



## Rural Education Teacher Training: Remote Learning Challenges in Brazilian IFES during the COVID-19 Pandemic <sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted historical inequalities, in multiple dimensions, in Brazil, since it has exposed the vulnerability experienced by rural populations with regards to their fundamental rights. In light of the remote learning institutionalization in federal higher education institutions (IFES, acronym in Portuguese), the aims of the current national scope research are to analyze the institutionalization of major degrees in rural education at IFES, by taking into consideration the COVID-19 pandemic-associated vulnerability levels indigenous and quilombola populations are exposed to, as well as to identify the digital inclusion policies that have been implemented during the emergency academic calendar. The research adopted quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore the databases of the Ministry of Education

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<sup>1</sup> This is an unofficial English translation provided by the author and was not peer-reviewed.

(MEC) and Social and Environmental Institute (ISA - Instituto Socioambiental), as well as institutional websites of universities and federal institutes. Striking results have indicated the expansion of major degrees in rural education in the last decade in all regions countrywide, as well as the fragility of these courses in IFES agendas about specific assertive policies aimed at meeting educational demands of remote learning.

**Keywords:** rural education; COVID-19 pandemic; remote learning

### **Formación de educadores para actuación en contextos rurales en las IFES brasileñas: Retos de la educación remota en tiempos de pandemia Covid-19**

**Resumen:** En Brasil, la pandemia Covid-19 ha revelado desigualdades históricas en sus múltiples dimensiones, exponiendo la vulnerabilidad de los derechos fundamentales de las poblaciones que viven en los contextos rurales. Ante la institucionalización de la educación remota en las Instituciones Federales de Educación Superior (IFES), pensamos en la construcción de esta investigación – a nivel nacional – que tiene como objetivo: analizar la institucionalización de las Licenciaturas en Educación para Actuación en Contextos Rurales en las IFES, medido a través de los niveles de vulnerabilidad de las poblaciones indígenas y quilombolas ante la Pandemia Covid-19, para luego identificar las políticas de inclusión digital que se están implementando durante los calendarios académicos de educación remota. La investigación se basó en enfoques cuantitativos y cualitativos, con carácter exploratorio de las siguientes bases de datos: Ministerio de la Educación (MEC); Instituto Socioambiental (ISA) y sitios web institucionales de universidades e institutos federales. Los principales resultados indican la expansión de los cursos de Licenciaturas en Educación para Actuación en Contextos Rurales, en la última década, en todas las regiones del país. Además, la fragilidad de estos cursos en las agendas de las IFES, en cuanto a políticas afirmativas específicas dirigidas a las demandas educativas de la educación remota.

**Palabras-clave:** educación en contextos rurales; pandemia Covid-19; educación remota

### **Formação de educadores do campo nas IFES brasileiras: Desafios do ensino remoto em tempos de pandemia Covid-19**

**Resumo:** No Brasil, a pandemia de Covid-19 tem revelado as desigualdades históricas nas suas múltiplas dimensões, expondo a vulnerabilidade dos direitos fundamentais das populações do campo. Em face da institucionalização do ensino remoto nas Instituições Federais de Ensino Superior (IFES), pensamos a construção desta pesquisa de abrangência nacional que tem como objetivo: analisar a institucionalização das Licenciaturas em Educação do Campo nas IFES, atravessada pelos níveis de vulnerabilização das populações indígenas e quilombolas diante da pandemia de Covid-19 para, então, identificar as políticas de inclusão digital que estão sendo implementadas durante os calendários acadêmicos emergenciais. A pesquisa foi elaborada a partir das abordagens quantitativa e qualitativa, com caráter exploratório das seguintes bases de dados: Ministério da Educação (MEC); Instituto Socioambiental (ISA) e sites institucionais das universidades e dos institutos federais. Os principais resultados indicam a expansão das Licenciaturas em Educação do Campo na última década em todas as regiões do país; bem como, a fragilidade desses cursos nas agendas das IFES, no que diz respeito às políticas afirmativas específicas voltadas às demandas educativas do ensino remoto.

**Palavras-chave:** educação do campo; pandemia de Covid-19; ensino remoto

## Political Scenarios and the COVID-19 Pandemic in Brazil: Discarding the Fundamental Rights of Rural Populations

The new coronavirus, named SARS-CoV-2, by the World Health Organization (WHO), has spread across Asia, Europe, the Americas, Africa and Oceania; it did not only trigger the COVID-19 pandemic, but also exposed brutal inequalities, in their multiple dimensions (Deshwal, 2020; Grech, 2020; Otu et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has crossed cities and forests in countries such as Brazil – where social inequalities are strikingly significant – and reached populations that have been historically neglected by public policies, such as peasant populations, as well as Indigenous and *Quilombola* communities. However, the new coronavirus did not arrive in the country without warning; on January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) had classified it as Public Health Emergency of International Importance and, on March 11 of that same year, it was reclassified as pandemic (Farias, 2020; Llewellyn, 2020). On March 11, 2020, Brazil accounted for 52 contagion cases and no COVID-19 associated deaths (Brasil, 2020a).

In the days after WHO had officially acknowledged the pandemic status of the disease, information about the lethality of the virus in countries like Italy, Spain and the United States was extensively spread in traditional and social media (Leão et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the virus has managed to reach the least likely territories; consequently, it claimed the lives of Indigenous, Quilombola, and peasant communities, among others. This factor enables thinking that the COVID-19 pandemic context has boosted some developmental and ideological trends that were overall focused on promoting the voracious appropriation and commercialization of nature, as well as on the territorial uprooting of peasant, Indigenous and Quilombola communities. Agents and powerful sectors – such as mining, agribusiness, prospectors, land grabbers, and loggers, among others – have adopted multiple strategies and acted in an articulated manner in the highest political spheres, under the federal government's encouragement and protection (Amado & Ribeiro, 2020).

The act of favoring the aforementioned sectors and power agents was institutionalized through legal provisions, such as the case of Provisional Measure 910 (MP910), which provided on the regulation of land occupations in federal lands. However, it lost validity before it was even voted given its controversial text; thus, MP910 was replaced by Bill 2.633/2020<sup>2</sup>. Yet, it is worth mentioning Law n. 14,021 – approved on July 7, 2020, which had part of its text vetoed by the Brazilian federal government. The government vetoed aspects of paramount importance to rural populations, such as the requirement of drinking water supply in indigenous villages during the COVID-19 pandemic and the provision of emergency aid and social security benefits to this population. As a paradox, the aforementioned law:

Provides social protection measures to prevent COVID-19 contagion and spread in indigenous territories; creates the Emergency Plan to Combat COVID-19 in indigenous territories; sets measures to support quilombola communities, artisanal fishermen and other traditional peoples and communities to cope with COVID-19; and amends Law n. 8080 – from September 19, 1990 – in order to ensure the allocation of additional resources for emergency and public calamity events. (Brasil, 2020b)

At the peak of the first COVID-19 pandemic wave, vetoes to Law n. 14.021/2020 approval have evidenced the vulnerability limits imposed by institutional spheres on rural and traditional

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<sup>2</sup> Document available at: <https://www12.senado.leg.br/noticias/materias/2020/05/20/mp-da-regularizacao-fundiaria-perde-validade-e-e-substituida-por-projeto-de-lei>.

