

Education, Autonomy and Territory: Contributions from Post-Graduation to Endogenous Development in Brazil¹

Educación, Autonomía y Territorio:
Contribuciones del Posgrado al Desarrollo
Endógeno en Brasil

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Abstract

This article examines the relationship between education, territorial autonomy, and endogenous development in Brazil through a critical review of 48 postgraduate dissertations and theses defended between 2015 and 2024. Grounded in the theoretical distinction between exogenous models, marked by external dependence, and endogenous trajectories, centered on local capacities, innovation, and democratic participation, the study highlights how education, when conceived as a territorialized public policy, becomes a structuring axis for regional development. Methodologically, a scoping review was employed to map the scope and limitations of academic production in the field, allowing the identification of interdisciplinary trends and regional specificities. Findings indicate that educational policies can either reinforce dependency or foster autonomy, depending on their articulation with territorial realities. In several cases, education strengthens communities' decision-making capacity, reinforces social control, and fosters democratic governance through collaborative networks between universities, civil society, and local governments. Regional variations reveal that while the South and Midwest emphasize professional and environmental education, the North and Northeast mobilize indigenous, intercultural, and popular pedagogies, directly linking education to political emancipation and territorial justice. However, structural challenges persist, including inequality, resource scarcity, and elite control over development policies. The article argues that endogenous development requires education rooted in territorial realities, collective arrangements, and democratic governance initiatives. It concludes by suggesting that future research should further explore higher education's role in regional development, given its growing impact on institutional capacity, knowledge production, and socio-political transformation.

Keywords: Education policy; Endogenous development; Governance; Higher education.

Resumen

Este artículo analiza la relación entre educación, autonomía territorial y desarrollo endógeno en Brasil a partir de una revisión de 48 disertaciones y tesis de posgrado defendidas entre 2015 y 2024. Se contraponen modelos exógenos, basados en la dependencia de capital y tecnología externos, y trayectorias endógenas, centradas en capacidades locales, innovación y participación democrática,

para destacar cómo la educación, concebida como política pública territorializada, puede convertirse en eje del desarrollo regional. La investigación adoptó la metodología de revisión de alcance, lo que permitió mapear la producción académica, identificar tendencias interdisciplinarias y especificidades regionales. Los hallazgos muestran que las políticas educativas pueden perpetuar la dependencia o fortalecer la autonomía, según su articulación con las realidades territoriales. En diversos casos, la educación fortalece la capacidad de decisión comunitaria, refuerza el control social y fomenta la gobernanza democrática mediante redes entre universidades, sociedad civil y gobiernos locales. Las variaciones regionales revelan que el Sur y el Centro-Oeste priorizan la educación profesional y ambiental, mientras el Norte y el Nordeste movilizan pedagogías indígenas, interculturales y populares, vinculando educación con emancipación política y justicia territorial. Persisten, sin embargo, desafíos estructurales como la desigualdad, la escasez de recursos y el control de las élites sobre las políticas de desarrollo. Se concluye que el desarrollo endógeno requiere una educación arraigada en el territorio, en arreglos colectivos y en iniciativas de gobernanza democrática. Futuras investigaciones deben profundizar en el papel de la educación superior en el desarrollo regional.

Palabras clave: Política educativa; Desarrollo endógeno; Gobernanza; Educación superior.

Introduction

Conventional economic literature contrasts exogenous models, supported by external capital and technology inflows, with endogenous trajectories rooted in local innovations and capabilities. However, this framework naturalizes the periphery as a space of “backwardness” and reifies categories such as “human capital,” transferring responsibility for overcoming inequalities to individual mobility. In critical dialogue with this tradition, we reposition endogenous development as a social process of class struggle in the territories: it will involve living labor, social reproduction, public institutions, and collective control over the means and ends of development. This article starts from the hypothesis that education, conceived as a territorialized public policy, can serve as the structuring axis of an endogenous development project, capable of strengthening local institutional capacity, fostering citizen participation, and expanding the decision-making autonomy of territories. It is, therefore, an approach that goes beyond the logic of employability or technical qualification to situate education in the field of political dispute over the meaning of development, as argued by authors such as Zagler (1999), Cotrim (2015), and Fernandes (1972).

