

# RIGHT TO EDUCATION, PUBLIC POLICIES AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE COREDE NORTE/RIO GRANDE DO SUL

DIREITO À EDUCAÇÃO, POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS  
E O ENSINO SUPERIOR NA REGIÃO DO  
COREDE NORTE/RIO GRANDE DO SUL

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## ABSTRACT

The article aims to reflect about the historical trajectory and contributions of public policies and educational institutions in the Northern region of Rio Grande do Sul, focusing on the analysis based on data related to the quantitative evolution of the number of higher education institutions and students in the region, in the period between 2000 and 2018, concerning the right to education. The issue is to show how higher education institutions are assisting and enhancing productive competences and social demands that induce decentralisation/concentration of development in the region. The study comprises the 32 municipalities included in the Regional Council of Development of the North of Rio Grande do Sul (COREDE Norte). The methodological procedure used is bibliographic-investigative, combined with data and statistics from MEC, IPEA, FEE, INEP and COREDE Norte.

**Keywords:** Right to education. University education. Public policy. Northern Region of Rio Grande do Sul.

## RESUMO

*O artigo busca refletir sobre a trajetória histórica e contribuições das políticas públicas e as instituições de ensino da região Norte do Rio Grande do Sul, focando a análise a partir de levantamento de dados sobre a evolução quantitativa do número de instituições de ensino superior e de estudantes na região, no período compreendido entre 2000 e 2018, concernente ao direito a educação. A problemática posta busca evidenciar de que forma as instituições de ensino superior, estão auxiliando e potencializando as vocações produtivas e às demandas sociais que induzam a descentralização/concentração do desenvolvimento na região. O estudo compreende os 32 municípios incluídos no Conselho Regional de Desenvolvimento Norte do Rio Grande do Sul (COREDE Norte). Utiliza-se o procedimento metodológico bibliográfico-investigativo, acrescido de dados e estatísticas do MEC, IPEA, FEE, INEP e COREDE Norte.*

**Palavras-chave:** Direito à Educação. Ensino Superior. Políticas Públicas. Região Norte do Rio Grande do Sul.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The historical trajectory of the constitution of higher education in Brazil, was guided by the process of formation of Brazilian society and its economic, political and social developments. Since their creation, the Institutions of Higher Education (University) have sought to respond to specific demands, from the training of labor, to the intellectual training for the constitution of intellectual high society and the development of regions. Modernly, the right to education has become a fundamental human right, one of the most important dimensions in the realization of human dignity. The principle of the dignity of the human being, implies in treating the human being as an end in himself, and never as a means to an end. Thus, a dignified life cannot be conceived without the institutional and normative guarantee of the right to education. And it is in this spirit that the 1988 Federative Constitution of Brazil, determines that education must promote the qualification of individuals for citizenship and for work. In this sense, the right to education, when exercised, emerges for the process of emancipation and human autonomy and consolidates itself as a procedure for the consolidation of other human rights.

In this context, allowing access, permanence, and possibilities of entry into college is to give completeness to the right to education. Since the first actions of implementation of higher education courses until the beginning of the 21st century, the HEIs demonstrate in their genesis the presence of conflicting opinions and projects that express the divisions and contradictions of society. The contrasting and expressive relationship between university and society is what explains, in part, the fact that, since it's emergence, it has become a social practice based on the public recognition of its legitimacy and its attributions. This assumption is based on a principle of differentiation, which gives it autonomy before other social institutions, and structured by ordinances, rules, norms and values of recognition and legitimacy internal to it. In other words, going through all the dimensions of the reforms implemented in the trajectory of Higher Education, one can see antagonisms such as: the acceleration of the privatization of education (20th century), (CHAVES, 2010) and the expansion of education with the opening of new structures in the 21st century.

The present study seeks to reflect on the historical trajectory and contributions of public policies and educational institutions in the Northern region of Rio Grande do Sul, focusing on the analysis from data collection on the quantitative evolution of the number of higher education institutions and students in the region, in the period between 2000 and 2018, concerning the right to education. The study comprises the 32 municipalities included in the Northern Regional Development Council of Rio Grande do Sul (COREDE Norte) and uses the bibliographic-investigative methodological procedure, plus data and statistics from the MEC, IPEA, FEE, INEP and COREDE Norte.

