

Bill (2614/2024) of the National Education Plan - interview with Minister of Education Camilo Santana, Senator Teresa Leitão and Heleno Araújo

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The return of a government from the popular democratic field has provided advances in policy proposals and their democratization through participatory processes. The holding of the National Conference on Education – Conae 2024 by the National Education Forum – FNE and the Ministry of Education – MEC –, preceded by free, municipal, state, district and regional conferences, having a new National Education Plan – PNE as its axis, as well as the establishment of bases for the state, district and municipal plans, enabled the collective and democratic construction of Conae 2024 Final Document with proposals, goals and strategies involving a systemic and emancipatory

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conception of education, aimed at overcoming inequalities and asymmetries in the institutional field. MEC, based on this final document and the contributions of a Working Group – MEC's GT PNE, forwarded Bill 2614/2024, which addresses PNE 2024/2034, to the National Congress on June 27, 2024.

In order to understand this process and its outcomes, we invited the Minister of Education Camilo Santana, the Senator Teresa Leitão, and Heleno Araújo, the coordinator of the National Education Forum, to the *Interview* section. This section aims to inform the reader about the political and pedagogical perspectives and views of the interviewees regarding PNE, the National Education System – SNE and the challenges to guarantee the right to quality education for all people.

Interviewers: Luiz Fernandes Dourado, Carlos Abicalil, Fátima Silva, Guelda Andrade and Leda Scheibe.

How do you assess the role of the National Education Forum – FNE in the agenda of proposing, monitoring and evaluating the National Education Plan – PNE?

Minister of Education Camilo Santana: I believe that an open and democratic dialogue is the only possible way to build the education policies that Brazil needs. And the role of the National Education Forum – FNE is essential for a broad debate as it is the space that brings together a great range of representatives of organizations and social movements, in permanent dialogue with the Ministry of Education and the government. More than this, regarding the National Education Plan, National Education Forum also has the indispensable legal role, defined by Law No. 13,005/2014, which approved PNE 2014-2024, as an instance of articulation of the national conferences on education with the regional, state and municipal conferences that precede them. The law also establishes FNE as one of the bodies responsible for monitoring the implementation of the goals, with emphasis on the goal of increasing public investment in public education and defining the Student-Quality Cost – CAQ as a parameter for financing all stages and modalities of basic education. These attributions are reinforced by Bill No. 2614/2024, from the new PNE 2024-2034, submitted by President Lula to the National Congress.

Senator Teresa Leitão: We must recognize and celebrate the centrality of the National Education Forum – FNE, the highest expression of society's participation in public education policies. A historic achievement and a space that has been widely claimed throughout our struggles, established in 2010 and then ratified in 2014.

FNE is one of the legal spheres for monitoring and evaluating the National Education Plan, which is, by constitutional definition, the articulator of the National Education System – SNE, another national challenge. On this account, FNE is strategic. It must fulfill a role as a State body – to monitor PNE and contribute to its implementation –, while

being a living organism and a strategic institution in SNE as an instance of dialogue, participation and social agreement in the area of education at the same time.

It is for no other reason that it was one of the collegiate bodies attacked and dismantled after the coup against President Dilma Rousseff. Therefore, FNE must be recognized for its legitimacy and diversity as a hub that brings together the most varied expressions of national education, from nursery to postgraduate education, from public and private education, in short, all stages, levels and modalities, in all their nuances, always in defense of education, the democratization of education and democracy itself in our country.

FNE, fulfilling its role and legal attributions, together with MEC, promoted and held a major National Conference on Education – Conae –, with its peak in January 2024, in its national stage, after mobilizing the entire country in the debate on education to guide the construction of a PNE with social participation.

Heleno Araújo: The Brazilian Federal Constitution determines that the Right to Education is a right of all people, a duty of the State and that educational policies must be developed with the participation of society. On this account, in order to comply with the constitutional determination, the National Education Forum, state, district and municipal education forums play a fundamental role in the debate, in the elaboration of proposals, in the disputes over the conception of a democratic, popular and emancipatory education, in the approval of education plan laws, in their monitoring and periodic evaluations. The responsibility of education forums in coordinating Conferences on Education shows how important these education forums are in ensuring the existence and implementation of education plan laws.