The study conducts a qualitative analysis of 48 dissertations and theses produced in Brazil between 2015 and 2024, considering the country's macro-regions and privileging studies that articulate education, regional development, and public policies. Based on this analysis, we seek to understand the extent to which such research contributes to the consolidation of democratic governance practices, territorial autonomy, and the formation of political and social capital, which are fundamental dimensions for strengthening fragile democracies in peripheral contexts. By prioritizing education as a field for the production of critical and institutional capacities, the article proposes a political reading of regional development, considering the multiple scales that constitute it (local, state, national, and global) and its effects on the possibilities for participation, representation, and sovereignty of the collective actor within the territories.

Endogenous development: historical aspects

Endogenous development, by considering the exploitation of local potential, is based on an organic process of local growth, differing from the exogenous model, in which there is investment of external capital and a consequent relationship of dependency. In contrast to exogenous development, endogenous development incorporates regional elements, prioritizing sustainability, knowledge, and innovation (Zagler, 1999). Aghion and Howitt (1997) point out that there are several ways to promote endogenous development, ranging from the neoclassical model to theories involving multiple countries, intended to clarifying the connections and distinctions between foreign investment, technology, and public policies. There are differences in the interpretations of the potential of economic models capable of promoting it; however, all approaches converge on one central point: the formation of human capital.

Forming human capital implies creating conditions, mediated by public policies that favor the holistic development of individuals, both intellectually and physically, with the goal of building a more equitable society. It starts with individual development and moves toward the collective, benefiting everyone through this dynamic. The most effective way to promote human capital is through policies designed to strengthen human capabilities. Rashid (2000) argues that quantitative indicators alone are insufficient to promote development; it is necessary to establish qualitative criteria directed toward creating a more developed socioeconomic environment. This quality must be driven by public

policies that inhibit the unchecked accumulation of capital and promote its better distribution. Innovation must also be encouraged, provided it is guided by ethical principles and focused on the collective good.

Considering this qualitative perspective, which moves from the micro to the macro, Rashid (2000) and Zagler (1999) emphasize that the best way for public policies to promote development is through education and comprehensive training of individuals. Education should be the main instrument for breaking dependence on central countries, but it should also be directed toward technological improvement. This becomes even more relevant given the fact that work in the 21st century is guided by the introduction and constant updating of technologies. Thus, Aghion and Howitt (1997) argue that educational policies that increase worker mobility reduce inequality: as the results of learning by doing are diminishing, moving a worker from an old technology to a new one will increase the productivity of workers who remain in the old technologies, reducing the wage gap between workers in the old and new lines. (p. 356)

Therefore, the implementation of public policies that support education and train the working class are essential for endogenous regional development, as reduced reliance on the imported skilled labor and improves workers', enabling specialization and better remuneration.

Thus, it can be concluded that endogenous regional development rests on three fundamental pillars: ethical public policies that prioritize quality of life over mere quantitative growth, government investment in education and workforce training, and incentives for innovation and creativity.

However, some difficulties remain. Zagler (1999) points to barriers to endogenization, such as pollution, corporate monopoly, and social inequality. To overcome them, the author suggests creating policies to: prevent excessive concentration of economic activity, tighten/consolidate/strengthen pollution taxation (such as the carbon market), redistribute wealth, and stimulate strategic sectors in the region. In addition, there is criticism of the influence of private interests that hinder state control, with sectors of the elite guiding the actions of the state according to their own interests, which can result in the unequal distribution of public resources.

The Latin American case, Brazil, and the difficulties of endogenization

Brazil's historically formation was marked by colonial exploitation, capital concentration among landowning elites, and the persistence of a slave-based society. Even so, various public policies have been implemented throughout the country's history. This text highlights the period beginning with the administration of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC), which consolidated the neoliberal model and deepened relations of imperialist dependence, directly shaping the debate on endogenous regional development.

