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Education, territory, and inequalities in the Amazon: challenges for basic education in Macapá, Amapá, Brazil

Educação, território e desigualdades na Amazônia: desafios da educação básica em Macapá-AP

Educación, territorio y desigualdades en la Amazonía: desafíos de la educación básica en Macapá, Amapá, Brasil

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Abstract:
This article analyzes the relationships between education, territory, and inequalities in the Amazon, focusing on the reality of the municipality of Macapá, in the state of Amapá, Brazil. It is based on the understanding that the guarantee of the right to education takes place in territories characterized by different social, economic, infrastructural, and cultural conditions, which may affect opportunities for access, retention, and learning. The study aims to understand how the territorial and social characteristics of the Amazon, particularly in the state of Amapá and the municipality of Macapá, relate to the conditions under which basic education is provided and to educational inequalities. This is a bibliographic and documentary study, with a qualitative approach and exploratory nature, organized around three areas: basic education, quality, and educational inequalities; education and territory in the Amazon; and basic education in Amapá and Macapá. The analysis was conducted thematically and interpretively, based on academic publications and institutional documents related to the categories under investigation. The results indicate that educational inequalities are related to the territorial and social conditions in which schools are located. In the Amazonian context, factors such as distance, mobility, infrastructure, connectivity, distribution of educational professionals, and sociocultural diversity affect the conditions under which basic education is provided. In Amapá and Macapá, the analysis highlights the need to consider territorial differences in the planning of educational policies. The article concludes that guaranteeing the right to education requires coordination between common standards and responses suited to the specific characteristics of each territory, avoiding uniform policies for different realities.

Keywords: Basic education. Territory. Educational inequalities. Amazon. Amapá.

Resumo:
O presente artigo analisa as relações entre educação, território e desigualdades na Amazônia, com atenção à realidade do município de Macapá, no estado do Amapá. Parte-se da compreensão de que a garantia do direito à educação ocorre em territórios marcados por diferentes condições sociais, econômicas, infraestruturais e culturais, que podem interferir nas possibilidades de acesso, permanência e aprendizagem. O estudo tem como objetivo compreender de que maneira as características territoriais e sociais da Amazônia, particularmente no estado do Amapá e no município de Macapá, relacionam-se às condições de oferta da educação básica e às desigualdades educacionais. Trata-se de uma pesquisa bibliográfica e documental, de abordagem qualitativa e natureza exploratória, organizada em três eixos: educação básica, qualidade e desigualdades educacionais; educação e território na Amazônia; e educação básica no Amapá e em Macapá. A análise foi desenvolvida de forma temática e interpretativa, com base em produções acadêmicas e documentos institucionais relacionados às categorias investigadas. Os resultados indicam que as desigualdades

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Ano VII, v.1 2026 | submissão: 28/03/2026 | aceito: 04/04/2026 | publicação: 09/04/2026

educacionais estão relacionadas às condições territoriais e sociais nas quais as escolas estão inseridas. No contexto amazônico, fatores como distância, mobilidade, infraestrutura, conectividade, distribuição de profissionais e diversidade sociocultural interferem nas condições de oferta da educação básica. No Amapá e em Macapá, a análise evidencia a necessidade de considerar as diferenças territoriais no planejamento das políticas educacionais. Conclui-se que a garantia do direito à educação requer a articulação entre referências comuns e respostas adequadas às especificidades dos territórios, evitando políticas uniformes para realidades distintas.

Palavras-chave: Educação básica. Território. Desigualdades educacionais. Amazônia. Amapá.

Resumen:
El presente artículo analiza las relaciones entre educación, territorio y desigualdades en la Amazonía, con atención a la realidad del municipio de Macapá, en el estado de Amapá. Se parte de que la garantía del derecho a la educación ocurre en territorios con diferentes condiciones sociales, económicas, infraestructurales y culturales, que pueden interferir en las posibilidades de acceso, permanencia y aprendizaje. El objetivo es comprender cómo las características territoriales y sociales de la Amazonía, particularmente en Amapá y Macapá, se relacionan con las condiciones de oferta de educación básica y las desigualdades educativas. Se trata de una investigación bibliográfica y documental, de enfoque cualitativo y naturaleza exploratoria, organizada en tres ejes: educación básica, calidad y desigualdades educativas; educación y territorio en la Amazonía; y educación básica en Amapá y Macapá. El análisis se desarrolló temática e interpretativamente, con base en producciones académicas y documentos institucionales relacionados con las categorías investigadas. Los resultados indican que las desigualdades educativas se relacionan con las condiciones territoriales y sociales escolares. En la Amazonía, distancia, movilidad, infraestructura, conectividad, distribución profesional y diversidad sociocultural interfieren en la oferta educativa. En Amapá y Macapá, se evidencia la necesidad de considerar diferencias territoriales en la planificación. Se concluye que garantizar el derecho educativo requiere articular referencias comunes y respuestas adecuadas a las especificidades territoriales, evitando políticas uniformes para realidades distintas.

