, a tax adjustment proposal was made, and it had three strategies: (i) higher revenues, (ii) lower current cost expenses and (iii) healthy indebtedness (Holanda, Petterini; Barbosa, 2006, apud Brandão, 2014, p. 24).

The second half of the first decade of the 2000s would bring more satisfactory conditions to the national and state economy. Ceará, due to its long history of fiscal responsibility, has been able to benefit from this context, gaining national recognition for good public management when, after times of abundance, in 2015 times of scarcity knock at the door of the Brazilians.

Continued governmental measures to keep public machine expenses under control and improve revenue have allowed the state to balance its revenues and expenditures, complying with the Fiscal Responsibility Law and suffering minor effects from the crisis that affected most Brazilian states in the second decade of the twentieth century. A study by Manoel; Grandson; Neto (2016) regarding the fiscal situation of the Brazilian states places Ceará in the period 2009-2015 in a strong fiscal situation, i.e., it is characterized as a state with conditions to borrow internationally, among 11 of the 27 Federation units, four from the Northeast region.

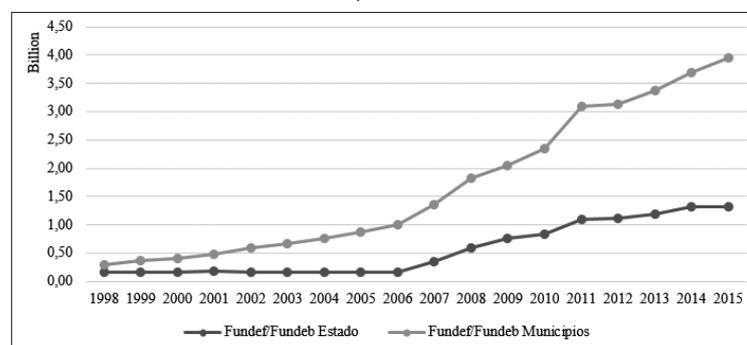
The state's fiscal equilibrium, achieved under adverse circumstances, contributed to the improvement of the state treasury's investment capacity. Such conditions have had an impact on education, especially in more recent times. Other factors specific to the educational field have contributed to the progressive achievement of more satisfactory conditions for the maintenance and development of education, as it will be possible to verify in the considerations about the changes in the financing of K-12 education.

Fiscal Balance in Education

If in the broader plan of the government machine the fiscal balance was sought as a sustainability factor of state initiatives, the financing of education in Ceará, in the period considered, was influenced by two variables: on the one hand, the economic conditions of the country and state; on the other, the changes in the operationalization strategy of the transfer of resources from tax revenues related to the financing of expenses with maintenance and development of education, as provided for by the Federal Constitution. The creation of accounting funds in each of the federated units to ensure the financing of education, contributed to promote the expansion of access and improve the quality of services.

If the general oscillations of the country motivated by various crises had detrimental effects on education, on the other hand, the compulsory use of resources, initially for elementary education (1998-2006) and then for the whole of K-12 education (2007 onwards) represented a watershed for education systems. Graphic 1 shows the evolution of education funding in Ceará under the validity of the Fund for Maintenance and Development of Elementary Education and Teaching Enhancement (Fundef), and the Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and for the Enhancement of Education Professionals (Fundeb)¹ between the first year of its application and 2015.

Graphic 1 – Fundef and Fundeb resources in Ceará – state and cities, 1998-2015



Source: STN and FNDE (2017).

An analysis of Fundef/Fundeb in Ceará shows that between 1998 and 2006, the resources contributed to elementary education increased 151%, while in the state network fell by 3.6% and in the municipal networks increased by 236.8%, a situation resulting from the process of municipalization of the elementary school, adopted by the state. The Fundef/Fundeb transition in the years 2006-2007 represented a year-on-year growth of 45.1%, with an increase of 113.6% in state resources and 34.2% in municipal networks. The 2007-2015 period, corresponding to the last ten years of the study period, was marked by a 208.9% growth in Fundeb resources in Ceará, such growth of 285.2% for the state network and 189.7% for the municipal networks. In the state network, the period was marked by investments in the school buildings and equipment, improvement of teaching working conditions, acquisition of equipment for schools, and support to cities, expanding and strengthening the collaborative regime, a theme deepened in the article.

