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Main methodological challenges faced by Youth and Adult Education (EJA) teachers

Principais desafios metodológicos enfrentados por professores da Educação de Jovens e Adultos (EJA)

Alcemir Horácio Rosa

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2359-5903>

IFAM - Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia do Amazonas, Brasil

E-mail: alcemir.horacio@ifpi.edu.br

Francisco Willan Costa dos Santos

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2086-002X>

IFPI - Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia do Piauí, Brasil

E-mail: willianphb50@gmail.com

Daniel Nascimento-e-Silva

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9770-575X>

IFAM - Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia do Amazonas, Brasil

E-mail: danielnss@gmail.com

Marcus Marcelo Silva Barros

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7010-7346>

IFAM - Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia do Amazonas, Brasil

E-mail: marcus.barros@ifac.edu.br

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Abstract. The present work identifies the main methodological challenges teachers face in developing Youth and Adult Education (EJA) teaching-learning process. It raises a discussion on the subject at its most critical point of teaching activities in the classroom: the adequacy of teaching methods and techniques to the reality of students in this modality. The general objective of the research is to point out the main methodological challenges teachers face in the pedagogical practices of Youth and Adult Education. Unlike the strategies and methodologies developed linked to other levels and modalities, in regular education, we seek to understand through qualitative research and bibliographical studies a) the historical advances of EJA in Brazil, b) the advances of the Laws of Guidelines and Bases of National Education for EJA, c) international conferences and the National Education Plan and d) proposals that consider the specificities of young people and adults. We took a more subjective look at the treatment of content about the aspirations of EJA students. Youth and adult

education is marked by a high dropout rate, little time to work on the content, and a small number of classes to fully develop concepts. These aspects are very different from elementary school students with the same education level—teaching at the time is considered correct. In addition, the results showed that teachers face methodological difficulties in reaching the EJA public, and this is due to 1) students' limited availability of time, 2) the short duration of the course, 3) lack of student motivation, 4) lack of own methodologies for EJA, and, 5) disregard of EJA classes with the reality of students' lives.

Keywords: EJA. Teaching Methodological Difficulties. Teacher.

Resumo. O presente trabalho consiste em identificar os principais desafios metodológicos encarados pelos docentes no desenvolvimento do processo ensino-aprendizagem da Educação de Jovens e Adultos (EJA). Levanta uma discussão sobre o tema em seu ponto mais crítico da ação docente, em sala de aula: a adequação dos métodos e técnicas de ensino à realidade dos alunos dessa modalidade. O objetivo geral da pesquisa é apontar os principais desafios metodológicos enfrentados pelos professores nas práticas pedagógicas da Educação de Jovens e Adultos. Diferentemente das estratégias e metodologias desenvolvidas vinculadas aos demais níveis e modalidades, no ensino regular, buscamos perceber por meio de pesquisas qualitativas e estudos bibliográficos, voltados ao tema; os avanços ao longo da história da EJA no Brasil, como as Leis de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional para a EJA, as conferências internacionais e o Plano Nacional de Educação, propostas que consideram as especificidades de jovens e adultos, dando um olhar mais subjetivo ao tratamento dos conteúdos em relação aos anseios dos alunos da EJA. A educação de jovens e adultos é marcada pela alta taxa de evasão, pelo pouco tempo para trabalhar o conteúdo e um número reduzido de aulas para se desenvolver os conceitos de forma plena e completa, em comparação com alunos da educação básica que cursam seu nível de ensino no tempo considerado correto. Além disso, os resultados mostraram que os professores enfrentam dificuldades metodológicas para atingir o público da EJA, e isso se deve a: 1) pouca disponibilidade de tempo dos alunos, 2) curta duração do curso, 3) falta de motivação dos alunos, 4) falta de metodologias próprias para o EJA, e, 5) desconsideração das aulas do EJA com a realidade de vida dos alunos.

Palavras-chave: EJA. Dificuldades Metodológicas de Ensino. Professor.

1. Introdução

The school education of citizens in the last century of the modern period has been considered one of the essential parameters of human development, both in the social, cultural, and political spheres, as well as in industrialized societies in the world of work after the Second World War. The formation of critical citizens, aware of their role in society, with the responsibility of producing their livelihood and collaborating with the country's growth, has become imperative in the political action of the rulers of these societies with capitalist and socialist production systems (DIEZ, 2004; FERREIRA, 2010; GADOTTI, 1979; GONZAGA, 2007; IRELAND, 2009; LORI, 2003; MARTINS, 1997; PAIVA, 1973; PILETTI, 1989; RIBEIRO, 1997, and, VYGOTSKY, 2003).

