

# Educational Public Policies for The Rural Area: An Analysis of the Closure of Basic Education Schools in Brazil

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## Abstract

Access to education for peasants in the history of Brazilian society has always been denied, with the absence of public policies for peasants, as the result of a political and social process of denial of minority groups. The text address the issue of closure of schools in the countryside as a growing social phenomenon that has been expanding in the countryside of Brazil. Thus, the general objective of this text is to analyze the issue of the right to education for peasants, focusing on the high number of school closures in the countryside, seeking to understand the consequences for the peasantry. The closure of this institutions has become a problem that effects the importance of the countryside in Brazil, given that access to education is a right for everyone, including those who live and are from the countryside. However, public management has closed activities in schools in the countryside, making it difficult the access to education for peasants. The research has a qualitative character, where initially a survey and bibliographic review was carried out supported by Magalhães (2017), Ribeiro (2012), Brasil (2010), Diniz (2010), Nogueira (2019), Silva (2018) and other authors. In a second segment, data was collected on the number of schools closed in Brazil between the years of 1997 to 2022, and finally, data and information processing and analysis thereof. The results indicate that the closure of schools in the countryside violates the right to human development of the peasantry, as it is understood that the uprooting of peasant culture, the lack of educational policies for the countryside and the cutting of spending on education are linked to the closure of these institutions.

**Keywords:** countryside schools closing, public politics, peasantry

## 1. Introduction

The present text analyzes public policies aimed at rural areas, particularly focusing on access to education historically denied to peasants based on the process of school closures in rural areas. Thus, the text problematizes the right to education for peasants, as school closures have led to a series of consequences for communities that see education for children and youth as a means of accessing knowledge and fighting for a more egalitarian society. This process has intensified in the country in recent years, as evidenced by the high number of rural schools that have been closed, posing challenges for access to education for these rural populations.

Between 1997 and 2022, it is estimated that over 80,000 schools were closed in rural areas (Brazil, 2022). Access to public policies for rural peoples and for the outskirts of cities has historically been neglected, making it evident that access to education is the result of the absence of effective policies guaranteeing permanence and dignified life for rural people.

It is worth noting that within rural spaces, socioterritorial movements such as the Landless Workers Movement (MST) have been fighting against this issue of access to education for rural workers, thus achieving the policy of Rural Education developed in the so-called Rural Schools.

It is important to highlight that the schools that have been closed are rural schools, i.e., those located in rural areas but do not incorporate Rural Education into their teaching process. On the other hand, Rural Schools go beyond merely being located in rural areas; their conception “emerges from the contradictions of social struggle and the education practices of workers in and from the countryside” (Molina & Sá, 2012, p. 326). Therefore, Rural Schools are the result of the peasant people’s struggle for access to education, which is concerned with human development and goes against the logic of capitalist production in rural areas (Molina & Sá, 2012).

Although throughout the text we address Rural Schools and Rural Education policies, as they are recent public

policies won by peasant movements, the main focus is on the issue of school closures in rural areas. With the closure of these institutions, the right to education historically denied to these rural populations is further highlighted because even with students being relocated to other institutions outside their reality, their relationships with the natural, cultural, and social environment are compromised due to the closure of schools.

For a better understanding, the text was structured with an introduction, materials and methods, results, and final considerations. The introduction provides an approach to the topic at hand. Then, with the methods and materials, we describe the stages developed for the research. In the results and discussions, a brief theoretical contextualization of educational public policies in rural areas was carried out, along with a theoretical analysis of the problem with the survey of the number of schools closed in rural areas, and finally, with the final considerations.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The research has a qualitative nature because, according to Minayo (2002), qualitative research seeks the meaning of human actions in society. Thus, the aim is to analyze the closure of schools in rural areas as actions and intentions carried out by subjects.