Palabras clave: Educación básica. Territorio. Desigualdades educativas. Amazonía. Amapá.

1 Introduction

Basic education is a major setting for realizing the right to education and social rights. However, formally guaranteed access to schooling does not itself ensure equivalent conditions for all students to remain in school and learn. Social, economic, and territorial differences affect how this right is realized, making it necessary to understand education through the conditions in which schools are situated.

This issue is particularly important in the Amazon, a region characterized by vast territory, sociocultural diversity, travel difficulties, uneven population distribution, and differing conditions of access to public services. Custódio, Foster, and Superti (2013) emphasize that educational policy formulation must consider these characteristics, since uniform solutions may not adequately address the different realities of Amazonian territory.

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Ano VII, v.1 2026 | submissão: 28/03/2026 | aceito: 04/04/2026 | publicação: 09/04/2026

Amapá belongs to this context, with particular features concerning territorial organization and the distribution of population and public services. Macapá concentrates a significant share of the population and important administrative structures, giving it a central role in educational provision, but it also has internal inequalities associated with urban expansion and the distribution of public facilities. Institutional data from the state system and municipality are important references for understanding this reality (AMAPÁ, 2024; MACAPÁ, 2024).

Discussing educational inequalities also requires a broader understanding of educational quality. Dourado (2007) emphasizes the importance of considering policy implementation conditions, while Freitas (2021) questions reducing quality to assessment results. Arroyo (2020), in turn, relates the right to education to social inequalities that shape people's trajectories. These contributions show that educational provision must be analyzed in relation to the social and territorial conditions in which it occurs.

Against this background, the study starts from the following question: how do the territorial and social characteristics of the Amazon, particularly in Amapá state and Macapá municipality, relate to basic education provision and educational inequalities? The article aims to understand relationships among territory, educational inequalities, and basic education provision in the Amazon, with attention to Amapá's and Macapá's specific characteristics.

To achieve this objective, a qualitative, exploratory bibliographic and documentary study was developed around three analytical areas: basic education, quality, and educational inequalities; education and territory in the Amazon; and basic education in Amapá and Macapá. The discussion seeks to connect academic literature with selected institutional data and documents to understand how territorial and social conditions affect realization of the right to education. The methodology, discussion of findings, final considerations, and references supporting the study follow.

2. Basic education, quality, and educational inequalities

Basic education occupies a central position in realizing Brazilian social rights, especially as a major setting for guaranteeing the right to education. Schooling, however, cannot be understood solely through access or student enrollment, since it also involves conditions for retention, learning, participation, and development throughout students' school trajectories. Considering educational quality therefore requires examining the conditions sustaining

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Ano VII, v.1 2026 | submissão: 28/03/2026 | aceito: 04/04/2026 | publicação: 09/04/2026

education, including pedagogical, institutional, social, and material aspects that directly affect students' and education professionals' experiences.

From this perspective, Arroyo (2020) brings educational discussion closer to social inequalities, emphasizing that students arrive at schools with different life trajectories and concrete living conditions. Society's inequalities do not disappear when these individuals enter school, but may affect their opportunities for retention, participation, and learning. Understanding differences in school trajectories thus requires considering the social conditions permeating students' lives, which often extend beyond the school itself.

Frigotto's (2020) discussion broadens this understanding by relating the expansion of basic education to structural inequalities in Brazilian society. Expanded school access is an important achievement in democratizing education, but is insufficient by itself to overcome historically constructed differences. Expanding schooling must be accompanied by conditions ensuring social quality, adequate institutional operation, and effective learning opportunities, especially for groups and territories with greater difficulty accessing public goods and services.