Education becomes everyone's right and the duty of the State in countries with democratic regimes in industrial development, guaranteed by laws prescribed in their constitutions. The right to education is pointed out in the liberal conception speeches of revolutionary leaders in international agreements integrated into national legislation. It ensures education from the individual's childhood and throughout his life. It also aims to reduce illiteracy rates and offer young people and adults opportunities to satisfy their multiple learning needs (GOMES; CARNIELLI, 2003; FREIRE, 1989; 2002). The challenge is thus to guarantee access to quality education with gender equity.

In the mid-1990s, the International Commission on Education for the 21st century released the Jacques Delors Report, reiterating that education is a collective good to which everyone should have access. The V International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA), in 1997, committed the signatory countries of the Hamburg Declaration to the promotion of lifelong learning. The Law, nº 9.394/96 of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB), reiterated the educational rights of young people and adults to adequate education for their needs and learning conditions and established the responsibilities of public authorities in identifying and mobilizing demand and in the provision of accessible and appropriate fundamental education (DIPIERRO, 2010, p. 941).

In line with LDB nº 9394/96, the purpose of EJA is to develop students' autonomy, prepare them for the world of work and continue their studies, as well as the commitment to the human development of students. In this perspective, Article 37 of the LDBEN points out which offers the "appropriate" means of Education for Youth and Adults (EJA, from the acronym in Portuguese), considering their specificities. EJA has faced some challenging aspects, such as the adequacy of the methodologies used for this target audience. These challenges have characterized the history of education in Brazil. But its results are still not the intended ones, and it continues to be a great challenge for teachers and students of this modality (BRESOLIN, 2014).

Young people and adults are between 15 and 60 years old. They have acquired heights, balances, and emotional and behavioral aspects of different childhood and adolescent stages (PÓVOAS, 2012). Teachers use these methodologies, and the same applies to children and adolescents in regular elementary schools. They are infantilizing, teaching young people and adults who would not fit their characteristics of this more mature and experienced phase, with specific goals and lifestyles, people and professionals. The other uses traditional, mechanical, and rigid methods that cause socio/cultural and cognitive shocks with contemporary students who are aware of their interdependence relationships.

EJA students have been excluded from the normal educational process, whether for personal reasons or repetition. A mathematized approach to the detriment of the analysis of physical phenomena in conceptual terms, without laboratory activities, makes teaching irrelevant for the working student. It has numerous gaps concerning the contents developed in primary education, perceived mainly in the mathematics discipline.

Thus, this work brought the need to research this subject to understand the methodological difficulties EJA teachers face throughout their teaching process. It seeks to reflect and answer the question raised regarding the principle of adapting teachers to the cultural and subjective reality of young people and adults to find out if this can be considered an obstacle to quality teaching for this educational modality (BARBETA; YAMAMOTO, 2002). In search of an answer to this problem, we opted for research with a descriptive qualitative methodological approach, using a bibliographical study method.

The general objective of the research is to analyze the methodological teaching difficulties teachers face in EJA pedagogical practices in schools. Specific goals are: a) identify teachers' pedagogical practices in the classroom, b) investigate methods and practices, c) didactic and pedagogical materials in the teaching and learning of young people and adults, and d) research how teaching happens in EJA. In this way, the research aims to improve pedagogical practices consistent with this teaching modality, with coherent theoretical support to those seeking more participatory citizenship and dignified life in society. And its result can be added to the knowledge that constitutes the body of knowledge produced by educators and researchers of the teaching modality in the science of education, serving academics and professionals of youth and adult education and the general public.

The general structure of the research was developed through the four basic steps of the Scientific-Technological Method (NASCIMENTO-E-SILVA, 2019). The steps were: structuring the guiding question, research, data collection, data organization, and response structure. Thus, the method articulated the entire context of the work. In structuring the guiding question, the research sought to identify the main methodological challenges faced by Youth and Adult Education (EJA) teachers. As for data collection, school Google was used to determine the leading works in the research area. Data organization was established based on factors: A) research with relevant results for the theme, B) research that dealt with methodological challenges faced by teachers of Youth and Adult Education, and C) that presented a robust research methodology and reliability. The response structure was based on the results achieved, so it was possible to synthesize them and present them in the final considerations section.

