# INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: SOCIAL PROJECTS AND PUBLIC POLICIES THAT GUARANTEE THE ACCESS AND RETENTION OF IMMIGRANT CHILDREN IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM OF THE CITY OF SÃO PAULO

# EDUCAÇÃO INCLUSIVA: PROJETOS SOCIAIS E POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS QUE GARANTEM O ACESSO E A PERMANÊNCIA DE CRIANÇAS IMIGRANTES NO SISTEMA PÚBLICO DE ENSINO DO MUNICÍPIO DE SÃO PAULO

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***Abstract[3]**: Immigrant children[4] arriving in the city of São Paulo face numerous challenges, above all, those regarding the realization of their right to a school education. Given this scenario, the question that arises is: which public projects and policies contribute to their access to the public school system? To answer this question, the frameworks that enshrine the right to a school education were examined. Next, a series of policies and initiatives developed in the municipality were presented, ranging from the creation of specialized agencies to the adoption of practices that reduce school dropout rates and discrimination, raise awareness among education professionals, and promote intercultural understanding. Ultimately, the findings showed that these projects and policies ensure immigrant children's access to and retention in the public school system. The study methodology was based on qualitative research using the deductive method. Descriptive qualitative research was also conducted. For the analytical and interpretive analysis, human rights hermeneutics was used as a reference.*

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4 In this paper, one has chosen to use the term "child" in the same sense as defined in Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: every human being under 18 years of age. On the protection of children's human rights as rights-holders, see: LIMA, Carolina Alves de Souza; SANTAREM, V. N. M., "Comprehensive Protection of Children in the International Human Rights System and Its Impact on Brazilian Law," *Revista Brasileira de Direitos Humanos*, vol. IX, 2020, pp. 32–56.

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***Table of Contents***: *1. Introduction; 2. The Right to Inclusive School Education for Immigrant Children in the City of São Paulo; 3. Social Projects and Public Policies that Guarantee the Access and Retention of Immigrant Children in the Public Education System of the Municipality of São Paulo; 4. Concluding Remarks; 5. References.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

São Paulo is a city with a long history of welcoming immigrants and is known for its diversity and multicultural character. However, those who arrive there, especially the most economically vulnerable, keep facing challenges of all kinds, such as xenophobia, discrimination, language barriers, lack of awareness of their rights, lack of documentation, and difficulty accessing public services. These challenges are even greater when it comes to immigrant children, particularly with regard to realizing their right to a school education.

Given this scenario, the question that arises is: which social programs and public policies contribute to ensuring that these children can access and remain in the public school system of the city of São Paulo? To answer this question, one will first provide a brief overview of national, state, municipal, and international regulations regarding immigrant children's right to education, with an emphasis on state and municipal laws, while addressing the concept of inclusive education.

Subsequently, one will present a series of public policies and social projects developed in the municipality in this area, ranging from the creation of specialized agencies equipped to listen to and advise the immigrant population on their rights, to the adoption of practices that reduce school dropout rates and discrimination, raise awareness among education professionals, and promote intercultural understanding. Ultimately, it will be demonstrated that these projects and policies ensure immigrant children's access to and retention in the public school system.

The study methodology is based on qualitative research using a deductive approach, incorporating bibliographic and documentary research as well as an analysis of regulatory sources. There is also descriptive qualitative research regarding social projects and public policies that ensure refugee children's access to and retention in the public school system in the municipality of São Paulo. For the analytical and interpretive analysis, human rights hermeneutics was used as a reference, with an emphasis on international human rights law.

## 2 THE RIGHT TO INCLUSIVE SCHOOL EDUCATION FOR IMMIGRANT CHILDREN IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF SÃO PAULO

As is well known, education is a fundamental right enshrined in Article 6 of the Constitution of the Republic, in the Statute of the Child and Adolescent[5] (Law

[5] Available at: http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/l8069.htm, Accessed on: April 10, 2023.

No. 8,069/90), in the Law on Guidelines and Foundations of Education[6] (Law No. 9,394/96), in the Refugee Law[7] (Law No. 9,474/97), in the Migration Law[8] (Law No. 13,445/2017), and in international treaties, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, incorporated into Brazilian law by Decree No. 99,710/90[9], the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, incorporated by Decree No. 591/92[10], and the American Convention on Human Rights, incorporated by Decree No. 678/92[11].

Given its importance, this right was included in the "2030 Agenda" adopted by the United Nations General Assembly through Resolution No. 70/1 in 2015. This document consists of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and Goal 4 addresses the need to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"[12].