Cotrim (2015), based on Ruy Mauro Marini, explains that global capitalism is structured around a center and a periphery: the center is industrialized, while the periphery follows an agricultural-export model. In the case of Latin America, and especially Brazil, agricultural production continues to predominate. Thus, the relationship between central and peripheral economies –historically marked by colonialism– persists even under contemporary neoliberal capitalism.

The contemporary Brazilian political and institutional context is based on two fundamental milestones: the process of redemocratization, which began with the end of the military regime, and the promulgation of the 1988 Federal Constitution, which consolidated the principles of the Democratic Rule of Law. With the intensification of neoliberal policies under the FHC administration, there has been a trend toward “solidarity between national and foreign capital” (Cotrim, 2015, p. 328), transforming the relationship between Brazil and the central countries of capitalism into interactions of “complementarity and even solidarity” (Cotrim, 2015, p. 336). Added to this is the historical presence of a dependent bourgeoisie, which, allied with international capital, makes structural reforms unfeasible and keeps the working class in subordinate conditions, constraining significant advances in Brazil's social and political structures (Fernandes, 1972). This reality, marked by structural dependence and inequality, endures.

The country has historically consolidated itself from a peripheral insertion, a legacy of its colonization, into world capitalism, marked by external dependence, which restricted the development of an endogenous economic system, in addition to its insertion into the market through agricultural inputs. This trajectory, which dates back to land concentration, slavery, and subordination to metropolises, resulted in an export-oriented, externally dependent economy, making it difficult

to structure the country in an autonomous and independent process. For Furtado (2007), this configuration corresponds to a movement in which modern capitalist production penetrated archaic structures, shaping underdeveloped economies in a specific way. Furthermore, Lefebvre (2000), when reflecting on the social production of space, reinforces this interpretation by indicating that global logic tends to colonize territories and uniformize regions, so that the peripheral condition cannot be understood only as an economic issue, but also as a result of spatial processes of homogenization imposed by capitalist modernity: territorial space and the economy are directly interconnected.

In the most recent context, globalization has intensified external impositions that weaken regionality. The uncritical adoption of external models produces only superficial modernization, which does not break with structural dependence but reproduces caricatures of progress. This process was aggravated in Brazil in the 1990s, when neoliberal logic expanded heteronomy and further subjected the economy to international market demands. Globalization reorganizes the economy in order to subordinate the particular to an abstract universal logic, nullifying territorial specificities that could support endogenous alternatives.

In this sense, concepts such as governance and metagovernance, although often presented as institutional innovations, tend to reproduce global hierarchies and legitimize the neoliberal order, limiting the possibilities for emancipation of peripheral regions. The hegemonic nature of the globalized economy requires an analysis that transcends abstract, universalizing formulations, which disregard territorial and economic particularities, as well as the contradictions inherent in the articulation between the local scale (nation) and the global scale (interstate and economic system led by the central countries of capitalism).

Governance and endogenous development: a critical approach

The notion of governance has been widely used in recent decades to describe alternative forms of social coordination, especially in light of the crisis of the centralizing state model. However, far from being a neutral or unambiguous concept, governance requires a critical analysis that situates it within disputes over power and forms of development organization. Jessop (2003) proposes the concept of metagovernance to describe how the state, even when distancing

itself from the direct conduct of policies, retains the ability to shape governance mechanisms by regulating actors, defining rules, and framing hegemonic narratives of development. In this sense, governance does not necessarily entail democratization; it may also serve as a strategy for reproducing unequal power structures.

Levi-Faur (2012), in discussing regulatory governance, argues that the expansion of regulatory networks and agencies, especially in the Global South, has frequently accommodated the interests of transnational capital under the pretext of administrative efficiency. This is particularly evident in Latin America, where institutional reforms guided by multilateral organizations have promoted the creation of technical governance apparatuses without guaranteeing broader social participation or redistribution of power. Criticism of managerial governance is also central to the work of Schneider (2012), who warns of the risks of simplifying territorial dynamics into mere management processes, ignoring the historical, cultural, and economic asymmetries that shape territories. Instead, the author proposes viewing governance as a contested field, where actors struggle over resources, legitimacy, and trajectories of development.