This understanding also helps overcome conceptions of educational quality restricted to external assessment results or school performance indicators. Dourado (2007) emphasizes analyzing educational policies through their concrete institutional implementation conditions, since objectives defined in regulations may encounter different possibilities for realization when they reach schools. The existence of an educational policy or guideline therefore does not automatically guarantee its realization, since implementation outcomes relate to the institutional, material, and human conditions available in each context.

Similarly, Freitas (2021) questions the centrality of accountability mechanisms and standardized results as references for educational quality. Although indicators are relevant for monitoring public policies and identifying inequalities, they cannot independently explain why particular students or schools achieve different results. Analyzing results without considering the social and institutional conditions of educational work risks shifting attention from structural factors to individual accountability of schools and professionals, overlooking some of the complexity of education.

Fonseca (2009) broadens this discussion by questioning different conceptions of educational quality, especially those associated exclusively with efficiency and measurable results. Educational quality also has a social dimension, related to schools' commitment to individual development and guaranteeing rights. This perspective matters in territories characterized by unequal conditions, where institutions may have different infrastructure levels,

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Ano VII, v.1 2026 | submissão: 28/03/2026 | aceito: 04/04/2026 | publicação: 09/04/2026

resource availability, professional team composition, and possibilities for developing pedagogical activities. Evaluating quality therefore requires considering the conditions enabling or limiting educational work.

Among these conditions, school infrastructure is relevant, since suitable spaces, teaching resources, equipment, and access to technology support school activities, although they cannot guarantee learning alone. Similarly, professional training, pedagogical support, and management organization affect possibilities for educational work. Different conditions among schools and territories can produce distinct educational experiences, reinforcing the need to analyze quality through both reported results and the resources and conditions sustaining their production.

The pedagogical and human dimension of education must also be included. Freire (2021) enables education to be understood as a practice involving dialogue, autonomy, participation, and recognition of the experiences of those involved in teaching and learning. Educational quality is consequently not reduced to material resources or institutional target fulfillment; it also relates to schools' ability to establish meaningful pedagogical relationships with students and recognize the different knowledge, experiences, and realities within the school community. This dimension is particularly important in socially, culturally, and territorially diverse contexts.

Educational inequalities can thus manifest across schooling, from access and retention conditions to institutional infrastructure, professional distribution, and student learning opportunities. When these differences are closely related to the characteristics of school locations, territory becomes fundamental to understanding educational realities. Space must therefore be recognized as more than a backdrop for implementing policies: territorial conditions can influence schools' needs and concrete possibilities for guaranteeing the right to education.

For this reason, pursuing educational equality does not necessarily mean providing identical responses to all territories. In certain situations, guaranteeing equivalent rights may require differentiated policies formulated around each reality's specific needs and conditions. This understanding moves beyond equality based exclusively on uniform actions toward a perspective that considers differences among individuals, schools, and territories.

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Ano VII, v.1 2026 | submissão: 28/03/2026 | aceito: 04/04/2026 | publicação: 09/04/2026

2.1 Education and territory in the Amazon

The Amazon cannot be understood solely through its environmental dimension or geographical extent, since it is characterized by different settlement patterns, ways of life, and social, cultural, and economic conditions. This diversity produces distinct territorial realities affecting public service organization and people's access to basic rights, including education. Understanding regional educational provision therefore requires considering the territories in which schools operate, since distance, mobility, infrastructure, and population distribution can create different conditions for education systems.

Custódio, Foster, and Superti (2013) emphasize considering the Amazon's specific challenges when formulating and implementing public educational policies. Great distances, different travel methods, infrastructure conditions, and territorial diversity make uniform responses difficult where realities have distinct needs. Educational policy must therefore engage with ways of life and concrete conditions in different Amazonian spaces, so that guaranteeing the right to education remains connected to the territorial characteristics conditioning its realization.

In some territories, travel conditions are among the factors most strongly affecting people's relationship with school. Where access depends on rivers, roads, or long overland journeys, school transport becomes part of students' access and retention conditions rather than merely a logistical issue. Travel difficulties may also affect other dimensions of system operation, including material distribution, technical visits, administrative and pedagogical monitoring, and training provision for professionals working farther from administrative centers.

Connectivity has also become relevant, especially with the growing use of digital technologies in schools' pedagogical and administrative activities. However, equipment alone does not ensure adequate technological access, since its use also depends on connection availability and quality, necessary infrastructure, and resource maintenance conditions. Digital inequalities may thus accompany other existing territorial inequalities and affect educational opportunities, especially where schools have significantly different technological conditions from other units in the same system.