communities<sup>3</sup>. Thus, social distancing measures recommended by the scientific community and by WHO (2020) to curb the number of infections and death cases caused by the new coronavirus provided the *perfect scenario* to have rights usurped, attacks to democracy and strategies favoring the genocide of indigenous and quilombola peoples, and of other rural communities; as well as the implementation of ecocide<sup>4</sup> practices turned into instrument by the developmental project. This *perfect scenario* came from the impossibility of having rural social movements, as well as indigenous and quilombola leaders, taking the streets, claiming for their rights and protesting about the actions implemented by the federal government. Consequently, rural populations were limited to use social networks to tell the story of their communities at times of pandemic; to express their opinions and dissatisfaction with agendas adopted by the federal government; to expose structural racism, as well as institutional omission and neglect towards their fundamental rights, among others (Kaseker & Ribeiro, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic is not the only threat to both human life and democracy in Brazil, which is leveraged by obscurantism. Sometime before, the country had already started a political polarization process that was intensified by power plays that have unfolded in a series of planned events, such as: *a*) illegal procedures within the scope of Operation Lava Jato – triggered in April 2014 under the leadership of former federal judge Sérgio Moro (Gonzaga & Nassif, 2020); *b*) the encouragement of a coup against democracy – implemented through the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in 2016 (Moreira, 2018); *c*) the murder of city councilor Marielle Franco, who represented the families mostly affected by the militarized intervention in Rio de Janeiro City (Andrade & Corrêa, 2020); *d*) the imprisonment of former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, which was orchestrated, as part of Operation Lava Jato, to prevent his participation in the 2018 presidential elections (Nassif, 2020); *e*) the rise of the far right to the presidency of the republic, which was associated with intense use of fake news, conservative Christian speeches and conspiracy theories on social media (Gonzaga & Nassif, 2020; Mariano & Gerardi, 2019; Nassif, 2020).

All these events, and some others that were not herein mentioned, highlight different developmental hegemonic agendas that were historically imposed to the country – whether by national groups or international-market interests. These events are among the social, economic and political aspects featuring the disputes for power taking place in Brazil. According to Acselrad (2014, p. 87), development is “described as something good for everyone – the nation, business and the people”, in these agendas. However, as emphasized by the aforementioned author, “disregarding the viewpoint of those who are negatively affected by the impacts of development presupposes the hierarchization of rights and cultures, according to which, the developmental culture takes precedence over the others”. Based on this precedence, traditional communities and peasant peoples were left on the margins of public policies, subjected to all kinds of racism and violence, and outraged in their multiple existence forms.

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<sup>3</sup> Information available at: <https://congressoemfoco.uol.com.br/governo/bolsonaro-esvazia-lei-que-garante-protecao-a-indigenas-durante-a-pandemia/>.

<sup>4</sup> Long before environmental activist Patrick Hossay highlighted, in 2005, in his book titled “*Unsustainable: A Primer for Global Environmental and Social Justice*” that the human species is committing ecocide due to the devastating effects of industrial civilization, indigenous leaders such as Raoni Metuktire, Davi Kopenawa Yanomami, and Ailton Krenak, among others, had already reported the devastating impacts of practices enabling the appropriation and trade of nature, in all forms of life. Ecocide has been put into practice, in the COVID-19 pandemic context, as the main feature of the political agenda set by some hegemonic groups. Burnings in the Amazon Forest and in the Pantanal biome have gained hazardous proportions among environmental crimes, since they put the fauna and flora in these regions at risk, as well as indigenous, quilombola and rural communities that coexist with nature and make their living from their work in the countryside. Further information about these burning events are available at: <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-54259838> and <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-54186760>.

According to the colonial developmental perspective based on the voracious *appropriation and trade* of nature, rural populations – and their *coexistence* with nature and defense of life – are historically defined as barriers to the country's development (Porto-Gonçalves, 2017). In order to rule out such a “barrier”, the COVID-19 pandemic context in Brazil – which was intensified by the rise of the far right and, therefore, by obscurantist, hate, anti-democratic, racist and fascist speeches – became the *perfect scenario* to usurp the rights and to destroy nature. Both the usurpation and destruction actions have been put into practice in different ways, mainly by disarticulating agendas and demands of rural social movements in different knowledge and power spaces, such as federal higher education institutions (IFES – Instituições Federais de Ensino Superior).

In light of this new reality, provisions ensured by the Rural Education Policy (Procampo) and by the National Program for Education in Agrarian Reform (PRONERA), put in place by Decree n. 7352 – from November 4, 2010 –, are at risk. Among these provisions, one finds the training provided to rural educators, which is based on the pedagogy of alternation. It has been happening in a scenario where remote teaching was intensified in federal educational institutions. Since March 2020, the Ministry of Education (MEC) has been issuing a series of constantly updated documents and ordinances to regulate school activities and calendars by suspending classroom lessons and implementing remote learning in emergency character – both for basic education schools and higher education institutions (Alves, 2020).

As part of this regulation, on October 6, 2020, the National Council of Education (CNE – Conselho Nacional de Educação) approved a resolution – based on educational guidelines – for face-to-face and non-face-to-face classes, and for pedagogical activities carried out within the COVID-19 pandemic context, such a resolution provides on the conduction of remote learning until 2021<sup>5</sup>. In light of the remote education institutionalization context, the aims of the current study were to analyze the institutionalization of major degrees in rural education at IFES, by taking into consideration the COVID-19 pandemic associated vulnerability levels Indigenous and Quilombola populations are exposed to, as well as to identify the digital inclusion policies that have been implemented during the emergency academic calendar – remote learning. The herein described aims gain relevance in the current Brazilian reality, since the COVID-19 pandemic has been used to implement remote learning, but also processes capable of worsening social inequalities in education and other fundamental rights of indigenous and quilombola communities, among other rural populations.

## Contextual, Theoretical and Methodological Research Elements

The Rural Education Policy (Procampo) and the National Education Program in Agrarian Reform (PRONERA), which were implemented by Decree n. 7.352/2010, emerges as rural social movements' achievement resulting from their historic struggles in defense of individuals' right to education, health, territory and labor, among other fundamental rights (Caldart, 2012; Ribeiro, 2013). These struggles enabled social movements to organically bond to the National Forum, to State and Municipal Forums for Education in the Countryside, as well as to public universities, in processes to claim for the right to the existence of ethnic and cultural diversities. According to Arroyo (2012, p. 234), the awareness of this diversity “gives a rich complexity to struggles of rural communities and, consequently, to struggles for a different rural

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<sup>5</sup> The document sets National Guidelines for the implementation of provisions provided on Law n. 14.040/2020, which establishes exceptional educational standards to be adopted by education systems, public, private and community institutions and school networks, during the state of calamity acknowledged by Legislative Decree n. 06/2020. The document is available at: <https://www.semesp.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/MHGC-Versao-Final-Minuta-de-Parecer-e-Resolucao-Lei-14.040-2020-MH.pdf>

education project in a different rural and society project”. Thus, diversity is reaffirmed as feature of rural populations, i.e.:

Family farmers, extractivists, artisanal fishermen, riverside dwellers, agrarian reform settlers and campers, rural wage workers, quilombolas, caiçaras, forest peoples and caboclos, among others who produce their material conditions for existence based on their work in rural areas. (Brasil, 2010)

The training provided to educators stands out for reaffirming the diversity of rural populations, since it takes into consideration the interests, demands, principles, class struggles and work in the countryside. Rural educators’ training – as public policy – is justified “as affirmative action to correct the historical inequality in access to basic and higher education that is experienced by rural populations” (Arroyo, 2012, p. 235). With respect to the higher education context, 2020 was the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Decree n. 7352/2010, which enabled expanding major degrees in rural education (LedoCs – Licenciaturas em Educação do Campo) in universities and federal institutes countrywide. However, that very same year also marked the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country and the exposure of vulnerabilities capable of threatening the lives of populations living in large urban centers and in rural environments. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has been used to turn some ideological and developmental trends that lie on the core of current disputes for land, in democratic fragility contexts into an instrument. Among these trends, one finds processes capable of increasing social inequalities, in their multiple intersectionalities, such as the remote education institutionalized through CNE/CP Opinions n. 5/2020 and n. 9/2020, among others (CNE, 2020a; 2020b).