Based on these contributions, it becomes possible to think of governance not only as an institutional arrangement, but as a political arena in dispute. This is particularly relevant in the peripheral and postcolonial contexts of Latin America, where state structures are characterized by fragmentation, inequalities, and limited responsiveness. Thus, the analysis of educational experiences oriented toward regional development requires attention not only to the forms of policy implementation, but also to the ways in which collective actors (communities, social movements, and schools) position themselves within power dynamics and claim their right to the territorial production of knowledge and self-management of development processes.

Materials and methods

This article adopts the scoping review methodology proposed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), later refined by Levac, Colquhoun, and O'Brien (2010). This approach is particularly suitable for examining research scope and mapping the field of study when the range of available material is difficult to visualize (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005, p. 6). In the case of this research, we mapped the nature, extent, and scope of postgraduate academic production in Brazil on education

and endogenous sustainable development, facilitating the identification of trends, gaps, and connections between different disciplinary perspectives. Focusing on theses and dissertations constitutes a fundamental strategy for assessing the state of knowledge in the field. As highlighted by Morosini, Nascimento, and Nez (2021, p. 70), this practice enables identification of key scientific works and the theoretical and methodological approaches adopted, in addition to highlighting the evolution of the field and possible research gaps. The investigation contributes to defining the topic's scope, guiding the theoretical and methodological framework, and situating study within the national and international academic debates. Table 1 specifies the stages followed in conducting this study, from the research question that guided the searches to the final data mapping, synthesis, and reporting of results.

Table 1. Scope review stages

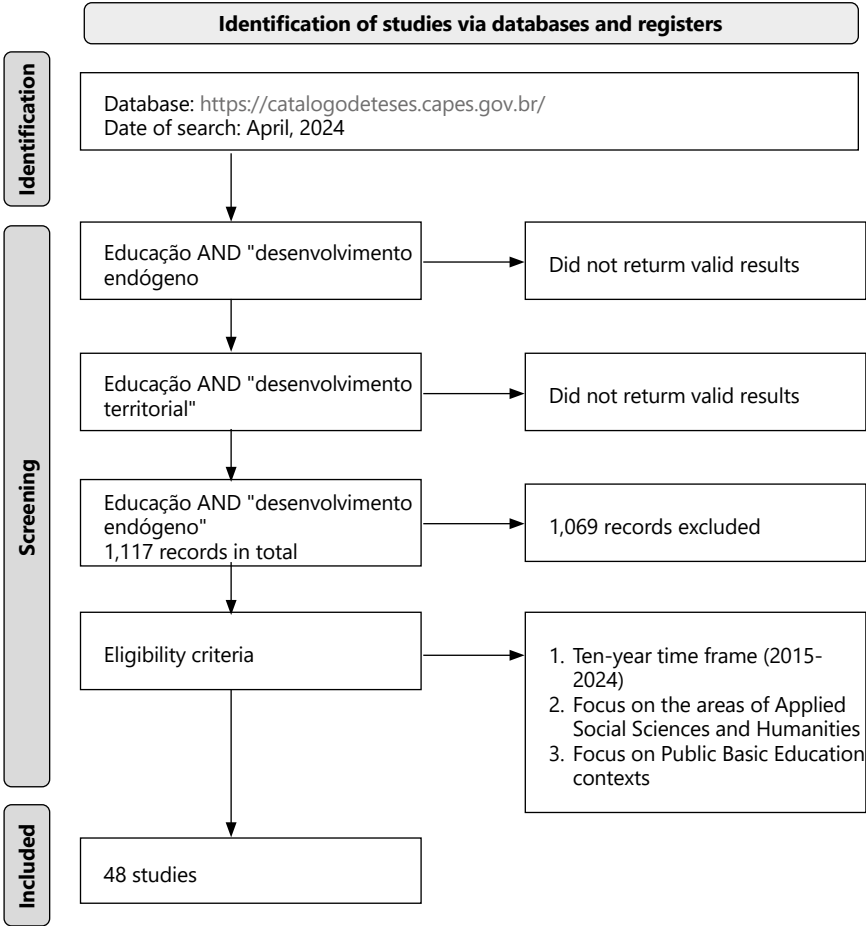
Stage 1	Research question	In the context of postgraduate studies in Brazil, are there any theses or dissertations that relate education to sustainable endogenous development?
Stage 2	Identification of relevant studies	Developed based on the Prisma flowchart for scoping reviews with database searches and registration (Haddaway et al., 2022).
Stage 3	Data selection	
Stage 4	Data mapping A	Spreadsheet layout including: year; type; title; author; advisor; university; program; area of concentration; objective; problem; research type; theoretical framework; theoretical basis; data collection; keywords; policy concept; regional development concept; education concept; results; and access link. Further reordering of the spreadsheet by Brazilian region.
	Data mapping B	Summary of the relationship between education and regional development and the research limitations in each study.
Stage 5	Synthesis and reporting of results	The organization of this article for the dissemination of findings.

