

THE BASIC INCOME AS A STRATEGY FOR INCREASING CHILD EDUCATION IN BRAZIL¹

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Summary: This research puts the basic income, understood as a monetary transfer for individuals or families, as a public policy in the context of the Brazilian Social Welfare System. A survey was developed from the international literature to build the investigation theoretically, conceptually and methodologically. It was also developed a survey on national documentation as well as a follow up –of Brazilian basic income proposals and experiences.

This study pointed out the main characteristics of the basic income in Brazil as well it raised the following issues; restriction and possibilities of adopting this policy in countries with a high poverty index; confrontation between universalization and focalization principles; articulation of the basic income with others social programs; the question of substitution versus complementation among social programs; the principle of unconditionality as a ground of the social rights.

Key-words: income - education – monetary transfer.

1 INTRODUCTION

The international debate on basic income has been extended since the 80's in the context of the great economical changes in capitalism. It is the era of the technical and economical revolutions.

As a consequence, there is a new order conducting the capitalist economy in a context of globalization with deep consequences in the wage society and in the work market, such as: reduction of production, instability of jobs and unemployment. This process has inspired new social questions and new demands (GORZ, 1983, 1985, 1991 ; ROSANVALLON, 1985; CASTEL, 1995).

In this context we could perceive a very big crisis concerning the Welfare State, since it was developed based on an agreement between capital and labor. Its basic points - full employment, economical growth and stable families - are in decadence in the new society of technical and information hegemony. The consequence of this context is a loss in the relationship between production and human work and the emerging of a dual society, composed by few well employed and a great deal of unemployed or unstable employees.

The traditional pattern of the Welfare State - social security - set by a contribution from the employees, and social care – represented by social aids, directed to some specific social categories, are not able to answer the new social questions anymore.

¹ Nota do Editor: Pela universalidade do tema (renda mínima) e do idioma (inglês) o editor optou em manter-se fiel a integral da conferência na sua forma original. Paper presented in the 28ICSW International conference on Social Welfare, Jerusalem, Israel, July 5-9, 1998.

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In this context is that the international debate on basic income is in development in the industrialized countries. It is seen as a part of the solution for unemployment, pointed out by politicians, social organizations and scholars of social questions,

The subject of basic income, in Brazil, is a part of a limited agenda, initiated in 1991, when a Senator Eduardo Suplicy's Project of Law was approved. He is a member of the Workers' Party, who proposed the creation of the Warranty Basic Income Program (Programa de Garantia de Renda Mínima - PGRM), directed to Brazilian workers with 25 years of age and over, who earn around two minimum wages.³

This subject has been extended since 1995 when two cities (Campinas and Ribeirão Preto in São Paulo) adopted basic income programs, inspiring other states and cities to develop similar experiences.

However, we live, in Brazil at the present time, a conjuncture where the attention to social questions is discharged. The main priority is just to maintain the economical stability. At the same time, the unemployment has become a serious problem as well as the fragmentation and instability of jobs are increasing in the Brazilian society.

It is in this contradictory field that basic income has been evoked as an alternative for public policy in the matter of social care as a social right to face poverty, violence and the lack of education for Brazilian workers.

Therefore, the debate over the basic income, in Brazil, is in development in the context of the hegemony of the neoliberal project, when our weak Welfare State is dismantled. It is a moment marked by restriction towards social programs in spite of an index of poverty around 40%, enlarged by the economical crisis of the 80's and by the adjustment of the national economy to a globalized world. At the same time the demand for a new kind of worker, more and more qualified, is also increasing.

A process of decentralization of social programs has also been taking place, which means a transference of the responsibilities from the federal to local governments and from the local government to the society.

1 THE ANTECEDENTS OF THE BASIC INCOME POLICY IN BRAZIL

The marks of the constitution of the Social Protection System, in Brazil, is identified with the period between 1930 and 1943. This was a conjuncture of great social and economical transformation, with the passage from an agro-exporting economical model toward an urban industrial economical model with the reorganization of the National State. Since that, the State assumes the direct regulation of the fields of education, health, social security, nutrition programs, popular housing, sanitation and collective transportation (NEPP, 1994, p. 23)

The Brazilian Social Protection System goes on towards its consolidation and expansion during the authoritarianism of a military dictatorship in the 70's. In this period, the

³ A minimum wage, in Brazil, is about US\$ 130,00 a month.

expansion of social services assume, clearly, the function to mitigate strong repression on popular sectors of the population.