The first stage of the research involved a survey and literature review of various authors. Some of the authors studied include Ribeiro (2012) and Magalhães (2017) on the concept of Rural Education, Molina and Sá (2012) on the definition of Rural Schools, Brazil (2001), Brazil (2010), and Caldart (2015) discussing the public policy of Rural Education. Other authors such as Nogueira (2019), Silva (2018), Santos (2019), Barbosa (2021), Taffarel and Munarim (2015), and Andrade and Venturini (2021) discuss the approach to school closures in rural areas.

The second part of the research focused on collecting data on the number of schools closed in Brazil between 1997 and 2022. To obtain data on the number of schools, official websites of the federal government were used, and statistical synopses regarding school censuses for the reference years conducted by the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira—INEP were downloaded. Afterward, a comparison of numerical data on the quantity of schools in urban and rural areas during the specified time frame was conducted. It is noteworthy that the choice of the year 1997 as the base year is justified because in this year, data on the number of schools were made available with more specificity, including the number of rural schools with their totals, which is the sum of the number of rural and urban schools.

After this survey, the data were organized by the number of schools on a national scale, by geographical regions, and by states of the federation. The collected data were organized into tables for better understanding. Results from research groups on the number of schools closed were consulted, specifically from the Study and Research Group on Rural Education in the Amazon—GEPERUAZ.

In the third stage of the research, the analysis of the obtained results and the final writing of the text were carried out.

## 3. Results and Discussions

The closure of schools located in rural areas is a process that has been expanding in Brazil over time, with greater prominence in the last 20 years. It is considered a problem that interferes with the right to education of rural populations, as residents in rural communities have limited access to the school environment and, therefore, from the perspective of accessing knowledge, are at a disadvantage compared to children and youth living in urban areas. This is already considered an unequal process of access to schooling.

As discussed earlier in the text, the schools that have been closing are those located in rural areas, which provide access to education for rural individuals, even though they may not incorporate the Rural Education curriculum developed in more recently established Rural Schools. Rural Schools have a distinct approach, as they address themes and curricular activities contextualized to the social development of the rural communities where they are located. Molina and Sá emphasize that:

“The concept of rural school emerges and develops within the framework of the Rural Education movement, based on experiences of human formation developed in the context of struggle of peasant social movements for land and education. It is, therefore, a concept that arises from the contradictions of social struggle and the education practices of rural workers” (Molina & Sá, 2012, p. 326).

The achievement of Rural Education was established only in the late 20th century, where the rural areas historically had the right to education denied, and the educational policies implemented in rural areas did not meet the demands of these individuals. According to Magalhães (2017), for a long time, rural areas were understood solely as spaces for production to supply the food needs of cities and for exporting goods. Consequently, the conception held of peasant farmers was that “To work in agriculture, it was not necessary for the worker to have education or even to

be literate” (Magalhães, 2017, p. 43).

However, with the political and economic changes in Brazilian society, there was a need to implement policies for access to education in rural areas, given the more specific needs that arose with the advance of capital in both urban and rural areas, and as a response, peasant resistance to this advance affecting the population in these spaces. Magalhães asserts that:

“The need to consider education for the rural population dates back to the early decades of the 20th century. The discussion of rural education at this time arises mainly from the debate on the importance of education to contain rural-urban migration and increase productivity in the countryside” (Magalhães, 2017, p. 43).

During this period, the development of capitalist production in rural areas demanded a workforce for production, where ensuring the permanence of this population in rural areas for production required the provision of education in rural areas. Thus, the educational process introduced in the field of rural education was developed.

According to Ribeiro (2012), in rural education, there is no concern to adapt the education system to the peasant reality; instead, the same teaching model offered in urban areas is developed. Consequently, rural education promotes the formation of individuals for the labor market, where its contents, methods, and purposes aim to introduce these individuals into the capitalist industrial production mode.

The educational training of rural workers has never been the objective of the rural education system; on the contrary, this conception viewed peasant life and rural areas as synonymous with backwardness and antiquity. Consequently, Agrarian Reform and public policies for access to quality education were not developed. The idea of modernizing and industrializing rural areas, even in the second half of the 20th century, with the advancement of capitalist production modes in rural areas through the use of machinery, pesticides, and chemical fertilizers, required minimum education for workers to be directed towards the new agricultural production model in rural areas (Ribeiro, 2012).