Concerning the right to education of immigrant children[13], the concept of inclusive education stands out as an approach that, by embracing the diversity inherent in every human being and respecting their inherent differences, guarantees full access to the learning process for all children, regardless of any condition, such as gender, race, origin, religion, or social and economic status. According to the City Curriculum for Elementary Education, developed by the São Paulo Municipal Department of Education in 2017, a global movement recognizing human diversity and the contemporary need to establish a school for everyone, without barriers, in which enrollment, retention, learning, and the guarantee of the schooling process are, truly and without distinction, available to everyone[14].

The legislation of the municipality of São Paulo expressly addresses this issue. In 2016, Law No. 16,478/2016[15] was enacted, establishing the Municipal Policy for the Immigrant Population, which, as determined by its Article 1, sole paragraph, all

6 Available at: http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/l9394.htm, Accessed on: April 10, 2023.

7 Available at: http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/l9474.htm, Accessed on: April 10, 2023.

8 Available at: http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2015-2018/2017/lei/l13445.htm, Accessed on: April 10, 2023.

9 Available at: https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/decreto/1990-1994/d99710.htm, Accessed on: April 10, 2023.

10 Available at: http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/decreto/1990-1994/d0591.htm, Accessed on: April 10, 2023.

11 Available at: https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/decreto/d0678.htm, Accessed on: April 10, 2023.

12 Available at: https://brasil.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/agenda2030-pt-br.pdf, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

13 According to data retrieved from the EOL (Escola Online) system of the São Paulo City Government (https://eol.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/escola/se1426_asp/index.aspna) and made available on April 24, 2023, by civil servant José Alves Ferreira Neto (jose.neto@sme.prefeitura.sp.gov.br), there are currently 9,222 immigrant children enrolled in the public school system of the municipality of São Paulo, of whom 4,329 are girls and 4,893 are boys.

14 Available at: https://acervodigital.sme.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CC-Historia.pdf. p. 25, Accessed on: April 10, 2023.

15 Available at: https://legislacao.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/leis/lei-16478-of-July-8, 2016/#:~:text=Classifies%20public%20facilities%20as,(2021–2023%20term), Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

persons who move from their country of habitual residence to Brazil, including labor immigrants, students, refugees, stateless persons, and their families, regardless of their immigration status or documentation. This law prioritizes certain actions, among which the guarantee of the right to education in the municipal public school system for immigrant children stands out (Article 7, item IV).

In 2020, the municipality developed the Municipal Plan for Immigrant Policies. It outlines 80 actions to be carried out by the government by 2024 and is organized into eight pillars, with particular emphasis on the seventh, which addresses access to comprehensive education and Portuguese language instruction for immigrants, as well as respect for interculturalism.

Among the measures planned under this priority area are: expanding and institutionalizing the professional development of staff in the municipal public education system; raising students' awareness about respect for diversity; systematizing and disseminating information, in different languages, about the education system in the city of São Paulo; strengthening coordination between the municipal and state departments of education to promote the sharing of best practices among educational institutions; encouraging public and private educational institutions to adopt affirmative action measures that facilitate the admission and retention of immigrant students at various levels of the educational system; and strengthening policies to support immigrant students through: monitoring their progress in learning Portuguese, offering language classes, hiring language and Portuguese teachers, creating spaces for dialogue in municipal public schools to facilitate the integration of immigrant students, providing psychological and social support, as well as reporting channels for cases of violence against immigrant students[16].

It is important to emphasize that, due to its universal nature, the right to education is recognized for immigrant children, regardless of whether they have documents or are in a regular immigration status, as established by Resolution No. 10-SE 10/95[17] of the São Paulo State Department of Education, which guaranteed the right to enrollment for all migrant students in São Paulo's state elementary and high schools.

In 1997, this Resolution was expanded by State Board of Education Resolution No. 16/97[18], which stipulates that undocumented migrants' access to schools would apply to the entire education system, thus encompassing municipal, state, and private schools. Endorsing this right, Administrative Order No. 6,837, dated December 23, 2014, recognized the right of migrant students—whether

[16] Available at: https://www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/upload/direitos_humanos/MIGRANTES/PUBLICACOES/Pl ano%20Municipal_Produto%20Final_Atualizado_02.pdf, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

[17] Available at: http://siau.edunet.sp.gov.br/ItemLise/arquivos/10_1995.htm Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

[18] Available at: https://normativasconselhos.mec.gov.br/normativa/view/CEE-SP_DEL_16_568_1995.pdf?query=Procedimentos%20de%20Matr%C3%ADcula, Accessed on: April 14, 2023.

documented or undocumented—to enroll and continue their studies in the Municipal Education System.