## 2. HIGHER EDUCATION IN CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES IN THE BRAZILIAN CONTEXT

In Brazil, the first attempts to create higher education courses were elaborated by the Jesuits, in the colonial period, in 1572, in Bahia, but they were extinguished with the expulsion

of the Jesuits from the country in 1759, through the implementation of the reformist policies of the Marquis of Pombal, causing a significant disarticulation of the educational system.<sup>3</sup>

At the beginning of the 19th century, the benchmark for higher education was established, with the transfer of the seat of metropolitan power from Portugal to Brazil. But it was with the transmigration of the Royal Family to Brazil that, in 1808, the Medical Course of Surgery was created in Bahia and, in November of the same year, the Anatomical, Surgical and Medical School was established at the Military Hospital of Rio de Janeiro (FÁVERO, 2006). The main objective of the Portuguese Crown was to create schools and courses related to the need to form and qualify an elite of bureaucrats (white, Portuguese and sons of the elite), considered essential to the management and administration of the political and economic interests of the Crown in the Colony. In addition, they sought to train specialists capable of elaborating and producing symbolic goods needed by the emerging society. In the same way, the aim was to train a range of liberal professionals to support the “new elites”. The higher education establishments were structured separately, and later, after successive attempts, were assembled into universities. Until 1889, all institutions of higher education were state-run, but with the necessity of the State in expanding schooling opportunities, the creation of private colleges began (CUNHA, 1980).

In this way, it is not an exaggeration to state that the Brazilian education system, since the beginning of the Incarnations, promoted and assisted the social segregation since the early school years between the gentiles, the orphans and the white, Portuguese and elite children. This historical observation, in a way, except for the due repairs, is still reproduced under other characteristics. The most evident example is expressed in the search for private schooling, as an idea of quality education, circumscribed to a part of the population that has the economic resources to sustain the expenses with education, and the public school for the rest. This perspective is reproduced in higher education; 75% of students study in private universities (INEP, 2017).

Access to public higher education for the popular classes occurred in recent decades, through public competitive examinations (SAT), in which the majority was eliminated due to insufficient performance in the apprehension of content in the elective tests. With the introduction of other selection mechanisms, exclusion still occurs through the difficulties in accessing the most desired elite courses, which offer the greatest possibilities of absorption by the labor market and the greatest chances of economic returns.

Even with these caveats, data regarding the number of students enrolled in higher education shows growth over the last two decades in Brazil. Between 1991 and 2017, total enrollment more than quadrupled from 1.56 million to 6.63 million, that is, it showed an average expansion rate of 5.5% per year. Another relevant element was the accentuated expansion of the interiorization of universities/faculties outside the capital cities and consolidated metropolitan centers. In this segment, the average growth of enrollments was 5.7% per year during the same period. Decentralization, when adopted, becomes an effective strategy, as it allows the expansion of

3 During the colonial period Brazil was dominated, externally, by the Portuguese Crown; internally, by a mercantile and patriarchal bourgeoisie that had its moment of glory in the middle of the 17th century, with the sugar cycle in Pernambuco and Bahia. During the Colonial Period, given the failures of the Portuguese elites, it was up to the local elites to develop in their own way local administration actions to continue with the administration of the country. The country went through a second cycle of expansion, which peaked a century later, with the gold and diamonds of Minas Gerais, but this was by nature a transitory cycle. After 1750, for about 100 years, the Brazilian economy went into decay, showing how the Portuguese mercantile colonization was incapable of establishing modern capitalism and a sustained development process in the country. At the time of Independence, income per inhabitant in Brazil was visibly lower than in European and some Latin American countries. The economic decadence, which was also the long decadence of the sugar mill owners, only ended with the coffee expansion, which gained momentum in the mid-19th century. See Caio Prado Jr. (1979a), Celso Furtado (1982) and Ignácio Rangel (1980).

the possibilities of access to higher education, including in regions that have a low Human Development Index (HDI). Based on this context, higher education institutions located in the interior of the country became notable on a national level, raising their participation in the total number of enrollments from 49% to 53%, thus becoming an important axis of Brazilian higher education (INEP, 2017).