Magalhães (2017) highlights that the government attributed policies for financing education in rural areas in the 1934 federal constitution. In the 1946 constitution, access to education in rural areas was guaranteed by private rural companies. Years later, during the military government (1964–1984), educational policy based on rural education was developed by the military government itself.

After the elaboration of the 1988 constitution, education was reaffirmed as a social right (Brazil, 1988). However, it was only with the 1996 Guidelines and Bases Law, the LDB, that the government understood that providing education for rural areas should be highlighted as a specific educational policy for the countryside. The LDB of 1996 highlights in its article 28 that:

Article 28. In providing basic education for the rural population, the education systems will promote the necessary adaptations to ensure its adequacy to the peculiarities of rural life and each region, especially: I—curricular contents and methodologies appropriate to the real needs and interests of rural zone students; II—own school organization, including adjustment of the school calendar to the phases of the agricultural cycle and climatic conditions; III—adaptation to the nature of work in rural areas (Brazil, 1996).

According to the article, the Brazilian National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (LDB) recognizes the importance of developing curricular content, school organization, and adapting work to rural schools. However, even with the emphasis in the LDB on the need to consider Rural Education, a debate that only took place in the late 1990s, education in rural areas continued to have connotations of regular schooling with little emphasis on the realities of the communities they served. Magalhães (2017) asserts that the education offered and developed in rural areas continued to be precarious, with a lack of school infrastructure, shortage of educational materials adapted to the rural reality, among other issues, still retaining the characteristics of rural education.

The Education of the Countryside, a result of the struggle led by the MST, entered national public policy only in 1998, with the National Program for Education in Agrarian Reform—PRONERA. Thus, in 2001, the Operational Guidelines for Basic Education in Rural Schools were created (Brazil, 2001). Subsequently, Decree Law No. 7,352/2010, on the Rural Education Policy and the National Program for Education in Agrarian Reform — PRONERA (Brazil, 2010), as cited below:

“Article 1. The rural education policy is intended to expand and improve the provision of basic and higher education to rural populations and will be developed by the Union in collaboration with the States, the Federal District, and the Municipalities, in accordance with the guidelines and goals established in the National Education Plan and the provisions of this Decree” (Brazil, 2010, p. 1).

This new method of education and educational policy aligns with the formation of rural peoples, taking into

account their histories of struggle, developing a critical awareness of reality, and raising awareness of their contradictions. According to Caldart:

“It was born with the workers of the countryside and their organizations, in a collective movement to think about the education/training of workers and not for them, to fight for public policies that guarantee the conditions for these practices to be built from their social, political, human interests. This is the great historical novelty of EdoC, and we cannot let it be lost: created by rural workers as a tool to dispute policies that guarantee them the objective conditions to build and manage, through their collective association, the education they need to ‘conquer their own emancipation’. It has a priority focus (not exclusive) on the struggle for formal schooling policies, due to the historical denial of access to workers and the importance that school has in the construction of their educational project, especially in its specific task in relation to knowledge. And assuming the contradiction of disputing, alongside the State, ‘the most willing collaborator’ of capital, policies that make it possible to meet the formative demands of the labor pole” (2015, p. 2).#

Although peasant movements have been advocating for educational public policies for rural areas, such as Rural Education, the closure of schools located in rural areas constitutes a contradictory movement that has been expanding in parallel. The closure of rural schools highlights the historical picture of the implementation of educational public policies for rural areas, constituting a movement counter to educational policies in Brazil.

As a result of this process, we present in Table 1 below, based on the statistical synopses of school censuses available on the federal government website, the number of schools in Brazil between the years 1997 and 2022.

Table 1. Number of schools in Brazil from 1997 to 2022.