Source: The authors, based on Arksey and O'Malley, 2005.

Thus, the key question that guided the bibliographic search (stage 1) was: In the context of postgraduate studies in Brazil, are there theses and dissertations that relate education and sustainable endogenous development? The protocol record for identifying studies (steps 2 and 3) was carried out using the CAPES Thesis and Dissertation Database², using three search syntaxes, as illustrated in Flowchart 1. Stage 4 comprised two phases: Mapping A and Mapping B. The first mapping involved the “extraction” of certain information, such as the year of the study, type (thesis or dissertation), title, university, among others, as well as interpretive reading to grasp other information, such as concepts of educational policies or regional development. It consisted of extensive cataloging of the forty-eight (48) studies found in a spreadsheet that specified for each study: year; type; title; author; advisor; university; program; area of concentration; objective; problem; type of research; theoretical framework; theoretical basis; data collection; keywords; policy concept; regional development concept; education concept; results; link to access the work. Then, in this same phase, it was understood that it was relevant to reorder the studies by region of Brazil. Stage B involved analytical and reflective rereading (Levac, Colquhoun & O’Brien, 2010), to analyze the relationship between education and regional development and to identify research limitations in each study. As detailed in the Flowchart, the search process took place in April 2024, and three (3) combinations of descriptors were tested: “educação AND desenvolvimento endógeno,” “educação AND desenvolvimento territorial,” and “educação AND desenvolvimento regional.” The first two combinations did not return valid results; finally, the search “educação AND desenvolvimento regional” returned 1,117 studies. Applying time filters (defenses from 2015 onwards) and knowledge area filters (Humanities and Applied Social Sciences) produced a refined sample of 633 documents, of which 48 directly addressed the article’s central themes and were selected for analysis.

2 Available at <http://catalogodeteses.capes.gov.br/>

Flowchart 1. Identification of studies via database and protocol registry.



Source: *The authors*, based on Haddaway et al. (2022).

The selection included studies conducted in all Brazilian regions. The final corpus comprised theses and dissertations predominantly from public institutions (15 public and 4 private), representing approximately 71% of the selected studies.

The qualitative analysis followed stages of extraction and thematic synthesis, (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005), integrating Levac, Colquhoun, and O'Brien (2010) refinements to make the process more iterative and reflective. Initially,

central categories were examined, including the articulation between education and regional development and the limitations of each study. In a second stage, arising from reflective analysis of the, additional categories emerged: democratic territorial governance, educational social innovation, distribution of power in the territories, and community participation. These axes guided comparative interpretation across Brazilian macro-regions and supported the identification of thematic patterns and divergences.

