

Transporte escolar no Brasil: o longo caminho para a conquista do direito

School transportation in Brazil: the long road to achieving a right

Transporte escolar en Brasil: el largo camino hacia la consecución de un derecho

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Received: November 30, 2025

Accepted: April 28, 2026

Published: May 01, 2026

RESUMO

Este artigo aborda a evolução dos processos que resultaram no reconhecimento do transporte escolar como direito e que configurações vão adquirindo as políticas públicas relacionadas à oferta desse serviço. É um estudo qualitativo de natureza descritiva e explicativa, com uso de pesquisa bibliográfica realizada em documentos oficiais e levantamento acerca das produções acadêmicas sobre o tema. Observa-se que do ponto de vista de marco legal, o transporte escolar aparece de forma esparsa nas constituições brasileiras, sem clareza ou definição e que só a partir da Constituição Federal de 1988 é que ele emerge como direito e se consolida como obrigação do Estado em assegurar acesso e permanência, sendo reforçado pela criação do PNTE em 1994, pela LDB em 1996, pela criação do Pnate em 2004 e pelo Programa Caminho da Escola em 2007. A consolidação desse direito mostra uma inflexão na política de transporte escolar, antes concebida como ação assistencial para populações específicas, e que passa a se configurar como eixo estruturante da política educacional nacional. Aponta-se que, embora a consolidação de leis, criação de programas e avanço na cobertura representem avanços

substanciais, ainda persistem desafios relacionados ao financiamento, à gestão e ao regime de colaboração entre os entes federados, além de desigualdades regionais e de problemas enfrentados na oferta diária do serviço, que comprometem a efetivação desse direito.

Palavras-chave: Transporte escolar. Regime de Colaboração. Direito à educação.

ABSTRACT

This article examines the evolution of the processes that led to the recognition of school transportation as a right and the configurations being adopted by public policies related to the provision of this service. It is a qualitative, descriptive, and explanatory study drawing on bibliographic research in official documents and a survey of academic productions on the subject. From a legal-framework perspective, school transportation appears only sporadically in Brazilian constitutions, without clarity or precise definition; it was only with the Federal Constitution of 1988 that it emerged as a right and became consolidated as a State obligation to guarantee access and permanence in education, subsequently reinforced by the creation of the National Program for School Transportation (*Programa Nacional de Transporte Escolar – PNTE*) in 1994, the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases – LDB*) in 1996, the creation of the National Program in Support of School Transportation (*Programa Nacional de Apoio ao Transporte do Escolar – Pnate*) in 2004, and the School Route Program (*Programa Caminho da Escola*) in 2007. The consolidation of this right marks an inflection in school transportation policy, which had previously been conceived as a welfare measure for specific populations and now becomes a structural axis of national educational policy. It is noted that, although the consolidation of legislation, the creation of programs, and advances in coverage represent substantial progress, challenges related to financing, management, and the collaborative framework among federated entities persist, alongside regional inequalities and problems in the daily provision of the service that compromise the realization of this right.

Keywords: School transportation. Collaborative framework. Right to education.

RESUMEN

Este artículo aborda la evolución de los procesos que culminaron en el reconocimiento del transporte escolar como un derecho y las configuraciones que están adquiriendo las políticas públicas relacionadas con la prestación de este servicio. Se trata de un estudio cualitativo de carácter descriptivo y explicativo, basado en una investigación bibliográfica realizada en documentos oficiales y un estudio de la producción académica sobre el tema. Se observa que, desde la perspectiva del marco legal, el transporte escolar aparece escasamente en las constituciones brasileñas, sin claridad ni definición, y que solo a partir

de la Constitución Federal de 1988 surge como un derecho y se consolida como una obligación del Estado para garantizar el acceso y la permanencia, siendo reforzado por la creación del Programa Nacional de Transporte Escolar (PNTE) en 1994, la Ley de Directrices y Bases de la Educación Nacional (LDB) en 1996, la creación del Programa Nacional de Transporte Escolar (Pnate) en 2004 y el Programa Camino Escolar en 2007. La consolidación de este derecho muestra una inflexión en la política de transporte escolar, anteriormente concebida como una acción asistencial para poblaciones específicas, y que se convierte en un eje estructurante de la política educativa nacional. Se observa que, si bien la consolidación de leyes, la creación de programas y el aumento de la cobertura representan avances sustanciales, persisten desafíos relacionados con el financiamiento, la gestión y el marco de colaboración entre entidades federadas, además de las desigualdades regionales y los problemas que se enfrentan en la prestación diaria del servicio, lo que compromete el ejercicio de este derecho.

Palabras clave: Transporte escolar. Marco de colaboración. Derecho a la educación.

Introduction

Brazil has the fifth largest territorial area on the planet, covering 8,514,876 km², surpassed in size only by Russia, Canada, China, and the United States. It is divided into 26 states, 1 federal district, and 5,570 municipalities distributed across five regions with great territorial, climatic, environmental, cultural, structural, and historical diversity. These vast dimensions, which give rise to rich natural resources and landscapes, also reveal major challenges across the country's territory, among them the provision of school transportation services capable of reaching all regions with their particular characteristics and difficulties.

As a tripartite federation (Arretche, 2004), Brazil's public policies, including those that guarantee fundamental social rights, face implementation difficulties stemming from the relationships among the various levels of government, political interests, and the objective conditions that must be navigated along the long road to operationalization. It is striking that a country that remained predominantly agrarian until the second half of the twentieth century only began to address the problem of school transportation in the final decades of that century and the early years of the twenty-first.

If the financing of Brazilian education only appeared in the Federal Constitution of 1934 (Vieira; Vidal, 2015), matters pertaining to school transportation would not make it onto the political agenda until after the Federal Constitution of 1988 and, more effectively, only in the early twenty-first century, by which time Brazil had already built its great metropolitan centers and the number of students located in rural areas was in sharp decline.

This article aims to analyze how the processes that led to the recognition of school transportation as a right evolved, and what configurations public policies related to the provision of this service have been acquiring. To this end, it draws on

legislation addressing the subject and also relies on a survey of studies and research carried out on the topic. From a methodological standpoint, it is a qualitative study of a descriptive and explanatory nature, drawing on bibliographic research in official documents and reference authors, as well as a survey, through the state-of-the-question approach (Therrien; Nobrega-Therrien, 2004), of scientific productions on the subject in official databases.

The text is organized into two sections, in addition to this Introduction and the Final Remarks. The first section analyzes the inclusion of school transportation in Brazilian constitutions, while the second section surveys scientific productions on school transportation from various graduate programs, as well as articles published in academic journals.