Another aspect concerns sociocultural diversity in Amazonian territories, since schools operate in communities with different experiences, knowledge, social practices, and relationships with their surroundings. This diversity should be understood as an element to

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Ano VII, v.1 2026 | submissão: 28/03/2026 | aceito: 04/04/2026 | publicação: 09/04/2026

consider in organizing educational action rather than an obstacle to a common educational policy. A territorially sensitive policy must recognize communities' and places' specific characteristics while retaining the common principles guiding the right to education, connecting general standards to needs identified in each reality.

Territorial characteristics also affect education systems' administrative capacity, especially where schools are widely dispersed and management centers are far from educational activities. Technical visits, school monitoring, infrastructure maintenance, and resource distribution may require more time, planning, and investment where travel is complex. The costs and conditions of territorial circulation are therefore not external to educational policy, since they influence concrete possibilities for monitoring and implementing planned actions.

Territory should consequently be understood as more than the physical space where a policy is applied: it participates in constructing educational demands and implementation possibilities. School location, surrounding conditions, available transport, and flows of people, resources, and services shape different school experiences. Considering these relationships helps explain why the same educational guidance may face very different implementation conditions in territories with distinct social, economic, and spatial characteristics.

In Amapá, these issues take particular forms because of territorial organization and the distribution of population and public services. Macapá's concentration of a significant share of the population and administrative structures coexists with different realities elsewhere in the state, producing educational demands that cannot be understood from a single territorial perspective. Educational planning must therefore consider different scales of action, linking national guidelines and state decisions to concrete municipal and community needs, especially where access, infrastructure, and travel conditions differ significantly.

Considering Amazonian education through territory also means avoiding interpretations based exclusively on regional difficulties and shortages. Communities experience territorial conditions, but also build their own organizational strategies, develop participation, and produce knowledge about the places they inhabit. These experiences are important for understanding relationships between territory and education and can help build more contextualized policies that recognize individuals and communities as participants in constructing responses to educational needs as well as recipients of public action.

The territorial perspective thus broadens understanding of educational inequalities by shifting analysis from a reading centered exclusively on school results to an approach considering the conditions in which results are produced. Beyond asking why one school

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Ano VII, v.1 2026 | submissão: 28/03/2026 | aceito: 04/04/2026 | publicação: 09/04/2026

performs differently from another, it becomes necessary to examine the social, economic, infrastructural, and spatial conditions shaping their trajectories. This perspective shows that Amazonian educational challenges result from combined factors while establishing a basis for relating discussion to Amapá's specific characteristics and, more particularly, Macapá's territorial challenges.

2.3 Basic education in Amapá and Macapá: challenges and prospects

Basic education in Amapá relates to the historical formation and organization of its territory and to changes in population distribution and the expansion of administrative and urban structures. Education systems' establishment and expansion accompany these changes, as population growth and urban and rural spatial reorganization create new public service demands. Understanding basic education in the state therefore requires considering the territorial characteristics conditioning school locations, professional and resource distribution, and the different needs of served communities.

Macapá occupies a strategic position by concentrating a significant share of the state's population and important administrative and public service structures. Urban expansion increases demand for places and educational facilities, but also creates challenges concerning school locations, travel conditions, infrastructure, and education professionals' distribution. City expansion therefore involves more than a quantitative increase in the population served by the education system: it requires following territorial transformations so educational provision relates to concrete conditions in different municipal areas.

The Socioeconomic Profile of Macapá Municipality is an important institutional reference for understanding the capital's demographic, social, and territorial characteristics (MACAPÁ, 2024). Similarly, State Department of Education data support examination of the organization and distribution of the state education system (AMAPÁ, 2024). This information, however, must be analyzed alongside literature on education, territory, and inequalities, since quantitative data, although relevant for characterizing reality, cannot independently explain schools' operating conditions and differences among served territories.

School system expansion must therefore be accompanied by adequate operating conditions, since building or expanding units alone does not meet educational demands. Physical spaces must connect to professional availability, teaching materials, equipment, connectivity, maintenance, and monitoring of school activities. When these elements do not

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Ano VII, v.1 2026 | submissão: 28/03/2026 | aceito: 04/04/2026 | publicação: 09/04/2026

keep pace with growing demand, difficulties may arise that compromise institutions' ability to provide adequate conditions for pedagogical work and student retention.