However, a new social movement and an authentic syndicalism emerged in the 80's to fight against the political repression. At the same time, new political parties emerged, such as the Workers' Party, and new demands are placed in the social arena. The concept of citizenship was extended and included in the Federal Constitution of 1988.

The notion of social security as a social right was considered and it included social aid, social security and health care. However, the enlargement of the demands that happened in the ambit of the democratization of the Brazilian society started to fall down because of the impact of the economical crisis in the 80's, intensified with a wave of the neoliberalism that entered the country since this decade.

Then, we arrive in the 90's with a Social Protection System marked by superposed objectives, competencies, target clientele, agencies and operator mechanisms; instability and discontinuity of the social programs; insufficiency, inefficiency and waste of the resources; distance between policy formulators and beneficiaries of the social programs; absence of the control mechanisms and the follow up of the programs (DRAIBE, et al, 1995), in spite of no articulation between public and profitable private sectors of the economy.

In short, it was developed a Welfare State based on individual merit, with corporate and personal trace (AURELIANO & DRAIBE, 1989; DRAIBE, 1990). Its benefits have been used in order to maintain inequality, obstructing horizontal expansion of the social conquests, with a history of submission of the social policies to the economical policies.

The thematic of basic income, seen as a monetary transfer to individuals and families, in the context of the Social Protection System emerges creating a space of debate and experiences, reaching all regions of the country.

The idea of a basic income, in the Brazilian State, can be tied to the creation of the minimum wage, in 1934, and it was started in 1940.

Another example of a minimum policy is the Unemployment Security (Seguro Desemprego), it started in 1986, as well as the Lifelong Monthly Income (Renda Mensal Vitalícia), linked to the Social Welfare and assigned to individuals with 70 years of age or over, who can not support themselves. That benefit was incorporated by the Federal Constitution of 1988 in the ambit of the social aid, as a help for the elderly, who also do not have means to support themselves.

2 THE NATIONAL DEBATE, THE EXPERIENCES AND THE PROPOSALS OF THE BASIC INCOME IN BRAZIL

The Welfare State of the developed countries and the Social Protection Systems of the developing countries, centralized on the traditional nuclear families and on full employment are, therefore, included in the agenda of the reforms in an era of a globalized society.

It is in this perspective that basic income and reduction of work time are assumed as alternative policies to face increasing unemployment and poverty, in the contemporaneity, as a consequence of the productive readjustment and the private and neoliberal practices (ATKINSON, 1995; BRITTAN, 1995; BRESSON, 1993; VUOLO, 1995; GOR2, 1991).

The advance of the debate on basic income, in Brazil, happens within a conjuncture of the increasing of unemployment, violence in the large cities, acknowledgment of the bad qualification of the workers in order to answer the demands of the new model of production, as well as in a context of increasing poverty, being children and young people strongly affected.

This study places the basic income, seen as a monetary transfer for individuals or families, as a public policy of social cut in the Brazilian Social Protection System. The evolution of the debate and the experiences have been developing since 1991. and 1995, The quantitative and qualitative dimensions show some important aspects that qualify an increasing effort of some Brazilian States and cities in adopting this social public policy in the era of productive transformation.

A quantitative survey of the experiences and proposals of the basic income, in Brazil, showed the following numbers:

- The national proposals are 08, 01 of those has already been approved by the National Congress and sanctioned by the President;
- The State proposals are 18, being 03 of them run in the States of Amazonas Tocantins and in Brasilia, capital of Brazil;
- The city proposals are around 90, being in development 11 of them.

In spite of these proposals and experiences having been identified in different States and Regions of the country, they are concentrated in the State of São Paulo, with 62,35% of them.

An analysis of the content of the programs of the basic income in Brazil shows the following tendencies and characteristics:

- The families are the beneficiaries;
- Articulation of monetary transfer (basic income) to poor families with children or dependents up to 14 years of age;
- Articulation toward the improvement of family income with suppression or reduction of the negative social situations related to child and adolescents, such as: school evasion and repetition; undernourishment, malnutrition infantile work and permanence of the child and adolescent on the streets;
- Adoption of a criteria associating family or per capita income; age of the children and time of living in the city;
- Some obligations in order to maintain the families in the program are; a) related to behavior of the children and dependents, such as: enrollment and attendance of a public school and health care and to withdraw the children or dependents from the streets; b) related to the behavior of the adults of the beneficiary family, such as: participation in

professional training programs; attendance of periodic educational meetings and to follow the routines of the program;

- The basic income programs in Brazil are mainly supported by the public funds, defined in the national, state or city budgets. They also receive donations of organizations and private enterprises;
- The basic income programs in Brazil are predominantly complementary and differential. That is, the benefit changes according to the family or per capita income and it completes a fixed income to the whole family.

