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ABSTRACT

The following text refers to data collection to support a master's thesis on riverside schools in Manaus. Among the possible themes to be understood in this reality, we are interested in the act of going to school, the changes in students' paths resulting from the fluctuations of the Rio Negro, and the public policies that ensure access to formal education. As a spatial focus, we investigated the José Sobreira do Nascimento Municipal School, in the Nossa Senhora de Fátima Community (Manaus – AM). Aligned with our general interest, we opted for the school dropout rate due to the possibility of measuring the act of going to school. From this data, our objective was to identify periods of increased dropout rates and relate them to atypical floods and low water levels of the Rio Negro. To this end, we began by contextualizing the population dynamics in the Manaus countryside, as well as the functioning of basic education in rural contexts. Next, we conducted a historical series of school dropout rates between 2007 and 2022, focusing on the dropout rate in riverside schools within the municipality and the community. Finally, we also included the minimum and maximum water levels of the Rio Negro for the years analyzed. Based on this data analysis, we present the findings of the "Caminho da Escola" (School Route) Program in the Nossa Senhora de Fátima Community. This allowed us to identify potential relationships between school dropout rates and extreme flood and ebb events of the Rio Negro, as well as the implementation of public policies that ensure access to education.

Keywords: Riverside school. Rural education. School dropout. School census. School Path Program.

RESUMO

A produção textual a seguir refere-se ao levantamento de dados para subsidiar uma pesquisa de mestrado sobre as escolas ribeirinhas de Manaus. Dentre as temáticas possíveis de serem compreendidas nessa realidade, nos interessa a ação de ir à escola, as mudanças no caminho dos estudantes decorrentes das oscilações do Rio Negro e as políticas públicas que asseguram o acesso à educação formal. Como recorte espacial, investigamos a Escola Municipal José Sobreira do Nascimento, na Comunidade Nossa Senhora de Fátima (Manaus – AM). Alinhado ao nosso interesse geral, optamos pela taxa de abandono escolar devido à possibilidade de mensurar o ato de ir à escola. A partir desses dados, nosso objetivo foi identificar os períodos de aumento da taxa de evasão e relacionar às cheias e vazantes atípicas do Rio Negro. Para isso, iniciamos pela contextualização da dinâmica populacional no campo de Manaus, bem como o funcionamento da educação básica em contextos rurais. Em seguida, realizamos uma série histórica da evasão escolar entre 2007 e 2022 referente à taxa de abandono escolar nas escolas ribeirinhas do município e da comunidade. Por fim, inserimos ainda as cotas mínima e máxima do Rio Negro referente aos anos analisados. A partir dessa análise de dados, apresentamos as manifestações no Programa Caminho da Escola na Comunidade Nossa Senhora de Fátima. Dessa forma, foi possível verificar possíveis relações entre a evasão escolar e os eventos extremos de cheia e vazante do Rio Negro, bem como a realização de políticas públicas que assegurem o acesso à escola.

Palavras-chave: Escola ribeirinha. Educação do campo. Evasão escolar. Censo escolar. Programa Caminho da Escola.

INDRODUCTION

This study presents a case study concerning the general interest in the displacement and commuting patterns of basic education students. When observing a classroom, we are prompted to ask: how and why did these students arrive here? Within this universe, we investigate the riverside schools of Manaus, emphasizing the influence of the river's hydrological cycle on the daily lives of children and adolescents.

By action, we refer to a set of acts which, in turn, constitute a behavior formed by orientation, situation, regulation, and effort (Santos, 2004, p. 78). Through action, we attribute functions to objects. The latter refers to "everything that exists in the world of concretion and in the world of representation and imagery" (Santos, 2004, p. 123). Consequently, there is an inseparability between the system of objects and actions (Santos, 2004, p. 21).

In this context, the school is understood here as a place—that is, a particular expression of the totality, which in this case is schooling. This latter phenomenon seeks to impose itself globally; however, its forms of existence, while not independent, are unique. Because of this, the same school can motivate different actions. Attending school, for example, may be the fulfillment of an obligation or a search for refuge and belonging. Through this action, students use and create

objects through their daily acts.

In the riverside context of Manaus—the spatial scope of this research—this part of daily life is mediated by the river in its dance of flood and ebb (*cheia e vazante*). To delve into this reality, beyond the municipal scale, we emphasize a community-level approach. Among the possible locations, we are investigating the Nossa Senhora de Fátima Community, established in the 1960s, where the José Sobreira do Nascimento Municipal School is located.

Among the possible indicators to understand basic education in this location, we selected the dropout rate due to its relationship with the daily act of going to school, illustrating its interruption over time. Through this work, we systematize subsidies for the implementation of public policies, such as the *Caminho da Escola* (Path to School) Program. Based on data analysis, we highlight the analytical potential provided by the school census, which can be even more revealing when conducted with rigor and autonomy.