The intersection horizon between the National Education Plan – PNE and the National Education System – SNE is reinforced by Bill 2614/2024, sent to the National Congress by Lula’s administration. Constitutionally, PNE is the articulator of SNE. This involves the implementation of a true federative pact in education, necessary to ensure stability, perennial policies and quality equitable education. To do so, fundamental dimensions such as democratic management, the appreciation of education professionals, educational modalities, evaluation and financing must be considered. What limits and/or possibilities can be seen in this direction in the current proposal? Why is it important to institutionalize SNE and regulate federative cooperation in education?

Senator Teresa Leitão: I would say that more than a horizon of intersection between plan and system, it is necessary that one activates and dynamizes the other. PNE helps to effectively format a National System. That is why Article 214 was defined and then modified in 2009 as: the 10-year National Education Plan established by law aims to articulate the National Education System in a collaborative regime. On this account, PNE defines

guidelines, objectives, goals and implementation strategies to ensure the maintenance and development of education at its various levels, stages and modalities. And to enforce this plan, which guides public policies, we must have federative cooperation, we must have a system with integrated actions by public authorities of the different federative spheres, all mobilized to guarantee the right to each and every one in any territory.

Institutionalizing a National Education System – SNE –, therefore, in a supplementary law will be the expression of a federative pact in education by achieving a qualified quorum for its approval and by defining areas for negotiation and agreement that are spaces for the exercise of dialogue and cooperation in our education. For example, during the pandemic, under the leadership of the Ministry of Education – MEC –, we were unable to mediate and coordinate actions so that children, young people and adults could maintain their minimum bonds with teachers and with schools, universities and institutes, and where the bond was possible, it was precarious and distressing for everyone. This expresses, to a large extent, the consequence of not having an SNE. In other words: we are not clear about who does what at the different levels, stages and modalities of education, under what contexts and conditions of technical and financial support, with which bodies and coordination mechanisms, through negotiation and deliberation processes.

If we have a national body for agreement and cooperation, if we have bodies for coordination between states and municipalities, the provision of education in its entirety scope will be more successful. If we have other spaces for dialogue and social participation (such as forums, education and school councils, for example) to address educational issues with the involvement of education professionals and school and academic communities, we will have much more consistent and legitimate solutions and approaches, as they were constructed by those who understand and practice education every day.

It is important to have a National Education System so that what we advocate can be materialized, which is a systemic agenda for education in the country, from nursery to postgraduate education. In this sense, it is essential that we have stable public spaces for deliberation and decision-making that encompass the different federative spheres, and that we consolidate the mechanisms and instruments for cooperation and collaboration.

We cannot rely on an over-the-counter relationship or a voluntary and fragile partnership, of government only, with precarious, episodic and temporary partnership instruments. A system needs to stabilize relations between the different spheres of public power, it must have democratic participation and management, and a financing model between the federative spheres that can drive the achievement of educational goals, which are an expression of the guarantee of the right to education.

Heleno Araújo: We are in the process of approving the third law of the National Education Plan and we must ask ourselves: why was the Brazilian State unable to implement the two previous laws? Reflections on this question will certainly lead us to affirm

that the two laws were not applied because of the lack of the necessary bases to guarantee their implementation, that is, our limitations and absences have hindered the fulfillment of the right to education, with social quality for all people. The Law of the National Education System was determined by the Federal Constitution in 1988, but it still does not exist; the regulation of the Student-Quality Cost should have already been established in our country, but this has not happened yet; the specific laws of democratic management should have been implemented in all municipalities, states, the Federal District and the Union, but they have not been approved. Therefore, the lack of conditions for cooperation, financing and social participation imposes limits on our progress to implement the National Education Plan, and the Bill sent to the National Congress concerns us in this regard.

Minister of Education Camilo Santana: The link between the National Education Plan – PNE and the National Education System – SNE is constitutional. The core of the creation of SNE is to establish a new architecture for the country's education, ensuring effective coordination between institutions and bodies, with organicity to the educational policies under the responsibility of the Union, states, Federal District and municipalities. This systemic organization is a prerequisite for overcoming the complex challenges and for addressing the educational inequality that have been deepened in recent years.