Education professionals' training and working conditions are another important dimension. In discussing basic education expansion and quality challenges, Scheibe (2014) shows that expanded access must be accompanied by policies ensuring adequate teaching conditions. In Amapá, this discussion matters alongside territorial characteristics and school distribution, since different locations may have specific needs concerning team composition, continuing education, and conditions for educational work.

Quality discussion must also connect to the concrete conditions in which educational indicators are produced. Freitas (2021) and Fonseca (2009) question conceptions predominantly associating educational quality with assessment results and performance indicators while relegating social and institutional factors affecting those results. For Amapá, this perspective is particularly important because indicator interpretation must consider school conditions and students' different territorial contexts, avoiding comparisons that disregard inequalities among educational spaces.

Macapá's internal diversity reinforces the need for analysis attentive to each territory's characteristics. Schools are distributed across neighborhoods and communities with different infrastructure, mobility, and public facility and service access, allowing distinct educational experiences within the same system. A common policy can consequently take different concrete forms depending on each school's conditions, demonstrating the importance of territorial characteristics in planning and organizing public action.

School location also extends beyond the strictly educational field, since schools are important social facilities within urban space. Choosing locations for building, expanding, and maintaining units can bring public services closer to communities and facilitate educational access. Decisions concerning school system distribution must therefore consider both available places and unit locations, travel conditions, and relationships between schools and areas of greatest demand, especially amid urban expansion and transformation.

Relationships between education and other public policies must also be considered when analyzing student retention. Transport, health, social assistance, food, and infrastructure directly or indirectly relate to school trajectories, especially where families face social vulnerability or difficulty accessing basic services. Educational policy cannot independently respond to problems whose origins and manifestations extend beyond schools; coordinated

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Ano VII, v.1 2026 | submissão: 28/03/2026 | aceito: 04/04/2026 | publicação: 09/04/2026

action among sectors is necessary to address conditions affecting access, retention, and learning opportunities.

In school organization, Libâneo (2021) helps explain schools as spaces where different administrative, pedagogical, and social dimensions must be connected to achieve educational objectives. Paro (2020) emphasizes democratic management and different actors' participation in building public schools, a perspective that brings institutional organization closer to served communities' needs and characteristics. These contributions matter for Amapá because considering local specificities depends both on resource distribution and institutions' ability to establish relationships with people and their territories.

Amapá's educational reality must therefore be understood through coordination among territorial and institutional scales. National policies establish basic education's general principles and standards, while the state organizes its system and develops strategies according to its duties, and municipalities directly address demands expressed where schools are located. Educational quality depends partly on coordination among these scales, allowing general guidance to be realized with consideration for Amapá's and particularly Macapá's social, territorial, and institutional conditions.

The main challenge is therefore to guarantee common educational rights while keeping territorial differences visible in public policy planning. Recognizing Macapá's and Amapá's specific characteristics does not mean abandoning national standards or establishing different rights, but creating conditions for implementation to consider the characteristics of served spaces and populations. This perspective shows that building more equitable basic education depends on expanded provision and the ability to connect policies, resources, management, and territorial conditions.

3 Methodology

The study is a qualitative, exploratory bibliographic and documentary investigation developed to understand relationships among territory, educational inequalities, and basic education provision in the Amazon, with particular attention to Amapá state and Macapá municipality.

The survey was organized around three areas: basic education, quality, and educational inequalities; education and territory in the Amazon; and basic education in Amapá and Macapá. Works and documents directly related to these categories were selected, including contributions by Arroyo (2020), Custódio, Foster, and Superti (2013), Dourado (2007), Fonseca (2009),

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Ano VII, v.1 2026 | submissão: 28/03/2026 | aceito: 04/04/2026 | publicação: 09/04/2026

Freitas (2021), Frigotto (2020), and Scheibe (2014), alongside institutional documents from Amapá state, Macapá municipality, and the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE).

The selected material was analyzed thematically and interpretively, seeking relationships among the contributions found. Discussions of inequalities and educational quality were initially identified; these issues were then connected to Amazonian territorial characteristics and finally related to Amapá's and Macapá's reality. The procedure enabled an integrated interpretation of territorial and social conditions affecting basic education provision, without intending to conduct a systematic or bibliometric review.