Although the scoping review methodology adopted in this study enabled a broad mapping of academic production on education and endogenous regional development in Brazil, it did not aim to perform a systematic assessment of the methodological quality of each dissertation and thesis included in the corpus. The focus was centered on identifying thematic convergences, regional specificities, and theoretical-methodological trends. Nevertheless, methodological aspects of the selected studies were considered during the interpretive analysis, especially regarding coherence between objectives, procedures, and conclusions. Future investigations may advance this agenda by incorporating more detailed appraisal protocols for evaluating the methodological robustness of the reviewed studies.

Results and discussion

Analysis of dissertations on education and regional development reveals a multifaceted panorama across Brazilian regions, highlighting relationships among educational practices, public policies, and alternatives to the exogenous development model. From a critical perspective, it can be observed that educational training not only influences economic development but also shapes political participation and the exercise of local power. When well-articulated with the territories, educational policies expand the decision-making capacities of communities, strengthening social control, collective belonging, and democratic governance. On the other hand, when disconnected from local realities, they perpetuate dependency, marginalize peripheral knowledge, and undermine individual autonomy.

As shown in Table 2, over the last decade, research has averaged five studies per year, totaling 48 studies. The highest concentration occurred in 2023 (8 studies), followed by 2018 (6 studies). By knowledge area, the Humanities account for nine studies: 17% in Education and 3% (one study) in Geography. Applied Social Sciences represent 80% of the studies: 4% in Administration, 3% in Economics, and 73% in Regional Development.

Table 2. Number of studies per year and in relation to the field of study in Education

Year of completion	2024 (2); 2023(8); 2022(5); 2021(5); 2020(3); 2019(5); 2018(6); 2017(4); 2016(5); 2015(5)	Average of (5) studies per year
Number of studies developed per knowledge area	8/48	17% in Education (Humanities)
	1/48	3% in Geography (Humanities)
	2/48	4% in Administration (Applied Social Sciences)
	1/48	3% in Economy (Applied Social Sciences)
	35/48	73% in Regional Development (Applied Social Sciences)

Source: The authors

These figures highlight the centrality of Regional Development programs and related areas, while revealing the theme’s interdisciplinary character.

Table 3 systematizes the regional distribution of dissertations and theses and their links to educational themes. The analyses treated these studies as evidence from the respective region, enabling identification of regional patterns.

Table 3. Studies classification per BR regions and education-connected themes

Brazilian region	State	Institution	Education-connected themes
South	Paraná (PR)	UTFPR(7) UNIOESTE(1)	Environmental Education and Rural Education Educational Policies
	Santa Catarina (SC)	UNOESC(1) FURB(5) UNC(2)	Professional Education Professional Education (2), Environmental/Indigenous Education (3) Educational Policies
	Rio Grande do Sul (RS)	UNISC(1) UNIJUI(1) FACCAT(2)	Young/Adult Education (EJA) Educational Policies Intercultural Education, Teacher Development

Brazilian region	State	Institution	Education-connected themes
Southeast	Rio de Janeiro (RJ)	UFRRJ(1) UCAM(1)	Professional Education (conducted in Amazonas) Educational Policies
	São Paulo (SP)	UNITAU(2)	Educational Policies (Inclusive) (conducted one in Tocantins-North and the other in Maranhão-Northeast)
North	Tocantins (TO)	UFT(2)	Educational Policies
	Amapá (AP)	UNIFAP(2)	Educational Policies (1), Environmental Education (1)
	Amazonas (AM)	UFAM(5)	Rural Education (3), Educational Policies/Professional Education (2)
	Roraima (RR)	UFRR(1)	Environmental Education
Center-west	Goiás (GO)	UNIALFA(9)	Environmental Education and Rural Education (3) Educational Policies (6)
Northeast	Bahia (BA)	UNEB(2) UNIFACS(2)	Environmental Education and Rural Education Educational Policies
	Sergipe (SE)	UFS(1)	Children Education