1. School transportation in Brazilian legislation

The recognition of educational rights for rural populations, among whom the majority of students who must travel to reach school are found, did not occur in the legislation of colonial Brazil, the Empire, or even the early Republic. For more than 400 years, the topic was not subject to political scrutiny or legislative interest, even though the country was predominantly agrarian, with a population dispersed across inhospitable territories with limited access to public services. For rural populations, the possibility of access to education implied migrating to the city, in a stark contrast of rights between urban and rural areas.

The Constitution of 1824, the Empire's sole constitution, and the first Republican Constitution of 1891, both enacted when the country maintained an overwhelmingly agrarian structure, are silent on the right to education for rural populations and therefore do not even contemplate school transportation. It was only in 1932 that the New School Pioneers Movement (*Movimento dos Pioneiros da Educação Nova*) included recognition of the right of rural populations to educational funding, without, however, making any mention of policies aimed at school transportation or student mobility. Even without school transportation being recognized as a right, a first step toward the provision of this service was taken with the Federal Constitution of 1934, which reserved twenty percent of education funds for schooling in rural areas (Brazil, 1934). For Vieira (2008, p. 85), "the Constitution of 1934 is an expression of this moment of desire for change, and it drew the attention of organized groups such as the Manifesto of the Pioneers of the New School".

The Constitution of 1937 represented a setback in relation to the Constitution of 1934, and its foundations, in the words of Vieira (2008, p. 91), "have a clear inspiration in European fascist regimes, marking the second phase of Getúlio Vargas' time in power, under the advent of the *Estado Novo*". In this context, the 1937 Magna Carta both distanced itself from educational policies directed at rural education and ignored questions related to recognizing the importance of school transportation and student mobility.

The enactment of the Constitution of 1946 brought advances in the

educational field, as it “defines the competence of the Union to legislate on the guidelines and bases of national education” (Vieira, 2008, p. 107). Although provided for, the guidelines and bases for national education took 13 years to materialize, following a trajectory that reached the Chamber of Deputies in 1948 and was only approved in 1961. In its Article 172, the Federal Constitution of 1946 stated that each education system would mandatorily include educational assistance services ensuring that students in need had the conditions necessary for school efficiency (Brazil, 1946) ; however, it made no reference to the issue of student mobility or school transportation for those who required such services. The most significant aspect of this Magna Carta was the mandatory allocation of no less than 10% of Union tax revenue and 20% of states' and municipalities' revenue to education.

It was in the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional – LDB*) of 1961 that transportation was mentioned for the first time as a service to be offered by the State, when Article 94 stated:

The Union shall provide resources to students who demonstrate need and aptitude for study, in two modalities: a) free scholarships for total or partial coverage of study costs; b) financing for repayment within a variable period, never exceeding fifteen years.

§5º The public assistance granted by the Government to students in the form of food, school materials, clothing, transportation, medical or dental care, which shall be governed by special rules, is not included in the scholarships covered by this article. (Brazil, 1961).¹

Although the specific type of assistance to be granted for school transportation is not explicitly stated, §5 constitutes the first recognition of the need for this essential service for the school population. This LDB, in alignment with the Constitution of 1946, also fixed the allocation of resources in Article 92, establishing that “the Union shall apply annually, in the maintenance and development of education, a minimum of 12% (twelve percent) of its tax revenues, and the States, the Federal District, and the Municipalities, a minimum of 20% (twenty percent)” (Brazil, 1961).

Although it introduced important advances, the LDB of 1961 was replaced by other legal instruments during the civil-military dictatorship that began in 1964, and with the new Federal Constitution of 1967, which once again omitted any reference to school transportation. Four years after the 1967 Magna Carta and ten years after the enactment of the 1961 LDB, Reform Law no. 5,692 of August 11, 1971, was published, establishing guidelines and bases for first- and second-degree education².

¹ Original: “A União proporcionará recursos a educandos que demonstrem necessidade e aptidão para estudos, sob duas modalidades: a) bolsas gratuitas para custeio total ou parcial dos estudos; b) financiamento para reembolso dentro de prazo variável, nunca superior a quinze anos.

§5º Não se inclui nas bolsas de que trata o presente artigo o auxílio que o Poder Público concede a educandos sob a forma de alimentação, material escolar, vestuário, transporte, assistência médica ou dentária, o qual será objeto de normas especiais” (Brazil, 1961).

² **Translator’s note:** Until the Law of Guidelines and Bases of 1996, Brazilian basic education was structured into 1º grau (first degree, roughly equivalent to today’s elementary and lower secondary education) and 2º grau (second degree, roughly equivalent to today’s upper secondary education). This terminology was later replaced by *ensino fundamental* and *ensino médio*.

In it, the legal mechanisms for mentioning school transportation were present, as can be observed:

Art. 62. Each education system shall mandatorily include, in addition to educational assistance services ensuring that students in need have the conditions for school efficiency, entities bringing together teachers and parents of students, with the objective of contributing to the efficient functioning of educational establishments.

§1º The educational assistance services referred to in this article shall be aimed, preferably, at ensuring compliance with compulsory schooling and shall include assistance for the acquisition of school materials, transportation, clothing, food, medical and dental care, and other forms of family assistance (Brazil, 1971, emphasis by the authors).³

The legal provision for the provision of school transportation services, although contained in Law no. 5,692/1971, was never structured as a public policy for those who needed to travel in order to have their right to education guaranteed. It was treated as auxiliary assistance and often served as a form of political currency, since there was no clarity in the criteria governing eligibility.

The Constitution of 1988 was the first to make explicit mention of the State's duty to guarantee the provision of this service, as Article 208 states that "the State's duty with regard to education shall be fulfilled through the guarantee of: VII – support for students in elementary education through supplementary programs for school didactic materials, transportation, nutrition, and health care" (Brazil, 1988). Although the provision of school transportation represented an advance in comparison to previous constitutional texts, it was restricted to elementary education. The Constitution of 1988 reinstates the mandatory allocation of resources, with an increased percentage compared to the Constitution of 1946, as established in Article 212:

The Union shall apply, annually, no less than eighteen percent, and the States, the Federal District, and the Municipalities, a minimum of twenty-five percent, of tax revenues, including those resulting from transfers, to the maintenance and development of education (Brasil, 1988).⁴

After the Constitution of 1988 and before the enactment of the LDB of 1996, a first initiative supporting school transportation policy was taken with the creation of the National Program for School Transportation (*Programa Nacional de Transporte Escolar – PNTE*) in 1994, which did not cover all municipalities and did not have a

³ Original: "Art. 62. Cada sistema de ensino compreenderá obrigatoriamente, além de serviços de assistência educacional que assegurem aos alunos necessitados condições de eficiência escolar, entidades que congreguem professores e pais de alunos, com o objetivo de colaborar para o eficiente funcionamento dos estabelecimentos de ensino.

§1º Os serviços de assistência educacional de que trata este artigo destinar-se-ão, de preferência, a garantir o cumprimento da obrigatoriedade escolar e incluirão auxílios para a aquisição de material escolar, transporte, vestuário, alimentação, tratamento médico e dentário e outras formas de assistência familiar" (Brazil, 1971, emphasis by the authors).