NÚMERO DE ESCOLAS POR ESTADO E REGIÕES GEOGRÁFICAS - 1997- 2022				
	1997		2022	
	Urbana	Rural	Urbana	Rural
<b>Brasil</b>	87.921	137.599	125.589	52.757
<b>Norte</b>	5.823	22.467	8.559	13.467
Rorondônia	613	2.790	827	384
Acre	283	1262	449	1.074
Amazonas	982	4.077	1.777	3.625
Roraima	133	413	294	576
Pará	2.757	11.443	3.731	6.839
Amapá	225	367	395	467
Tocantins	830	2.115	1.086	502
<b>Nordeste</b>	29.213	72.030	32.752	27.384
Maranhão	3.401	11.554	4.070	7.385
Piauí	2.168	6.791	2.393	1.831
Ceará	4.777	11.130	4.850	2.549
R. G. do Norte	1.650	3.121	2.208	1.190
Paraíba	2.859	5.823	2.917	1.806
Pernambuco	4.192	7.591	5.073	2.985
Alagoas	1.273	2.967	1.664	1.201
Sergipe	956	1.601	1.224	845
Bahia	7.937	21.452	8.353	7.592
<b>Sudeste</b>	33.205	19.309	53.907	6.282
Minas Gerais	8.656	11.114	12.596	3.067
Espirito Santo	1.839	3.455	2.106	926
Rio de Janeiro	7.135	2.089	10.381	1.057
São Paulo	15.575	2.654	28.824	1.232
<b>Sul</b>	13.589	18.093	21.580	4.065
Paraná	5.591	5.164	8.240	1.213
Santa Catarina	3.454	5.989	5.293	1.047
R. G. do Sul	4.544	6.940	8.047	1.805
<b>Centro-Oeste</b>	6.091	5.700	8.791	1.559
M. G. do Sul	1.163	216	1.525	248
Mato Grosso	1.322	2.459	1.949	751
Goiás	2.806	2.919	4.141	474
Distrito Federal	800	106	1.176	86

Source: Statistical synopses in school censuses/INEP (1997–2022).

Table 1 displays the number of schools located in urban and rural areas in the country, broken down by geographical regions and states between the years 1997 and 2022. It presents data regarding the number of basic education schools, with general information on the administrative level of municipal, state, federal, and private

schools. The data show an increase in the number of institutions located in urban areas, from 87,921 schools in 1997 to 125,589 schools in 2022. Meanwhile, schools located in rural areas experienced a significant decrease, dropping from 137,599 in 1997 to 52,757 in 2022.

From a regional perspective, it is evident from Table 1 that regions also experienced changes in their numbers of urban and rural schools, with the Northeast region, relatively, being the one that lost the most schools located in rural areas.

The data indicate that urban schools saw growth in the number of school units; however, rural schools reduced their numbers. Following this, Table 2 presents a comparison of the data on the number of schools based on Table 1.

Table 2. Number of rural schools closed between 1997 and 2022

<b>NÚMERO DE ESCOLAS FECHADAS NO CAMPO ENTRE 1997-2022</b>		
<b>Localização</b>	<b>Urbana</b>	<b>Rural</b>
<b>Brasil</b>	37.668	- 84.842
<b>Norte</b>	2.736	- 9.000
Rondônia	214	- 2.406
Acre	166	-188
Amazonas	795	-452
Roraima	161	163
Pará	974	- 4.604
Amapá	170	100
Tocantins	255	- 1.613
<b>Nordeste</b>	3.539	- 44.646
Maranhão	669	- 4.169
Piauí	225	- 4.960
Ceará	73	- 8.581
R. G. do Norte	558	- 1.931
Paraíba	58	- 4.017
Pernambuco	881	- 4.606
Alagoas	391	- 1.766
Sergipe	268	-756
Bahia	416	- 13.860
<b>Sudeste</b>	20.702	- 13.027
Minas Gerais	3.939	- 8.047
Espirito Santo	267	- 2.529
Rio de Janeiro	3.246	- 1.032
São Paulo	13.249	- 1.422
<b>Sul</b>	7.991	- 14.028
Paraná	2.649	- 3.951
Santa Catarina	1.839	- 4.942
R. G. do Sul	3.503	- 5.155
<b>Centro-Oeste</b>	2.700	-4.141
M. G. do Sul	362	36
Mato Grosso	627	- 1.708
Goiás	1.335	- 2.445
Distrito Federal	800	-20

Source: Statistical synopses of school censuses/INEP 1997–2022.