Given this theme, we intend to answer: what are the fluctuations in the school dropout rate over time? What are the possible relationships with this dropout rate? How is the *Caminho da Escola* Program being implemented? To answer these, we have listed the following objectives: a) Identify periods of increased school dropout rates; b) Correlate these periods with atypical floods and droughts (*vazantes*); and c) Present records regarding school transport in the Nossa Senhora de Fátima Community.

To this end, we contextualize the dynamism of the rural population based on demographic censuses conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) between 1970 and 2022. Subsequently, we conducted a historical series of school evasion between 2007 and 2022, found in the "Yield Rate" (*Taxa de Rendimento*) table. The timeframe corresponds to the period available on the Federal Government platform (INEP, accessed on February 15, 2024). Regarding the spatial scope, we analyzed data at both the municipal and community scales. The former refers to the average dropout rates of riverside schools in Manaus.

In the available data, there is no distinction between the zones of the Municipal Secretariat of Education (SEMED). In the organization of Elementary and Middle School education, SEMED has seven district divisions: South, Center-South, East I and II, West, Center-West, and the rural

zones (Roadside and Riverside). To access data for the latter, it was necessary to identify each of the forty-eight riverside schools. In this search, we considered only institutions with available data. This limitation occurred because some institutions lack information or only appear in more recent school censuses (primarily indigenous schools). Finally, the high rates of evasion were correlated with periods of atypical floods and ebbs.

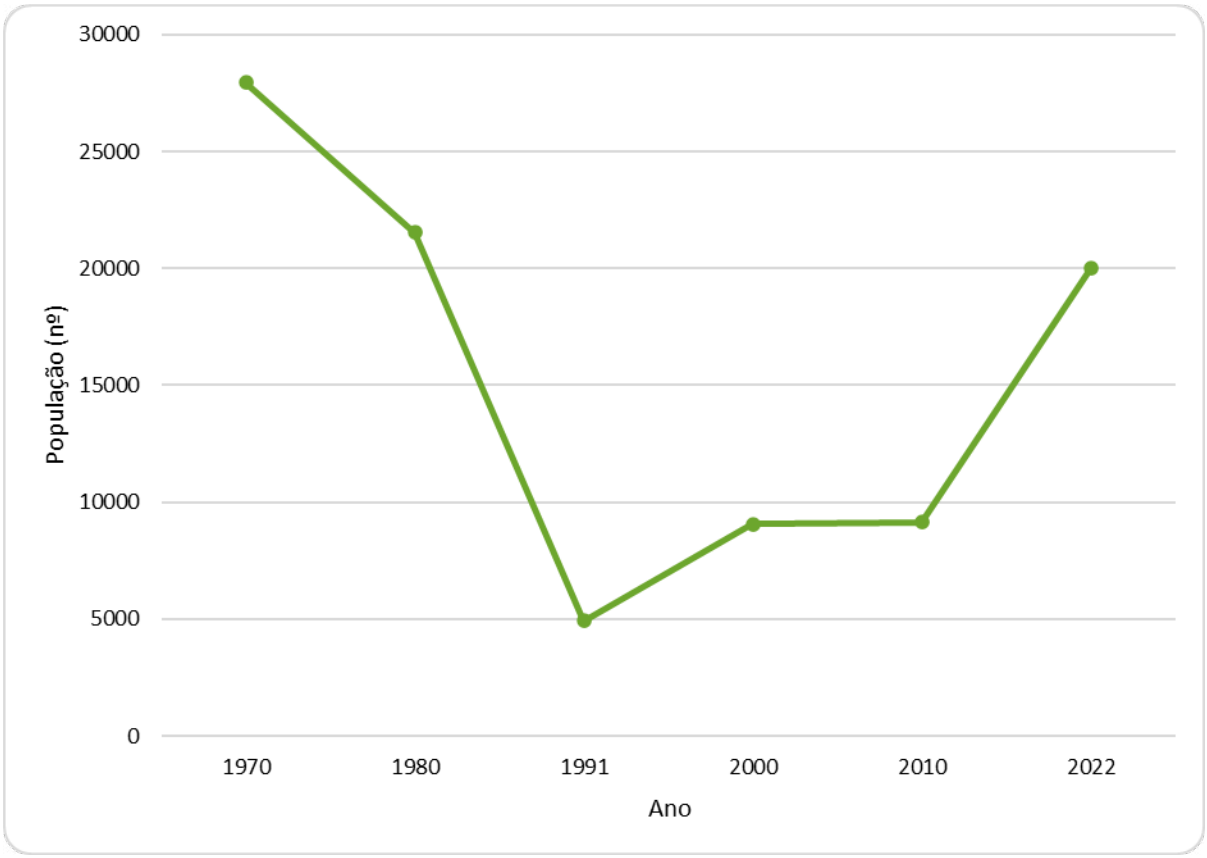
As the main theoretical frameworks regarding development, we highlight Santos and Oliveira (2017), who provide a contextualization of the concept across different historical moments. In one of these moments, the notion of development resembles growth, a distinction established in the work of Perroux (1987). In a broader and more humanistic conception, the works of Sen (2000) and Buarque (2002) offer approaches focused on freedom and the local scale, respectively. Finally, Nazzari et al. (2004) and Inchuca and Rodrigues (2025) relate development, as both a concept and a policy, to the school context.