⁴ Original: "A União aplicará, anualmente, nunca menos de dezoito, e os Estados, o Distrito Federal e os Municípios vinte e cinco por cento, no mínimo, da receita resultante de impostos, compreendida a proveniente de transferências, na manutenção e desenvolvimento do ensino" (Brasil, 1988).

dedicated budget.

The Law of Guidelines and Bases (Law no. 9394/96), drafted with the Federal Constitution of 1988 as its framework, begins by reaffirming these duties:

Art. 4º The State's duty regarding public school education shall be fulfilled through the guarantee of: VIII – support for students in public elementary education through supplementary programs for school didactic materials, transportation, nutrition, and health care (Brazil, 1988).⁵

Classified as a supplementary program for guaranteeing the right to public education and financed by the National Fund for the Development of Education (*Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação* – FNDE), school transportation came to occupy a place on the educational agenda and to acquire its own contours within implementation conditions. Law no. 10,709/2003 added to the LDB the mandatory provision of school transportation and the accountability of federated entities, as established in Article 10 (“States shall be responsible for: VII – assuming school transportation for students in the state network”) and in Article 11 (“Municipalities shall be responsible for: VI – assuming school transportation for students in the municipal network”) (Brazil, 1996). In other words, fifteen years elapsed between the enactment of the Federal Constitution of 1988 and the publication of a law that clearly defined the responsibilities regarding student school transportation.

The LDB also brings relevant provisions for the promotion of school transportation services by classifying investments in this area as expenditures on the maintenance and development of education, as can be observed in the text of Article 70:

Expenditures made with a view to achieving the basic objectives of educational institutions at all levels shall be considered expenditures on the maintenance and development of education, including those intended for: VIII – acquisition of school didactic materials and maintenance of school transportation programs (Brazil, 1996).⁶

The concept of Maintenance and Development of Education (*Manutenção e Desenvolvimento do Ensino* – MDE), enshrined in the Federal Constitution of 1988, concerns expenditures made by states and municipalities to ensure the functioning and expansion of basic education. These expenditures encompass teacher and staff salaries, investments in infrastructure, school transportation, nutrition, and didactic materials. The Constitution itself establishes the minimum percentage of MDE expenditure by states and municipalities at 25% of revenues from taxes and constitutional transfers (Brazil, 1988).

In the same year that the LDB was published, the Fund for the Maintenance

⁵ Original: “Art. 4º O dever do Estado com educação escolar pública será efetivado mediante a garantia de: VIII – atendimento ao educando, no ensino fundamental público, por meio de programas suplementares de material didático-escolar, transporte, alimentação e assistência à saúde” (Brazil, 1988).

⁶ Original: “Considerar-se-ão como de manutenção e desenvolvimento do ensino as despesas realizadas com vistas à consecução dos objetivos básicos das instituições educacionais de todos os níveis, compreendendo as que se destinam a: VIII - aquisição de material didático-escolar e manutenção de programas de transporte escolar” (Brasil, 1996).

and Development of Elementary Education and the Enhancement of the Teaching Profession (*Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento do Ensino Fundamental e de Valorização do Magistério* – Fundef) was created, established by Constitutional Amendment no. 14 of September 1996. It is an accounting fund in nature, with effect until 2006, that guaranteed the allocation of 60% of MDE expenditure resources exclusively for elementary education and teacher salaries. According to Vieira (2008, p. 141), the Fundef

brings together 15% of four taxes: the Tax on Operations Relating to the Circulation of Goods and on the Provision of Interstate and Intermunicipal Transportation and Communications Services (ICMS), the State Participation Fund (FPE), the Municipal Participation Fund (FPM), and the Tax on Industrialized Products – Exports (IPI exp.) of the state and its municipalities.⁷

The Fundef represented not only an advance in the responsibilities contained in the LDB, but also the creation of a fund that came to guarantee resources for the maintenance of educational policies, including the fostering of policies directed at school transportation. Vieira and Vidal (2015) designate the moment of the Fundef's creation as the beginning of the “third generation of financing” of Brazilian education, which would also influence policies for the maintenance and development of education, including school transportation.

Although the Fundef represented an advance, the funding was restricted to elementary education, leaving the other stages of basic education without fund-related mechanisms, as well as the benefits of school transportation. In this way, the experience with the Fundef “contributed to the desire for a new reform, this time the creation of a fund that would aggregate resources for all of basic education” (Vieira, 2008, p. 142)

The National Education Plan (*Plano Nacional de Educação* – PNE), approved in 2001 with a ten-year validity period, set out relevant goals regarding school transportation, including:

[...] To provide school transportation to rural areas, when necessary, with financial collaboration from the Union, States, and Municipalities, so as to guarantee the schooling of students and the access to school by teachers.

[...] To generalize, within ten years, the care of students with special needs in early childhood education and in elementary education, including through inter-municipal consortia when necessary, providing, in such cases, school transportation.

[...] To guarantee, throughout the decade, school transportation with the necessary adaptations for students with mobility difficulties.

[...] To adapt existing Ministry of Education programs that support educational development, such as school transportation, textbooks, school libraries, school meals, and TV Escola, so as to take into account the specific nature of indigenous education, both in terms of the student body

⁷ Original: “Congrega 15% de quatro impostos: o Imposto sobre Operações Relativas à Circulação de Mercadorias e sobre Prestação de Serviços de Transporte Interestadual e Intermunicipal e de Comunicação (ICMS), Fundo de Participação dos Estados (FPE), Fundo de Participação dos Municípios (FPM) e Impostos sobre Produtos Industrializados – Exportação (IPI exp.) do Estado e de seus municípios” (Vieira, 2008, p. 141).

and its objectives and needs, ensuring the provision of these benefits to schools (Brazil, 2001).⁸

There were thus advances in policies for school transportation coverage for students with special needs and indigenous students, as well as a guarantee of providing this service in rural areas. The PNE 2001–2010 further emphasized that:

Even when networks have been consolidated according to the political will and financing capacity of each entity, certain actions must involve States and Municipalities, as is the case with school transportation. Even when responsibility is well defined, as with early childhood education, which falls under the responsibility of Municipalities, the supplementary role of the States (art. 30, VI, CF) and of the Union (art. 30, VI, CF and art. 211, §1º, CF) must not be neglected (Brazil, 2001).⁹

The text devotes special attention to the collaborative framework between states and municipalities, noting that even with the constitutional division of responsibilities, the supplementary role of the State must, within a collaborative framework, guarantee support to municipalities in the area of school transportation. Although the PNE 2001–2010 pointed to the necessary creation of school transportation policies grounded in the collaborative framework, this only came to receive greater attention from 2003 onwards, while the collaborative framework continues to face major implementation challenges to this day (Cury, 2025).