4 Discussion

The review shows that educational inequalities cannot be understood separately from schools' social and territorial conditions. Although education is a universal right, its realization occurs in contexts with different infrastructure, mobility, service access, and social opportunities. Guaranteeing common rights therefore does not necessarily mean identical responses across territories, but considering concrete conditions affecting provision, retention, and learning.

Educational quality must likewise be analyzed beyond assessment results. Dourado (2007), Fonseca (2009), and Freitas (2021) show that indicators matter for public policy monitoring but cannot independently explain the conditions producing results. Arroyo (2020) and Frigotto (2020) reinforce this understanding by connecting education to social inequalities, indicating that expanded school access does not itself eliminate historically constructed differences.

In the Amazonian context, these inequalities acquire characteristics related to territorial organization itself. Distances, travel difficulties, infrastructure, connectivity, and service distribution may affect education systems' provision and monitoring capacity. As Custódio, Foster, and Superti (2013) discuss, policy formulation must consider these specificities, avoiding uniform models applied without attention to concrete territorial conditions.

In Amapá and particularly Macapá, this discussion becomes relevant given the capital's population and administrative concentration and differences among its urban spaces. The analyzed institutional documents help characterize this reality, but their data must be interpreted alongside literature so quantitative information is not treated as a sufficient explanation of

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Ano VII, v.1 2026 | submissão: 28/03/2026 | aceito: 04/04/2026 | publicação: 09/04/2026

school and community differences. Unit locations, infrastructure conditions, professional training, and public service access must form part of educational planning.

The analysis also indicates that management and community participation can bring policies closer to local needs. Libâneo (2021) and Paro (2020) emphasize school organization and democratic management, while Freire (2021) reinforces dialogue and recognition of individuals' experiences. Considering these dimensions does not mean transferring responsibility for educational problems to schools or communities, but recognizing that knowledge produced in everyday school life can identify needs and guide more suitable actions for different realities.

The review's main contribution is thus understanding that educational planning must connect social conditions, territorial characteristics, and institutional capacity. In Amapá and Macapá, this connection is particularly important so infrastructure, transport, connectivity, professional training, and management policies consider the spatial distribution of needs. Educational quality therefore results from a set of conditions taking different forms according to school territories rather than from an isolated action.

5 Final considerations

The bibliographic and documentary review shows that educational inequalities relate to the social, economic, infrastructural, and territorial conditions of basic education provision. Although the right to education is universal, its realization occurs in different contexts where access, retention, and learning opportunities are influenced by territorial characteristics and concrete school operating conditions.

In the Amazonian context, this relationship becomes particularly significant given distances, mobility conditions, infrastructure inequalities, connectivity, and regional sociocultural diversity. Educational policy planning must consider these characteristics while recognizing communities' knowledge, experiences, and organizational forms in their own territories, without reducing the Amazon to its difficulties.

In Amapá and especially Macapá, the analysis reveals the importance of territorial organization, urban expansion, and differences among spaces served by education systems. The institutional documents used help characterize this reality, but their indicators must be interpreted alongside concrete school and community conditions, avoiding isolated use of quantitative data to explain educational quality.

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Ano VII, v.1 2026 | submissão: 28/03/2026 | aceito: 04/04/2026 | publicação: 09/04/2026

The discussion also reaffirms that educational quality cannot be reduced to assessment results or performance indicators. Dourado (2007), Fonseca (2009), and Freitas (2021) support an understanding considering provision conditions, implementation processes, and education's social function, while Arroyo (2020) and Frigotto (2020) reinforce the need to connect schooling to broader social inequalities.

The conclusion is therefore that territorially appropriate educational policies depend on combining common standards with the ability to consider each reality's specific characteristics. The universality of the right to education does not presuppose absolute uniformity of actions, since guaranteeing more equitable conditions may require differentiated responses to distinct territorial and social needs.

In Amapá, this understanding reinforces planning that considers infrastructure, professional training and recognition, democratic management, and community participation. Schools should be understood as social facilities situated within particular territories and related to their populations' living conditions, as well as places of teaching and learning.

Finally, the study shows the importance of bringing educational policy analysis closer to the concrete realities of implementation. Understanding territory means recognizing that schooling conditions are not homogeneous and that building educational quality depends on responding to this diversity. From this perspective, Amapá and Macapá are relevant settings for deepening discussions of public education, inequalities, and territory in the Amazon.

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