Emergency remote academic activities – or remote teaching, as pedagogical proposal during the COVID-19 pandemic – have generated discussions about the limits and likelihood of using and mediating technologies in education. According to Alves (2020), pedagogical practices carried out in remote education are mediated by digital platforms, wherein contents are taught and tasks are performed, either in a synchronous or asynchronous manner. Based on her viewpoint, remote education shows “prevalence of temporary adaptation of methodologies used in the face-to-face regime, according to which, lessons are taught at the same time slots and by the same teachers who teach the face-to-face lessons” (Alves, 2020, p. 358). Besides LEDoCs, remote education widens social, territorial, gender and race inequalities rooted in Brazilian society – approximately 728,512 Brazilian households do not have access to electric power (IBGE, 2010). Furthermore, technical studies have estimated that 20.9% of Brazilians do not have access to internet; and among those who have such an access, 45.2% only have internet on their cellphone (PNAD, 2020).

Based on the agenda of inequalities, rural populations are those experiencing the worst limitations in access to internet, with emphasis on the abysmal discrepancy among country’s regions, urban centers and rural areas (INEP, 2007; PNAD, 2020). In addition to this issue, another remote teaching aspect proves to be challenging for rural educators’ training courses, namely: the likelihood of adopting the pedagogy of alternation. The application of such a pedagogy in basic and higher education reframes “knowledge production processes in contexts truly promoting intense exchange of learning times and spaces, wherein different dimensions of life are integrated to knowledge production processes”, among other elements (Molina, 2015, p. 158). The pedagogy of alternation adopted in training courses for rural educators is systematized in university time (UT) and community time (CT), as educational principle and proposal, and it integrates the work, class struggles, as well as the knowledge and culture diversity of peasant communities to the scientific knowledge produced in universities (Arroyo, 2012; Cordeiro et al., 2011; Ribeiro, 2013; Santos, 2012).

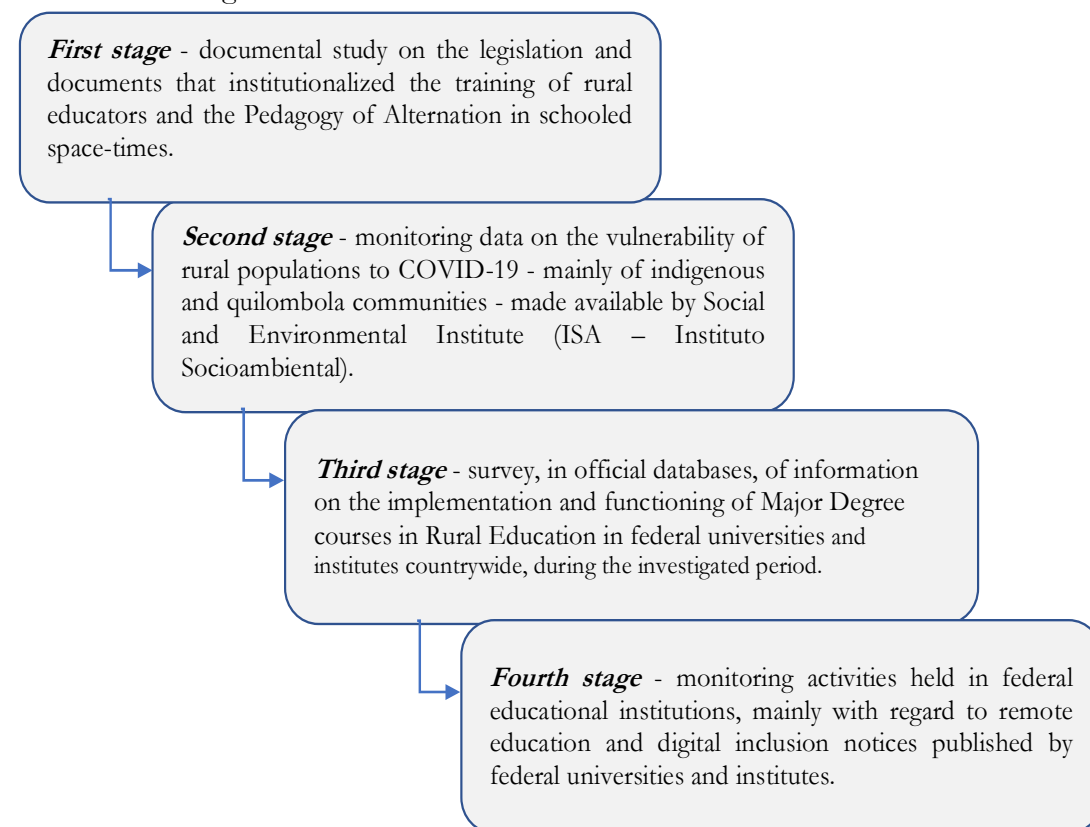
The literature defines university time (UT) as the formative stage taking place in universities, when both students and professors can experience a given discipline matrix – developed from the perspective of training based on field experiences – through discussions and

epistemic constructions about the plurality of the reality experienced in the Brazilian rural territory (Caldart, 2012; Ferreira & Molina, 2015). Studies describe community time (CT) as education space-time in students' community of origin, where they develop projects and working plans associated with the thematic axes and/or with work groups – as real alternatives to overcome the dichotomy between theory and practice, in synergy with intellectual work, life and rural work dimensions (Andrade et al., 2019; Ferreira & Molina, 2015; Santos, 2012). Based on such a synergy, the pedagogy of alternation promotes revolutionary educational practices in higher education institutions, as well as enriches these educational spaces by adding other pedagogical and epistemological elements supported by the principle of working *in* collectivity and *in* community – i.e., in different sociability dimensions.

The current research adopted the quantitative and qualitative approach based on the exploratory nature in order to gather information about the institutionalization of LEDoCs offered by IFES throughout Brazil, in social distancing and remote learning institutionalization times resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The use of quantitative and qualitative approaches is justified by the magnitude of the investigated phenomenon and by its intensity, which is herein explored. The quantitative approach “investigates what is repeated and can be treated in its homogeneity, whereas the qualitative approach investigates its singularities and meanings” (Minayo, 2017, p. 2). Thus, the aim of the current research is not only to quantify practices and programs that have been implemented in universities and federal institutes, but, above all, it was done to help better understanding their meanings and likely consequences for rural education courses, mainly with respect to the pedagogy of alternation in communities and territories mostly vulnerable to impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the research design comprised four data collection stages, which were carried out from July 15 to August 28, 2020.

## Figure 1

### Data Collection Stage



*Note:* Elaborated by the authors.

The data collection process prioritized different sources, among them documents, national legislation and consultations on the following websites: Coronavirus – monitoring in educational institutions (Brasil, 2020c); e-MEC portal – monitoring of processes regulating higher education in Brazil (Brasil, 2020d); websites of federal higher education institutions, regarding the approval of academic calendars, aid notices and digital inclusion grants<sup>6</sup>. The relevance of these data for current research lies on highlighting the vulnerability levels rural populations are exposed to, which were intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly in certain territories and ethnic groups. These four data collection stages enabled accessing a significant amount of information on all 87 major degrees in rural education offered by the Brazilian federal education system, 74 of them are held at universities and 13, at institutes, i.e., the total number of courses developed in federal institutions countrywide. These data were analyzed to introduce the challenges posed by remote teaching to rural educators' training, during the increase in the number of infections and death cases in traditional and rural communities.