In short, the explicit and central objective of the basic income programs, in Brazil, is the improvement of life conditions of the poor families, by the monetary transfer associated with the enrollment and attendance of their children to a public school exchanging street life or infantile work for school. This characteristic places the basic income, as a public policy against poverty in Brazil, in a short and middle range-

In the other hand, at the same time the basic income programs, in Brazil, have an innovative characteristic because they try to articulate other basic social policies (education, nutrition, health...). They also have a problematic aspect: the criteria for detachment of the beneficiary families. The base for that is the time fixed, in general, around an year, being possible to renew the family participation on the programs for one more year. The question is: the time seems to be an inadequate criterion for an automatic detachment because the poor families cannot change in such a short period of time, mainly, when the problems are income, education, health, etc.

In spite of the innovative characteristic, the experiences of basic income, in Brazil, need to be systematically evaluated in order to identify its' possibilities and possible distortions as well as to know its' real impacts.

4 CONCLUSIONS: CENTRAL QUESTIONS ON BASIC INCOME IN BRAZIL

Our study about this subject allowed us to point out some important questions that seem to be relevant for insights concerning the debate and evaluation of the experiences. They are:

- a) Which could be the restrictions and the possibilities for adopting the basic income programs in poor and underdeveloped countries?

For some people, the basic income is a minimalist policy or just a relief policy. Seen like that, this policy has the following characteristics:

- It weakens the sociability and the social solidarity among people;
- It modifies habits and the consumption patterns necessities of the population, with deep repercussion on social life and in the economy of the country;
- It stimulates the fraud among the managers when they hire workers and it also reduces wages;

- The high demand for programs like the basic income in poor countries turned them impractical;
- It weakens the stimulus for people to look for jobs;

However, we can point out an opposite argumentation that emphasizes basic income as a potential policy against poverty. In this sense, the problem for developing these programs is not its' cost, but mainly:

- Lack of political determination to apply a small amount of the National Gross Income in programs like these;
- Lack of technological and organizational capacity for implementation of these programs, in the way in which the resources really reach the poor people;
- False expectation of these programs that could motivate withdraw from work.

b) The second point of the debate is about the question of universalization and focalization. However the real problem seems to be finding good methods and strategies to identify and to really help the poor population. Then, the most important is to understand focalization not just as a restriction, but also as a positive discrimination. Besides, we can have a relative conception of universalization. One program can be universal when it reaches some groups of persons who really need it.

c) Another question is how to articulate basic income programs, with other basic social policies. I see the basic income for the poor families as a condition for them to reach other basic social policies like education and health. I also see a strong necessity to articulate these programs with policies for creating jobs and income, when the goal is to change poverty.

d) From the above question, another point to be considered is how we see substitution X completion when we talk about social programs in the debate on basic income.

To articulate a basic income program with basic social policies already means to disqualify the argument of substitution. We are not talking about choosing between money or services. The basic income is not a substitute but a pre-condition to access programs and social services. Besides the real impact of the basic income programs upon poverty demands also policies to generate jobs and income as well as the enlargement and improvement of the basic social programs and services.

Finally, another central question is; is it possible to restrict the monetary transfer (basic income) to some requirements without hurting certain principles of rights that must be unconditional?

As we have seen above, the basic income experiences and proposals, in Brazil, put some requirements to the children and their families as a counterpart in order to receive the benefit. Therefore, the articulation between basic income and other social basic policies happens as a consequence of the requirements made by the programs. In this case, the requirements seem to be, on the contrary of restrictions, an enlargement of the social rights.

Resumo: Essa investigação apresenta a renda mínima, entendida como transferência para indivíduos ou famílias, enquanto uma política pública no contexto do Sistema Brasileiro de Proteção Social. Foi desenvolvido um estudo da literatura internacional para construção teórica conceitual e metodológica da investigação. Foi também desenvolvido um estudo em nível nacional sobre documentação bem como acompanhamento das propostas e experiências de renda mínima. Esse estudo destaca as principais características da renda mínima no Brasil bem como levanta algumas questões; restrições ou possibilidades na adoção dessa política em países com índices elevados de pobreza; articulação entre os princípios de universalização e focalização; articulação entre renda mínima e outros programas sociais; a questão de substituição versus complementação entre programas sociais; o princípio da incondicionalidade como fundamento dos direitos sociais.

Palavras-chave: Renda Mínima-Educação-Transferência Monetária.

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