It is important that Bill No. 235/2019, which addresses SNE and is currently being processed by the National Congress, to be debated by society, especially to improve governance mechanisms, educational planning, quality standards, financing, teacher appreciation, evaluation and regulation of education, considering public and private provision.

Considering the inequalities and asymmetries in national education, is it possible to envision the management and effective expansion of public investment in public education in order to reach, at least, a level of 7% of GDP in the fifth year of PNE and, at least, the equivalent of 10% of GDP at the end of the decade for national education?

Heleno Araújo: It is worth emphasizing that without major investments in public education, the Brazilian State will continue to deny its people the right to education. In 2001, the National Congress approved reaching 7% of GDP by 2010 to be invested in public education, but the president at the time vetoed this item in the National Education Plan Law. In 2014, the second National Education Plan Law approved reaching 7% of GDP by 2020 and 10% by 2024. In practice, we reduced it from 6% in 2014 to 5.1% today. What led the Brazilian State to reverse the legal determination? Constitutional Amendment No. 95 of 2016 was the driver of this reduction; the current Fiscal Framework Law is another driver that prevents the expansion of investments in public education; the high interest

rate determined by the Central Bank, which takes around 45% of GDP into the hands of banks and the super rich in Brazil, is another major driver that prevents the expansion of resources to be invested in public education. These measures take away our perspective of envisioning the application of 7% and 10% for management and effective investment in public education.

Minister of Education Camilo Santana: As President Lula always says, money for education is not an expense, it is an investment. I firmly believe and work every day to defend more investments to guarantee free, quality public education, which could foster the development and the reduction of inequalities in the country.

A central issue in the debate on financing is educational asymmetry, and we have already achieved important progress with the change in weighting factors of Fundeb – the Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and for the Appreciation of Education Professionals –, guaranteeing more resources for rural, indigenous and quilombola schools.

We still have challenges. It is enough to say that the total annual value per student – VAAT in Brazil in 2024 varied between R\$3,761.10 (Ibipitanga - BA) and R\$76,855.41 (Varginha - MG), that is, a ratio of more than twenty times between the highest and the lowest VAAT. The minimum national VAAT ensured by the Union's supplement to all public education networks is R\$8,429.88, according to the first update of 2024 (April), which makes that inequality ratio fall to about 9 times, which is still high. We must continue working on mechanisms capable of reducing disparities in financing capacity. We also need to advance in the search for national standards of quality and Student-Quality Cost – CAQ.

Goal 20 of the current PNE (Law No. 13.003/2014) defined the national target for public investment in public education (considering all stages and levels of education) for 2024 as 10% of GDP. Bill No. 2.614/2024, which proposes the new PNE, in addition to the current goal in relation to the percentage of GDP, presents two new specific goals for increasing investment per student in basic education. The first sets an intermediate goal in terms of the percentage of GDP per capita, which relates the level of investment per student in basic education to the country's real indicator of wealth per inhabitant; and a final goal based on the Student-Quality Cost – CAQ to be defined. The second goal addresses equalizing the financing capacity for basic education among the federative entities, based on CAQ, taking as a reference the national quality standard, as provided for in Article 211, §7 of our Constitution. In other words, at the same time that it is necessary to increase investment per student in basic education based on the country's wealth, it is necessary to improve Fundeb's redistributive mechanism in order to equalize the financing capacity of networks to achieve the nationally agreed Student-Quality Cost.

Senator Teresa Leitão: Financing is central to PNE implementation and SNE establishment agenda. It is the pillar for fulfilling the educational goals for the decade and, at the same time, the driving force behind SNE when defining the relationships of financial complementation and reciprocal support between federative entities. It is a fundamental element for implementing cooperation norms and the national quality standard (in basic and higher education), aiming to achieve what Conae ratified as “qualified decentralization”, that is, a better definition and division of competences followed by the necessary technical and financial conditions for its implementation.

On this account, investment in education as a proportion of our national wealth is not random, but is translated by commitment and calculation so that we have an education typical of a country that invests massively in education to address inequalities and promote equity. This is what we are dealing with and we need to have, in this goal, an expression of a national commitment to education in our country, a structural factor for our national development.