Likewise, research data were contextualized to help better understanding the expansion of rural education courses in the country, at the time the National Council of Education (CNE – Conselho Nacional de Educação) discussed the regulation of the pedagogy of alternation (CNE, 2020c). In order to do so, the research highlighted different analytical categories, such as contagion and death caused by the new coronavirus in Indigenous and Quilombola communities, geographic location of the courses, qualifications of training fields, course implementation year, remote teaching in federal institutions, and edicts for aid and digital inclusion grants, among others. The entire discussion about these categories was cross sectioned in the theoretical framework on rural education, in association with the legislation and documents that have institutionalized rural populations' right to education based on their demands, culture, knowledge, history, struggles and territory.

## **Rural Populations and Vulnerability during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Right to Life and to Education**

Brazilian education is a right granted by law to everyone. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed social inequalities in Brazil, since it highlighted different levels of vulnerability and neglect – by the federal government – of fundamental rights of populations living in rural and remote territories, with low socioeconomic, human development and health indicators (Floss et al., 2020). The 1988 Federal Constitution, in its art. 196, acknowledges that “health is everyone’s right and the Federal Government’s duty, it is guaranteed through social and economic policies aimed at reducing the risk of diseases and other health issues and at guaranteeing universal and equal access to healthcare actions and services focused on health promotion, protection and recovery” (Brasil, 1988). However, it took more than two decades after such an acknowledgment in the Constitution for the Brazilian Government to implement the National Policy for the Comprehensive Health of Rural and Forest Populations, in 2011 (PNSIPCF – Política Nacional de Saúde Integral das Populações do Campo e da Floresta). This policy resulted from the broad demands, struggles, protagonisms and articulations of rural social movements, whose aims were to:

Improve the health level of rural and forest populations through actions and initiatives taking into consideration specificities of gender, generation, race/color, ethnicity and sexual orientation in order to grant them access to health services; to reduce health risks deriving from work processes and from agricultural technological innovations; and to improve health indicators and the quality of life of these populations. (Brasil, 2013, p. 7)

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<sup>6</sup>The websites are listed in the supplementary document.



The approval of the PNSIPCF was an attempt to reduce health inequalities and inequities in rural and difficult-to-access territories (Brasil, 2013). However, according to Floss et al. (2020), the availability of health professionals – mainly physicians – in these territories is a constant challenge that was mitigated by the introduction of Cuban doctors from the More Doctors Program (PMM - Programa Mais Médicos). However, at the end of the collaboration between Brazil and Cuba in PMM, which took place from 2013 to 2018, the Indigenous territories were the ones mostly affected by the lack of these professionals (Anderson, 2019; Floss et al., 2020). The discontinuity of such a collaboration, in association with a series of political decisions – such as the signing of a project authorizing mining activity in indigenous<sup>7</sup> lands and vetoes in Law n. 14.021/2020 – placed rural populations at the threshold vulnerability level in the COVID-19 pandemic context, which had implications in their fundamental rights and in the continuity of their territories.

According to Ayres et al. (2003, p. 127), vulnerability in the health field described as “the likelihood of having individuals exposed to diseases due to a set of individual, collective and contextual aspects that lead to higher susceptibility to infections and illnesses”. Among these contextual elements, one finds the scars of *colonization* and, therefore, the current elements imposing the subordination condition on rural populations within the scope of public and legal policies (Leite, 2020). These elements turn rural population into potential victims of the new coronavirus, structural racism and institutional violence, who are outraged in their fundamental rights. They also highlight the colonial perspective of development, according to which “the Federal Government betrays the poor to take sides with the rich, be them Brazilian or foreign” (Martínez-Alier, 2007, p. 276). Thus, it puts *progress* into practice by focusing on practices such as the vulnerabilization, ecocide and genocide of traditional and peasant peoples. Data on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Indigenous and Quilombola communities will be presented to exemplify vulnerability as a consequence of the Federal Government’s betrayal and omission.

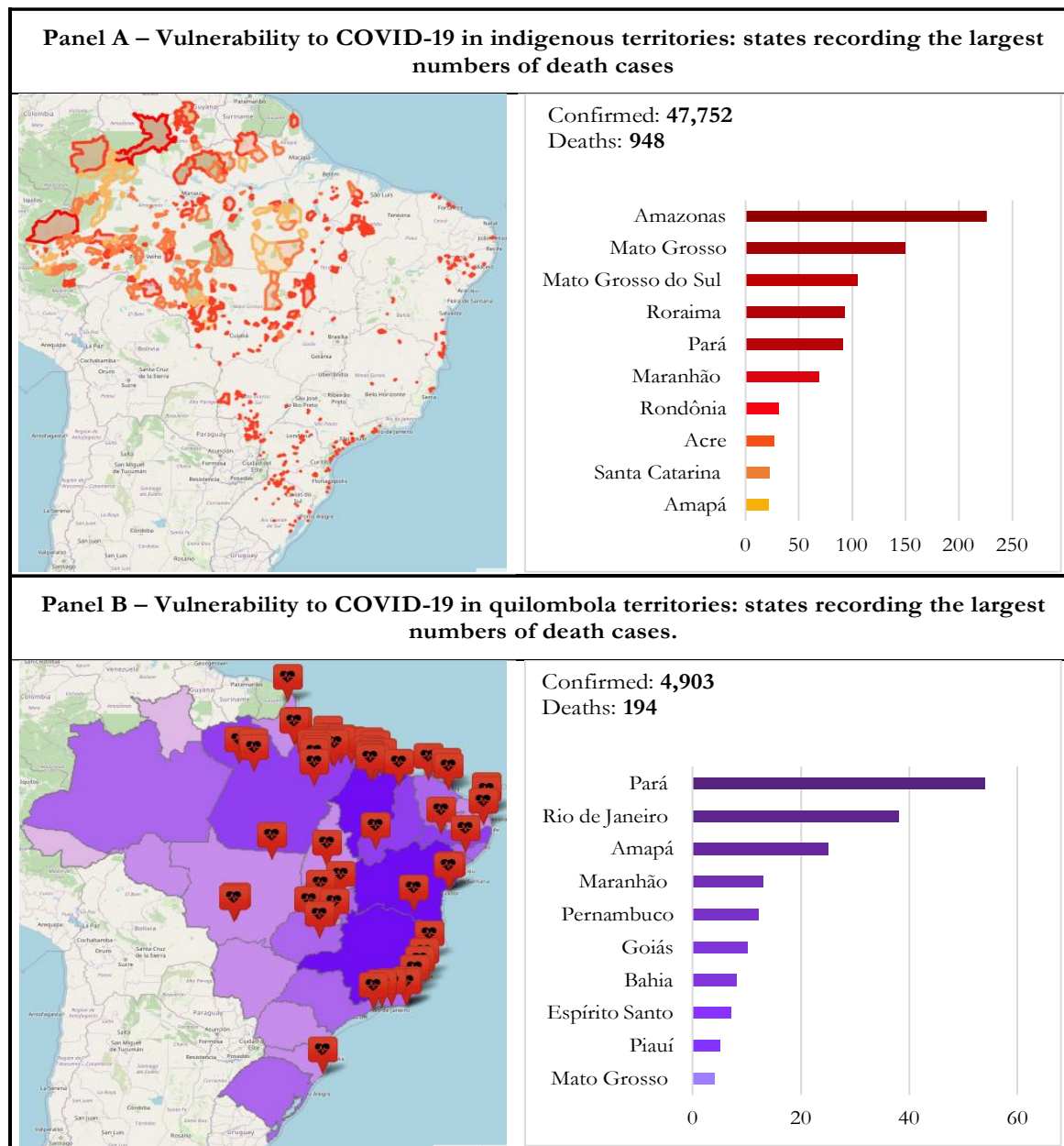
Data shown in Figure 2, Panel A, leave no doubt that the new coronavirus is causing the genocide and ethnocide of indigenous communities living in the Amazonian region, whose death rate is 150% higher than the national average (IPAM, 2020; ISA, 2020a). With respect to Quilombola communities (Panel B), notifications of infection and death cases are seen as challenge, since the institutional racism – with regard to lack of constitutional acknowledgement of Quilombola territories – significantly contributes to the underestimated number of communities, to lack of access to rights and to violence in the countryside (ISA, 2020b). In addition to the genocide and ethnocide of Indigenous and Quilombola peoples, collected data have highlighted the vulnerability of these populations, mainly of those living in Brazilian Amazon territories. States such as Amazonas, Mato Grosso, Roraima, Pará, Amapá and Maranhão stand out among the aforementioned territories, since they reflect colonial historical contexts imposed on rural populations, with regard to the neglect and omission of their fundamental rights. According to Leite (2020, p. 9), “several thinkers in the Human Sciences field have seen the COVID-19 pandemic management process as an ‘opportunity’ to put into practice the ‘social Darwinism’, and the dream of a radical neoliberalism, based on negligence and discrimination”.