An important advance in support of school transportation policy came with the creation of the National Program in Support of School Transportation (*Programa Nacional de Apoio ao Transporte do Escolar* – Pnate), established by Law no. 10,880/2004. By replacing the PNTE, the Pnate came to cover all municipalities in the country, under the coordination of the FNDE.

Law no. 11,494 of June 20, 2007, created the Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and the Enhancement of Education Professionals (*Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica e de Valorização dos Profissionais da Educação* – Fundeb), and Constitutional Amendment no. 59 of 2009 expanded the compulsory and free nature of basic education to ages four

⁸ Original: “[...] Prover de transporte escolar as zonas rurais, quando necessário, com colaboração financeira da União, Estados e Municípios, de forma a garantir a escolarização dos alunos e o acesso à escola por parte do professor.

[...] Generalizar, em dez anos, o atendimento dos alunos com necessidades especiais na educação infantil e no ensino fundamental, inclusive através de consórcios entre Municípios, quando necessário, provendo, nestes casos, o transporte escolar.

[...] Assegurar, durante a década, transporte escolar com as adaptações necessárias aos alunos que apresentem dificuldade de locomoção.

[...] Adaptar programas do Ministério da Educação de auxílio ao desenvolvimento da educação, já existentes, como transporte escolar, livro didático, biblioteca escolar, merenda escolar, TV Escola, de forma a contemplar a especificidade da educação indígena, quer em termos do contingente escolar, quer quanto aos seus objetivos e necessidades, assegurando o fornecimento desses benefícios às escolas” (Brazil, 2001).

⁹ Original: “Ainda que consolidadas as redes de acordo com a vontade política e capacidade de financiamento de cada ente, algumas ações devem envolver Estados e Municípios, como é o caso do transporte escolar. Mesmo na hipótese de competência bem definida, como a educação infantil, que é de responsabilidade dos Municípios, não pode ser negligenciada a função supletiva dos Estados (art. 30, VI, CF) e da União (art. 30, VI, CF e art. 211, § 1º, CF)” (Brazil, 2001).

through seventeen, including those who had not had access to schooling at the appropriate age. Following these changes, the right to school transportation was expanded to encompass all stages and modalities of education. In 2024, Law no. 14,862 was approved, permitting teachers in basic education to use vacant seats in school transportation vehicles on authorized routes (Brazil, 2024). In 2025, Law no. 15,255 expanded the Pnate, guaranteeing financial transfers for the transportation of basic education students in the federal network, particularly in rural areas, beginning in 2026. However, issues related to transportation for higher education students and for teachers and other education professionals remain major challenges, since even with the authorization, teachers can only have access if seats are available.

Also in 2007, another important initiative in support of school transportation policy was created: the School Route Program (Programa Caminho da Escola), through Resolution no. 03/2007, with the objective of renewing the vehicle fleet, ensuring safety, and reducing dropout and absenteeism.

In the PNE 2014–2024, established by Law no. 13,005 of June 25, 2014, none of the 20 goals makes direct mention of school transportation; however, it appears in three strategies linked to Goals 1, 2, and 7, pointing to the need for more careful attention to the subject. These strategies present the need to incentivize states and municipalities to guarantee access to and permanence in early childhood education, to develop and maintain programs in partnership with federated entities to guarantee access to and permanence in school for students from rural areas, and to support the provision of school transportation in a collaborative framework among the Union, states, municipalities, and the Federal District, so as to guarantee access to school.

The trajectory of the consolidation of school transportation as a right that guarantees access to and permanence in basic education has been constructed along a path that runs from its absence in the Constitutions of 1824 and 1891, through its emergence in 1934 with the earmarking of education financing for rural areas, to its mention in the LDB of 1961 as a form of student welfare assistance with limited practical reach, and finally to its guarantee as a right in the Constitution of 1988, which established the State's obligation to provide the service. It is with the LDB of 1996 and Law no. 10,709/2003 that school transportation policy came to have its responsibilities clearly defined in legal provisions in terms of the roles of the Union, states, and municipalities, and to acquire greater salience in its implementation.

The consolidation of legislation guaranteeing the provision of school transportation represents an advance in Brazilian educational policy, constituting a guaranteed right that has contributed to expanding students' access to and permanence in basic education (Pereira; Cordeiro; Nascimento, 2024). Although this right has not yet been universalized, given that there are limits to its free provision for education teachers and staff, the gains achieved over the past thirty years demonstrate the relevance of this supplementary policy established through legislation. It is important to highlight that school transportation policy does not become effective through legislation and financing alone, as it is strongly intertwined with other public policies, with particular emphasis on infrastructure policy.

2. The State of the Question on School Transportation

According to a study conducted in 2014 by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in partnership with the National Union of Municipal Education Directors (*União Nacional dos Dirigentes Municipais de Educação – Undime*), it is estimated that in Brazil, 3,611,733 students need but are not served by public school transportation services, out of a total of 6,078,829 students enrolled in rural schools across the country, equivalent to nearly 59% of the total. The South region has the smallest deficit, with 29% of rural-area students not served by school transportation, while the Northeast has the worst scenario, with 67% (Undime/Unicef, 2014). In the absence of more recent studies on the topic, and despite the advances made, the problem of school transportation coverage has not yet been adequately resolved. Data from the 2024 School Census indicate that 7.1 million students in basic education use school transportation, representing approximately 15% of total enrollments at this level of schooling.

These issues become even more evident, as shown in a study carried out by Vieira, Medeiros, and Marinho (2021) in schools located in six different Brazilian biomes. In two schools in the Northeast region (Tauá-CE and Mossoró-RN), school transportation policy was identified as the most problematic in terms of implementation, owing to precarious vehicles, overcrowding, scheduling issues, problems with road infrastructure, the presence of physical barriers, and similar challenges.

It is important to understand school transportation policy as intersectoral in nature, articulating with road infrastructure policies and requiring joint action by federated entities in the construction and maintenance of access roads for all who need their right to education guaranteed. Another aspect worth highlighting concerns qualified personnel for driving vehicles, as well as the type of transportation best suited to the geographical characteristics of the territory. Given all the dimensions involved in the use of school transportation, from road conditions and safety to personnel qualifications and other factors, specific legislation for the regulation of this policy becomes necessary.