Currently, about 80% of school enrollments are concentrated in public schools. However, there are still problems in access, service and quality in nursery centers, preschools and elementary and secondary education, in addition to gaps in teaching-learning processes and age-grade distortions. How does the new PNE intend to strengthen free public schools, in the specific goals, without delegating school services to private entities, even if they have agreements with the public power?

Minister of Education Camilo Santana: The new PNE, as proposed by the Bill presented by the government (Bill No. 2.614/2024), places new emphasis on the quality of educational provision at all levels, including the need to define quality standards for provision, in addition to goals related to access, regular trajectory and learning results, also highlighting equity in achieving goals.

The participation of private institutions in national education is subject to the terms of Articles 209 and 213 of the Federal Constitution, and the new PNE does not provide for the expansion of this participation. What exists in the cases of higher education and technical and technological education is the proposal of strategies that reach private institutions in improving the quality of the educational provision and the learning of graduates.

Senator Teresa Leitão: I don't believe in a school that is not effectively the size of our Brazil, where not everyone can fit. We need a 'machine' that prepares democracies. This machine is the public school, as Anísio Teixeira taught us. Therefore, PNE must aim, with centrality and priority, to improve the conditions of provision and quality of

our public schools, with appreciated and respected education professionals and decent, safe and welcoming schools.

The meaning of our Constitution, which should be the meaning of the PNE to be approved after the legislative debate, is that public resources will be allocated to public schools and may be directed to community, confessionnal or philanthropic schools in exceptional and already regulated situations, such as scholarships, which are restricted, that is, in short, when there is a lack of vacancies and regular courses in public institutions.

PNE orientations and the State's actions are guided by the fact that the government has to invest primarily in expanding its network in the locality. We have a historical dispute between education projects in the country, including over public funds, and we need to overcome it. This means overcoming in the sense of our social pact for education, which is a quality public school, with public management, for everyone, without any type of exclusion.

Heleno Araújo: Bill No. 2.614/2024 indicates among the objectives of the National Education Plan: the strengthening of the principles of the Democratic Rule of Law, with an emphasis on promoting citizenship; the consolidation of the democratic management of public education; the guarantee of the right to education, with an expansion of educational opportunities at all levels, with a view to improving the humanistic, professional, cultural, scientific, and technological training of young people; the overcoming of educational inequalities and the eradication of all forms of prejudice based on origin, race, sex, color, and age, as well as other forms of discrimination; the universalization of school attendance for the population aged four to seventeen, and the provision of educational opportunities to those who did not have access at the appropriate age; the improvement of the quality of education at all levels, stages, and modalities of education, considering the dimensions of access, permanence, educational processes, and learning and development results; the appreciation of education professionals and the strengthening of teacher professionalization; the increase of public investment in education. The guidelines also support the strengthening of public schools, and our concerns regard the programs because when they are developed, they do not have the participation of representatives of the school community, and when implemented, they are heavily influenced by private sector entities. One example of our concerns relies on private platforms used in public schools. What should be done? And how can we avoid this privatization process?

The regulation of the Student-Quality Cost – CAQ – is considered fundamental for the effective financing of basic education in all its stages and modalities. What is missing so we can have this regulation?

Senator Teresa Leitão: The idea of a quality cost is historical and has echoed in many organizations' struggles over the decades, such as CNTE's – the National Confederation of Education Workers. CAQ is provided for in our legislation and in our Constitution. Law No. 13.005 outlined a roadmap that, in my opinion, has not been followed and that needs to be achieved. The law made it clear that CAQ would be defined and continually adjusted, based on a methodology formulated by MEC and monitored by FNE, CNE, and the Education Committees of the Chamber of Deputies and the Federal Senate. This political and inter-institutional script needs to be overcome so that we can have its full regulation and its progressive and effective implementation so that we can have decent, structured, inclusive and quality schools.

Heleno Araújo: Political will! And when I say that there is a lack of political will, I am referring to Brazilian society as a whole (civil, political and legal). Voters need to value their votes and dedicate them to people whose words are truly aligned with their actions, who defend public services and public education. The Brazilian population must go to the streets and social media to demand a reduction in high interest rates. Politicians in the executive area must implement regulations for existing laws and the judiciary must practice social justice in compliance with current legislation.