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<sup>7</sup> Information available at: <https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2020-02-05/bolsonaro-anuncia-projeto-que-permite-garimpo-em-area-indigena-e-sugere-confinar-ambientalistas.html>.

**Figure 2**

*Indigenous and Quilombola Territories: Vulnerability, Contagion and Death Cases in the COVID-19 Pandemic Context*



*Note:* Adapted by the authors. Data and maps provided by the Social and Environmental Institute (ISA - Instituto Socioambiental), in collaboration with Brazil's Indigenous People Articulation (APIB - Articulação dos povos indígenas do Brasil) and with the National Coordination for the Articulation of Black Rural Quilombola Communities (CONAQ - Coordenação Nacional de Articulação das Comunidades Negras Rurais Quilombolas). Data updated on February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

Research data highlighted in Figure 2 provide an overview on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Indigenous and Quilombola communities. Based on the analyzed data, mainly on those exposed in Panel A, the practice of 'social Darwinism' is intentional and operationalized by institutional means. Data have also evidenced that the highest indigenous population vulnerability rates are concentrated in the Amazonian region, which is the constant object of interest of hegemonic developmental forces. Rural populations have articulated different resistance movements, before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, to fight the

vulnerabilization observed in their struggle for life and territory. The essence of rural education<sup>8</sup> in this articulation process enabled expanding the voice and rights of these populations in different knowledge and power spaces, based on using social media (Amado & Ribeiro, 2020; Kaseker & Ribeiro, 2020). Thus, the current study focused on investigating major degree courses in rural education and, therefore, practices adopted by federal higher education institutions (IFES) in remote learning. It was done to better understand the expansion of major degree courses in rural education in different territories in the country, such as those mostly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Major Degree in Rural Education: Institutionalization and Challenges during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The expansion of major degree courses in rural education, at universities and federal institutes, was enabled by Decree n. 7352/2010, which instituted the Rural Education Policy (Procampo). More than representing the right of rural populations to education based on their demands and culture, such an expansion has outlined other movements and articulations in the struggle for fundamental rights (Arroyo, 2012; Caldart, 2012). These movements act to report different forms of violence and institutional negligence in the social, political, epistemological and legal spheres, among others. Thus, they put pressure on these spheres in pursuit of justice and reparation for genocidal, ethnocidal and ecocidal practices capable of threatening the life of traditional and peasant communities. However, training courses provided for rural educators are seen as unwanted project in the current Brazilian context, which is marked by obscurantism, hate speech and institutional practices focused on omitting and neglecting the fundamental rights of rural populations and those of other “inferior” communities. Therefore, it is important addressing the expansion of these courses in order to contextualize the impacts of remote teaching institutionalization on IFES and on rural educators’ training.

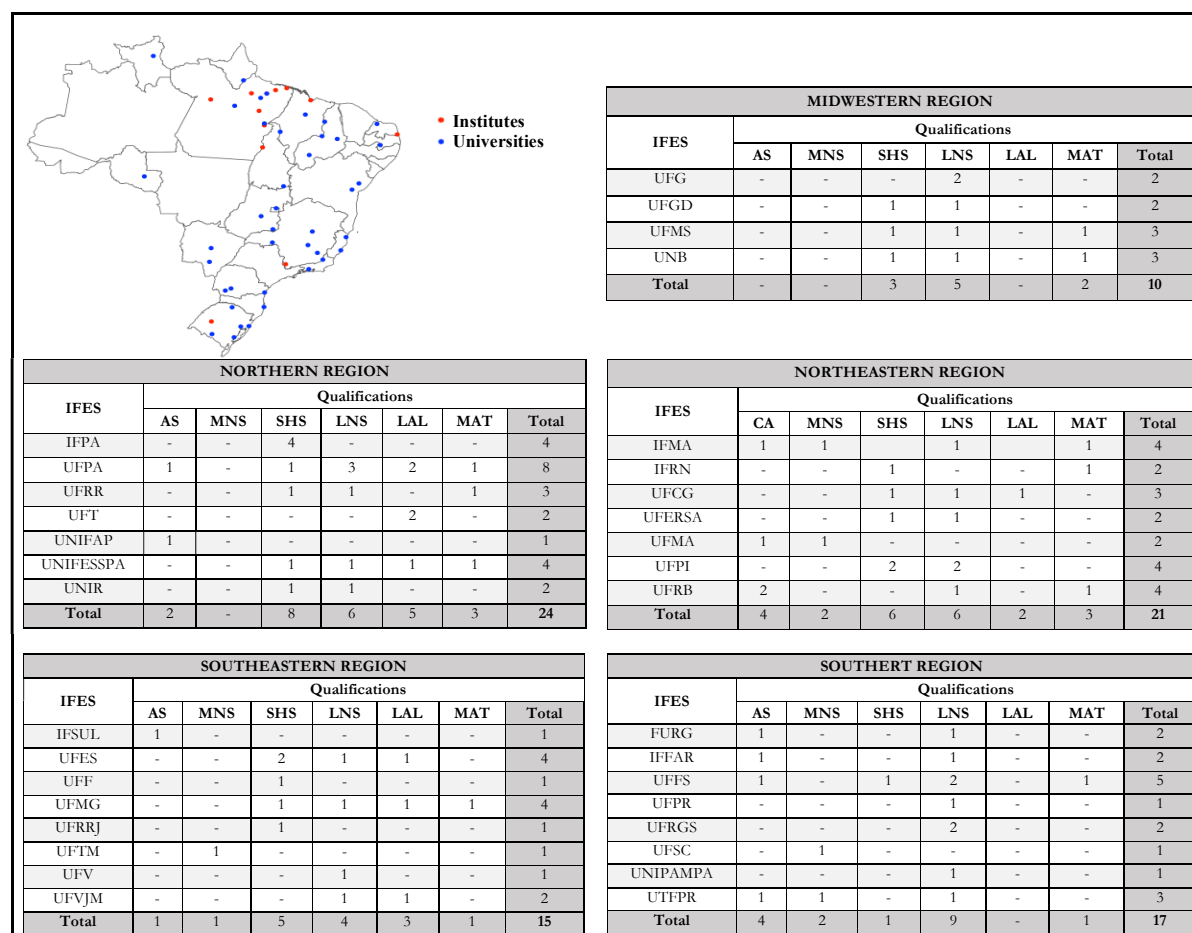
Research data shown in Figure 3 have evidenced the expansion of major degrees courses in rural education countrywide in recent years; it comprises 87 courses, in total. Northern Brazil accounts for 28% of these courses, and it is followed by the Northeastern (24.1%), Southern (19.5%), Southeastern (17.2%) and Midwestern (11.5%) regions. With respect to the Amazonian region, data highlight the role played by Federal University of Pará (UFPA – Universidade Federal do Pará), which provides eight major degree courses in rural education distributed in three municipalities and in five knowledge fields: a) *Abaetetuba campus* – Life and Nature Sciences (LNS), Social and Human Sciences (SHS), Mathematics (MAT), Languages, Arts and Literature (LAL); b) *Altamira campus* – Life and Nature Sciences (LNS), Languages, Arts and Literature (LAL); c) *Cametá campus* – Agricultural Sciences (AS) and Life and Nature Sciences (LNS). Federal University of Southern and Southeastern Pará (UNIFESSPA – Universidade Federal do Sul e Sudeste do Pará), in Marabá City, Pará State, offers rural education courses focused on four qualifications – LNS, SHS, LAL and MAT. Furthermore, Federal Institute of Pará (IFPA - Instituto Federal do Pará) offers four Major degrees with qualification in SHS, distributed in four municipalities, namely: Bragança, Breves, Castanhal and Marabá.