Meritocracy

Another important aspect to be mentioned in the trajectory of the last twenty years in Ceará is the search for qualification of the public administration supported by policies that value the merit of public servants. The teachers of the state network are selected by public tender,

having been carried out several initiatives of such nature, such as public tenders for the position of high school teacher in 2003, 2009 and 2013. Processes involving selective steps for the office of school principal and regional education development coordinator are also used. In addition, important positions in the bureaucracy of the Secretariats, such as the key positions of leaders (Secretary, Assistant Secretary and Executive Secretary) tend to be filled by technical requirements.

It is important to mention that in a pioneering study on the ongoing changes in government policies in Ceará, Tendler (1998) highlighted the commitment and recognition of technicians as an important element of what the thinker then called *good governance in the tropics*.

Probity with the public matters referred by Gondim (1995) in relation to the beginning of the 'government of changes' was consolidated in Ceará, especially in the educational segment. In 1997, the state government held a public tender for K-12 education teachers with membership of 124 municipalities, meeting not only guidelines from the federal and state constitutions, but also strengthening the regime of collaboration with cities, through technical support and governance example where principles of public administration prevailed. This experience, little highlighted in the educational literature that studies the period, shows a process that will later positively mark the implementation of new initiatives.

Regarding its own network, in 2003, the Education Department (Seduc) would hold a public contest for teachers, with 6,488 vacancies distributed by the high school subjects. In 2009, in view of the situation of a significant contingent of teachers in retirement process and vacancies not filled in the 2003 competition, a new competition was held to occupy 4,000 vacancies in the high school subjects; in 2013, another contest was launched, this time offering 3,000 vacancies.

The data analyzed from the last three public competitions for high school teachers from the state school of Ceará point to the admission of teachers according to the requirements of the legislation for the exercise in this stage of education. They also show that, as competition grows with each competition edition, the tendency is to select better candidates to fill these vacancies.

Management by results

Another important component of accountability concerns what is commonly referred to as 'management by results' (Holanda, 2006), a public management model implemented during the Lúcio Alcântara government (2003-2006), based on the Canadian experience:

[...] focused on the citizen as a customer and seeking optimal standards of efficiency, effectiveness and effectiveness, with ethics and transparency. It is a management that seeks to reduce costs to society and commits the state to the satisfaction of citizens. It is a model in which gov-

ernment is a means and not an end in itself. In this model, the government needs to continuously dialogue with the society and make intensive use of monitoring and evaluation procedures, including from the point of view of the citizen as the main client (Rosa, Holanda; Maia Junior, 2006, p. 39).

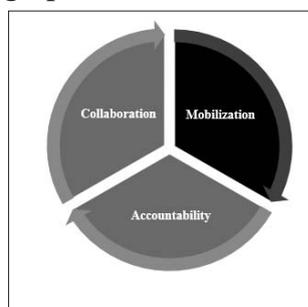
Seduc was one of the first sectors to start implementing the proposed model and for that it began a wide restructuring of processes and flows in both its network schools and central and intermediate agencies. In the process of implementation of Management by Results (GPR), Seduc has the Permanent System of Evaluation of Basic Education (Spaace), a large-scale statewide assessment instituted in the early 1990s, which gained increasing importance in educational policy in the 2000s (Vidal; Vieira; Galvão, 2016).

The GPR which, in theoretical terms, could represent a contradiction with the model of democratic and participative management of schools, started in the mid-1990s and that had strong mobilizing power, was assimilated as a theoretical-instrumental support to support the current model. On the other hand, the management model that Seduc was already working on allowed some initiatives using GPR to be implemented immediately, such as the pedagogical dissemination of the results of Spaace's evaluation to municipalities and schools, by setting goals for school performance and creating a model for school awards, measures taken and disseminated during this period and strengthened by subsequent administration.

The GPR represents an update of the principles that guided the changes in Ceará's public management, as it keeps the focus on "budget balance, efficiency of the administrative machine and probity in dealing with the public thing" (Gondim, n. d., p. 4). In the field of education, it is strengthened by the ongoing inflection in the country and the state, especially the large-scale evaluation policy, which is more or less associated with *accountability* policies. The fact that, since 2007, the state government was taken over by a group that commanded an important municipality with an educational policy strongly focused on evaluation policies and bonus contributes to the creation of an environment in which such initiatives flourished and consolidated.

Educational Policy – strategic processes

Having discussed elements of the context that generated favorable circumstances for the emergence of initiatives aligned with a perspective of change, it is opportune to focus strategic processes on the creation of favorable conditions for the development of educational policies in Ceará. Three strategic processes deserve to be highlighted in the educational field: collaboration, mobilization and accountability, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3 – Strategic processes in Ceará’s educational policy

Source: Authors' elaboration (2019).