This theoretical-conceptual repertoire was mobilized in the case study of the José Sobreira do Nascimento Municipal School. Below, we present a contextualization of education in the rural zone of Manaus and the aforementioned community.

THE SCHOOL AND ITS SURROUNDINGS: RURAL EDUCATION IN MANAUS AND THE NOSSA SENHORA DE FÁTIMA COMMUNITY

Before delving into education within rural contexts in the municipality, it is necessary to contextualize the rural population. To this end, we will utilize the records of the IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) demographic census between 1970 and 2022.

Figure 1 | Population size graph for the rural area of Manaus-AM.



Source: IBGE, accessed on February 9, 2024; own elaboration (2024).

Currently, according to the 2022 IBGE demographic census, the population of Manaus is 2,063,689 (IBGE, accessed March 24, 2024). In 2022, residents in rural areas accounted for approximately 0.979% of the total population.

However, considering that at the time the city had 2,063,689 citizens, the rural population increased from approximately nine thousand in 2010 to twenty thousand in 2022—an increase of roughly 119% (SIDRA, February 09, 2024). For comparison, this figure exceeds the population of the municipality of Japurá in 2022 (IBGE, accessed March 28, 2024).

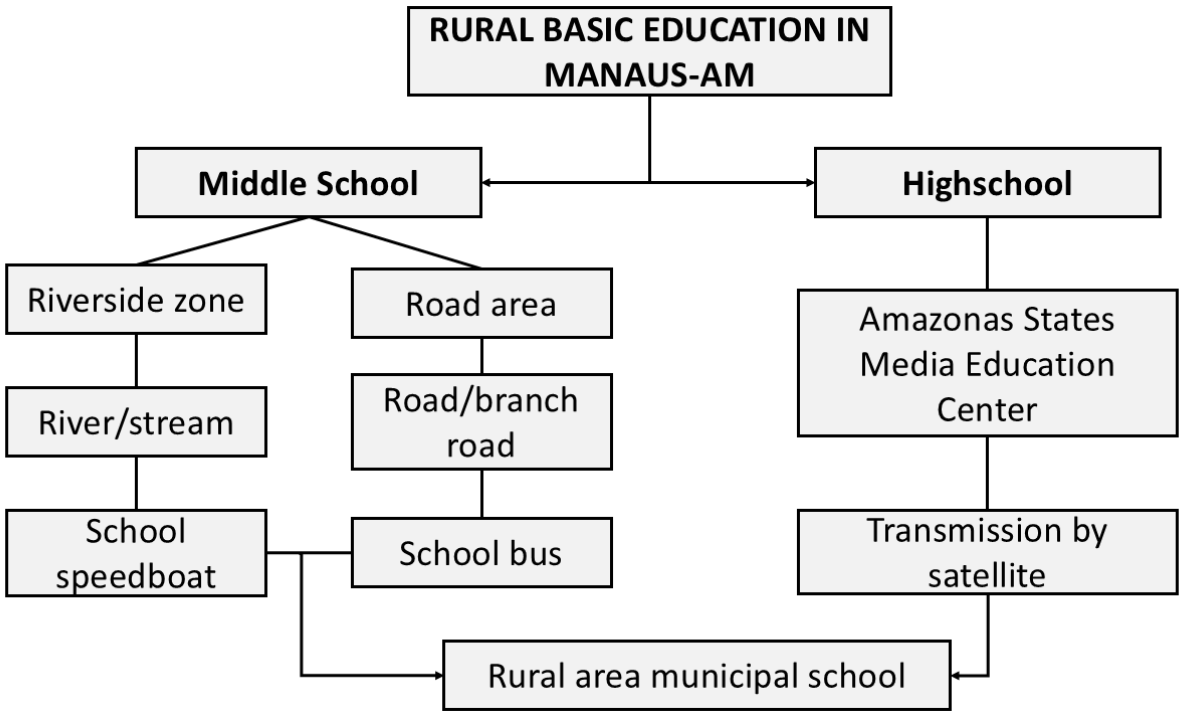
This description presents the rural population in general, located along riverbanks and highways. In this case, both populations were protagonists in the pronounced rural exodus between the 1970s and 1980s. This phenomenon occurred due to the establishment of the Manaus Free Trade Zone (1967) and the subsequent increase in the urban population relative to the rural population.