Furthermore, Decree No. 57,533[19], dated December 15, 2016, which regulated Law No. 16,478/2016[20], expressly stipulates in Article 19 that all children, youth, and adults are guaranteed the right to education through admission to, continued enrollment in, and completion of the municipal education system.

The inability to provide documentary proof does not constitute an obstacle to the exercise of this right, and it is the responsibility of the Municipal Department of Education to: streamline procedures and adapt systems to ensure the enrollment of the immigrant population in municipal schools, as well as to record the nationality of the parents or legal guardians of all students at the time of enrollment, for the purposes of statistical surveys and the formulation of public policies; relax the documentation requirements to facilitate the recognition of academic activities and certificates from the country of origin; to ensure that, at the time of enrollment, placement assessments are conducted that take into account the specific characteristics of immigrant students, particularly those related to the Portuguese language and possible differences in curriculum content from their countries of origin, so as to allow both access to education consistent with their prior knowledge and the issuance of a complete academic transcript at the end of the academic cycle.

Article 20 of the aforementioned decree states that education shall observe the principle of interculturality and must promote dialogue among different cultures, democratic citizenship, and a culture of peace. It is the responsibility of municipal authorities to: prioritize and expand educational initiatives to combat xenophobia, taking into account its intersections with other forms of discrimination; introduce content that promotes dialogue, interculturalism, and the appreciation of the cultures of origin of immigrant students or children of immigrants within the curriculum, across all subjects and levels of education, including educational materials on the topic of contemporary migration flows, such as refugee status; to strengthen and expand intercultural training programs for education professionals; and to promote, publicize, and ensure pedagogical, material, and institutional support for projects aimed at welcoming immigrant students, promoting interculturalism, and valuing the cultures of origin of immigrant students and their families, with their active participation, in educational institutions and municipal public facilities in general.

Although the enshrinement of the right to inclusive education in international and domestic law is an extremely important step, reality shows us that it is not sufficient to ensure its effective implementation. To this end, it is necessary to create and implement social programs and public policies that promote immigrant children's access to and retention in the public school system and that guarantee quality education for all.

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[19] Available at: http://legislacao.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/leis/decreto-57533-de-15-de-dezembro-de-2016, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

[20] Available at: https://legislacao.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/leis/lei-16478-of-July-8, 2016/#:~:text=Classifies%20public%20facilities%20as,(2021–2023%20administration), Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

This process is not simple, as it involves addressing a series of challenges. One of these is the homogenization of the school curriculum, which, according to Fernando Hernández in his work *Transgressão e Mudança na Educação: Os Projetos de Trabalho (Transgression and Change in Education)*, has been intensified by the reforms implemented in recent years[2121]. Citing the 1995 report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the author makes it clear that the concept of the school as a homogeneous entity runs counter to the diversity of family structures and the multicultural nature of societies[22].

Thus, when developing projects and policies aimed at achieving inclusive education for immigrant children, it is crucial that government agencies devise strategies and approaches that take into account the specific characteristics of these students, thereby avoiding standardized methods, in order to create conditions conducive to their integration into the school environment.

Additionally, they must provide democratic spaces where these students and their families can be heard and welcomed, thereby enabling their participation in the development of educational measures. They must also raise awareness among education professionals and the immigrant population itself regarding the need to reduce bureaucratic barriers to the right to education.

## 3 SOCIAL PROJECTS AND PUBLIC POLICIES THAT GUARANTEE ACCESS AND RETENTION OF IMMIGRANT CHILDREN IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM OF THE CITY OF SÃO PAULO

With the aim of realizing the ideal championed by so-called inclusive education, social projects and public policies have been developed over the years in the city of São Paulo that contribute, both directly and indirectly, to immigrant children's access to and retention in the public school system. Some involve the creation of specialized agencies equipped to listen to and guide the immigrant population on how to access public services, particularly education.

Others relate to practices that help improve children's communication in the classroom and enhance their families' socioeconomic conditions, thereby reducing school dropout rates.

There are also projects that assist in the inclusion and integration of children into the school environment by promoting activities designed to celebrate cultural diversity and raise awareness among teachers and students about the need to eliminate xenophobia, discrimination, and racism.