The Federal Court of Auditors (*Tribunal de Contas da União – TCU*), in an audit conducted in 2020 on school transportation, highlighted the following issues:

[...] in 79% of cases, inadequate service evaluation by the Monitoring and Control Councils of the Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and the Enhancement of Education Professionals (Cacs/Fundeb); lack of care in service provision in 64% of the educational units audited; failures in service oversight by municipal administrations in 57% of the units and routes; and poorly dimensioned routes, trips, and schedules in more than half (57%) of the educational units inspected. Furthermore, widespread non-compliance was found with traffic operational norms and with public programs for resource transfers by municipalities, particularly regarding adherence to requirements for student transportation and the general road- or waterway-worthiness of the vehicles used. Notably widespread is the deficiency of mandatory safety equipment, both for motor and waterway

vehicles (Brazil, 2020).¹⁰

The problem of school transportation is present throughout the national territory, and these conditions indicate the need for careful attention to the construction of policies aimed at strengthening, investing in, and overseeing this service.

Understanding how school transportation policies developed during this period and how academic production on the subject has been evolving are therefore relevant factors for deepening the field of study. To this end, a state-of-the-question survey was conducted which, as Nóbrega-Therrien and Therrien (2004, p. 7) note, aims to lead the “researcher to record, based on a rigorous bibliographic survey, the current state of the theme or object of investigation within the science available to them”.

The search focused on productions related to the themes of school transportation and the collaborative framework, proceeding from the assumption that, as an intersectoral policy, school transportation mobilizes articulation with other public policies within the sphere of the federated entities, which in turn refers back to the collaborative framework provided for in the Federal Constitution of 1988. Table 1 shows the list of databases searched, the search descriptors, and the criteria adopted for including or excluding a study.

Table 1 - Research Execution Criteria

DATABASE	SEARCH DESCRIPTORS	INCLUSION/EXCLUSION CRITERIA
Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (<i>Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações – BDTD</i>)	School Transportation (+ singular term and variations)	Works in the area of Education and the Humanities related to the topic
Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations of the Graduate Program in Education (<i>Biblioteca Digital de Teses e Dissertações da Pós-Graduação em Educação – PPGE</i>) – Universidade Estadual do	School Transportation	National publications

¹⁰ Original: “[...] em 79% dos casos de avaliação da prestação de serviços por parte dos Conselhos de Acompanhamento e Controle do Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica e de Valorização dos Profissionais da Educação (Cacs/Fundeb); falta de zelo na prestação dos serviços em 64% das unidades educacionais auditadas; falhas na fiscalização dos serviços por parte da administração municipal em 57% das unidades e rotas, viagens e horários mal dimensionados em mais da metade (57%) das unidades educacionais fiscalizadas. Além disso, constatou-se generalizada a inobservância das normas operacionais de trânsito e dos programas públicos de repasses de recursos por parte dos municípios, sobretudo quanto à adequação aos requisitos para transporte de escolares e condições gerais de trafegabilidade ou navegabilidade dos veículos utilizados. Chama atenção a ampla deficiência de equipamentos obrigatórios de segurança, automotivos e aquaviários” (Brazil, 2020).

Ceará (UECE)	Policy (+ singular term and variations)	Works indexed and available in the specified databases and/or personal collections.
Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations of the Graduate Program in Education (<i>Biblioteca Digital de Teses e Dissertações da Pós-Graduação em Educação</i>) – Universidade Federal do Ceará (UFC)	Financing of School Transportation	
Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations of the Graduate Program in Education (<i>Biblioteca Digital de Teses e Dissertações da Pós-Graduação em Educação</i>) – Universidade Federal do Oeste da Bahia (UFOB)	Collaborative Framework Combinations between the terms ¹ using Boolean operators.	
Digital Library of the National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Education (<i>Biblioteca Digital da Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Educação</i> – ANPED)		
CAPES Journal Portal (<i>Portal de Periódicos da CAPES</i>)		
Journal of Educational Policies (<i>Jornal de Políticas Educacionais</i> – JPE)		
ANDEP's Brazilian Journal of Education (<i>Revista Brasileira de Educação</i> da ANDEP – RBE)		
ANPAE's Brazilian Journal of Educational Policy and Administration (<i>Revista Brasileira de Política e Administração da Educação</i> da ANPAE – RBPAE).		

Source: Elaborated by the author, 2024

The databases used for the article search were the CAPES Journal Portal of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (*Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior* – Capes)^{II}, the Brazilian Journal of Education (RBE)^{III} of the National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Education (*Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Educação* – Anped)^{IV}, the Brazilian Journal of Educational Policy and Administration (RBPAE)^V of the National Association of Educational Policy and Administration (*Associação Nacional de Política e Administração da Educação* – Anpae), and the Journal of Educational Policies (JPE)^{VI}.

Table 2 presents a summary of the number of articles selected from each

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database searched, noting that no work was found in the Brazilian Journal of Education of Anped.

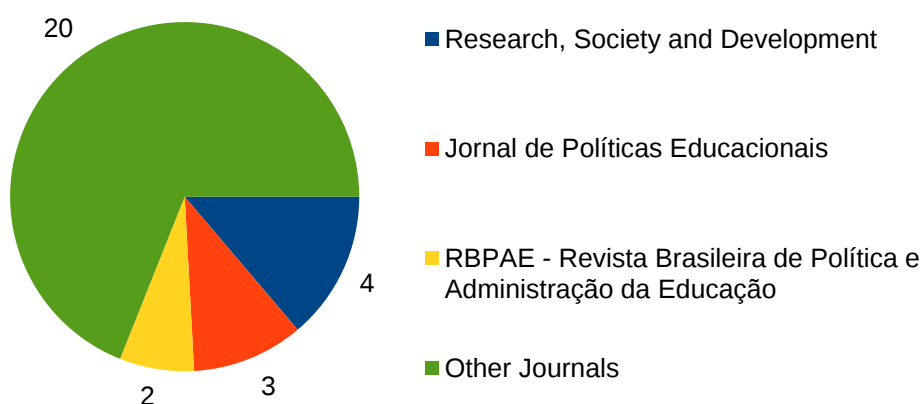
Table 2 - Number of Articles by Database

SEARCH DESCRIPTORS	CAPES JOURNAL PORTAL	RBPAE	JPE
"School Transportation"	11	1	2
"School Transportation Policy"	5	0	0
"Financing of School Transportation"	2	0	0
"Collaborative Framework"	7	0	2
"School Transportation" AND "Collaborative Framework"	0	0	0
"School Transportation Policy" AND "Collaborative Framework"	0	0	0
Total	25	1	4

Source: Elaborated by the author, 2024

The search yielded 30 articles from 23 journals, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - Distribution of Articles by Journal

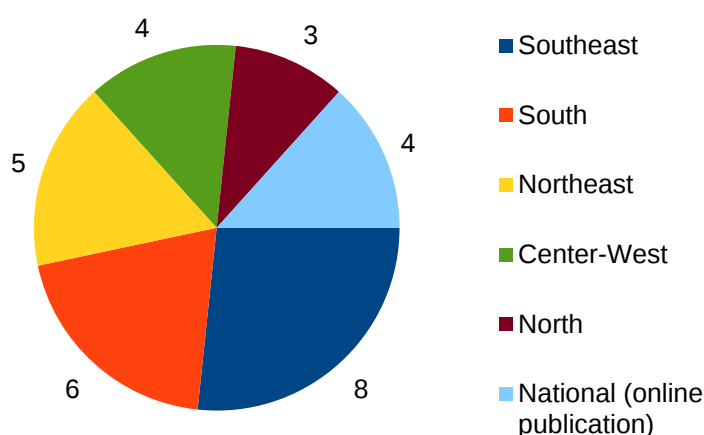


Source: Elaborated by the author, 2024

The journal Research, Society and Development, affiliated with the Research Group on Methodologies in Science Teaching and Learning at the Universidade Federal de Itajubá (Itabira-MG campus), had the highest number of productions, with four articles, followed by the Journal of Educational Policies (Curitiba-PR) with three articles and the Brazilian Journal of Educational Policy and Administration with two articles (Porto Alegre-RS). The remaining 21 articles were published in 21 different journals.