Collaboration

By providing for the organization of national education, the 1988 Constitution provides for the National Educational Bases and Guidelines Law (LDB) to referend that “the Union, the States, the Federal District and the Cities shall collaboratively organize their education systems” (CF, Art. 211 and LDB, Art. 8). The understanding of this agreement has been the object of many studies and controversies. Theoretically, there is a hierarchy between the spheres of government, however, just as the Union and the states, the cities are also instances of policy making, which points to “multiscale governance” as the guiding axis for collaboration between the federative spheres.

In addition to be being a form of formulation and coordination of the national education policy, the Union has a supplementary and redistributive function in relation to states, the Federal District and cities (LDB, Art. 9º III). In practice, different states and cities define their own policies with the support of Union resources or, independently, with resources from their own sources. The exercise of the *regime of collaboration* is a permanent challenge for the federated entities and few are the successful states in the collaboration with their municipalities. In a scenario not necessarily conducive to the search for articulation between the spheres of government, a requirement for successful governance, as seen in the theoretical framework that underlies the reflection (Governance) of this article, Ceará was able to build cooperation alternatives between the state and the cities that represented examples of governance in the conduct of their K-12 education policies.

In the case of Ceará, collaboration between the state and the municipalities is a practice that dates back to the 1970s (Vieira, 2010; Vieira; Vidal, 2013; Seggatto; Abrucio, 2016). In the period corresponding to the twenty years of the object of analysis, the federative pact between the state and the cities was built historically, over time becoming a state policy and paving the way for important initiatives, of which the most recent – the *Programa Alfabetização na Idade Certa* (PAIC) [Right Age

Literacy Program] – has become a national reference in terms of collaboration.

In a study on the subject, besides locating the historical roots of municipalization, Vieira and Vidal (2013) identifies three distinct stages in the collaboration regime: the institution (1995-2002), the organization (2003-2006) and the consolidation (from 2007 on).

Under different forms and circumstances, collaboration between the state government and municipalities has a long history in Ceará and predates the collaboration regime itself established by the 1988 Constitution (Art. 211) and endorsed by the LDB (Art. 8). Historically, many technical and financial cooperation agreements have been signed, providing an approximation between the federative entities capable of overcoming partisan political interests that, as a rule, guide the relations between the different spheres of the Public Power. With the approval of specific legislation (Law No. 12452/95) and the transfer of resources by the state to municipalities for the provision of elementary education, gradually a culture of collaboration was established, facilitated by the role played by the regional instances of education, strategic agencies of the state government. Despite the rapprochement achieved over the last twenty years, the collaborative pact between state and cities has not been without its difficulties. Despite the advances, many political and technical obstacles remain.

At the municipal level, an instance of the exercise of local power, traces of a political culture strongly marked by patrimonialism remain (Vieira, 2011). Thus, although cooperation between state and cities was successful in many respects, in others it was not possible to advance. Decisive elements for changing the state administration context, such as fiscal balance and meritocracy, have rarely found counterpart in municipal management. In this sense, the permanence of clientelistic practices in the local sphere is a permanent challenge to the sustainability of governance achieved in fields such as the Right Age Literacy policy. The collaborative action, in turn, requires the mediation of respect for independence among the spheres of government where the municipality is an autonomous federated entity.

Mobilization

The strategic process of mobilization in educational policy began in the second government of Tasso Jereissati (1995-1998), when Ceará conceived a model of democratic management for its state schools, based on the selection and choice of principals, including election by the school community. With some modifications over time, this model has been maintained, except for vocational schools, created from the Cid Gomes government on (2007-2014).

Prior to such a change, the appointment of officers was a prerogative of the Education Department, which had strong discretion to appoint principals politically aligned with the government. The approval

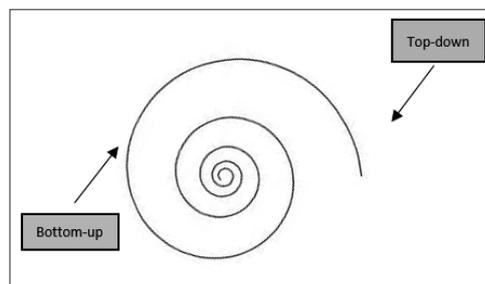
of specific legislation that established criteria for the choice of school leaders represented an important milestone, in order to stimulate the participation of the various segments of the school community and break with the clientelist culture, a hallmark of the state education policy until then. It is noteworthy, however, that if such practices visibly oxygenated state schools, something similar little or rarely happened in those belonging to municipal networks, where practices of political indication for school management positions tend to prevail. Data obtained from the Principal Questionnaire, 2015², applied when the *Prova Brasil* was held, shows that 63.3% of the principals of Ceará municipal schools occupy the position by *appointment only*, 17% by *selection process and indication*, 13.5% per selection process only, 2.9% by public tender only, and 0.4% by election only. As previously mentioned, local government does not relinquish its discretionary prerogatives to appoint principals, as it represents a strong asset in the political arrangements at the municipal level.