According to Table 2, schools located in urban areas in the country saw an increase of 37,668 schools. In contrast, rural schools experienced a decrease of 84,842 schools. By geographical regions, it is notable that the region that closed the most schools was the Northeast, with 44,646 schools closed in rural areas.

In the Northeast region, states also stood out for closing schools in rural areas, such as Bahia with 13,860 closed rural schools, Ceará with 8,591 closed schools, and Piauí with 4,960 closed schools, among others showing alarming numbers. The Northeast region encompasses a significant part of its territorial area in the semiarid region, and it is understood that the closure trend has been expanding in this area, thus necessitating further studies on this

phenomenon in this space.

In Table 2, it is observed that other regions also stand out with the expansion of school closures in rural areas, such as the Southeast region of the country being the second region that closes the most schools in rural areas. In other states like Minas Gerais, the number of school closures in rural areas is concerning, with a total of 8,047 closed rural schools. In the South of the country, the states of Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, and Paraná have a high rate of school closures in rural areas.

With additional data provided by the Study and Research Group on Rural Education in the Amazon (GEPERUAZ), our analysis will be further informed. Regarding the number of rural schools closed, the data from this research group are even more alarming. Between the years 2000 and 2020, there was a total of 146,232 schools closed in Brazil, with 45,271 schools closed in urban areas and 100,961 schools closed in rural areas.

These numbers demonstrate the lack of effectiveness of educational public policies aimed at rural areas, due to the expansion of the phenomenon of school closures in rural areas across the national territory. Consequently, other actions are being developed to try to ensure access to education, such as school nucleation and the implementation of school transportation.

According to Nogueira (2019), nucleation is a process aimed at concentrating students in a single reference nucleus school that had their schools closed. The author also states that nucleation was initially an intra-rural process, where isolated schools with multigrade systems were replaced by nucleus schools, still located in the nearest rural communities. From the 1990s onwards, proposals for reforming basic education and decentralizing the state encouraged the municipalization of schools, and based on the criteria established for fund allocation, this process resulted in the closure of rural schools, with these students being nucleated again, this time primarily in schools in urban areas.

Malheiro (2019) emphasizes that it is more favorable for municipal and state governments to close schools and convince students' families to enroll their children in urban schools with the proposal of improving learning, rather than investing in education that meets the needs of rural populations and in teacher training to work in these schools.

The process of municipalizing education and the nucleation process, combined with school closures, primarily affects elementary schools, as municipalities are responsible for administering this level of education. The school transportation policy is also linked to this nucleation process.

The school transportation policy, entitled the National Program for School Transport Support (PNATE), was established by Federal Law No. 10,880, on June 9, 2004, which aims to ensure access to education for students residing in rural areas through school transportation. It is worth noting that this provision was allocated in Federal Law No. 11,947 of June 16, 2009, which establishes the direct money to school program (Brazil, 2009).

Other complementary laws for school transportation and the commuting of students from rural areas to school, such as Decree No. 6,968 of 2009 which instituted the "Caminho da Escola" Program, were revoked by Decree No. 11,162, dated August 4, 2022 (Brazil, 2022). As highlighted by Brazil:

"Article 2. The National Program for School Transportation Support—PNATE is instituted within the scope of the Ministry of Education, to be executed by the National Fund for Education Development—FNDE, with the objective of providing school transportation to students of public basic education residing in rural areas, through financial assistance, on a supplementary basis, to the States, the Federal District, and the Municipalities, subject to the provisions of this Law" (Brazil, 2009).