In this regard, the Reference and Assistance Center for Immigrants (Crai Oriana Jara) was inaugurated, established by Municipal Law No. 16,478 of July 8, 2016[2323] , and regulated by Decree No. 57,533 of December 15, 2016[24].

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21 HERNÁNDEZ, Fernando, *Transgressão e Mudança na Educação: Os projetos de Trabalho*, Translated by Jussara Haubert Rodrigues, Porto Alegre, Artmed, 1998, p. 19.

22 *Ibid*., p. 49.

23 Available at: http://legislacao.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/leis/lei-16478-de-08-de-julho-de-2016, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

This is a public facility maintained and supervised by the Municipal Secretariat for Human Rights and Citizenship, whose objectives include, among others, providing specialized and multilingual services to the immigrant population, offering guidance on how to access social rights and public services, particularly those related to education, health, and social assistance; to coordinate with the public sector, organizations, and civil society movements to provide mobile outreach services in areas of the municipality with high immigrant populations; to promote workshops, seminars, and lectures to train and raise awareness among public servants on issues affecting the immigrant population, particularly regarding education, health, and social assistance; collect and compile information on the immigrant population served, in order to inform policy-making at the municipal, state, and federal levels; organize Portuguese language courses, workshops, and lectures for immigrants[25].

Similarly, the Municipal Council for Immigrants was established, also through Municipal Law No. 16,478, dated July 8, 2016[26], and regulated by Decree No. 57,533, dated December 15, 2016[27]. As a consultative and joint body, its purpose is to contribute to the formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies aimed at the immigrant population of the city of São Paulo. It is composed of 16 members, eight from civil society and eight from the government, and 16 alternates, for a total of 32 members.

The civil society group is made up of immigrant associations or organizations and individual immigrants, which enables the social and political participation of this diverse group of people in the development of public policies that affect them, especially in the field of education[28].

Among the projects developed by the municipality of São Paulo, one that stands out is "Sabores e Saberes: Memórias que Atravessam Tempos e Espaços" (Flavors and Knowledge: Memories That Transcend Time and Space), created in 2017 by the local network of the Health in Schools Program (Programa Saúde na Escola – PSE), at the initiative of João Theodoro Municipal Preschool, Dom Gastão Early Childhood Education Center, and Lar Criança Feliz Early Childhood Education Center.

This project began when the schools' pedagogical coordinators felt the need to make the schools' menus more appealing, restore the role of food in the educational process, and foster community involvement in this important aspect of children's

[24] Available at: http://legislacao.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/leis/decreto-57533-de-15-de-dezembro-de-2016, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

[25] Available at: https://www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/direitos_humanos/imigrantes_e_trabalho_decente/crai/index.php?p=186973#:~:text=Inaugurated%20in%20November%202014,its%20immigration%20and%20documentati on%20status, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

[26] http://legislacao.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/leis/lei-16478-de-08-de-julho-de-2016/, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

[27] Available at: http://legislacao.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/leis/decreto-57533-de-15-de-dezembro-de-2016, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

[28] Available at: https://www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/direitos_humanos/imigrantes_e_trabalho_decente/conselho_ municipal_de_imigrantes/index.php?p=266084, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

lives. The professionals also recognized that it would be essential to acknowledge and value the kitchen staff, bringing them closer to the schools' educational mission in order to highlight the cultural, social, and behavioral aspects of food. From this effort emerged the idea to create a cookbook titled[29].

In January 2017, the project was launched with the participation of other social organizations, such as Cidade Escola Aprendiz (Learning School City), which mobilized numerous agents to promote the appreciation of the memories, knowledge, and cultures present in the Bom Retiro community, and O Mundo Cabe em SP (The World Fits in SP), which collected videos from family members.

The partnership among the various social organizations resulted in a process that went far beyond the creation of a cookbook, as it involved actively listening to families, providing children with opportunities for creative and cultural expression, and valuing the knowledge and flavors used in the kitchens of migrant families[30].

"Sabores e Saberes" drew on the rich diversity found in schools to foster respect for and appreciation of the students' myriad identities, practices, and customs. By choosing cuisine as a catalyst for memories, the project collected 142 testimonials about the food-related memories of the students' family members. The narratives described how kitchens were organized, what the typical recipes were, how meals were prepared, and what interactions and conversations took place during mealtimes.

Through the data collected, the project team was able to gain insight into the children's identities, living arrangements, and life contexts. It was also possible to show families that they could contribute to their children's education through their own knowledge[31]. In addition, the schools held hands-on sessions in which the recipes mentioned in the families' testimonials were prepared.