Ministry of Education Camilo Santana: There is still no agreement or regulation on what the national quality standards are for the provision of schooling and for the proper functioning of educational institutions.

Our Constitution calls for the establishment of a minimum quality standard considering adequate conditions of provision aligned with the Student-Quality Cost – CAQ, which is agreed under a collaborative regime, but its regulation must be established in a supplementary law. Several legislative proposals have tried to respond to the need for a supplementary law, proposing the establishment of the National Education System – SNE. In this context, the creation of a tripartite inter-managerial body for education, whose responsibilities would include, among others, the agreement on the minimum quality standard for basic education, as set out in §§ 1º and 7º of Art. 211 of the 1988 Federal Constitution, which is presented as a possible way to deal with the still pending issue of the minimum quality standard and CAQ. This does not, however, prevent the Ministry of Education from taking initiatives that contribute to the debate, including as one of the strategies of the new PNE, within the scope of Objective 18, to “ensure quality and equity in the conditions of provision of basic education”.

How can PNE, the epicenter of educational policies, collaborate with the democratization of the bodies responsible for the institutionalization, implementation, control and evaluation of educational policies?

Heleno Araújo: In addition to maintaining the existence of the National Education Forum as the body responsible for coordinating Conferences on Education and for strengthening the democratic management process, the new PNE also indicates to the three spheres of government that the governance of PNE and other plans are going to have a permanent body for negotiation, cooperation and agreement between the Union, the states, the Federal District and the municipalities. It is important to include the entities representing the segments of the school community in this governance committee.

Ministry of Education Camilo Santana: Bill No. 2.614/2024, about the new PNE, emphasizes the role of the bodies responsible for implementing and monitoring compliance with the goals and strategies planned for the next 10 years. It is paramount to strengthen democratic spaces for debate, as specifically expressed in Objective 17 of PNE 2024-2034 Bill, which seeks to strengthen the foundations of social participation and democratic management. Besides, the participation of various segments is ensured as an essential part of the set of goals and specific strategies to each level and modality of education.

Senator Teresa Leitão: PNE presents a systemic view of educational policy planning and its relationship with other areas. It crosses three governments, guides the planning of states, the Federal District and municipalities, and indicates the level of investment needed to advance education in our country. Effective implementation, with monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, requires the establishment of a permanent body for negotiation, cooperation and agreement between the Union, the states, the Federal District, the municipalities, and between the states and their municipalities. These bodies need to be implemented in a plural and legitimate way so that, together with forums and councils, conferences and other spheres of social control, they can foster a broad social consensus for reaching the goals for the next decade. In many ways, PNE must fulfill the function of articulating SNE and democratizing the bodies responsible for its implementation.

Considered essential to the principle of democratic management, how can we ensure the existence and effective functioning of education councils and forums at national, state, district and municipal levels throughout the country over the next decade?

Ministry of Education Camilo Santana: Councils and forums are given special attention in the new Plan's Bill in Objective 17 – Social Participation and Democratic Management. Regarding the three goals related to this objective, one of them proposes “ensuring that all public schools of basic education have established and functioning school councils, with the participation of the different segments of the school community”.

Another goal proposes “ensuring that all federative entities have education forums as permanent instances of social participation, established by law and in operation”. Related to this topic, Strategy 17.3 provides for “ensuring the effective democratic management of education through intra-school and extra-school collegiate bodies, such as: school councils, student unions, parent-teacher associations, education forums and councils, and collegiate bodies for policy management, technical and financial support and for strengthening social participation”.

Senator Teresa Leitão: We need to move forward and ensure institutional instruments to make democratic management effective, including the establishment of guidelines and parameters for democratic management, as I suggested in Bill 2556/2023, presented in my first year in office as a senator. We know that democratic management is a fundamental principle provided for in the Federal Constitution. However, data from the National Institute of Studies and Educational Research Anísio Teixeira – Inep – indicate that the predominant form of choosing principals in public schools is unilateral nomination by the administration (56.3%), for example. Although the country’s set of federal regulations recognizes the relevance and pertinence of adopting the model, there is still little legislative consistency in the states, Federal District, and municipalities. Therefore, the bill we are presenting aims to establish guidelines for the standardization of democratic management in Brazil.