Figure 2 presents the distribution of article publications across Brazil's five geographic regions.

Figure 2 - Distribution of Articles by Region



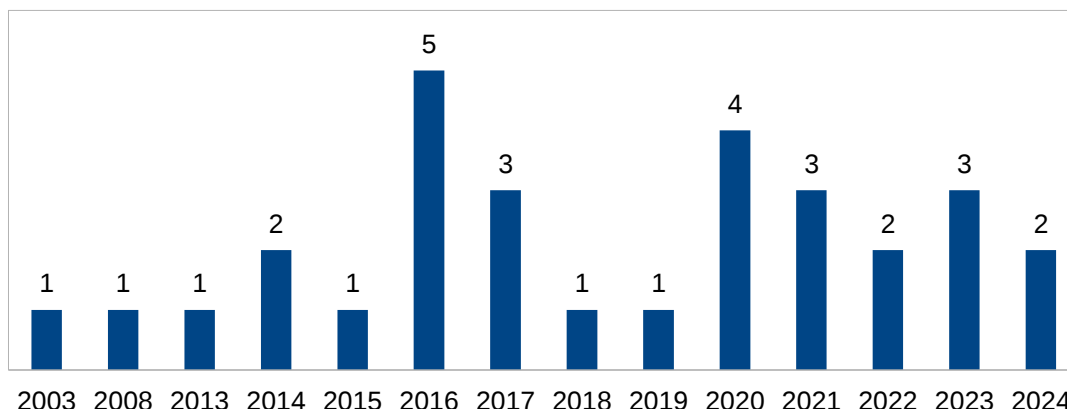
Source: Elaborated by the author, 2024

Articles were most frequently published in journals from the Southeast and South regions, representing 26.6% and 20%, respectively, of the period observed. The Northeast and Center-West regions were tied at 13.3% of publications each, while the North had the lowest percentage, at 10%.

Another variable examined was the year of article publication, as shown in Figure 3.

ISSN: 1984-6444 | <http://dx.doi.org/10.5902/1984644494664>

Figure 3 - Distribution of Articles by Year of Publication



Source: Elaborated by the author, 2024

The articles span the period from 2003 to 2024; three articles were published between 2003 and 2013, and 27 between 2014 and 2024, with greater concentration in the most recent decade, which accounts for 90% of publications, a period corresponding to the validity of the PNE 2014–2024. Within this interval, only the periods 2004–2007 and 2009–2012 had no articles inventoried. The years of highest incidence were 2016, with five publications, and 2020, with four, followed by 2017, 2021, and 2023, each with three articles.

The search for theses and dissertations was carried out in the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (*Biblioteca Digital de Teses e Dissertações -- BDTD*), in the databases of the Universidade Estadual do Ceará (UECE)^{vii}, the Universidade Federal do Ceará (UFC)^{viii}, and the Universidade Federal do Oeste da Bahia (UFOB)^{ix}, the last of which coordinates the Northeast Cecate Project in partnership with the National Fund for the Development of Education (*Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação -- FNDE*).

This project aims to strengthen national school transportation policies through the Collaborative Support Centers for School Transportation (*Centros Colaboradores de Apoio ao Transporte Escolar – Cecate*) and is distinguished by a decentralized approach, aligned with the FNDE's mission of promoting access to education throughout the country. The Cecate supports the FNDE in improving public policies related to school transportation, through training offered directly to municipalities, along with studies and actions that contribute to the continuous improvement of program effectiveness, closely monitoring the implementation of the Pnate, and ensuring that the resources allocated are used efficiently, providing students with uninterrupted access to education^x.

Table 3 presents the number of theses and dissertations found in the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD), analyzed by filtering on the title and abstract.

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Figure 3 - Number of Theses and Dissertations found in the BDTD

SEARCH DESCRIPTORS	MASTER'S DISSERTATION	DOCTORAL THESIS	SELECTION	
			MASTER'S DISSERTATION	DOCTORAL THESIS
"School Transportation"	118	43	22	2
"School Transportation Policy"	7	3	3	1
"Financing of School Transportation"	2	1	0	0
"Collaborative Framework"	127	73	8	7
"School Transportation" AND "Collaborative Framework"	1	1	1	0
"School Transportation Policy" AND "Collaborative Framework"	1	0	1	0
Total			33^{XI}	10

Source: Elaborated by the author based on the BDTD, 2024

In the cases of UECE and UFOB, no theses or dissertations were found in their repositories in the area of education. At UFC, four dissertations and no theses were found; after applying the filters, three were selected, as shown in Table 4, analyzed by filtering on the title and abstract.

ISSN: 1984-6444 | <http://dx.doi.org/10.5902/1984644494664>

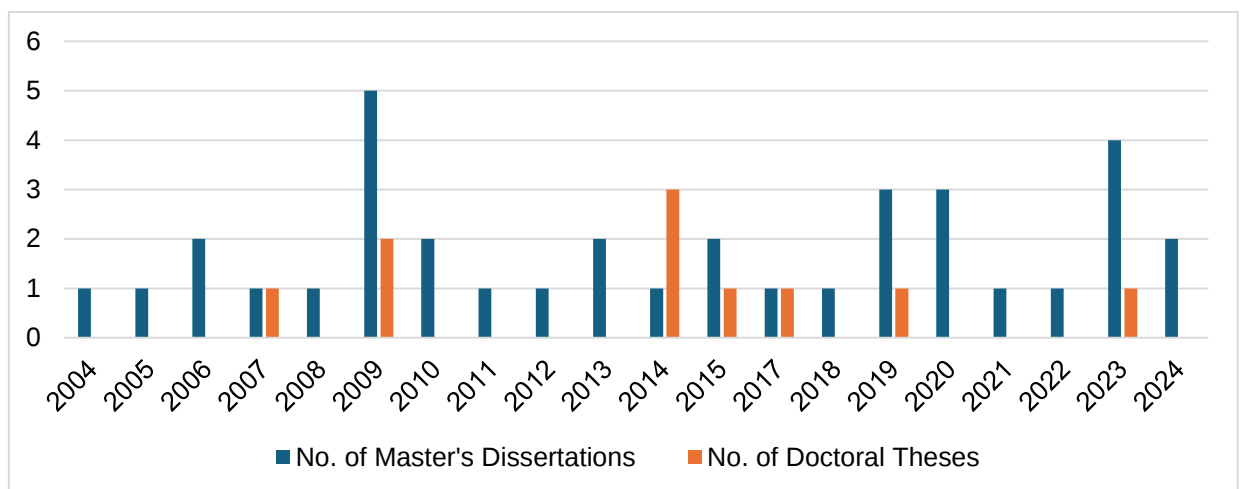
Table 4 - Number of Theses and Dissertations found at UFC

