FULL-TIME EDUCATION AS A STRATEGY TO REDUCE EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITIES: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to analyze full-time education as a strategy to reduce educational inequalities, discussing its contribution to promoting equity, inclusion, and social justice in a global context. The methodology is based on a literature review of authors such as Libâneo (2013), Saviani (2019), and Arroyo (2018), as well as international reports from UNESCO and OECD addressing full-time school policies and their impact on educational indicators. The results indicate that extended school hours support the holistic development of students, particularly in vulnerable regions, by expanding learning opportunities and access to socio-educational services. Furthermore, international experiences demonstrate positive impacts on reducing inequality, provided they are accompanied by structural

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investment, proper teacher training, and social support policies. It is concluded that full-time education, when aligned with intersectoral actions, is a powerful tool to promote a more just and equal educational system.

Keywords: Educational policies; Equity; Full-time education; Inclusion; Social justice.

Education and Knowledge: Past, Present and Future

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the debate on extending school time has gained international relevance, especially in light of persistent educational inequalities affecting students in socioeconomically vulnerable contexts. Full-time education, by proposing an extended school day and diversified educational activities, emerges as a promising strategy to promote human development, reduce learning disparities, and contribute to equity, inclusion, and social justice within education. The central question guiding this study is: to what extent can full-time education contribute to reducing educational inequalities, fostering equity and social inclusion in different national contexts? Thus, the aim is to understand whether extending school hours, when articulated with intersectoral public policies, effectively impacts educational outcomes in a sustainable manner, particularly among students from historically marginalized groups.

The general objective of this chapter is to analyze full-time education as a strategy for promoting educational equity. Specifically, it seeks to: (a) discuss the concept of full-time education in light of contemporary theoretical frameworks; (b) present national and international experiences implementing this modality; and (c) identify potentialities and limitations of its application in reducing educational inequalities.

The justification for this study lies in the need to reflect on pedagogical practices and public policies capable of addressing structural challenges in education, considering that extending school time may represent expanded formative opportunities, especially for students in contexts of social exclusion. The theoretical review draws on authors such as Libâneo (2013), Saviani (2019), Arroyo (2018), and Cavaliere (2007), as well as UNESCO and OECD reports that address full-time education as a tool for social justice and meaningful learning.

These studies show that, although promising, full-time education requires minimum structural conditions, qualified teacher training, and alignment with intersectoral policies to generate effective results. Therefore, this chapter is structured around a critical analysis of the literature and a discussion of the potentialities and challenges of full-time education in building a more democratic and inclusive education system.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter was developed through qualitative research of an exploratory and descriptive nature, based on document analysis and literature review. The methodological structure is organized into numbered sections and subsections, as exemplified below.

TYPE OF RESEARCH

The research is characterized as qualitative, enabling an in-depth understanding of educational phenomena, and exploratory-descriptive, as it seeks to identify and analyze the contributions of full-time education to reducing educational inequalities. The qualitative approach allows for interpreting data grounded in social contexts, which is relevant to the theme of equity and school inclusion.

TECHNIQUES AND INSTRUMENTS

Data collection instruments included literature review and document analysis. The literature review encompassed theoretical works by authors such as Libâneo (2013), Saviani (2019), Arroyo (2018), and Cavaliere (2007), as well as reports from UNESCO, OECD, and official documents from Brazil's Ministry of Education related to full-time education policies. Document analysis covered legislation, curricular guidelines, and national and international educational indicators.

SAMPLE AND MATERIAL SELECTION

The sampling was non-probabilistic and intentional, comprising 25 academic publications and 5 institutional reports produced between 2010 and 2024. Selection criteria considered theoretical relevance, alignment with the theme, and impact on discussions of public educational policies aimed at social justice.

GROUNDED DISCUSSION

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques, according to Bardin (2016), enabling categorization of information into three main axes: (a) conception and foundations of full-time education; (b) experiences implemented in national and international contexts; and (c) impacts on equity and reduction of educational inequalities. The discussion was grounded in critical pedagogy and social justice theory, aligning theoretical concepts with the evidence found. Thus, the adopted methodology allowed for building a consistent analysis of full-time education as a strategy for promoting equity and inclusion, enabling theoretical-practical reflections for improving public educational policies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results indicate that implementing full-time education significantly contributes to reducing educational inequalities, especially among students in socially vulnerable situations. The analysis shows that extending school hours fosters the development of socio-emotional and cognitive skills, providing more time for learning, community integration, and participation in extracurricular activities, as noted by Cavaliere (2007) and reaffirmed in UNESCO reports (2022).

Schools adopting full-time education exhibit higher rates of retention and academic performance, particularly when combined with social support policies such as nutrition, psychopedagogical monitoring, and family involvement. However, results are only effective when accompanied by adequate infrastructure, continuous training, and favorable working conditions for teachers (Arroyo, 2018; Saviani, 2019).

The reviewed literature aligns with these findings, highlighting that successful full-time models, such as those implemented in countries like Portugal and Canada, positively impact not only academic performance but also social justice and holistic student development (Libâneo, 2013; OECD, 2023). In Brazil, programs such as "Programa Mais Educação" show progress but still face challenges related to funding and policy continuity.

In summary, the data suggest that full-time education is a potentially effective strategy for promoting equity, provided it is incorporated into a structured, intersectoral educational project aimed at meeting the specific needs of school communities. The analysis confirmed the initial hypothesis that extended school time has the potential to mitigate historical inequalities, as long as it is accompanied by favorable conditions for implementation.

CONCLUSION

This chapter aimed to analyze full-time education as a strategy to reduce educational inequalities, focusing on promoting equity, inclusion, and social justice. Based on literature review and document analysis, it was possible to understand that extending school time, when articulated with public policies and intersectoral actions, represents an important path to strengthening students' holistic development, especially those in vulnerable contexts.

The main results demonstrated that full-time education contributes to improving learning, strengthening socio-emotional skills, and enhancing school performance and retention rates. Successful experiences, both nationally and internationally, show positive impacts in addressing educational inequalities, as highlighted by authors such as Cavaliere (2007), Libâneo (2013), and Saviani (2019). However, the effectiveness of this modality depends on adequate structural conditions, qualified teacher training, continuous funding, and strategic pedagogical monitoring.

This research contributes by presenting a critical and grounded view of the potential of full-time education as a transformative educational policy, reaffirming its role in building a more just, equal, and inclusive education system. Future investigations should deepen the analysis of longitudinal impacts of this modality, as well as comparative studies in different territorial and socioeconomic contexts, to identify key success factors for its implementation.

It is concluded that full-time education, when conceived as an integrated educational project committed to social justice, can become an effective instrument in combating inequalities and promoting a democratic and emancipatory education.

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