Based on this new geographic/spatial configuration of Brazilian higher education, the South/Southeast regions, although they have registered equally accentuated growth (average annual increase of 4.7% between 1991 and 2017), have lost relative position, in 1991 this prime area accounted for 75% of the contingent of students enrolled in in-class undergraduate courses, in 2017, this participation had reduced to 60% (INEP, 2017). When analyzing the 2018 Census of Higher Education, regarding the percentage of HEIs, by administrative category in Brazil, the data indicated that there are 299 public HEIs and 2,238 private HEIs.

Regarding public HEIs: 42.8% are state (128); 36.8% are federal (110); and 20.4% are municipal (61). In terms of the participation of universities, 53.8% of the offer is public. Among the private HEIs, colleges predominate (86.2%), while of the federal HEIs, 57.3% correspond to universities, 36.4% to Federal Institutes of Education, Science and Technology (IFS) and Federal Centers of Technological Education (CEFETS); 1.8% to colleges and 4.5% are university centers (INEP, 2018).

It is important to point out that the expansion is the sum of several efforts and demands from society and specific groups: regional leaders, educational segments, and public policies. The action of the federal government, despite its responsibility, was decisive in the process, by establishing public policies of a systemic nature. Thus, if adopted continuously, the strategy points in the direction that can reduce or enhance regional inequalities, in which the State becomes the main articulator and inducer, a fundamental assumption widely studied by institutional economics. For North (1990), institutions have the “power of the game”, insofar as they promote the regulated interaction of individuals, by means of protocol relations (formalized and written laws and constitutions that dictate the rules of the game), set in motion and executed by governments, agents or actors with some power of coercion. Institutions are structures that somehow condition and regulate people’s social behavior, which are regular and standardized by means of ideas and the translated values of a given society (NEALE, 1994).

As examples of this strategy, there are the actions effected by the interiorization, as already mentioned, of the federal higher education network, foreseen in the National Education Plan - 2001/2010; in the Support Program for Restructuring and Expansion Plans of Federal Universities (REUNI); in the Financing Fund for Higher Education Students (FIES); in the University for All Program (PROUNI); in the creation of Federal Institutes of Education, Science and Technology (IFET) and in the National System for Evaluation of Higher Education (SINAES). Moreover, there are the public social policies of social inclusion that allowed, through the institutionalization of quotas, greater access of students from state public networks and black, indigenous and mixed race students in higher education courses throughout the country.

Moreover, it is important to highlight, that in addition to the perspectives generated with the process of enlargement of the strategic role of education and the possibilities of inclusion of a larger contingent of adults in higher education. Moreover, the projection of impacts felt in the job market are points of view that create expectations in a large portion of the local and regional population. On the other hand, the character promoted by decentralization has triggered,

stimulated, and created opportunities for new processes of professional training, employment, and income in places where these possibilities did not exist.

In the same way, the states also collaborated with the process of expansion of higher education. According to data from official agencies, the states have 42 universities and 04 state colleges in Brazil. The State of Paraná has the largest number, 7 in total; followed by Bahia, São Paulo with 4 HEIs, Ceará and Rio de Janeiro with 3, Alagoas, Maranhão, Minas Gerais with 2 and 1 in the States of Amapá, Amazonas, Distrito Federal, Goiás, Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul, Pará, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Piauí, Rio Grande do Norte and Rio Grande do Sul. The best state universities in Brazil, taking into consideration the various evaluation elements and their alternations from year to year in teaching, research fields, extension actions, research, enrollment, evasion, insertion in the labor market, innovation and internationalization are listed the University of São Paulo (USP), State University of Campinas (UNICAMP), Paulista State University “Júlio de Mesquita Filho” (UNESP); State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), State University of Londrina (UEL) and the State University of Maringá (UEM), (INEP, 2018).