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<sup>8</sup> Rural Education was designed to meet the educational demands of different social groups, i.e. rural, fisherman and forest populations. According to the legislative sphere, Rural Education also includes the demands of native peoples who are supported by the normative frameworks of Rural Education, despite having specific educational laws aimed at indigenous schools and at indigenous teachers’ training.

Figure 3

## Major Degree Courses in Rural Education at Brazilian Federal Institutes and Universities



Note: Elaborated by the authors. Data available at the e-MEC portal (October 2020).

The expressive number of major degree courses (18) offered by federal education institutions in Pará State has expanded the access of rural populations to higher education; consequently, these courses have also expanded the educational possibilities in basic education. The expansion of LEDocs in the Brazilian Amazon is a promising factor, since the region concentrates 30 courses distributed in the following states: *Amapá, Maranhão, Pará, Rondônia, Roraima and Tocantins* (Brasil, 2020d). Thus, results in the current study have shown that, on the one hand, the Amazonian region has advanced in expanding higher education provision for rural populations. On the other hand, traditional communities living in this region were the ones mostly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with emphasis on high vulnerability levels experienced by indigenous and quilombola communities (ISA, 2020a; 2020b). According to data shown in Figure 2, Pará State leads the number of death cases in Quilombola communities and ranks the fifth position in the number of death cases among indigenous peoples – it is right behind Amazonas, Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul and Roraima states.

The high death rates recorded for Indigenous peoples in Amazonas and Mato Grosso states (Figure 2) enable intertwining this tragic reality with another variable taken into consideration in the current research – i.e., lack of major degree courses in rural education at IFES of eight Brazilian states, namely: *Acre, Alagoas, Amazonas, Ceará, Mato Grosso, Pernambuco, São Paulo and Sergipe* (Brasil, 2020d). Such a lack of courses can be analyzed based on multiple perspectives, such as on interests operating in each Brazilian region. Among these interests, one finds the struggle for land, mainly in the Amazonian region, where the advance of agribusiness,

deforestation, mineral exploration, hydroelectric power plants' expansion, mining and land grabbers pose constant threats to rural populations (Amado & Ribeiro, 2020; Lima, 2015). Thus, the training fields of all 87 courses highlight the demands and interests of Brazilian regions, as evidenced in the provided qualifications:

- Southern region - prevalence of training in Life and Nature Sciences (LNS) – with qualifications in Chemistry, Physics and Biology – and in Agricultural Sciences (AS) – focused on Agroecology, Associativism and Cooperation – highlights the interests of rural social movements in the region, with regard to rural development associated with nature preservation. However, there is no room for discussions about rural knowledge in the scope of Languages, Arts and Literature (LAL).
- Northern region - the hegemony of rural education courses with training fields in Social and Human Sciences (SHS) – with qualification in History, Geography, Philosophy and Sociology – indicates the regional demands to understand territorial historical dynamics intertwined with Life and Nature Sciences, which, in their turn, feature the social and political elements that, above all, have determined/determine the future of the Amazonian region.
- Southeastern region - there is also prevalence of training in Social and Human Sciences (SHS) and in Life and Nature Sciences (LNS), due to the historical circumstances that have marked/mark the region, namely: countryside emptying, indigenous genocide, deterritorialization of Afro-Brazilian populations' identity, and agribusiness expansion, among others.
- Northeastern region - there is a more equitable distribution of course qualifications, and it can indicate different fronts for struggles organized by rural social movements in the region.
- Midwestern region - data have only indicated three training fields – Life and Nature Sciences (LNS), Social and Human Sciences (SHS) and Mathematics (MAT) – as well as lack of courses in Mato Grosso State, which is the territory accounting for the greatest agribusiness expansion, as well as for a large number of COVID-19 infections and death cases in Indigenous and Quilombola communities.

On the one hand, research data synthesize the demands of rural social movements; on the other hand, it highlights the conflicting interests of hegemonic groups and sectors focused on land concentration and on the aggressive nature exploitation in Brazil. Likewise, there is evident negligence of the federal government towards the differentiated educational demands of rural populations, given the low incidence of major degree courses in rural education with qualifications in Agricultural Sciences (AS); Mathematics (MAT); Mathematics and Natural Sciences (MNS). With respect to conflicting interests, results reported by Andrade et al. (2019) have indicated that the training of rural educators is featured by the deconstruction of romanticized colonization representations in order to build a new identity for rural populations by detaching them from the idealized and urban-centric concept of rural areas as backward environments. Such features expose strategies historically used by developmental hegemonic concepts to uproot Indigenous, Quilombola and peasant communities from their territories.

Identity and territorial uprooting strategies have been intensified in the COVID-19 pandemic context, both in the Amazon and in other Brazilian regions, mainly when the political agenda of the federal government overrides economic interests, in the same extent as it makes the life and fundamental rights of traditional and peasant peoples vulnerable. In order to exemplify such a vulnerability in the legal sphere, it is worth highlighting the Anti-Demarcation Opinion – Opinion 001/2017, of the Federal Attorney General (AGU – Advocacia-Geral da União) – which implements the non-demarcation of indigenous territories, based on the time

milestone<sup>9</sup> thesis; the stagnated demarcation of quilombola territories<sup>10</sup>; and vetoes in Law n. 14.021/2020. Therefore, lack of major degree courses in rural education, mainly in *Amazonas* and *Mato Grosso* states – which have a significant number of demarcated indigenous territories and of Quilombola territories under demarcation process (IBGE, 2019a, 2019b) – indicates the conflicting interests, vulnerabilization, as well as the omission and negligence of the Federal Government towards the fundamental rights of these populations.