During these sessions, the teachers organized activities that explored the origins of food, using songs and games. In this way, the children had the opportunity to touch the ingredients and participate in preparing the recipes, which provided them with learning experiences in geography, math, history, language, and other subjects. They were also able to influence the daily menu through their ideas and cultural backgrounds: baião de dois[32], for example, became a regular part of the weekly meals.

The experiences provided by the "Sabores e Saberes" project made it clear that it is possible to educate in spaces other than the classroom and that the kitchen is a constant source of knowledge, integration, the cultivation of emotional memories,

[29] Available at: https://www.cidadeescolaaprendiz.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/SaboreseSaberes-web.pdf, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

[30] Available at: https://www.cidadeescolaaprendiz.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/SaboreseSaberes-web.pdf, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

[31] Available at: https://www.cidadeescolaaprendiz.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/SaboreseSaberes-web.pdf, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

[32] Baião de dois is a traditional dish from the Northeast and some northern states of Brazil, such as Rondônia, Acre, Amazonas, and Pará. The recipe consists of rice and beans, preferably green beans or young beans, and it is common to add coalho cheese (a traditional Brazilian artisanal cheese known for its resistance to melting when grilled or roasted) to the dish. Available at https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bai%C3%A3o_de_dois, Accessed on: April 27, 2023.

respect, and appreciation for diversity. All the learning that took place during this process was compiled into a book containing the main recipes from the families of schools in the Bom Retiro neighborhood, illustrated by the children—the project's main protagonists[33].

There is also a major project that helps promote children's access to and retention in the public school system in the city of São Paulo: "Portas Abertas: Português para Imigrantes" (Open Doors: Portuguese for Immigrants), regulated by Inter-Secretariat Ordinance SMDHC/SME No. 002, dated August 18, 2017[34]. It arose from a joint initiative between the Municipal Department of Education and the Municipal Department of Human Rights and Citizenship, with the goal of providing free, ongoing Portuguese language courses for immigrants from various regions of São Paulo.

This project is implemented in 14 schools within the Municipal Education Network (RME), across four macro-regions of the city of São Paulo. Classes are taught by female and male teachers who undergo specific training and are aimed at migrant communities in general, as well as the families of children and young students in the network[35].

"Portas Abertas" seeks to guarantee the rights of the immigrant population in the city of São Paulo, ensure their access to, retention in, and learning at school, facilitate their integration into the formal labor market, and promote their immigration regularization. All immigrants are eligible to take the course, and lack of documents, immigration status, or nationality do not constitute barriers to enrollment.

The project team also developed educational materials for free, public Portuguese language instruction for immigrants, which resulted from a joint initiative between the Municipal Secretariat for Human Rights and Citizenship and the Language Center at the University of São Paulo, formalized through a technical cooperation agreement. The material, which previously consisted only of the basic workbook[36] (Caderno Básico), is now in its second edition and has been refined and expanded to include the intermediate[37] (Caderno Intermediário) and advanced[38] (Caderno Avançado) modules, constituting a development made possible only

[33] Available at: https://www.cidadeescolaaprendiz.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/SaboreseSaberes-web.pdf, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

[34] Available at: https://www.imprensaoficial.com.br/DO/BuscaDO2001Documento_11_4.aspx?link=%2f2017%2fdiario%2520oficial%2520cidade%2520de%2520sao%2520paulo%2fsetembro%2f21%2fpag_0009_0T5PIEAID85T9e3C6C589INE12R.pdf&page=9&date=09/21/2017&section=Official%20Journal%20of%20the%20City%20of%20São%20Paulo&page_order=100009, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

[35] Available at: https://educacao.sme.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/nucleo-de-educacao-etnico-racial/portas-abertas/, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

[36] Available at: https://www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/upload/direitos_humanos/caderno%20basico.pdf, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

[37] Available at: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/upload/direit os_humanos/caderno%20intermediario.pdf, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

[38] Available at: https://www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/upload/direitos_humanos/caderno%20avancado.pdf, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

through technical consulting on instructional content from the São Paulo Municipal Department of Education and technical and graphic support from UNESCO. It is available in print to students enrolled in the project at participating locations[39].

Another project developed by the São Paulo Municipal Department of Education was the resource titled "Orientações Pedagógicas – Povos Migrantes"[40] (Pedagogical Guidelines – Migrant Peoples). Developed throughout 2020, it provides educators with theoretical guidance so they can adopt truly inclusive practices focused on immigrant students in schools within the São Paulo municipal education system.