DATA BASE	SEARCH DESCRIPTORS	MASTER'S DISSERTATION	DOCTORAL THESIS	SELECTION	
				MASTER'S DISSERTATION	DOCTORAL THESIS
Universidade Federal do Ceará (UFC)	"School Transportation"	4	0	3	0
	"School Transportation Policy"	0	0	0	0
	"Financing of School Transportation"	0	0	0	0
	"Collaborative Framework"	0	0	0	0
	"School Transportation" AND "Collaborative Framework"	0	0	0	0
	"School Transportation Policy" AND "Collaborative Framework"	0	0	0	0
Total				3	0

Source: Elaborated by the author based on the UFC database, 2024

The searches using the pre-defined descriptors located 36 dissertations and 10 theses, presented by year of publication in Figure 4.

Figure 4 - Distribution of Theses and Dissertations by Year of Publication



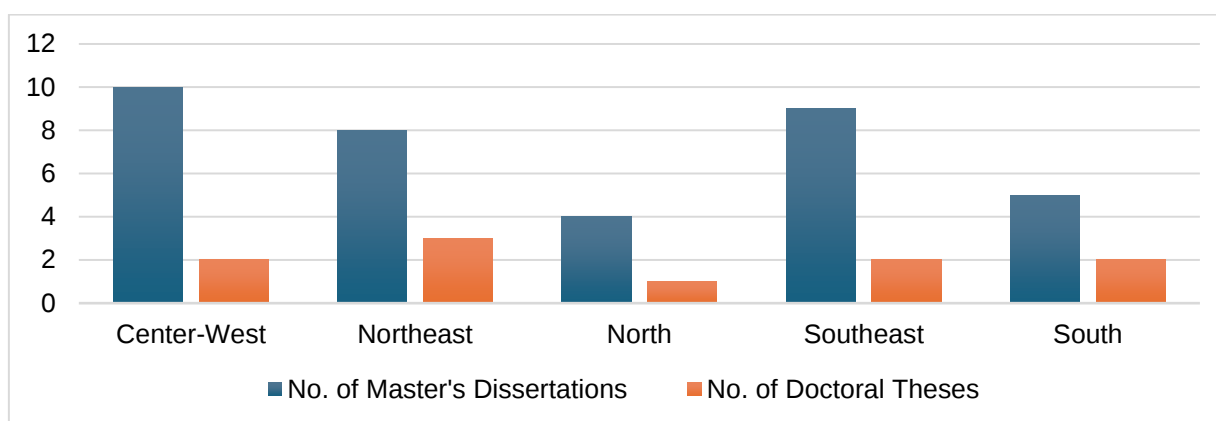
Source: Elaborated by the author, 2024

The studies span the period from 2004 to 2024. The graph shows that 2009,

with five publications, and 2023, with four, had the highest incidence of dissertations, while 2014 had the highest number of theses, with three works. During the period observed, only 2016 had no dissertation publications, while theses showed longer gaps without publications: 2004–2006, 2008, 2010–2013, 2018, 2020–2022, and 2024.

Figure 5 presents the distribution of theses and dissertations across Brazil's five geographic regions.

Figure 5 - Distribution of Theses and Dissertations by Region



Source: Elaborated by the author, 2024

Dissertations outnumber theses in all regions, with the Center-West and Southeast standing out for having the highest numbers of academic productions: ten dissertations for the Center-West, followed by the Southeast with nine. The Northeast has eight dissertations and three theses, followed by the South with five dissertations and two theses. The North region records the lowest numbers, with three dissertations and only one thesis.

Considering the 30 articles, 36 dissertations, and 10 inventoried theses, themes related to school transportation were identified, including: public policy, approaches to financing, and the challenges of the collaborative framework in the context of school transportation. The studies point to the historical evolution of federal programs, as well as their budgetary impacts on municipalities, in addition to management innovations and approaches to the problems faced daily by students who use this service, particularly those located in rural, hard-to-reach, riverside, and Quilombola communities¹¹.

The research also highlights themes related to student retention, efficiency in resource management, and the collaborative framework, pointing to the precariousness of routes, the closure of rural schools, and the lack of vehicle and road maintenance, all of which compromise school attendance and, consequently,

¹¹ **Translator's note:** Quilombola communities are communities historically formed by descendants of enslaved Africans in Brazil, recognized under Brazilian law as having special rights to their lands.

student performance. These studies also present proposals for routing algorithms and cost-analysis methodologies with the aim of discussing efficiency in the management of school transportation resources.

The theses address these points, broadening reflection on the collaborative framework, financing, and innovative methodologies for improving school transportation policy. In this regard, three theses, by Aguiar (2014), Pergher (2014), and Silva (2009), are particularly relevant to a better understanding of the intricate implementation process of school transportation policy.

The thesis by Silva (2009) addresses the importance of a fair distribution of resources for school transportation and the strengthening of equity by meeting the specific needs of each region. It also presents the importance of the PNTE and the Pnate for guaranteeing school access for students in rural areas. The study emphasizes the efficient distribution of financial resources as the major challenge of school transportation policy.

The study by Aguiar (2014) addresses the problem of school transportation by presenting a technological solution that uses the meta-heuristic of Adapted Discrete Particle Swarm Optimization (ADPSO) to optimize routes in rural municipalities in the state of Paraná, demonstrating that the use of this technique substantially improves route efficiency and reduces costs compared to traditional methods. The research points to the improvement of computational tools and models in resolving the logistical challenges involved in school transportation planning, optimizing financial resources and generating savings.

The third notable study on the subject is by Pergher (2014), which analyzes the school transportation policy implemented in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, addressing the intergovernmental relations involved in the provision and financing of school transportation. It highlights the financial dependence of municipalities on state and federal resources for school transportation, as well as the ongoing conflicts and negotiations regarding the adequacy and coverage of transportation costs. The author also analyzes the changes that occurred in the state's school transportation policy as a result of shifts in state and federal policy, as well as the complexity and dynamics of the collaborative framework that underlie the difficulties in providing education in rural areas.