In addition, the analyzed data have evidenced another face of this process focused on the vulnerabilization and disarticulation of rural social movements, which was achieved through the extinction of two rural education courses: one of them at University of Taubaté (UNITAU) – São Paulo State, which ceased to be offered in 2015; and the other one at State University of the Midwest (UNICENTRO – Universidade Estadual do Centro-Oeste), Paraná State, which was extinguished in 2017 (Brasil, 2020d). Furthermore, according to data available on the e-MEC portal, five rural education courses are in process of being extinguished; they are distributed in the following states and institutions: a) *Pará State* – Federal Institute of Pará (two courses); b) *Rio Grande do Sul State* – Federal University of Pelotas (a distance-learning course); c) *Paraná State* – Federal University of Fronteira Sul (one course); d) *Sergipe State* – Federal University of Sergipe (one course; Brasil, 2020d). These data are impressive, since the creation of major degree courses in rural education is a recent phenomenon in the history of Brazilian universities – they were expanded through notice 02/2012<sup>11</sup> (Brasil, 2012). Thus, it is essential presenting the current context of these courses in federal universities and institutes distributed around the country, by taking into consideration the social distancing measures and, therefore, the institutionalization of remote learning.

### **Rural Education in Times of Social Distancing: Remote Teaching and Challenges to the Pedagogy of Alternation**

Official data provided by the Ministry of Health put Brazil at the second position among countries accounting for the largest number of infections and death cases caused by the new

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<sup>9</sup> The “time milestone” thesis presented by agribusinessmen proposes the reinterpretation of the 1988 Federal Constitution, on the right of native peoples to territory. According to this thesis, indigenous peoples would only have the right to demarcate lands that were proven to be in their possession on the date the Federal Constitution was enacted – October 5<sup>th</sup>, 1988. According to Osowski (2017), this interpretation – which has been discussed within the scope of the Federal Supreme Court and adopted by the Executive Power, based on the approval of AGU’s Opinion that intends to bind the entire Federal Public Administration to this understanding – curbs the rights of indigenous peoples to the demarcation of their territories. The aforementioned author also highlights that the actions taken by the Brazilian Federal Government “go against the conclusions of the National Truth Commission, which pointed towards a systematic scenario of forced removals and expulsions in the period-of-time preceding the 1988 Constitution” (Osowski, 2017, p. 320). Further information is available at: <https://cimi.org.br/2020/07/parecer-antidemarcacao-volta-pauta-stf-13-agosto/>; or at: <http://www.uel.br/revistas/uel/index.php/mediacoes/article/view/32261>.

<sup>10</sup> In May 2021, the Federal Public Ministry called in INCRA (National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform) and the Federal Government for the delay in demarcating quilombola territories. Further information is available at: <http://www.mpf.mp.br/ba/sala-de-imprensa/noticias-ba/mpf-aciona-incra-e-uniao-por-demora-na-demarcacao-de-terras-quilombolas-no-oeste-da-bahia>.

<sup>11</sup> Notice n. 2 – from August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012 - was published by the federal government in order to launch a Public Call to select Federal Higher Education Institutions (IFES - Instituições Federais de Educação Superior) and Federal Education, Science and Technology Institutes (IFET - Institutos Federais de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia) in order to create major degree courses in rural education, in the face-to-face modality. [http://portal.mec.gov.br/index.php?option=com\\_docman&view=download&alias=11569-minutaeditais-selecao-ifesifets-03092012&Itemid=30192](http://portal.mec.gov.br/index.php?option=com_docman&view=download&alias=11569-minutaeditais-selecao-ifesifets-03092012&Itemid=30192).

coronavirus (Brasil, 2020a)<sup>12</sup>. These data have evidenced, among other aspects, some controversies in the way the federal government managed the health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, namely: the revisionist behavior “established in the framework of necropolitics” (Amado & Ribeiro, 2020, p. 335); actions and behaviors aimed at disrupting social distancing measures adopted by some governors and mayors (Desideri, 2020); misinformation and fake news published on social networks about the effectiveness of hydroxychloroquine against the virus<sup>13</sup> (Bonella et al., 2020); the dismissal of two ministers of health – who had medical training – at the very beginning of the crisis, a fact that left the Ministry of Health without the leadership of an expert and under the management of the military at the peak of the pandemic (Bertoni, 2020); among other actions contrary to Article 196 of the Constitution. These factors made the Brazilian population vulnerable, mainly communities that are on the edge of existence due to a series of neglects and omissions of their fundamental rights, and reached “the level of a silent and escalating genocide” (Amado & Ribeiro, 2020, p. 337).

Social distancing measures are strongly recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO), and by the scientific community, in the COVID-19 pandemic context (Aquino et al., 2020; WHO, 2020; Wilder-Smith & Freedman, 2020). Social distancing comprises a set of coordinated actions taken to avoid agglomerations and, therefore, to limit social interaction in territories susceptible to the community transmission of contagious diseases (WHO, 2020). In extreme cases, social distancing measures set stricter rules for mobility, close economic and commercial activities, as well as non-essential services in order to prevent, and reduce the curve of, contagions and deaths (Aquino et al., 2020; Farias, 2020). Thus, a new reality was established in educational spaces: first, there was the temporary suspension of face-to-face teaching activities and, later, there was the institutionalization of remote teaching (CNE, 2020a; 2020b). Given this new reality, the current research contextualizes the institutionalization of 87 rural education courses offered by the federal education network; based on that, it highlights the institutions that have approved emergency academic calendars, as well as digital inclusion actions and policies focused on the student community.

Data presented in Figure 4, Panel A, show the location and operation mode of federal universities and institutes, with regard to undergraduate classes held throughout Brazil during the COVID-19 pandemic – in the investigated period. They highlight the growing adherence of these institutions to remote education, mainly in the Southeastern, Midwestern and Southern regions. Upon closer examination, data have indicated that 35% of 69 and 32% of 41 federal universities and institutes, respectively, have adhered to remote education – undergraduate classes in the other institutions remain canceled (Brasil, 2020c). In absolute numbers, this amount indicates that remote education was made available to 605,000 undergraduate students (Brasil, 2020c). Some of them do not have technological means and access to the internet, as well as live in remote rural contexts, in territories where internet-access limitation rates are relatively high (IBGE, 2010; PNAD, 2020).