The resource presents migratory movements as a recurring phenomenon throughout human history, while also promoting the recognition of migrants as rights-holders and facilitating reflection on educational practices within the system, from early childhood education through high school.

This material is in accordance with Municipal Law No. 16.478/2016, which established the Municipal Policy for the Immigrant Population, with the Municipal Policy for the Immigrant Population itself, and with the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, as it encourages the promotion of equity and the appreciation of diverse nationalities by incorporating elements that foster in-depth reflection on xenophobia, discrimination, prejudice, and racism, especially in the school environment.

Therefore, it provides important guidance not only to teachers but also to educational support staff, educational agents, principals, assistant principals, and coordinators, so that everyone can implement welcoming teaching practices for immigrant children and work toward making schools inclusive, democratic spaces characterized by respect for diversity[41].

The material demonstrates that the qualified training of education professionals and the development of pedagogical resources that contribute to the inclusion of immigrant students have resulted in successful practices in São Paulo's municipal schools.

With regard to projects created by third-sector organizations, it is worth mentioning "Tendas de Cidadania," (Citizenship Tents) conceived by the Center for Human Rights and Immigrant Citizenship[42], a civil society organization that, since 2009, has promoted the coordination of public policies for the reception and inclusion of immigrant children. Its mission is to foster, organize, and coordinate actions aimed at building a migration policy that respects the human rights of immigrants.

The guiding principles behind these actions are the immigrant as a person, their agency, and their citizenship. This project was developed with the goal of

[39] Available at: https://www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/direitos_humanos/imigrantes_e_trabalho_decente/programas_e_projetos/portas_abertas/index.php?p=259310, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

[40] Available at: https://acervodigital.sme.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Curriculo-da-Cidade-Povos-Migrantes-WEB.pdf, Accessed on: April 14, 2023.

[41] Available at: https://acervodigital.sme.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Curriculo-da-Cidade-Povos-Migrantes-WEB.pdf, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

[42] Available at: https://www.cdhic.org.br/, Accessed on: April 10, 2023.

eliminating or at least reducing incidents of discrimination, xenophobia, harassment, intimidation, and violence against immigrant children, especially in schools.

"Tendas de Cidadania," approved in 2014, was carried out in partnership with the São Paulo City Government from December 2016 to June 2018[43]. Through educational and recreational activities, it sought to promote cultural appreciation and dismantle prejudice, thereby helping to prevent xenophobia and discrimination. It also promoted the social and cultural inclusion of immigrant children and children of immigrants.

In addition to working directly with the children, legal and social counseling was made available to their families. Lectures were also held to raise awareness among teachers and school coordinators in the region.

According to Elvira Riva Hernández, an educational analyst, the project's strategy was to occupy public spaces and establish a laboratory for the exercise of citizenship. To this end, partnerships were established with immigrant associations and public schools, and debates were organized, during which the participating children's demands and ideas were listened to with respect.

In total, there were 22 community outreach booths and 11 activities in two regions per month. A total of 348 children were served, including 193 at the Domingos Sarmiento State School and the Integrated Immigrant Center, and 155 at the Kantuta Market. Two hundred thirty-three were children between the ages of 6 and 12, 67 were between 0 and 5, and 48 were children and adolescents between the ages of 11 and 18[44].

The outcome of the entire process was compiled into a book titled *Livro das Tendas*[45] (*Book of Tents*), which shares the methodology and experiences of the immigrant children and descendants of immigrants who occupied the public space and made their voices heard. All the illustrations in the book were created by the children themselves during the Escultura de Fita Infinita (Möebus Strip Sculpture) tent, organized in 2018 by illustrator and graphic artist Laura Teixeira.

Today, the book serves as a tool for support, awareness-raising, and inspiration for educators and other social organizations committed to expanding initiatives to combat xenophobia and promote respect for diversity.

Another social project developed in the city of São Paulo in 2019, inspired by the challenges that child labor poses for schools and families, was Canicas[46]. This initiative was carried out in partnership with "Fundo Brasil Human Rights Foundation"[47], which aims to promote the prevention of child labor in public schools, with a focus on the immigrant community working in the textile industry.