Source: *The authors*

In the Southern Region, institutions such as the Federal Technological University of Paraná (UTFPR), State University of Western Paraná (UNIOESTE), Blumenau Regional University Foundation (FURB), University of Santa Cruz do Sul (Santa Catarina - UNISC), Regional University of the Northwest of the State of Rio Grande do Sul (UNIJUÍ), Integrated Colleges of Taquara/RS (FACCAT), and University of Contestado (UnC) direct their efforts toward linking education to specific territorial realities, though with different degrees of institutionalization. Table 3 shows that the predominant themes in the region include environmental education, professional education, and educational policies. Moreschi's dissertation (2016), for example, when discussing professional education as a promoter of development in western Santa Catarina, connects the decentralization of educational provision to the strengthening of local productive arrangements, mobilizing the thesis that human capital should be understood as a vector of territorial autonomy, in line with the arguments of Cotrim (2015) and Rashid (2000). This perspective is also observed in studies by UTFPR that address critical environmental education as a means of training politically conscious individuals able to intervene in socio-spatial dynamics shaped by inequalities, which refers to Zagler's (1999) warnings about the centrality of ethical, collective, and

territorialized educational policies in the process of endogenization. Although the concept of governance is not always explicitly named, collaborative experiences have emerged among universities, public authorities, and civil society that outline embryonic forms of local democratic governance.

In the Brazilian Midwest, the nine selected studies, developed at the Alves Faria University Center (UNIALFA, Goiânia), generally reinforce the centrality of education in endogenous development, integrating multiple dimensions. Studies such as those by Chaves (2023) and Barbosa (2023) discuss the relationship between school dropout rates, social inequality, and teaching quality, highlighting structural barriers that constrain the emancipatory role of schools. Oliveira (2022) analyzes the implementation of full-time schools in Goiás as a policy capable of expanding opportunities and strengthening community ties, even though it faces challenges in terms of resources and management. In the field of environmental education, Cadore (2019) and Ramos (2023) show how school practices linked to agroecology and sustainability can reshape territorial ties and foster belonging, but warn of cultural resistance, lack of resources, and a disconnect between theory and practice. Oliveira (2023) highlights inclusive education as a “driving force” for citizenship and social participation, while more recent research discusses digital literacy and smart cities as instruments for expanding civic capacity and local governance. In dialogue with the references of Cotrim (2015), Zagler (1999), and Schneider (2012), these studies reveal that, despite limitations—scarcity of resources, weaknesses in teacher training, and lack of policy coordination—education in the Midwest demonstrates concrete potential for democratic territorial governance, whether through the valorization of local knowledge, citizen inclusion, or the incorporation of technologies into regional development.

In the Southeast, studies emphasize the need for public education policies that are sensitive to urban complexity and peripheral youth. Dissertations from UNITAU (University of Taubaté) delve into the role of public schools in strengthening human capital in metropolitan regions marked by deindustrialization and new work configurations. The focus is on educational practices aimed at the autonomy of individuals and critical skills for the world of work, seeking to overcome the logic of minimum employability. This is in line with the perspective of Aghion and Howitt (1997), according to whom continuous training and retraining are central elements for productivity and equity in peripheral economies inserted in global circuits. In addition, there has been a notable emergence of educational projects that promote intersectoral

actions between education, culture, health, and social assistance, configuring incipient forms of social innovation –although rarely named as such– aimed at territorial cohesion and integral human development.

The Northern Region brings together a significant body of work that addresses education as a public policy aimed at strengthening citizenship and territorial sustainability. As shown in Table 3, institutions such as the Federal University of Tocantins (UFT), Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM), and Federal University of Amapá (UNIFAP) stand out in areas such as environmental education, indigenous education, and educational policies. Work from UFT emphasizes environmental education and entrepreneurship as ways of valuing the territory, grounding its proposals in pedagogical practices aligned with the ecological and cultural contexts of the Amazon. The study by Ferreira (2023) at UFT reveals how the absence of educational planning integrated with the territory compromises the potential of public schools to operate as spaces for emancipation, a situation that confirms Cotrim's (2015) diagnosis of the obstacles caused by the solidarity between local elites and exogenous interests. Even more forcefully, the dissertations from UFAM and UNIFAP investigate teacher training in indigenous and riverine communities, incorporating intercultural and epistemic dimensions that challenge the homogeneous model of national education. Tavares' (UFAM) research is exemplary in this sense, proposing training practices situated in traditional ways of life, revealing a form of social and institutional innovation that integrates belonging, plurality, and autonomy. Furthermore, it is possible to evaluate such actions as a concrete expression of democratic territorial governance, as conceived by Fernandes (1972) and Schneider (2012), even in contexts of structural absence of the State.