Heleno Araújo: A political decision of the Secretariat for Articulation and Integration with Education Systems – SASE/MEC is needed to recreate the technical commissions in each state, with the objective of guaranteeing technical assistance to create Municipal Education Forums in the 5,570 municipalities of the country, to strengthen education forums and councils that already exist and, in a collaborative and cooperative action, to elaborate state, district and municipal education plans, taking as reference the guidelines, the objectives of the National Education Plan and the local diagnosis carried out by the education forum of each federated entity.

What strategic actions and policies can contribute to the effective universalization of basic education despite the limits of the Fiscal Responsibility Law (Complementary Law No. 101 from 05/04/2000)?

Senator Teresa Leitão: We need an implemented National Education System – SNE and a major national agreement to universalize quality education in our country. A major national agreement involving education leaders from all the three spheres, education professionals, students, school and academic communities, all mobilized to include our children and young people and ensure their continued attendance and permanence in

schools. We need to make equity an effective criterion for establishing priorities to allocate resources and define educational policies in our country. A country like ours cannot continue to deny everyone the right to complete an educational cycle with dignity.

Heleno Araújo: First, we need to change the content of this law and remove the expenses on education workers from the limits imposed by it. It is important to remember that we have around 40 million enrollments in basic education, but we have more than 80 million people who are illiterate, who did not have access to school between the ages of 4 and 17, and that there are people aged 18 or older who have not completed basic education. Therefore, it is clear that we need to build new schools, hold public exams for new education professionals, regulate the Student-Quality Cost, implement measures to appreciate education professionals and approve the Law of the National Education System, in addition to, of course, approving and implementing the laws of education plans in the respective states of the federation.

Ministry of Education Camilo Santana: Once more, the premise is that no developed country has progressed without investing in education. There is no other way. Our ongoing work is to look for alternatives that guarantee resources for free quality public education.

For example, one of the strategies of the new PNE, linked to Objective 18, is to link revenue from taxes and contributions to investment in the Maintenance and Development of Public Education – MDE – and the search for new sources of financing. Another strategy also refers to linking a portion of the profit sharing or financial compensation of oil and natural gas exploration to MDE. The new PNE also refers to the creation of a ten-year plan for investment in educational infrastructure under a regime of co-responsibility between the Union, the states, the Federal District and the municipalities, which considers budgetary resources, tax incentives, credit from development banks and alternative sources of funds for capital expenditures.

What are the most acute challenges for the effective democratization of public higher education? Are there enough proposals and goals to consolidate postgraduate education in Bill 2614/2024?

Heleno Araújo: To ensure the constitutional determination of university autonomy is an action that does not require approval by the next national education plan. It can already be put into practice based on the legal determinations set forth in the Federal Constitution and the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education. In Bill 2614/2024, we find fourteen references to postgraduate education that indicate the democratization of access, permanence and conclusion of studies and stimulate regional, national and

international mobility and the adequate structure for operation, among other actions. I see possibilities for consolidating postgraduate education in the next national education plan, as long as the necessary funding is guaranteed.

Minister of Education Camilo Santana: A first challenge that the new PNE proposal aims to address involves expanding access to higher education in Brazil. In the 25 to 34 age group, 23.2% of Brazilians have completed higher education, compared to the OECD average of 47.2%.

Reducing socioeconomic and racial inequalities also contributes to democratizing access. While among white people the access to higher education considering the population aged 25 to 34 is 34%, among black people it is about half that. On this account, the new PNE sets goals for access, permanence and conclusion of undergraduate studies that aim to increase the participation of the population aged 18 to 24 with access to undergraduate studies and the percentage of the population aged 25 to 34 with a completed undergraduate degree to 40%, thereby reducing inequalities among different social groups.

Regarding postgraduate education, according to report Education at a Glance by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development – OECD, while Brazil has only 0.8% of people aged 25 to 64 with a master's degree, the average for the countries that are part of the organization is 13%. Although stricto sensu postgraduate education in Brazil is recognized as having high quality, they still unequally reach a small portion of the population throughout the country. The new PNE proposes a goal of increasing the number of master's and doctoral degrees aiming to increase the percentage of master's and doctoral degrees in the population, taking into account regional, racial, linguistic, socioeconomic, gender and disability inequalities.