In the riverside context—our primary interest—the rural exodus was accentuated by atypical floods. In 1975 and 1976, the river level exceeded twenty-nine meters, whereas the average is 18 m (Port of Manaus, accessed January 20, 2026).

As a result, cultivation in the *várzea* (the portion of fertile land deposited by the river) became unfeasible. Planting in these areas depends on the reduction of river levels, which leaves the fertile soil exposed. With the lands submerged, the apparent allure of industrial activity became even more brilliant.

However, prosperity did not shine for everyone. Those who were not marginalized within the *favelas* returned to the countryside, causing a population increase in the 1990s and stabilization between 2000 and 2010. For their sustained presence, basic education is one of the fundamental services, taking the following form of existence (Figure 2):

Figure 2 | Flowchart of basic education in the rural area of Manaus-AM.



Source: Elaborated by the author, 2024.

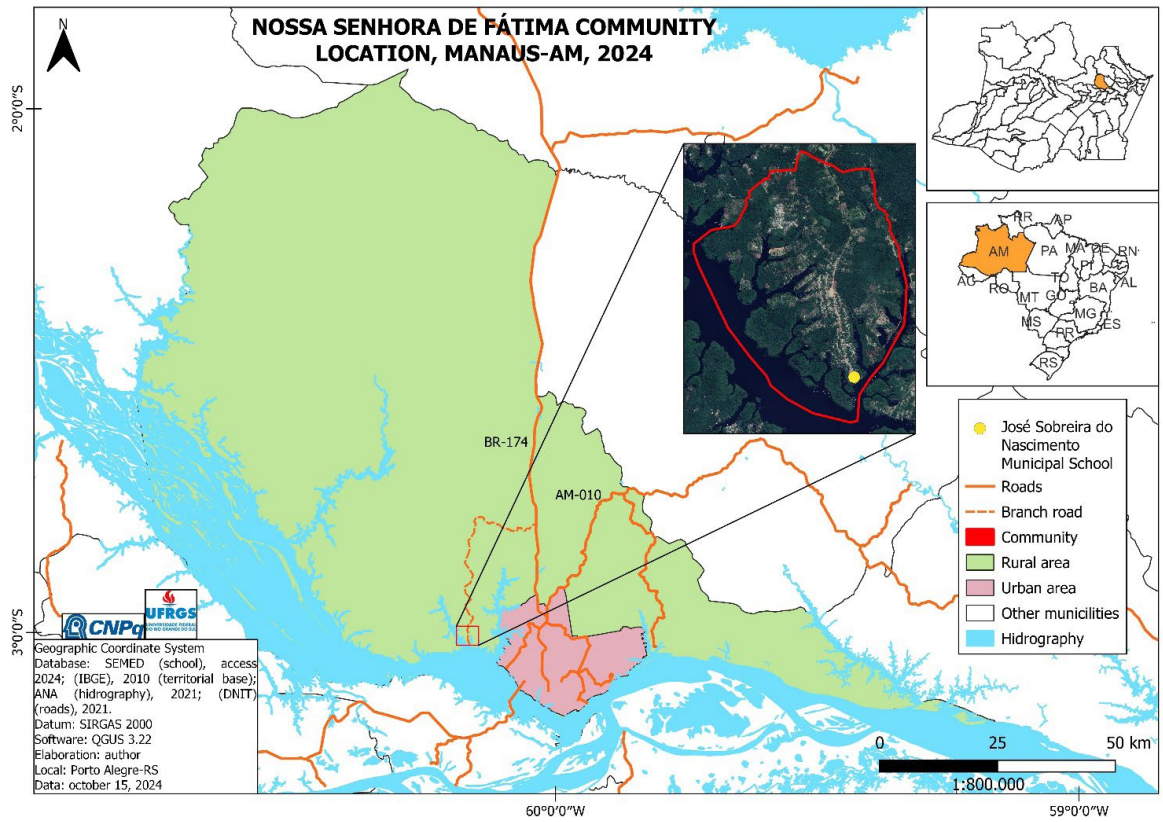
Through Figure 2, we emphasize the objects that the school mobilizes to exist. In many parts of the world, this meeting of people to teach and acquire knowledge from a specific field occurs.

However, the general process of schooling fits into and modifies the existing space, assuming specific forms in each location. In rural education in Manaus, Elementary and Middle School (*Ensino Fundamental*) is conducted in person and utilizes waterway and road transport to bring students and teachers to schools in communities located along riverbanks and/or highways.

High School (*Ensino Médio*), on the other hand, takes place through technology-mediated in-person education. In this model, classes are recorded at CEMEAM (Amazonas State Education Media Center) and broadcast live. Students, in turn, attend school (usually during the evening shift) and interact with teachers via computers, depending on the availability of electricity and electronic equipment such as headphones, microphones, mice, and keyboards.