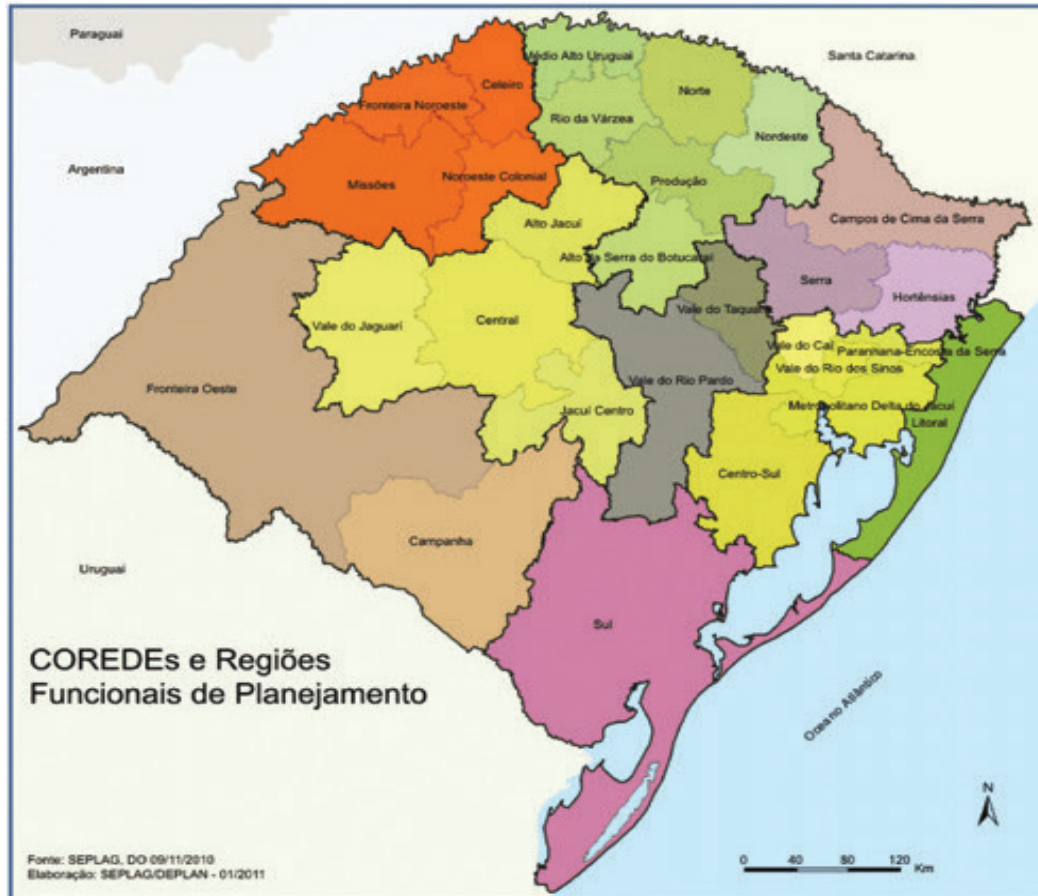
### 3. ABOUT THE NORTHERN REGIO OF RIO GRANDE DO SUL EM HIGHER EDUCATION

A The first higher education schools created in Rio Grande do Sul were the School of Pharmacy and Chemistry, in September 1895, and the School of Engineering. Initially, the emergence of higher education in Rio Grande do Sul followed a path similar to the traditional pattern in the country, that is, the creation of isolated schools and colleges that later became universities. The dynamics of regional political and economic development, with the change of dynamic centers, implied changes in the concentration, demand and supply of higher education, as well as new institutional proposals. Much of this strategy has been affected through a very interiorized higher education network, with a large number of prominent institutions in various municipalities. Data tabulated in 2019, revealed that in 2017 it had 21 universities, 7 university centers, 103 colleges, and 3 Federal Institutes of Education Science and Technology (SECRETARIA DE PLANEJAMENTO E GESTÃO, 2019).

The region of the Regional Council for the Development of the North of Rio Grande do Sul (COREDE NORTE), (Figure 1), according to 2018 estimates, had a population of 230,682 inhabitants (FEE, 2018) and was the last in the phase of the colonization process and Settlement of the state, detaching caboclos, indigenous and black people who occupied the land before the arrival of European settlers (COREDE NORTE, 2017). In the 1970s, the region suffered a significant and intense process of rural exodus and deterritorialization, due in part to the large industrialization stimulated by federal, regional and state public policies. The deterritorialization process of the Brazilian regions is connected with the growing territorial occupation, with the continuous transformation of agricultural production and of society in general, which in the last 50 years, the country went from an eminently rural and agricultural perspective to another, predominantly urban and industrial (TOLEDO, 2017). Regarding the offer of education, it is with the arrival of European immigrants, from the beginning of the twentieth century, that the educational scenario is effective through the emergence of initiatives of community education, at

first, and later the function was being implemented and expanded by the public administration in state and municipal levels.