It's interesting to note that the funds allocated for school transportation are calculated based on the number of students residing in rural areas who require school transportation to travel to school. Consequently, the more schools are closed, the more students need transportation to get to school, and the more financial resources are needed for this purpose.

However, several problems related to school transportation exist, such as poor road infrastructure, unsafe transportation, long distances between home and school, among others. As pointed out by Silva (2018) and Santos (2019), in addition to issues with the physical infrastructure of roads, other problems like the long distances and hours of commuting for students to reach schools, usually located in cities, lead to the distancing of students from the everyday life of the countryside. Thus, they find educational spaces culturally distinct from the peasant environment. Regarding this matter, Santos adds:

"For many government officials in Brazil, school transportation has become more economically viable than keeping a school operational. By closing a school, the state reduces costs associated with school equipment, staff, and teachers. Thus, to minimize costs and maximize profit, many children are transported to cities

and/or to other very distant communities in precarious buses and/or other vehicles, without any safety measures, thereby prevailing the neoliberal ideology of the commercialization of education, where cost reduction is more important than meeting the needs of the population” (Santos, 2019, p. 118).

Education is erroneously considered in the logic of school closures aimed at reducing public spending in this sector. Schools in rural areas are important because they provide access to education for peasants within the context of their rural family life. According to Pereira (2005), peasants are individuals who depend on the land to live, based on the family unit of production, with various forms and ways of accessing the land.

According to Diniz (2010), peasants have a close relationship between land, work, and family, resulting in a way of life and production different from the capitalist mode. Thus, peasants are understood as a social class that struggles and creates strategies to continue their way of life and production within the capitalist system.

Continuing to highlight the peasantry and the peasant, Diniz (2010, p. 43) writes that the peasant

It constitutes a social subject whose historical movement is characterized by ways of being and living that are specific to them, not resembling capitalism, even though inserted into capitalist economy. The rationality of the peasant world is based on the social production of the family, on providing food for the family and for the non-peasant population. This rationality is very different from that of the capitalist latifundium territory, centered on profit.

The natural, social, and cultural environment is an integral part of the peasant way of life, hence the need for policies that guarantee their maintenance as social subjects, including access to work, housing, health, and education in rural areas. However, as highlighted in the text, peasants are historically excluded from their basic rights, making it difficult or impossible for them to remain in rural areas. When a school in rural areas closes, the right to access education is denied, as even with policies of consolidation and transfer of students, there is no guarantee of improvement in teaching and learning.

Nogueira (2019) suggests that the closure of schools in rural areas results in the weakening of rural youth in relation to the land and peasant work because from an early age, children learn how to work the land and acquire the knowledge and practices of peasant production. With long hours of travel to get to school, time with the community and family work are compromised, diminishing family bonds and peasant practices. As a consequence of this process, the expropriation of peasants and the ideology of modernity propagated by the capitalist system in rural areas are strengthened. Nogueira understands that:

Learning to care for the land starts from childhood. With the school close to the community, children still helped their parents, but with the centralization in the city, the time lost between home and school becomes excessively exhausting and undermines even this relationship established in family life. For this very reason, many students also drop out of school due to the daily strain of commuting to schools (Nogueira, 2019, p. 152).

The expansion of school closures in rural areas throughout Brazilian territory has been impacting the peasantry, causing difficulties in their formative process, as education is an integral part of human development. According to Silva (2018), the closure of schools in rural areas is linked to the cost-benefit logic of maintaining these institutions in rural areas, along with the low number of students being justifications that local governments use to close rural schools. Schools that are closed in rural areas “[...] cannot be analyzed separately from the disintegration of peasant sociability and the consequent depletion of rural communities. This phenomenon is itself part of the expropriation process imposed on peasant families” (Silva, 2018, p. 53).

The daily school routine is important for social formation, as the school serves as a space for the construction of scientific knowledge and socialization within the community. Although there are other educational spaces in communities such as religious centers, spaces for peasant agriculture, among others, the school is fundamental for the formation of peasants.