2. EJA in Brazil: historical aspects and public policies

The emergence of the idea of Public Schools took place since the first Brazilian constitution, in 1824, during the empire period, influenced by Europeans, establishing the guarantee of free primary education for all citizens, including adults. But nothing was done about it. It was just on paper. However, Enlightenment conceptions about public education, which were then free, gained strength in the country's legal culture, appearing in later constitutions (HADDAD; DI PIERRO, 2000, p. 109). Although adult education in Brazil began with the Indians, through the Jesuits, in the colonial period, it was focused on teaching Christian doctrine and the crafts practiced in the economic production of the colonial era and the pacification of the indigenous people. , not to react against the Portuguese invaders.

Only in the 1869 constitution, in the republican period, of the conception of federalism, was the public possibility of a decentralized primary education of the provinces and municipalities given. The federal government reserved itself only for "encouraging" these activities, assuming a more significant presence in secondary and higher education (HADDAD; DI PIERRO, 2000, p. 109). In 1891, the need for the State to reorganize itself emerged as a republican challenge. It was due to the republic's installation and the country's urbanization. These factors were decisive in the creation of new needs for the population. With their families, mostly illiterate, they saw schooling as a more promising path for their children in bureaucratic and intellectual careers in society (BEISIEGEL, 1974, p. 63).

According to Rosa-Silva and Lorencini Junior (2009), the country's enthusiasm for political and economic changes fueled a spirit of renewal. Favorable for discussing national themes necessary for the country's modernization solution. Among the factors

were the possible installation of democracy, industrialization, implementation the federation, and popular education. The latter was considered the key to solving the problems of the illiterate country. 82% of the population was illiterate, starting from citizens above five.

However, political-educational actions were limited to the population's literacy process to satisfy internal demands to respond to international institutions' requirements, train literate labor to take on jobs in industries and increase the mass of eligible voters. For example, the United Nations Educational and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), created in 1945 by the United Nations (UN), conducts the International Conference on Youth and Adult Education. From the 1940s onwards, youth and adult education was initially constituted in Brazil's public policy field, as provided in the 1934 Constitution. At the end of the republic, the 1920 census, carried out 30 years after the establishment of the republic in the country, indicated that 72% of the population over five remained illiterate (HADDAD; DI PIERRO, 2000, p. 110).

Youth and Adult Education (EJA) is a primary and secondary education in Brazilian basic education, with particular attention to literacy, offered to citizens who did not have the opportunity to complete or start them at the appropriate time of schooling. LDB nº 9.394/96 provides that education for young people and adults is intended for those who did not have access to studies in primary or secondary education, aged between 7 and 17 years old, and must be offered in accessible public education networks, with pedagogical follow-up adequate. It should consider the characteristics, interests, living, and working conditions of the Brazilian citizen.

Resolution nº 1/2000 of the National Council of Education (CNE) establishes the National Curriculum Guidelines (DCNs) for Youth and Adult Education. Its guidelines include equity, difference, proportionality, appropriation, and contextualization of the national curriculum. It says that the offer of this teaching modality should consider the students' situations, profiles, and age groups. For this, it is necessary to propose a specific pedagogical model to guarantee:

- I. concerning equity, the specific distribution of curricular components to provide an equal level of training and restore equality of rights and opportunities about the right to education;
- II. concerning difference, the identification, and recognition of the unique and inseparable otherness of young people and adults in their formative process, of valuing each one's merit and developing their knowledge and values;
- III. concerning proportionality, adequate supply, and allocation of curricular components, they must meet the needs of Youth and Adult Education. Spaces and times are ensured for pedagogical practices to provide students with the training identity common to all participants in primary education (art. 5th, BRASIL, 2022).

The right to quality education, not only in childhood and adolescence but throughout life, is guaranteed by Law. However, it is everyone's commitment. However, not everything written on paper is fulfilled to several factors. But mainly, due to lack of investments in the area and inconstancy of government programs. The Brazilian educational legislation is the result of a lot of struggle and efforts by educators and representatives of non-governmental and governmental institutions. It becomes difficult to execute in its fullness. On the other hand, its implementation depends not only on the Law present on paper but on its agents, well-prepared teachers aiming to make a difference in the quality of teaching and learning of their students in the classroom (PÓVOAS, 2012).