Figura 1 – Territorial division of the Regional Development Councils (COREDES).

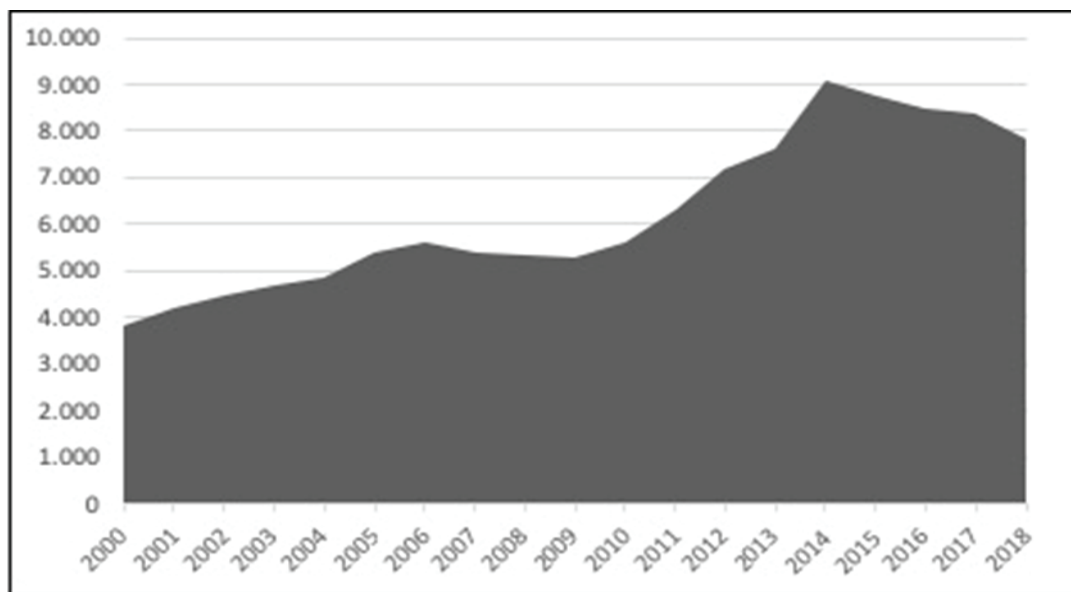


Source: Foundation of Economics and Statistics (FEE), (2014).

The Corede Norte of Rio Grande do Sul, occupies the third position in the component on education in the state ranking, with a performance equivalent to 0.750. In the educational structure of the region, there are 236 educational establishments at the levels of elementary school (161), middle school (48), high school (48), young-adult (22) and special (5), (COREDE NORTE, 2017). It is important to highlight that regarding education, although the Corede Norte region of Rio Grande do Sul shows good performance, it still has a high percentage of adults with incomplete primary education.

The recent expansion of higher education in Brazil was built from a set of actions and programs that made it possible to increase the number of enrollments (Figure 2). In 2000, 3,800 students were enrolled and in 2018, more than 7,800 (49% growth), whose peak enrollment was in 2014 with 9,071, (FEE, 2018). The policy option guaranteed the democratization of access to both public and private institutions. In the higher education modality, the region has 18 establishments. Of these three institutions are of public origin: the State University of Rio Grande do Sul (UERGS), the Federal Institute of Rio Grande do Sul (IFRS) and the Federal University of the Southern Border (UFFS) and one is declared community, the Integrated Regional University (URI) and the others (14) are of private order and character (PREFEITURA MUNICIPAL DE ERECHIM, 2020). Figure 2 - Number of enrollments in the Northern Corede (2000-2018).

Figure 2 - Number of enrollments in the Northern Corede (2000-2018).



Source: FEE Open Dates (2020).