Considering that Education has its specificity and nature ontologically delimited in the foundations and principles that enable us to become human beings, closing schools represents a violent attack on the very humanization of the population of the Brazilian nation. It constitutes a crime against a nation and its working class, especially against the peoples of the countryside, forests, and waters (Taffarel & Munarim, 2015, p. 45).

Education is more than a public right of citizens and workers; as the authors previously mentioned, it is part of our humanization. Therefore, the need for schools and trained teachers to work in rural areas is a reality that has not yet been effectively realized, with the extinction of these institutions in rural areas lacking investment in such policies. However, there is a noticeable strengthening of consolidation and school transportation policies, as

previously discussed.

The closure of schools in rural areas contributes to the weakening of the community, as it is a place of socialization and interaction among residents (Barbosa, 2021). Thus, the school is an important space for the entire community, serving as a place of learning and gathering for local residents.

The closure of rural schools is a setback. This policy highlights the devaluation of family farming and the overvaluation of monoculture, agribusiness. It demonstrates a logic of a countryside without people because, without schools or conditions for staying in rural areas, the levels of exodus tend to increase. Some individuals, who until then survived in these places, end up losing contact with their culture, and then, without school and with their reduced source of income, they are driven to migrate to the outskirts of the city in search of “another” life (Andrade & Venturini, 2021, p. 170).

The issue occurring in the Brazilian countryside reflects the ineffectiveness of public education policies addressing the right to access education for peasants. Access to basic rights such as employment, education, and health is not respected, hindering the development of life in rural areas. Schools in rural areas are fundamental spaces for the formation of the peasantry and the maintenance of their lives in rural areas; however, the closure of schools in rural areas underscores the denial of the right to education, the increase in inequality in society, and the strengthening of the ideology of the dominant class. It is through education and intellectual formation that individuals develop awareness of their reality.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The right to education, including access to schools that reflect the reality of students, whether from rural or urban areas, is a duty of the State, as guaranteed by the current Federal Constitution. Peasants have a close relationship with the land, the natural environment, and culture, which reflects in their way of production. Therefore, there is a need for public policies addressing agrarian reform, health, education, among others, to maintain life in rural areas.

As we have seen from the synopsis data presented from 1997 to 2022, schools located in rural areas in Brazil were closed in a pronounced and ascending trend, demonstrating that education in rural areas has never been a priority in successive governments. When considering the Northeast region, it becomes evident that the data is more alarming, as this region had the highest number of schools closed in both absolute and relative terms in the national territory, a fact that will be further explored in our master’s dissertation.

Despite this reality, achievements resulting from the struggles of peasant movements such as the MST, as well as educational public policies like Rural Education, have been made. However, what is observed is the continuation of neglect towards peasants with the closure of schools in rural areas, imposing difficulties on their educational formation. With the closure of schools, students are displaced to other institutions, affecting their identity ties with the social, natural, and cultural environment of the peasant way of life and production.

The lack of policies for rural subjects, especially the right to education, coupled with the expansion of school closures in rural areas in the country, highlights the ideological game regarding the countryside as a place of backwardness, antiquity, and devaluation of the peasantry in favor of modernization in agricultural production that increasingly prioritizes the countryside with fewer people. Political representatives who use the media as an ally of unequal capitalist expansion are increasingly responsible for the ideological diffusion of agribusiness, as exemplified by the political influence of the ruralist caucus in the government.

The influence of capital on politics and education does not seek the formation of the human being but rather formation solely for the labor market, contributing to uncritical and decision-autonomous formation. Thus, the neoliberal logic of reducing education spending is evidenced by the high number of rural schools closed by government bodies administering the respective institutions. The complexity of the analyzed problem reveals the neglect of educational policies for rural subjects, where it has become more common to close rural schools instead of investing in education and ensuring the dignity of peasants’ lives.

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

**Data sharing statement**

No additional data are available.

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