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43 Available at: https://www.cdhic.org.br/copia-tendas-de-cidadania, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

44 Available at: https://www.cdhic.org.br/_files/ugd/c00d30_8d98b696df954d1eb7e0a9afb105e3d9.pdf, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

45 Available at: https://www.cdhic.org.br/_files/ugd/c00d30_8d98b696df954d1eb7e0a9afb105e3d9.pdf, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

46 Available at: https://www.fundobrasil.org.br/projeto/wilbert-rivas/, Accessed on: April 16, 2023.

47 Available at: https://www.fundobrasil.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/estatuto-fundo-brasil-1.pdf, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

One of Canicas's main areas of focus is building relationships with parents, teachers, support staff, and school administrators through workshops designed to guide families on how to access their social rights. Its goal is to prepare the school community and the entire public service network to welcome families, understand their needs, and provide appropriate referrals, thereby contributing to their socioeconomic development and preventing or reducing the risk that, due to parents' lack of resources, children will be forced to work, with obvious harm to their family, social, and school lives.

The three basic pillars of the project are the child as a rights-holder, the school as a democratic and transformative space, and interculturality as a pedagogical strategy. Its activities are concentrated in the northern zone of São Paulo, at three schools: Escola Municipal de Ensino Fundamental Pedro Américo (a public municipal elementary school), Escola Municipal de Ensino Infantil Bombeiro (a public municipal preschool) e Escola Municipal de Ensino Infantil Dr. Enzo Silveira (another public municipal preschool), all of which have a very high proportion of migrant students or children of migrants.

As part of the project, workshops are held with children, migrant families, public servants, and teachers to raise their awareness through an approach based on dialogue, the non-criminalization of migrants, and respect for differences[48]. With teachers and school staff, the project focuses particularly on professional development, introducing them to topics such as migration in Brazil and around the world, teaching methods for migrant children, immigration law, and intercultural understanding.

Canicas provides these professionals with a variety of educational materials, methodologies, and protocols for action and problem-solving to serve as tools in their day-to-day school experiences.

There is also "Refúgios Humanos" (Human Refuges) project, carried out annually since 2017 by the Social Service of Commerce of São Paulo[49], in partnership with the Municipal Department of Education. Through this project, training sessions are held for educators in the municipal school system to facilitate the sharing of experiences, research, and knowledge about immigrants who have left their countries due to human rights violations.

The project's objective is to encourage reflection upon the situation of immigrants and refugees, enable their access to social rights and public services, promote respect for diversity and multiculturalism, prevent rights violations, foster social participation, develop coordinated actions with civil society, and ensure a

48 Available at: https://www.instagram.com/projetocanicas/, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

49 The Social Service of Commerce is an institution created by business leaders in the goods, services, and tourism sectors, whose mission is to offer projects and services in the areas of education, culture, recreation, social assistance, and health, in order to contribute to the development of citizens who are fully integrated into Brazilian culture, Available at: https://www.sesc.com.br/institucional/o-sesc/sesc/, Accessed on April 27, 2023.

commitment to the principles of inclusion, comprehensiveness, and equity enshrined in the São Paulo City curriculum[50].

There is also the work carried out by *I Know My Rights (IKMR)*, a nongovernmental organization founded on June 4, 2012, in the city of São Paulo, which works in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to promote the social and cultural integration of refugee children, who, as is well known, are among the most vulnerable groups of immigrants.

This organization has four areas of focus, one of which is education. Its work in this area involves supporting refugee children through multidisciplinary care provided by educators, educational psychologists, and psychologists, with the aim of identifying the main challenges they face, which enables the development of a support plan for each child.

This nongovernmental organization also implements initiatives that promote intercultural understanding and offers extracurricular courses, such as tutoring in a wide range of subjects, language classes, ballet, yoga, meditation, basketball, swimming, and soccer. It organizes cultural and artistic activities with the children and refers them for psychological and psychiatric care when necessary.

*IKMR* provides psycho-educational support and pedagogical supervision through a tutoring system, in which a teacher is assigned to meet with the child weekly and help them keep up with the regular school schedule. It also offers advisory services to help families navigate the city government's apps that provide access to the single-fare ticket, the free pass, and credit for purchasing school supplies and uniforms[51].

Finally, it is important to mention Instituto Sonhe (Dream Institute), another nongovernmental organization founded 13 years ago, headquartered in downtown São Paulo, in the Cracolândia area[52], which aims to promote the social empowerment of vulnerable children, especially immigrant children, since today 41% of those served are immigrants from

Bolivia, Peru, Argentina, Korea, and African countries[53].