In this context, the focus of our research is on Elementary and Middle School and the students' journeys along the rivers. Among the locations where this action takes place, we will focus on the Nossa Senhora de Fátima Community, the location of which is shown below (Figure 3):

Figure 3 | Location Map of the Nossa Senhora de Fátima Community.



Source: SEMED, accessed on November 1, 2023; IBGE, accessed on January 12, 2024. Elaborated by the author, 2024.

The community was established in the 1960s, when Nelson Gonçalves and his family moved from Coari to the city of Manaus (Teles, 2017). Upon arrival, they settled in an occupation in the City Center known as the **"**Floating **City"** (*Cidade Flutuante*), a cluster of houses built over the water that once housed twelve thousand people (Souza, 2010).

However, due to conflicts regarding the use of central urban space and the "poor aesthetics" that poverty was perceived to cause the city, the families were displaced. Nelson Gonçalves and his relatives wandered along the Rio Negro until they encountered the lands of José Sobreira do Nascimento.

On the proprietor's land, Nelson Gonçalves and his son demarcated the lots, registered the families, and distributed the land. Through these actions, they ensured access to education, religion, and sports without the need to travel to the urban area of Manaus. Nonetheless, it was the owner's name that was bestowed upon the school, the facade of which is shown below (Figure 4):

Figure 4 | Photography of José Sobreira do Nascimento Municipal School, in the Nossa Senhora de Fátima Community, Manaus-AM.

Source: personal collection, 02/07/2024.

In Figure 4, in addition to the school, the Tarumã-Mirim River, the port, electricity poles, and some private vehicles are prominent in the background. In the community, immediately upon entering via the waterway, it is possible to access transport services by car, motorcycle, and even van (*kombi*), given the distance between houses.

Despite the presence of other transport modes, the school does not have a parking lot. This is primarily due to the predominance of the waterway mode. To reach the school, teachers and students use the school speedboat (*lancha escolar*).

Through this exposition, we have traversed part of the paths of rural education in Manaus. It is realized through satellite transmission in High School (*Ensino Médio*) and via the *ramal* (a branch road, usually unpaved) or the river in Elementary and Middle School (*Ensino Fundamental*).

Thus, we observe the action of students which, even in the most routine gesture of going to school, constitutes a set of acts that transform the space. For this purpose, it is made use of objects to, in this way, make the school a particular expression of schooling.

Such objects can be found within the school itself, such as books, whiteboards, and computers. Others are found outside the walls and can be observed in Figure 4: the port, the dirt road, the river, and the electricity pole.

To use them and attribute meaning to them, students travel paths that "dance" to the rhythm of the river. To follow this "dance," let us now examine possible relationships between the dynamics of flood and ebb and the school dropout rate.

DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION: INFERENCES ON DROPOUT RATES FROM THE SCHOOL CENSUS

The theme of development began to gain prominence around 1950, especially in the field of Economics focused on public policy (Santos and Oliveira, 2017). Still in the 20th century, "development" became the primary propaganda for governments and companies, serving as both policy and ideology (Santos and Oliveira, 2017). In this context, progress and development became synonymous with growth. However, growth and development are distinct concepts.

Growth refers to the dimension of a unit over the long term (Perroux, 1987). Development, in turn, consists of the expansion of human activities in society through the exchange of goods and services, information, and symbols (Perroux, 1987), aiming to eliminate regional asymmetries (Inchuca, Rodrigues, and Scoleso, 2025).

In this sense, development can be related to the expansion of freedoms (Sen, 2000). Freedom, therefore, constitutes a means to achieve development, by not only meeting immediate needs but also by expanding the capabilities that individuals can develop regarding political participation and freedom of expression (Sen, 2000).

At the local scale, development can be understood as an endogenous change that leads to economic dynamism and improved quality of life in small territorial units (Buarque, 2002). One of its stages consists of prioritizing local public institutions. Among the protagonist institutions, this text highlights the school.

Formal schooling enables the individual's insertion into systematized cultural production, allowing, through classical and general studies, the understanding of and intervention in local problems. In this sense, education contributes to the appreciation and strengthening of citizens' social capital networks (Nazzari et al., 2004), influencing the generation of knowledge, the understanding of reality, and the formation of a collective identity (Inchuca, Rodrigues, and Scoleso, 2025).

One of the means of monitoring changes in basic education is the **school census**, under the responsibility of the Anísio Teixeira National Institute for Educational Studies and Research (INEP). Conducted annually since 1991, it covers regular education, Youth and Adult Education (EJA), Special Education, and Vocational and Technological Education (INEP, accessed on June 14, 2024).