Senator Teresa Leitão: We face the challenge of ensuring access equalization policies to higher education in our country. We need to consolidate the process of expansion and internalization, concluding the efforts to increase the provision that we saw in the first governments of President Lula and President Dilma Rousseff, which have now been significantly resumed. We also need to pay close attention to the processes of regulation, monitoring, evaluation and inspection of the quality of private higher education through state policies and MEC's management. We can consider the issue of distance learning, for example, which could be part of the solutions, but has become a major problem at this level.

Finally, as a backup to what we have seen in the recent attacks on universities, we need to grant higher education institutions the autonomy they are supposed to have, improving processes for organizing, managing and financing higher education.

What actions and policies should be developed to ensure the effective implementation of educational plans that address the current environmental emergency situation in the states, Federal District and municipalities in accordance with PNE?

Minister of Education Camilo Santana: The Federal Government has been responding firmly and quickly to each of the environmental emergency situations that have occurred in various parts of the country, with increasing frequency and more extreme effects each day. This is a global issue that concerns and affects all countries and that has been addressed in Brazil with priority and robust investments through the resumption of socio-environmental and climate policy on its various fronts. Overcoming these challenges also involves education, which plays a central role in raising awareness for environmental conservation and developing a sustainable culture, as stated in the National Environmental Education Policy – Law No. 9795/1999.

The new PNE 2024-2034, in an innovative way, provides for the promotion of socio-environmental sustainability as one of its guidelines. From this perspective, education should contribute to preparing all people for this new reality, both for the immediate confrontation of various occurrences and for mitigating the causes and reducing the effects of environmental emergencies. The new PNE foresees a set of measures related to environmental issues, starting with early childhood education, but ensuring the implementation of curricular guidelines for environmental education at other levels of education, up to postgraduate studies. In addition, it also establishes strategies for intersectoral articulations to meet the demands of environmental education, which are linked to economic, social and educational development.

Senator Teresa Leitão: As a country and planet, we have not fulfilled our role of protection and care and we no longer have any alternatives other than to implement a new model of development and relationship with the environment. On the contrary, we inherited a government in which destruction was a practice. As I have already said, the global reality is one of increasingly difficult, complex and dangerous coexistence regarding extreme rainfall, severe droughts, higher temperatures, more severe storms, increasingly warmer oceans, species being decimated, and increasing food shortages. If protecting the environment has already been an agenda of the future, today it is an urgent agenda of the present.

In this context, we cannot fail to place education at the center. I speak as an educator who believes that if education alone does not change the world, neither will the world change without education. In PNE and in the education plans of the states, the Federal District and the municipalities, we need to promote and guarantee a state policy that offers environmental education from a sustainability perspective at all levels, stages and modalities of education. We need to work on a policy to train education professionals in

the environmental area and, likewise, it is urgent to continuously promote the articulation and establishment of partnerships between Education and Environment secretariats.

I also believe that it will be necessary to promote, foster and prioritize educational processes for training and development of contingency and coping plans regarding emergency situations in face of these extreme climate events.

Heleno Araújo: The debate on climate/environmental issues cannot be left out of schools. For the benefit of current and future generations, content on these topics needs to be included at all levels, stages, and modalities of education, respecting the characteristics, age and level of understanding of students, from preschool to graduate school. Therefore, in addition to this content being included in education plans, it will be necessary to link other action plans on climate/environmental issues developed by other ministries and international organizations. The inclusion of a new axis in the reference document for the National Conference on Education – Conae 2024 – promoted a broad debate on environmental issues. With several proposals being presented and approved in Conae 2024 Final Document, this document is our reference for acting in the National Congress and asserting the strength of the topic and the importance of its inclusion in the next National Education Plan.

The National Congress approved the extension of the current PNE until the end of 2025. What are your expectations regarding the processing of Bill 2614/2024 in the National Congress? What level of political engagement and social mobilization will it require?