The fundamental landmark of public education for Brazilian citizens was formatted in the 1824 constitution, with a strong European influence, with the guarantee of free primary education for all citizens. This definition was sown and became present in successive Brazilian Constitutions. Around the second decade of the 20th century, many civil and even official movements engaged in the fight against illiteracy, considered a "national evil" and "a social plague." These problems drove the major educational reforms of the period in almost all Brazilian states, allied to maintaining order in the cities. They boosted the major educational reforms of the period in almost all Brazilian states due to the importance of maintaining order in the cities.

In addition, labor movements, whether of libertarian or communist inspiration, valued education in their pleas and demands. At that time, decree nº 16.782/A of January 13, 1925, known as "Lei Rocha Vaz," or João Alves Reform, established the creation of night schools for adults. It was only in the 1940s that education for young people and adults was established as a matter of national policy by the 1934 constitution, which nationally instituted compulsory and free primary education for all. Highlights at the national level:

- The creation of the National Primary Education Fund (1942), which aimed to expand primary education to include supplementary education for adolescents and adults;
- The Adult Education Service (SEA, from 1947), whose purpose was to guide and coordinate annual plans for supplementary education for illiterate adolescents and adults;
- The creation of Youth and Adult Education campaigns (such as the one in 1947) was of great importance in providing infrastructure for states and municipalities;
- The National Rural Education Campaign (1952);
- The National Campaign for the Eradication of Illiteracy (1958);
- The last two, of short duration, had few accomplishments.

UNESCO denounced social inequalities to the world and warned of the importance of education, especially adult education, so that the development process of nations considered backward could occur. During this period, adult education defined its identity when the Adult Education Service (SEA) was created as a particular service of the National Department of Education and Health, which had the purpose of reorienting and coordinating the annual plans of supplementary education for illiterate adolescents and adults.

3. Teaching methodology and the principle of adequacy to EJA

Youth and Adult Education (EJA) is a teaching modality of Brazilian primary education, elementary and secondary education, with particular attention to literacy, offered to citizens who did not have the opportunity to complete or start them at the appropriate time of schooling. ; continuing or starting their studies (PÓVOAS, 2012). LDB nº 9.394/96 provides that youth and adult education is intended for those who did not have access or did not continue their studies in elementary or high school, aged between 7 and 17 years, and must be offered in public education. It is done through

accessible education networks with adequate educational opportunities, considering Brazilian citizens' characteristics, interests, and living and working conditions.

The right to quality education, not only in childhood and adolescence but throughout life, is guaranteed by Law. However, not everything written on paper is fulfilled due to several factors, mainly the lack of investments in the area and the inconstancy of government programs. Although it is a commitment of all, it becomes difficult to execute it to its fullness. On the other hand, its implementation depends on the Law present on paper and on its agents. The difficulty in adapting teaching methodologies for EJA is found in the school's appreciation of skills or aptitudes in general and abstract reasoning, verbal influence, logical reasoning, and theoretical questions, skills that favor students from the upper strata of society. These well-prepared teachers aim to make a difference in the quality of teaching and learning of their students in the classroom (PÓVOAS, 2012). Meanwhile, practical or how-to skills, sports and art skills, solutions to life problems, and the language of the students' subculture are not considered in the school's plans and objectives. It made teaching-learning unfeasible for students from popular classes, young people, and adults with more practical than theoretical skills (MATUI, 2005).

To arouse the interest of EJA students and make classes more attractive, the school must carry out its political and pedagogical project by considering the skills of young people and adults from popular or poorer classes. Teachers must use teaching methodologies with language that identifies with their culture. The language values their subjectivities and maintains the pedagogical relationship with students in the classroom. "It is said that students from the popular classes had a poor vocabulary, did not understand the class, and, consequently, did not learn. Today it is known that the school uses a language that is different and strange to that of the student" (MATUI, 2015).

Also, according to Vichessi and Diniz (2009), many EJA teachers have the habit of using the same activities as in elementary school and applying them to young people and adults. As we can see, this is one of the main reasons for neglecting EJA students, as these students demand much more than a simple childish activity. They require systematized knowledge, real-world learning, and knowledge from the context in which they live.

For teaching methodologies in this modality, a few hours of weekly classes are planned, compared to regular teaching; teachers develop work methodologies with the choice of themes that they consider essential for working with young people and adults. The teaching method is often the same as in primary and secondary schools, with less content (POVOAS, 2012). Rosa-Silva and Lorencini Junior (2009) state in their research that, in most schools, no EJA design contextualizes knowledge of curricular components with the realities that students encounter in their daily lives. It is common to teach, for example, in the area of mathematics: the concepts of velocity, acceleration, force, and energy, but little is said about, for example, traffic laws and how these laws relate to the laws of Physics, mainly the laws of mechanics. The concepts are pronounced, but the relationship between them and regulations and the daily life of an EJA student is hardly shown.