In the Northeast, the work of the State University of Bahia (UNEB), Salvador University (UNIFACS), and the Federal University of Sergipe (UFS) stands out for its political engagement and mobilization of critical categories including liberation, territorial justice, and popular pedagogy, evidencing a strong mobilization of popular/Freirian pedagogy. According to Table 3, the most recurrent educational themes include environmental education, early childhood education, and technical training. The dissertation by Alcício Matos (UNEB) analyzes culture circles in EJA as an instrument for reconfiguring subjects and territories, revisiting Freirean fundamentals and establishing a direct link with Zagler's (1999) critique of the submission of training projects to market logic. Gevaldo (UNEB), on the other hand, proposes reading the territory as a space for training and resistance, in which memory, community practices, and social struggles are articulated, broadening the understanding of

development as a political and relational process. The UNIFACS dissertations, in turn, investigate technical education and professional training for historically marginalized populations, such as black women and young people from the periphery, pointing to experiences that, even when still embedded in the logic of employability, aim to align with strategies for sustainable development and socio-productive inclusion. The UFS dissertation deals with environmental education as an instrument of community mobilization and the valorization of traditional knowledge, recognizing epistemic diversity as a structuring element of territorial governance. These practices, although often emerging and not institutionalized, reveal concrete forms of democratic governance anchored in the territory, mobilizing local networks and participatory strategies to overcome the absence or precariousness of state action.

Conclusions

The set of dissertations analyzed reveals that the possibilities for endogenous development, based on education, depend not only on the existence of public policies but also on how they are conceived and articulated within territories. This finding brings us closer to the contributions of the literature on critical global governance, especially in the formulations of Jessop (2003), Levi-Faur (2012), and Schneider (2012). Jessop's concept of metagovernance is central to interpreting the empirical data presented, since many of the educational experiences reported in the dissertations operate outside traditional institutional structures, revealing forms of non-state, decentralized governance driven by participatory logic.

Schneider (2012), emphasizing the systemic complexity of contemporary governance, argues that decision-making dynamics are no longer linear or hierarchical; they involve polycentric networks of multiple actors in ongoing negotiation. This perspective allows us to understand, for example, the emergence of intersectoral territorial arrangements between universities, social movements, city halls, and schools as alternatives to hierarchical and fragmented models of educational management. Levi-Faur's diagnosis that governance is an arena of dispute between regulation and deregulation, public and private, global and local, always marked by power relations, resonates strongly with the obstacles reported in Brazil's North and Northeast regions, where the absence of robust state institutions has sometimes been compensated for by popular and community forms of organization, albeit limited in scale and stability.

In this vein, educational policies become endogenous only when situated in the territory, connected to collective arrangements, and embedded long-term democratic projects (social control, participatory budgets, councils, transformative teacher training). When articulating these theoretical lenses with the Brazilian educational reality, it becomes clear that the implementation of democratic and territorialized governance requires a dual process: first, institutional strengthening of public policies attuned to territorial diversity; second, recognition and valorization of local practices as legitimate centers of knowledge and power production. Thus, the dissertations analyzed not only expose the limits of the exogenous model, but also offer insights into constructing governance models that are pluralistic, participatory, and committed to social justice.

As a starting point for future research, it is important to highlight that a larger portion of the review's findings, not fully incorporated into the corpus of this article, refers to investigations on higher education and regional development. This is another dimension of Brazilian education requiring closer examination, especially with regard to the impacts of higher education institutions on regional development. Deepening this analysis will enable a more comprehensive understanding of education's contribution at different levels, to social, economic, and territorial transformation.

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