In addition to the process of choosing managers through technical selection and community election in state schools, since 1995 Seduc establishes mechanisms to ensure the implementation of School Councils in all schools. It is a strategy of support and strengthening of school management, which “[...] assumed in a democratic way, has the pedagogical and administrative-financial management done with the effective and organized participation of all segments of the school community” (Naspolini, 2001, p. 182). At the school level, participation has been strongly encouraged among students, mobilized through Student Guilds and other youth engagement strategies.

Mobilization as a participation strategy, in fact, represents an important differential in the formulation and implementation of educational policies in Ceará. Referring to strategies guided by the principle of participation, the head of the Education Department responsible for adopting and disseminating such practices refers to them as a reform strategy, as seen in the following passage:

Ceará adopted a third type of reform, based on the image of a spiral, in which vertical and horizontal flows are combined. In this model, decisions move from the higher hierarchical levels (such as the municipal and state departments of education), as well as from the base (set of schools). While the journey may seem longer and longer, this model is more resilient to political and economic pressures, demonstrating its ability to ensure sustainability and adaptability to change. The construction of this model is only possible, therefore, if it is done collectively and dialectically: at the same time everyone participates and makes decisions that consider both the local experience at school and the demands of the state (Naspolini, 2001, p. 170).

The suggested image can be seen in Figure 4. The spiraling motion suggests the simultaneous existence of top-down and bottom-up processes.

Figure 4 – Participation and mobilization, a spiral reform pattern

Source: Authors' elaboration (2019).

Stimulated and sustained over time, the mobilization process has been a facilitator in key moments of Ceará's educational policy by stimulating the protagonism of the different actors involved – educational and school leaders, technical teams, teachers, students and servants. An illustrative example of the mobilization has been the involvement of all segments of the education system by the participation of Ceará students in the *Exame Nacional de Ensino Médio* – Enem [National High School Exam] in recent years. Such participation has placed Ceará as one of the states with greater presence in this exam among young people from public schools, thus contributing to stimulate and facilitate their entry into higher education. At other times, mobilization has contributed to the state achieving goals in national and state campaigns, such as the universalization of elementary school, enrollment in the *Bolsa Família* Program and the active pursuit of evaded students.

Accountability

Afonso (2010) understands accountability policies from the pillars of evaluation and accountability. For the author, these pillars make up a model that seeks to provide information about something, imputing responsibilities, from punishments to material and symbolic rewards. The pillar of accountability is considered the informative and publicizing dimension of results, and may occur at different hierarchical levels; accountability refers to the degree of rewards, forms of induction and norms of conduct, including the role and action of teachers; and the level of assessment is a prerequisite for developing accountability and accountability processes.

The accountability processes discussed here relate to two mutually related policies: on the one hand, the creation of an external evaluation system that has acquired consistency and relevance over time in the government agenda; on the other, results-based management, implemented during the administration of Governor Lúcio Alcântara (2003-2006) and since then expanded and made possible in subsequent governments.

Ceará was one of the first Brazilian states to be part of a large-scale evaluation debate that began under the auspices of the federal government. The *Sistema Permanente de Avaliação da Educação Básica* – Spaece [Permanent Evaluation System of Basic Education] was originally conceived as a pilot project to track the performance of state schools and to support policy formulation aimed at improving public education. Over time this has become a system that includes the assessment of all public basic schools in the state (Lima, 2007; 2012; Vidal; Vieira; Galvão, 2016), with significant impact on public network performance.

Advances in large-scale evaluation models in the country have led to changes in Spaece regarding the methodological dimension. On the other hand, the strengthening and growing role of the large-scale evaluation policy at the national level contributes to repositioning this examination within the scope of state education management. This was then incorporated as a measurement mechanism for some educational indicators, as will be detailed below, associated with a strong reward and bonus policy.