The research highlights an important triad for improving school transportation policy: financing, the use of technology for oversight and planning, and a collaborative framework among federated entities to ensure improvement in all these areas.

With regard to the importance of federative relations for school transportation policy, given its intersectoral nature, the studies of Barroso (2007), Martins (2009), Oliveira (2014), Silva (2015), Farias (2017), Lima (2019), and Tavares (2023) were analyzed. These works address the collaborative framework in the context of the Brazilian public education system, highlighting its application in the sphere of educational federalism.

The research by Barroso (2007) shows that intergovernmental relations in the

state of Pará are characterized by the influence of federalism in the face of the challenges of consolidating the formulation of public educational policies during the 1990s. The study by Martins (2009) addresses the conceptual and operational aspects of financing funds, seeking to assess their capacity to guarantee fair financing for basic education. The research by Oliveira (2014) examines funds related to basic education and the financing sources of Rio Grande do Norte between 1996 and 2012, considering efforts toward greater equity in the use of these resources.

At the level of municipal administrations, Silva (2015) studies the Articulated Action Plan (*Plano de Ações Articuladas – PAR*) in Natal, discussing how its implementation impacts municipal autonomy and reinforces centralization practices led by the Union. A similar study was carried out by Farias (2017), who also examines the PAR in Belém and presents some tensions between centralization and federative collaboration, while also assessing how managerialist practices shaped local educational policies.

Tavares (2023) offers a critical view of the National Education System (*Sistema Nacional de Educação – SNE*), raising the need for regulations that can consolidate the collaborative framework in conjunction with the autonomy of the federal spheres. The research by Lima (2019) points to a financial challenge in the municipality of Parnamirim-RN during the period from 2009 to 2016, seeking to demonstrate the limits of the current model of federative relations, which justify the need for a reformulation of the collaborative framework in order to combat local inequalities and improve the management of educational resources.

Overall, the authors offer a broad and general panorama of the interactions between the different spheres of power in Brazil, making a significant contribution to understanding the complexities of federalism in its application to public education. The other works examined in this state-of-the-question survey show that, despite a significant body of academic production on the subject, the peculiarities of school transportation policy and its interdependencies still represent a challenge to be addressed both through scientific analysis and through the construction of regulatory frameworks and governance models involving the three spheres of government.

Beyond the literature review presented in this section, authors such as Gentil (2016), Marques (2018), and Pinheiro (2013) highlight the importance of school transportation in ensuring the retention of students from rural areas in schools, contributing to the reduction of school dropout and promoting social inclusion. In the understanding of Pereira; Cordeiro; Nascimento (2024, p. 4),

the implementation and enforcement of this policy represent significant advances in guaranteeing educational rights, especially for students in rural areas, who are enrolled both in schools located in rural areas – known as rural schools (*escolas do campo*) – and in urban schools that receive students from these regions.¹²

¹² Original: “a implementação e a efetivação dessa política representam avanços significativos na garantia de direitos educacionais, sobretudo para os alunos do campo, que estão matriculados tanto em escolas localizadas

Thus, as a supplementary educational policy, public school transportation in a country of continental dimensions such as Brazil acquires relevance and prominence in educational policy, especially when the right to education under conditions of equity is under discussion.

Final Considerations

Considering the history of school transportation policy, which came to be guaranteed as a right in Brazil at the end of the twentieth century but was only universalized in the first decade of the twenty-first, it is evident that the right to basic education for all, provided for in the Federal Constitution of 1988 and guaranteed in the Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education of 1996, was constrained by this supplementary program, which was slow to come into effect.

Absent from Brazil's early constitutions, the right of rural populations to education was consolidated through isolated initiatives linked to student welfare assistance. In a country of continental dimensions that was predominantly rural until the 1970s, the absence of a school transportation policy meant, in practice, the impossibility of access to education or continuation of schooling at higher levels for a large share of the population, which amounted, in the end, to the denial of a right. It was only from the 2000s onwards that the creation of federal programs such as the PNTE, the Pnate, and the School Route Program evidenced the consolidation of school transportation policy as an indispensable element for the universalization of basic education. This historical trajectory repositions school transportation policy, previously understood only as a compensatory measure for rural, riverside, and hard-to-reach populations, as a structural component of educational policy in Brazil.

The survey conducted in the literature review reveals, at first glance, the limited attention given to the topic as an object of research. The studies conducted, in turn, confirm that although school transportation is now consolidated as a right, there are many challenges in implementation conditions, ranging from financing and road infrastructure to the precariousness of vehicles, route planning, personnel qualifications, and coordination among federated entities. All of this reinforces the need for the constant improvement of financing mechanisms and the strengthening of the collaborative framework for service provision. It is also important to consider the significance of this policy as a condition that ensures access to and retention in school for a segment of students who, owing to the geographical location of their homes, can only have their right to education guaranteed through the presence of school transportation.

This article, in tracing the trajectory involved in the construction of school transportation policy, highlights the need for recognition of its peculiarities and interdependencies from conception to implementation. A key challenge to be addressed concerns the expansion of academic studies, the elaboration of regulatory frameworks, and the development of governance models involving the three spheres

em áreas rurais – denominadas escolas do campo - quanto em escolas urbanas que recebem estudantes provenientes dessas regiões” (Pereira; Cordeiro; Nascimento, 2024, p. 4).

of government, as well as the idea of a socially referenced quality standard. Only then will it be possible to have a public policy that ensures the realization of the right to education with equity, guaranteeing citizenship and social justice for all students in this country, regardless of their place of residence and their socioeconomic conditions.

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Notes

^I The descriptors "School Transportation" (*Transporte Escolar*) and "School Transportation Policy" (*Política de Transporte Escolar*) were combined with the Boolean operator AND and associated with the term "Collaborative Framework" (*Regime de Colaboração*).

^{II} Available at: <https://www.periodicos.capes.gov.br/>

^{III} Available at: <https://www.scielo.br/j/rbedu/#>

^{IV} Available at: <https://legado.anped.org.br/biblioteca>

^V Available at: <https://seer.ufrgs.br/index.php/rbpae/index>

^{VI} Available at: <https://revistas.ufpr.br/jpe>

^{VII} Available at: <https://siduece.uece.br/siduece/pesquisarItemPublico.jsf>

^{VIII} Available at: <https://repositorio.ufc.br/>

^{IX} Available at: <https://pergamum.ufob.edu.br/>

^X Available at: <https://cecatenordeste.ufob.edu.br/>

^{XI} One article appears under three descriptors: "School Transportation Policy" (*Política de Transporte Escolar*); "School Transportation" (*Transporte Escolar*) AND "Collaborative Framework" (*Regime de Colaboração*); "School Transportation Policy" (*Política de Transporte Escolar*) AND "Collaborative Framework" (*Regime de Colaboração*).