Senator Teresa Leitão: I believe it is worth remembering how challenging it was to approve the previous PNE. I do not believe that we will face the same situation, but we cannot lose sight of this, especially when we talk about political engagement and social mobilization. These are two elements that we can never do without when we talk about building progress towards a public, quality, democratic and inclusive education. The High School Bill and its approval in the Chamber of Deputies, which backtracked on important points after we managed to reach a consensus in the Senate through much dialogue, is an example of how education is seen as strategic, regardless of conceptions, whether liberal and conservative or progressive and emancipatory.

Heleno Araújo: We must consider that Bill 2614/2024 got to the National Congress a year and a half late. A 10-year education plan crosses two and a half governments, so it needs and should be treated as a state policy, which has not happened in the last 10 years. Therefore, I expect Bill 2614/2024 to be processed within this one-and-a-half-year period, which is in line with the Law that extended the deadline of the current National

Education Plan until December 2025. To prevent it from going beyond this deadline, we will need to mobilize and pressure the National Congress on the streets, on social media and through visits to the offices of parliamentarians in Brasília and in each state.

Minister of Education Camilo Santana: The proposal for the new PNE is the result of a broad dialogue between different social sectors, with social mobilization and the participation of our parliamentarians. We have presented a solid, technical proposal with clear goals and objective monitoring mechanisms. I hope that the National Congress remains sensitive to the importance of Education in Brazil's agenda and prioritizes the debate around this fundamental issue.

Social mobilization remains an essential key to the collective construction and processing of proposals. The engagement of the entire society is essential, not only for the approval of the PNE 2024-2034, but also to meet the objective conditions for implementing the goals and strategies to be approved.

It will not be an easy path, considering the election year and due to facing so many other competing issues, but those who need access to and permanence in quality, inclusive and equitable education are the ones in the greatest hurry. Brazil is in a hurry.

Considering that the PNE proposal sent to Congress is the result of a collective construction, how do you evaluate your personal and institutional participation in the process of processing Bill 2614/2024?

Heleno Araújo: I have a positive assessment, I believe I was strongly engaged in the debates and development of proposals for the next National Education Plan and, the entity I represent, the National Confederation of Education Workers – CNTE –, had an extraordinary and direct participation through the people in the entity's management, as well as the municipal, state and district unions affiliated with CNTE. We are proud of the work we carried out in the stages of the National Conference on Education – Conae 2024. Our unions made strong contributions to the process of organizing, preparing, executing and producing proposals for the new PNE, but we also believe that Bill 2614/2024 points out measures to reduce what has already been achieved in the current PNE Law, it has contradictory points, objectives and goals that are slow to be met and it fails to take advantage of some valuable proposals that are included in Conae 2024 Final Document. Let's keep fighting with determination!

Minister of Education Camilo Santana: The presentation of Bill 2614/2024 by the Union to Congress was an achievement for the Brazilian people. The entire drafting process was challenging, given the delay in the agenda and the conviction that its construction had to be collective and democratic. We opened MEC's doors to dialogue with

all segments of society, with states and municipalities, in a systematic and coordinated way, investing in the reconstruction of institutional spaces for participation and democratic management of education. Based on this consultation, it was possible to reconstitute the National Education Forum – FNE – and carry out Conae 2024, which mobilized the debate on education in a surprisingly agile way. We worked together to deliver this to Congress. We will work even harder to ensure that the text is improved and, above all, approved quickly, so that it can be articulated with the new subnational plans and we can accelerate the transformation of the Education that we are committed to making. This would be a national victory.

Senator Teresa Leitão: My involvement began with the negotiations to reconstitute FNE and to ensure the holding of the National Conference on Education, which was the target of attacks and fake news. Once this stage was completed, I was able to dedicate myself to Conae both as a senator and as a delegate, with great honor, joy and, of course, being aware of the importance of what was agreed upon to advance education. Now, my role is that of an attentive legislator with a great commitment to the National Education Plan. The current moment is to deepen the debate. For this reason, I submitted a request for the Senate to start a series of public hearings on the plan, given its strategic nature for overcoming educational and, consequently, national challenges once national development presupposes substantial investments in quality education. Next, I will monitor the progress and fight in the Senate for it to be approved within the agreed time, with dialogue, of course, and respect for the result of a qualified and broad consultation with society, experts and the category. *Conae Final Document* is a fundamental reference.