In terms of theoretical approach, it is pertinent to use the perspective advocated by Hirschmann (1977) on the negative tendency to consolidate and promote development in areas with low human development index through the State, in which the allocation of resources in public investments occurs in a residual or compensatory manner, without the ability to promote structural transformations. Basically, according to the author, the most common option is to shift efforts to regions that are friendlier and more favorable to economic growth, whose productive and social infrastructure (roads, education, health) are already consolidated, and that benefit the pole cities with more attractive and dynamic economies. This process, can happen when the regions meet the appropriate conditions to make investments and that beckon with the possibility of profit. In the case of the region under study, public investments have occurred, notably in the last decades, a factor that has potentiated the expansion and interiorization of public higher education institutions (UERGS, UFFS, and IFRS). On the other hand, the contributions of institutional economics (NORTH, 1990) are still fundamentally relevant, by focusing analytical efforts to highlight the role of institutional, inductive and regulatory of the State, and in the case of the study proposal, on the expansion of public investments, openness and regulation for the expansion of private investments in higher education institutions.

#### 4. PUBLIC POLICIES, REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND HIGHER EDUCATION: PERSPECTIVES FOR COREDE NORTE DO RIO GRANDO DO SUL

The birth of the idea of public policy is a legacy of the academic studies emerging in the United States of America. The process emerged by skipping the steps followed by the European tradition of studies and research focused on the analytical area on the State and its institutions, than on the production of governments. However, in conceptual terms, there is neither a single,

nor a better, definition of what is public policy (SOUZA, 2006). For many authors, public policy can be the disciplinary field that analyzes the government under the aegis of public issues (MEAD,1995). It can be the set of government actions that will produce specific effects, through political delegation that influence the lives of citizens (LYNN, 1980, PETERS, 1986). However, the definition best known in the literature and used is the one introduced by Laswell (1936), translated into those decisions and analyses that fall on public policy that implies answering the following fundamental questions: Who gains what with public policy? Why and what difference does it make?

In this context, it seems that these are the central questions that any public policy must answer. In other words, the problem of measuring and analyzing the impacts of any public policy lies in the problematization or methodological difficulty suggested by Arretche (1998), when he emphasizes that the main weakness lies precisely in analytically demonstrating that the results found (whether success or failure) are casually related to the products and public goods offered by a given policy. That is to say, how to correctly establish the strategies used to capture and diminish complexity and subtlety in order to reduce imprecision when isolating cause and effect variables. The enigma lies in how to attribute the results solely to a public policy, being that, sometimes, the results can be potentiated, masked by the presence and interface with policies of other administrative spheres (state or municipal), and that operate in the same institutional environment, and sometimes, aiming at the same objectives.

In this arena, public policies for higher education related to the demands for the promotion of regional development are placed. Like the concept of public policy, it is diffuse to conceptualize precisely what regional development is. The formulation acts in the sphere of fad and unfolding of the modern utopia of sustainable development (BURSZTYN, BURSZTYN, 2012), prescribed in the Bruntland Report, which seeks to meet present needs without compromising the needs of the future, which ultimately means rethinking with the process of expropriation of goods and natural assets by industrial society. Andrade (1987) that regional development refers to a process triggered by programs guided by several principles: capital of each region, population aware and interested in promoting development.

For POLÈSE (1998), regional economic development occurs through the decentralization of policies and regional strategies. In this way, the economic base allows capital, labor, and economic inclinations to flow as a support for the region's development and according to its vocation (agricultural, industrial, or commercial), allied to the human factor (culture, customs, work practices, etc.). In this way, development (or growth?) is sought through increased production and, at the same time, to promote changes in technical and institutional arrangements. In this aspect, the mediation of the State exercised by regulation is vital, in the prospection and use of resources and investments, including in education. It is expected in some way to indicate the project of nation to be built by all citizens.

The 1988 Federal Constitution (FC) categorizes access to education as a fundamental social right (Article 6), foreseeing the common competence of the Union, the States, the Federal District, and the Municipalities<sup>4</sup> o provide the means for its access (Article 23, item V), also high-

4 The Constitution is clear when it attributes to the Union, in Article 22, XXIV, private competence to legislate on "directives and bases of education". Even though it can be delegated to another federative entity, according to the sole paragraph of the same provision<sup>7</sup>, it can be affirmed that the Union, to better serve the general interests, has the power to regulate education by providing for its method and organization. As for the competence, the Municipalities will act primarily in elementary school and early childhood education. The States and the Federal District will have priority in primary and secondary education.



lighting that it is the duty of both the State, the family, and society to promote it, aiming at the full development of the person for the exercise of citizenship and qualification for work (Article 227). Regarding higher education, the responsibility can be assumed by municipalities, States and the Union. In Brazil, most HEIs are under the responsibility of the Union. On the other hand, with respect to the budgetary availability for the development of education, the FC indicates in Article 212, by providing for the division and redistribution of resources earned through taxes for the maintenance of education, further determining the priority of meeting the needs of compulsory education, especially for the purposes of achieving universality, quality and equity of education, as defined by the National Education Plan (BRASIL, 1998).