According to Bresolin (2014), in most EJA classes, there is little relationship between theory and practice. It is one of the purposes of high school, according to article 35, item IV of the Law of Guidelines and Fundamentals of Education: "to understand the technical processes productive, relating theory to practice, in the teaching of each subject." Despite this, in most schools, this possibility of connecting theory with practice is not viable due to the lack of resources that institutions (public and private) make available for Didactic activities. Many institutions demand that their

teachers use materials mainly elaborated by institutions that do not know the reality of EJA students.

The motivation for this work arises from the difficulties encountered in youth and adult education, whose proposal aims to contextualize the challenges faced by EJA teachers. In this context, EJA students face the same difficulties as students who attend primary and secondary education at the corresponding age due to the inappropriate teaching method applied in the classroom and the short time in which the content is addressed. For Bresolin (2014), the methodology should value the student, support their active participation in the class and contribute to the increase of their knowledge. Training is much more than just training the student in the performance of skills. We provide more excellent proximity and dialogue between teacher and student and the development of skills that go beyond mechanical repetition. Finally, we believe this work presents a design that meets the specificities and training needs of EJA subjects, supporting new implementations of this structured learning design.

Teaching in EJA requires more dedication from the teacher because, in the same environment, we find students of different ages and different levels of cognitive development, in addition to the small workload attributed to this teaching modality. Thus, the methodology must also adapt to this profile, which primarily seeks to contextualize the contents of each reality. Giving meaning to what is being studied is fundamental to arousing interest in what is being learned and bringing learning closer to the adult student (PÓVOAS, 2012; ARBACHE, 2001; BARBETA; YAMAMOTO, 2002; BRESOLIN, 2014; CAGLIARI, 2007; CHIZZOTI, 2006; DELORS, 2010).

Teaching in youth and adult education requires different strategies from those used in regular education because, in addition to the particular characteristics of students in this modality, the time available is minimal, and there is also a need to review fundamental knowledge of teaching subjects primarily. Students of this modality often do not aspire to continue their studies at the university level, and what they learn at this stage should be helpful throughout their lives. Therefore, students must be encouraged to link this educational phase to their own experience process, so they can continue to learn throughout their lives.

5. Final considerations

The scientific production made it possible to identify the main methodological challenges of teaching and learning faced by teachers of Youth and Adult Education (EJA). The results showed that teachers face methodological difficulties in reaching the EJA public, and this is due to the following:

1) Lack of student time availability. It is the development of methodologies is hampered by the lack of time to work on the disciplines and the limited availability of time for students, as most work;

2) short duration of the course; after all, youth and adult education is characterized by a short time to process the content and a limited number of hours to process the content completely;

3) lack of student motivation, which leads to a considerable lack of attractiveness in EJA classes, with their lack of democratization of knowledge and quality of teaching. Missing, motivated by the indifference of the public power in fulfilling the proposals and goals outlined for the modality in the PNE and LDB. There is also a

lack of training in the specific pedagogical field for EJA, which compromises the effectiveness of the methodologies used by teachers in teaching and learning;

4) lack of own methodologies for EJA, and,

5) neglect of EJA classes with the students' life reality, causing a disconnection between the student and the classes offered.

Throughout the work, it was also possible to make a timeline, reporting the history of EJA with its evolutionary process. Its policies, laws, and guidelines over the years, its literacy movements, and its current context were explored. One can find a space with a great diversity of culture, and crowded and heterogeneous classrooms, where many students are unmotivated by various factors, ranging from work fatigue to lack of motivation to study.

The citizen sees in the EJA modality, offered by public instances, the opportunity to seek denied citizenship rights, professional training that takes him to the job market, and cultural and productive participation in reading, writing, and counting knowledge for his intellectual development. Thus, freeing himself from functional or absolute illiteracy in the society in which he lives. But what is perceived during the process is that there are still difficulties in operationalizing this teaching. Perhaps, due to a destiny traced by the economic situation, family structural fragility, and precariousness of school education, among other reasons. It is reaffirmed that it is also the responsibility of teacher training institutions, in initial or continuing training, to have subjects in their curricula that allow them to learn about a set of practices and knowledge related to the specificities of EJA students.

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