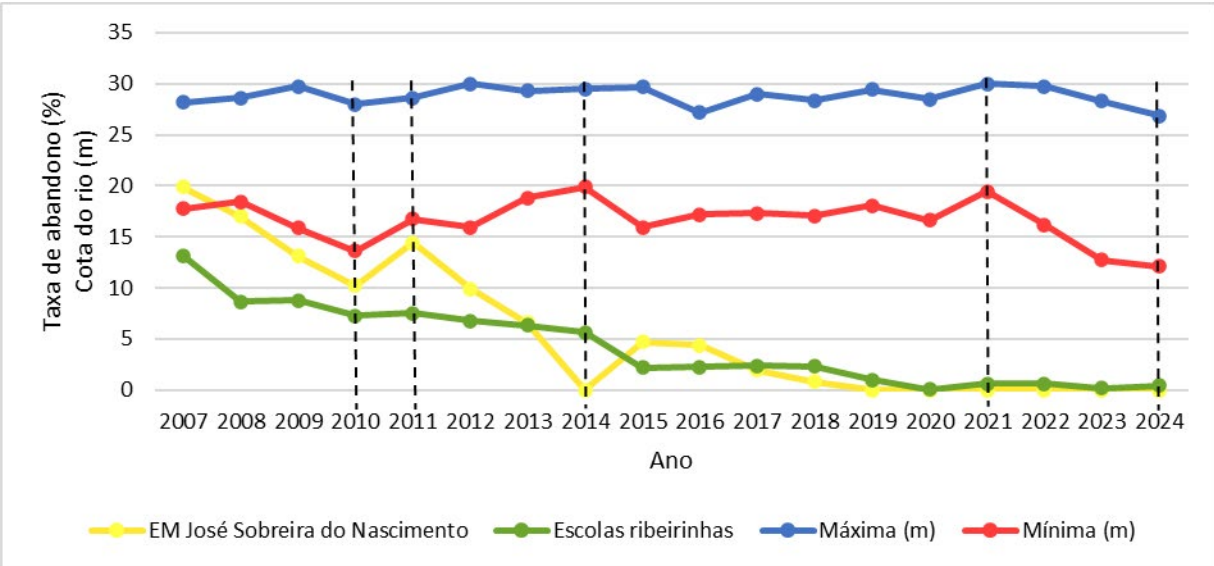
In this text, we emphasize the scope of rural education in the riverside context of Manaus. Using data from the school census, we enter a reality that is not our own to analyze subsidies for public policies regarding access to education.

In addition to the spatial and thematic scope in question, we sought the maximum and minimum levels of the Rio Negro from the Port of Manaus website. This dynamic of the river's rise and fall generally has a defined period: the flood (*cheia*) occurs between October and March, while the ebb (*vazante*) intensifies between April and September.

Consequently, the school calendar for the Rio Negro schools is altered. Due to the dimensions of this river, the inflow and outflow of water from the hydrological system take time to manifest in the main course. Because of this, the repercussions of the lack of rain only manifest in the water level starting in July, intensifying in October—the moment when classes are interrupted in the Rio Negro region.

In the Tarumã-Mirim Stream (*Igarapé*), where the José Sobreira do Nascimento Municipal School is located, the waters rise in March (Glória, 2012), providing greater mobility and speed for the school speedboat. Thus, the dominance of the main river (Rio Negro) over its tributary (Tarumã-Mirim) is consolidated: "it is when the small *igarapés* 'transform' into rivers" (Glória, 2012, p. 103). Based on the interest in this reality, we obtained the following results (Figure 5):

Figure 5 | Graph of dropout rates in rural schools in Manaus and at the José Sobreira do Nascimento Municipal School, alongside the minimum and maximum water levels of the Rio Negro.



Source: INEP, accessed on February 15, 2024 (2007 to 2022); elaborated by the author, 2024.

In Figure 5, we highlight three specific periods for consideration: 2010 and 2011 (analyzed jointly), 2015, and 2024. Although not a direct causal factor, the flood and ebb (*cheia e vazante*) cycles permeate the daily lives of riverside dwellers and their routes to school.

To understand the critical points in Figure 5, the highest level recorded to date in the Rio Negro is 30,02 m (2021) during the flood, and the lowest is 12,70 m (2023) during the ebb (Port of Manaus, accessed on January 20, 2026). In short: the closer the blue line is to 30, the more severe the flood; the closer the red line is to 12, the more severe the ebb.

In 2010 and 2011, there were periods of atypical ebb and flood, respectively. Of these two events, the most drastic was the 2010 ebb, when the water level dropped to 13,63 m (Port of Manaus, accessed on January 20, 2026). In 2011, the José Sobreira do Nascimento Municipal School recorded an increase in the dropout rate, unlike the average for riverside schools in Manaus, which remained stable.

When analyzing the month of October, which typically sees the lowest values, the historic drought of 2024 recorded a minimum of 12,7 m, which was surpassed the following year when the river reached 12,11 m. Generally, water levels decrease between July and November (ebb) and rise again between December and July. Although levels often remain near 25 meters, extreme events are becoming more recurrent, especially droughts.