When considering the growing material and subjective needs of modern societies, education becomes a central element in promoting development, focused on the production of science, on the elevation of socioeconomic opportunities and on the expansion of citizenship. As anticipated, Corede Norte has a large higher education network with 18 establishments. Sen (2000) considers that education, together with the offer of health policies, influences the freedom and the individual's ability to live better and develop his potentials. In this way, the empowerment of the individuals' capacity has repercussions in enabling them to make the best choices and to participate more effectively in economic and political activities. Sen emphasizes that illiteracy can be an extraordinary barrier to participation in these activities. He also emphasizes that a country, state, or region can be very rich in economic terms and yet be very poor in terms of the quality of human life of its citizens.

In this scenario, it is possible to collect information on actions and activities developed in the analyzed region in the areas of teaching, extension and research. The State University of Rio Grande do Sul is distributed in 07 regions and has 64 courses offered annually in the IES. Of the 2,500 vacancies authorized in e-MEC in 2018, 38 courses are listed as SISU participants. Of the 1,465 vacancies offered in SISU, 884 vacancies are affirmative action. (UERGS, 2018), which thus becomes an important element of inclusion.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Understanding the right to education and the formation of Brazilian society requires recognizing the process of implementation and consolidation of higher education in the historical and socio-legal formation process of Brazil. As a fundamental right, the recognition of the right to education is not recent, although considerable progress has been made in this field since the 1988 Federal Constitution. The right to higher education with the right to fundamental education in the Charter of 1988 is identified, when analyzing the role of the State and the limits of its constitutionally foreseen actions.

Thus, the objective of this study was to reflect on the historical trajectory and contributions of public policies and educational institutions in the Northern region of Rio Grande do Sul. It was possible to verify that, in the region studied, the offer of higher education is expressive and that they seek to meet the principles expressed in art. 206 of the FC of 1988, adapted to the definition and conformation of this field. For example, there is the issue of universal and free education,

in which one must consider that higher education cannot be treated in the same parameters as primary and secondary education, since it is not considered a compulsory level of education.

When it comes to development and public policies, it is common to read and hear from specialists and researchers that the economic development of Brazil in the five centuries after the process of occupation and settlement was frustrating, but it did not fail to occur. Inequality is always an element pointed out among the fundamental problems, surpassing even that of other Latin American countries. Nevertheless, living standards have improved moderately for almost everyone, and society has diversified and increased its level of education. On the political level, the trajectory has been through the following regimes: Colonial, Imperial, Republic and the reestablishment of democracy in 1985, although it has been discouraging on the economic and justice levels, it has followed its trajectory between advances and setbacks.

This political-administrative transition process that took place as society and politics diversified and fragmented, disorganized and reorganized, imposed on the old elites and the new political and social actors some obstacles in defining their own interests and, consequently, in leveraging access to Higher Education in Brazil. These transformations are the expression of the complexification of civil society in Brazil. Like the market, civil society is not rational, does not follow a course nor obeys a specific logic. It consists of agents who rationally seek to identify their own interests with the collective ones, but whose success in this attempt is always precarious.

The economic and social dynamics of the Brazilian regions in the first two decades of the 21st century have been influenced by a set of factors that have made it complex, diversified, and excluding countless social categories. In general, as a result of the accumulation pattern centered mainly on commodities and as an effect of the low performance of the transformation industry, a more interiorized and less metropolitan character of the Brazilian production has been noted, inserting the small and intermediate cities in the range of expansion of public policies of punctual development, inclusive and reparatory public policies. In this context, there is an expansion of Higher Education in all Brazilian states.

In the South of Brazil, three institutions were established after the year 2000. The institutions bring in their commitment to the expansion of schooling, regional development and socio-cultural strengthening through extension and research actions.

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