Already in 2004, the expansion of Spaece to all schools of the state public network made possible a closer monitoring of student performance, which was then discussed with schools, under the supervision of the *Coordenadorias Regionais de Desenvolvimento da Educação* – Crede [Regional Coordinations of Education Development]. It was then that, for the first time, the state government awarded schools of its own network by instituting a 14th salary for the best performing units. This relatively modest initiative was repeated in 2006.

Since 2007, with the rise of Cid Gomes (2007-2014), Spaece has been expanded, stimulated and adopted as a policy for the entire network, including serving as a result indicator to change the distribution criteria of the municipal share in the Tax on Circulation of Goods and Services (ICMS), through a new state law that conditioned part of the tax transfer to education, health and environment indicators. Law N. 14023/07³ linked the percentage of the ICMS quota to two new criteria:

II – 18% (eighteen percent) according to the Municipal Educational Quality Index [IQE] of each municipality, formed by the approval rate of students from 1st to 5th grade of elementary school and the average obtained by students of 2nd and 5th grade of the municipal network in learning assessments.

The modification of the law does not foresee *new money*, but a new form of distribution of resources, which leads municipalities to, due to their educational outcomes, have reduced the amount to be received, while others, also because of their educational indicators, can increase ICMS receivables.

The model called Management by Results, explained earlier, becomes a strategic component of the state's financial and administrative management, guiding all government planning. At Seduc, it articulates with Spaece and the School Census databases to create educational in-

dicators of quality and quantity, to be monitored from the point of view of investments, priority actions and allocation of technical teams.

The boldest experience based on the GPR and supported by the collaborative regime with the municipalities was the Right Age Literacy Program (PAIC), translated in the celebration of a pact between the state government and the 184 municipalities of Ceará about the literacy of children, from 2008. This pact was based on a strong accountability policy, based on the three pillars alluded to by Afonso (2010): evaluation, accountability and processes of accountability. The protagonism of the state was also marked by changes in the implementation of Spaece, which is now applied to children enrolled in the 2nd year of elementary school. Decisive elements of such processes were the publicization and ranking of such results in the form of newsletters, maps and other dissemination mechanisms and by the change in ICMS legislation with the creation of bonuses associated with results.

If elements of a culture of accountability contributed to advances in IDEB results recorded in the Initial Considerations of this article, such process did not happen without tensions and contradictions. Bonus policy has been the subject of controversy among field scholars (OECD, 2012). There are records that, from a practical point of view, in the case of Ceará, it has contributed to the increase of competitiveness between schools (Mota, 2018).

It is also important to note that by including this policy as a priority agenda and in anticipation of achieving expected goals, the state government creates mechanisms that enable technical support and staff compensation, acting within the management of municipal education departments. This type of collaboration cannot represent intervention in municipal management, and therefore requires a complex and well-articulated relationship, with clearly established limits and without causing embarrassment to the municipal entity – perhaps the biggest challenge of this type of action.

Final Remarks

By deepening the analysis of the collaboration, mobilization and accountability processes that began in the mid-1990s, it was intended to shed light on aspects little explored in contemporary studies on educational policy in Brazil, namely, that the trajectory of the initiatives generates favorable circumstances so that, in later moments, they may emerge and take advantage of certain ‘windows of opportunity’, as well noted by Sumiya (2015), such as PAIC.

The virtuous circle of good governance creates not only conditions that ensure the sustainability of initiatives but also a conducive scenario for innovation. The reconstruction of strategic processes to the trajectory of Ceará’s educational policy, shows that in this federated unit were created circumstances conducive to change, by developing a culture of collaboration between the State and the Cities to which

other ingredients such as mobilization and accountability have been associated. In this sense, it can be seen that, in the case of Ceará, as certainly also in other contexts, *history matters* (Hoff, 2011; Tilly, 2013). This finding illustrates the explanatory potential of governance theories and path dependency to understand the processes of formulation and implementation of educational policies.

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Notes

- 1 Created by Law N. 9424/1996, Fundef was created as an accounting fund in each state of the federation, expected to be effective for ten years (1997-2006). Through this mechanism, 60% of education resources became under-linked to elementary school. It was replaced by Fundeb, created by Constitutional Amendment 53/2006 and regulated by Law N. 11494/2007 and Decree N. 6253/2007, expanding sub-linked resources for all K-12 education, for 14 years.
- 2 The information was collected from 1,958 schools in Ceará municipal schools, whose students participated in *Prova Brasil* in the 5th and/or 9th grade of elementary school.
- 3 In addition to the 18% linked to educational indexes, 5% were linked to health outcomes (IQS) and 2% to environmental outcomes (IQM).

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