Beyond the social and individual reasons that lie outside the river's influence and the values in this graph, one must also consider the varying repercussions on the Rio Negro's tributaries. While measurements track the main river, the inflow and outflow of water in tributaries follow different, albeit correlated, dynamics and timelines.

In this sense, the atypical 2010 ebb may have impacted the Tarumã-Mirim Basin the following year. Although the school remains accessible for most of the year, as demonstrated by Sidiney Glória (2012), the severe ebb prevents vessels from reaching the port.

In riverside schools overall (green line), the dropout level remained steady and only decreased in 2015, a year that also saw a reduction in water levels. At the José Sobreira do Nascimento Municipal School, there was an increase in 2015 that persisted into the following year.

The most severe ebb recorded to date occurred in 2024. Despite this, we did not observe an increase in the dropout rate for riverside schools in Manaus or for the José Sobreira do Nascimento Municipal School. This is primarily due to the use of remote learning in extreme cases, a practice adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic and the atypical 2023 ebb. In these instances, the primary concern shifts to the availability of electricity, internet access, and electronic equipment.

Furthermore, another non-quantifiable factor to consider is the pressure exerted by the political class—especially at the municipal level—to maintain high educational rates, regardless of whether these numbers reflect reality. When conducting historical series in the school census, one notes, with a degree of skepticism, that the problems of basic education appear to have been solved.

There is a noticeable reduction, or even non-existence, not only of school dropouts but also of other parameters such as age-grade distortion and retention rates. Regarding the latter, for example, the solution is simple: teachers have been prohibited from failing students—not for the sake of student empowerment or cognitive and social improvement, but to create an image of efficiency in school management.

With this critique, we are not demanding the right to fail students. After all, in a land of so many hardships, such a demand is not the most vital aspect of our teaching practice. What we wish to emphasize is the potential for monitoring basic education conditions through the school census; however, this requires greater oversight and transparency to ensure that data is not reduced to a tool for polishing the image of the local political class.

Through the census, the effectiveness of public policies like the *Caminho da Escola* (Path to School) Program can be monitored, given that the program's goal is to reduce school dropouts by providing bicycles, buses, and, in this case, school speedboats. In the Nossa Senhora de Fátima community, the transport modes used were a speedboat and a minibus.

Figura 6 | School speedboat that was used.

Source: Personal collection, 25/06/2024.

Figure 7 | School minibus that was used.

Source: Personal Collection, 02/07/2024.

To acquire these, states and municipalities can join the National Fund for Educational Development (FNDE) using their own resources, through agreements, or by requesting a special credit line from the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES). Once integrated, they can purchase the vehicles through an electronic auction, a bidding process that allows contact with various suppliers via the internet, where the lowest bid prevails, and the partnership is finalized after an analysis of the company's qualifications.

In 2024, a public-private partnership engineered by the municipal government of David Almeida (Avante) was observed. Instead of a city-owned speedboat, the vessel belonged to the Cooperative of Waterway Transport Professionals of Marina do Davi (ACAMDAF). One of the changes reported by teachers was a reduction in the fleet. Consequently, during that period, the school relied on a single launch for both teachers and students, requiring two separate trips: the first (students) at 4:30 PM and the second (teachers and port residents) at 5:30 PM, the records and observations of which will be presented hereafter.

Beyond this difficulty, the students' commute presented another challenge. Despite the availability of water transport, it was necessary to walk to the embarkation point, a journey that could take up to 30 minutes. This varied during the ebb season, as the port changed location (Chart 1):

Chart 1 | Student commute schedules.

Student[1]	Community	Transport	Departure Time	Boarding Point	School
15	Do Abelha	Speedboat	9h30min/9h45min/9h50min	10h/10h30min	11h
13	Do Abelha	Speedboat	9h40min	10h10min/10h30min	11h
19	Do Abelha	Speedboat	9h10min	10h30min	11h
18	Do Abelha	Speedboat	In front of the residence	10h30min	11h
20	São João	Speedboat	In front of the residence	10h	10h30min
4, 10 e 17	Marina do Davi	Speedboat	In front of the residence	11h	11h30min
1, 5, 6, 7, 9, 12 e 14	Nossa Senhora de Fátima	Minibus	Next to the residence	11h30min/11h40min	11h50min/11h55min
2 e 3	Nossa Senhora de Fátima	On Foot	11h35min/11h40min	Nonexistent	11h45min/11h52min

Source: own elaboration (organization); 7th Grade A (information).

When analyzing Chart 1, it is noted that long walks occur primarily among students who utilize fluvial transport. For this group, there were no records of bicycle use, for instance. Based on this exposition, we start from a specific indicator (school dropout) and navigate through a series of events to explain it, primarily focusing on river oscillation. Consequently, we found that the fluctuation in school dropouts rose in 2011 and 2015.