To achieve its goal, the NGO offers programs, projects, and activities that help foster the children's sense of citizenship, agency, and autonomy. It operates on several fronts, one of which is education, as it provides academic support, literacy

[50] Available at: https://www.acnur.org/portugues/2019/12/16/professores-concluem-formacao-sobre-o-tema-do-refugio-em-sao-paulo/, Accessed April 11, 2023; Available at: file:///C:/Users/Optiplex%209020/Downloads/NTF_ArquivoPortal_20220420_ID10840.pdf, Accessed on: April 11, 2023.

[51] For details on this NGO's work, see: LIMA, Carolina Alves de Souza; CASTRO, V. M., "Cidadania e Educação de Crianças Refugiadas: O papel da ONG I Know My Rights na Realização da Justiça Social", *Revista Brasileira de Direitos Humanos*, vol. 43, 2022, pp. 7–27.

[52] An expression meaning *"crack* land." This is the name given to the central region of the city of São Paulo, occupied by a homeless population consisting mostly of drug addicts and drug dealers. Available at https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cracol%C3%A2ndia, Accessed on: April 29, 2023.

[53] Available at https://institutosonhe.org/, Accessed on: April 29, 2023.

instruction, English classes, and sports and cultural activities, such as dance, theater, photography, and music classes[54].

## 4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Everyone has the right to a school education, which certainly includes immigrant children. This right not only prepares them to fully exercise their citizenship but also equips them for work and for rebuilding their lives. However, for them to gain access to the public education system and remain in it, it is essential to adopt measures that take their specific circumstances into account and promote their integration into Brazilian society.

The public policies and social programs discussed in this article put these measures into practice, as some establish specialized agencies equipped to listen to and guide the immigrant population on how to access public services and, in particular, education.

Others, in turn, promote practices that help include and integrate children into the school environment by organizing activities designed to celebrate cultural diversity and raise awareness among teachers and students about the need to eliminate xenophobia, discrimination, and racism.

There are those that foster the socioeconomic development of immigrant families, thereby preventing the risk that, due to parents' lack of resources, young children will be forced to work and, consequently, drop out of school, with obvious negative consequences for their family, social, and academic lives.

Some projects offer Portuguese language classes, tutoring in a wide range of subjects, cultural and sports activities, educational supervision, and psychological, psychiatric, and psychopedagogical support—all with the goal of improving communication and enabling immigrant children to participate in school activities and the learning process as a whole.

There are also projects that aim to eliminate standardized educational practices by creating the necessary mechanisms and adaptations to welcome immigrant children, thereby helping to promote interculturalism and dialogue in the school environment.

Others provide education professionals with theoretical resources for adopting truly

inclusive practices tailored to immigrant students, while also facilitating the sharing of experiences, research, knowledge, and reflections on the situation of immigrant families.

Beyond all the benefits provided by the public policies and social projects discussed here, they also remind us that we are all part of a single nation: the human nation; that migrating and seeking refuge are rights; that diversity must be valued and respected; and, finally, that in a truly pluralistic and inclusive school, there is no place for xenophobia, discrimination, and racism.

[54] Available at https://institutosonhe.org/quem-somos/, Accessed on: April 29, 2023.

Upon analyzing all these measures, one can conclude that the municipality of São Paulo has fulfilled its role in ensuring immigrant children's access to and continued enrollment in the public education system, and that, in this regard, the Brazilian State has remained faithful to its commitment to the international and national human rights protection systems. This finding takes on greater significance when one considers that São Paulo is the most populous city in the country and should, therefore, serve as an inspiration and model of best practices in human rights for Brazil's more than 5,000 municipalities.

It is always important to remember that, following the enactment of the 1988 Citizen Constitution, the Brazilian State undertook to guarantee quality school education for all, which requires the elimination of all forms of exclusion, marginalization, and vulnerability that affect children in particular. Inclusive school education, an important tool for promoting citizenship, is grounded in diversity, empathy, and difference, and is built within safe and welcoming environments, free from discrimination, harassment, and violence[55].

As demonstrated in this article, the city of São Paulo has already undertaken extensive efforts to implement this approach, particularly with regard to immigrant children. However, there is still much to be done. It can be said that the actions described in this paper represent only the first steps on a long journey that will necessarily involve expanding these projects and fostering greater engagement not only among education professionals but also among society as a whole.

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[55] LIMA, Carolina Alves de Souza, *Cidadania, Direitos Humanos e Educação: Avanços, Retrocessos e Perspectivas para o Século 21*, 1st ed., São Paulo, Almedina, 2019.

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