1 Students were identified by number according to alphabetical order.

Based on the evidence, it is observed that periods of increased dropout rates do not have a direct relationship with atypical flood and ebb (*vazante*) periods. This is likely due to lag effects in the tributaries of the Rio Negro.

Furthermore, other factors not analyzed here are also related to the river and the daily school routine of riverside dwellers (*ribeirinhos*). In this sense, family farming stands out, as it is primarily affected during the flood season due to the submersion of arable lands.

For this reason, the relationship is difficult to capture in a graph, as the dropout rate manifested in the year following extreme events. Nevertheless, the graph allows for the recording of such events across time and space.

Through this study, we seek to highlight the difficulties of school access and their relationship with public policies. The main challenge identified refers to the navigability of rivers during periods of extreme drought. Although the ebb is an intrinsic element of regional hydrological dynamics, an intensification and greater recurrence of extreme events—especially severe droughts—has been observed.

In October 2023, a historic drought recorded a minimum level of 12,70 m, a value surpassed the following year when the river reached 12,11 m. In 2022, the lowest level recorded during the same period was 16,19 m, while in 2002—twenty years earlier—it reached 17,19 m, evidencing a worsening trend of this phenomenon.

Regarding public policies, the *Caminho da Escola* (Path to School) Program stands out as the main initiative for school transport assistance. However, beyond natural constraints, political factors were identified that directly interfere with the circulation of the school fleet. Among these, the financing of privatization processes engineered by the municipal public authorities stands out, contributing to the reduction of the fluvial fleet.

In this regard, it is emphasized that barriers to the movement of people and information in the Amazon—specifically in the Nossa Senhora de Fátima Community—do not stem exclusively from natural factors, but also from the political use of available resources. As evidence, we observe the transfer of responsibility for transporting teachers and students to a tourism cooperative, which began providing only one vessel for this purpose, in contrast to previous periods when the speedboat

was managed by the Manaus municipal government.

In light of the results obtained, the following propositions can be stated: (i) A reduction in school dropout rates does not necessarily imply an improvement in transport conditions; (ii) The challenges affecting school access are both environmental and political in nature; (iii) Basic education constitutes the most accessible and socially widespread means for promoting development.

Regarding dropout rates, although the data suggest a seemingly positive scenario, fieldwork evidenced a concomitant reduction in the fluvial fleet. This finding corroborates the second proposition, as the identified challenges are not restricted to measurable natural dynamics—such as flood and ebb regimes—but involve, above all, the way certain political groups appropriate and manage resources, especially within the context of educational privatization processes.

Finally, it is emphasized that in the context of public schools, financial returns are not immediate. Nevertheless, it is the State's duty to ensure the resources necessary for its full operation, aiming not only to meet immediate educational needs but also to guarantee political participation, access to information, and the exercise of freedom of expression.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Despite our attempt to explain the phenomenon through flood and ebb dynamics, the conditions for attending school are not limited to the natural aspects of the path. Based on the data, rather than offering certainty, we have draped our geographical perspective in doubt regarding the displacement of students in the riverside schools of Manaus.

From the graphs, it is observed that the dropout rate in riverside schools is in continuous decline. However, when compared to the dynamics of a specific school, one notices that this apparent linearity fluctuates.

Both the average of riverside schools and the José Sobreira do Nascimento Municipal School have shown a constant decrease in dropout rates since 2017. However, the low abandonment rate is largely due to the remote learning mechanisms adopted during the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequently utilized during atypical floods and, primarily, droughts.

Nevertheless, school transportation remains a fundamental mechanism for access to education, with the *Caminho da Escola* Program as its primary public policy. Despite the availability of minibuses and school speedboats, students—especially those who rely on the latter—still must travel long distances. Furthermore, with the reduction of the water transport fleet, journeys have become longer for both teachers and students.

In this sense, the school census was used here with the intent to verify the program's effectiveness during atypical flood and ebb periods. However, one must consider factors that are difficult to measure, such as the pressure exerted by the local political class for schools to present favorable rates. Although numbers alone do not represent reality, it is necessary to demand transparency in the production and availability of data, enabling, if not immediate social change, at least the monitoring of policies that ensure basic rights such as access to education.

With these advances and gaps, we seek to provide both readers and writers with a heightened sensitivity when engaging with this reality. Rather than offering certainties, we record a temporary and refutable reflection, the confirmation of which is constantly sought and modified.

Thus, we seek to present, through a case study, a conception of development that is not restricted to immediate profit. To this end, we consider basic education—especially Elementary and Middle School—whose participation in the workforce does not occur immediately, but finds in the school the primary source of access to reliable and socially constructed information. This enables not only technical training but, primarily, the development of human potential to build a freer society through popular participation.

Despite modifications to the school census to benefit the image of the political class, it remains a vital mechanism for monitoring educational conditions and formulating public policies.

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