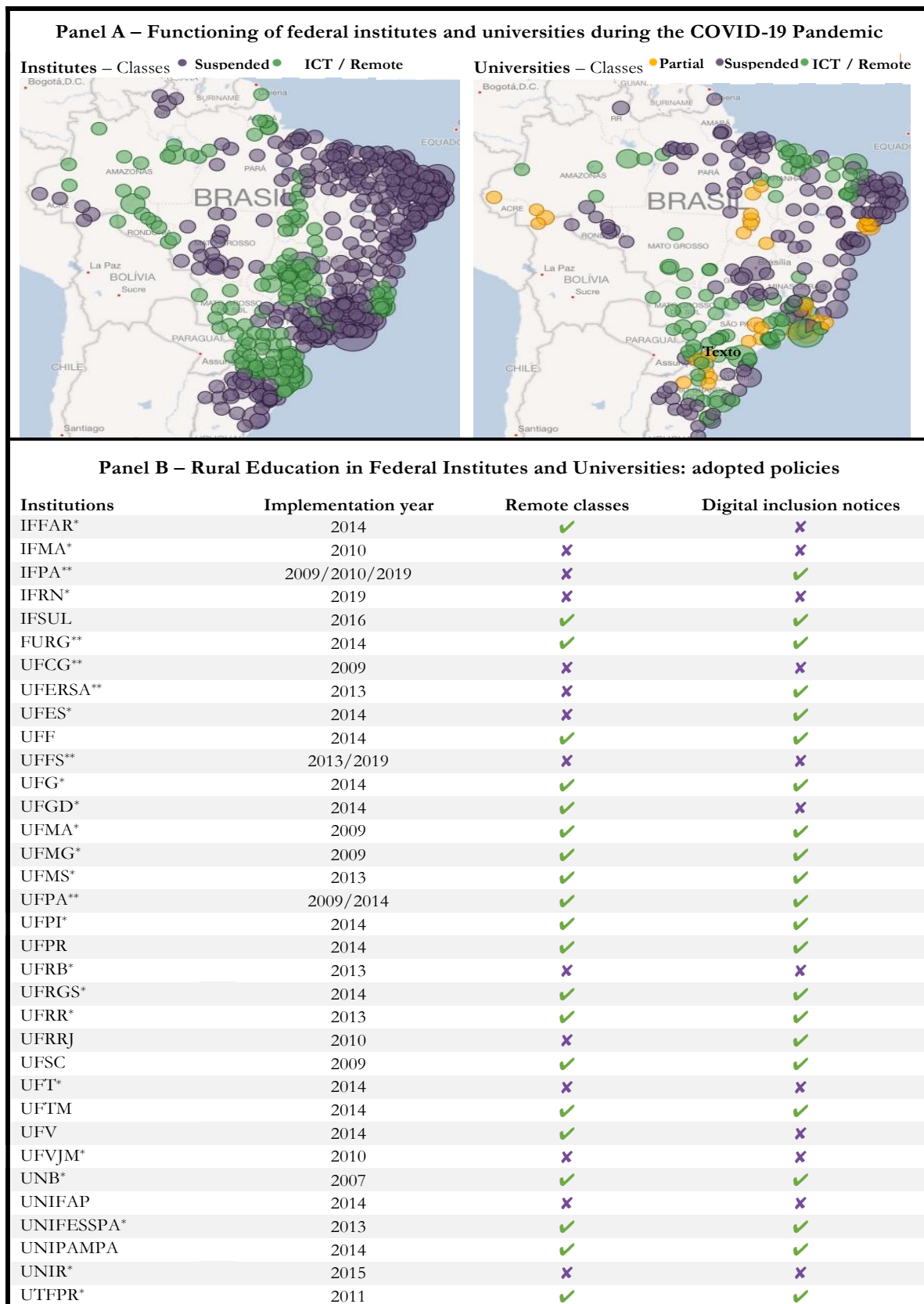
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<sup>12</sup> According to the Ministry of Health, Brazil accounts for 9,339,420 confirmed cases and 227,563 registered deaths. Data updated on February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021: <https://covid.saude.gov.br>.

<sup>13</sup> Since the very beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Brazilian federal government has issued several statements supporting the use of Chloroquine to treat patients infected with the new coronavirus and defending the effectiveness of this drug (Bonella et al., 2020). However, a set of scientific evidence found by researchers, in a large study carried out in New York City, has emphasized the ineffectiveness of this drug and, therefore, highlighted that “the results do not support the use of hydroxychloroquine” (Geleris et al., 2020).

**Figure 4**

*Rural Education at Federal Universities and Institutes: Remote Teaching and Digital Inclusion Policies during the COVID-19 Pandemic*



\* Institutions with more than one course launched in the same year.



\*\* Institutions with courses that were launched in different years.

*Note:* Elaborated by the authors. Information and maps available at the Ministry of Education's website – Coronavirus: Monitoring of educational institutions. Information accessed at e-MEC, as well as at the websites of federal universities and institutes – digital inclusion notices (Data updated on August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020).

Other issues make it even more complex for students who live in rural communities to participate in remote learning activities, since these populations face, on a daily basis, different aspects capable of increasing the vulnerability of their existence, both in terms of imminent risks of getting exposed to the virus and of facing socioeconomic challenges and issues associated with the defense of their territories (ISA, 2020a, 2020b). Remote education institutionalization also worsens social, gender, regional and territorial inequalities – in both urban centers and rural areas – among others, and puts into discussion the Constitutional rights provided on Article 205, which emphasizes that “education - which is a right for all and a duty of both the State and the family - will be promoted and encouraged, in partnership with society, to enable the full development of the people, their preparation for the exercise of citizenship and their qualification for work” (Brasil, 1988); most specifically, the part where Article 206 highlights that “teaching will be provided based on the following principles: I - Equal conditions for access to, and permanence in, school” (Brasil, 1988).

With respect the equality of conditions, it is essential pointing out the challenges posed by remote teaching to training courses focused on rural educators, whose central axis in the training process lies on the pedagogy of alternation (Cordeiro et al., 2011; Ferreira & Molina, 2015; Santos, 2012). The alternation in major degree courses in rural education, based on sociability processes under construction – together with these communities –, synergizes the knowledge experienced at university time, by associating them with the ways of life, cultures, traditions and knowledge of rural populations, articulated in community time (Caldart, 2012; Santos, 2012; Andrade et al., 2019). Rural educators' training, based on the pedagogy of alternation, is in jeopardy in the new remote teaching reality at IFES. Such a threat gets stronger and brings along serious implications for the configuration of the current training design, which is widely defended by rural social movements.

Furthermore, the institutionalization of major degree courses in rural education is historically described as recent factor in Brazilian federal institutes and universities. These courses have faced many difficulties in just over a decade, “such as our lack of knowledge about the reality of students and lack of students' knowledge about the different ways science is produced and how academic rituals work” (Caixeta, 2013, p. 2929). Thus, Andrade and collaborators have emphasized that the institutionalization of these courses is confronted by the colonial concept of monoculture of knowledge, which has contributed to difficulties faced by universities to understand the potential of the pedagogy of alternation in its entirety and, therefore, the innovative aspect of community time. Therefore, they emphasized “the important role played by community time in rural education as decolonial emancipatory proposal capable of destabilizing epistemological oppression and subordination processes” (Andrade et al., 2019, p. 26).

Data shown in Figure 4, Panel B, highlight the pioneering spirit of University of Brasília in implementing, in 2007, three courses with the following qualifications: LNS, LAL, and MAT; in order to combat such a subordination – not only in epistemological terms – in the process of implementing major degree courses in rural education. Subsequently, in 2009, five universities and one federal institute have expanded this offer by implementing fifteen courses distributed in different qualifications and regions in the country, namely: Federal Institute of Pará (SHS); Federal University of Campina Grande (LNS, SHS, LAL) Federal University of Maranhão (AS, MNS); Federal University of Minas Gerais (LNS, SHS, LAL, MAT); Federal University of Pará (LNS, SHS, LAL, MAT); and Federal University of Santa Catarina (MNS). The institutionalization of these major degree courses in rural education, as well as the creation of new courses, was consolidated by Decree n. 7352 - from November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010 – establishing that:

Art. 1, § 4 - Rural education will take place through the provision of initial and continuing training for education professionals, through the guarantee of infrastructure and school transport conditions, as well as of materials and textbooks, equipment, laboratories, library, and leisure/sports areas suited to the political pedagogical project, in line with the local reality and with the diversity of rural populations. (Brasil, 2010)

The aforementioned decree, in association with Notice 02/2012, was the determining factor for the institutionalization of the first courses and for the implementation of an expressive number of courses in the following years: 2011 – three courses; 2013 – seventeen courses; 2014 – twenty-nine courses; 2015 – three courses; 2016 – one course; and 2019 – seven courses. The sum of these numbers and the number of courses implemented in 2007, 2009 and 2010 equals 87 major degree courses in rural education, which are currently offered by 34 federal institutions in all Brazilian regions<sup>14</sup>. In total, 61% of the total number of institutions have approved emergency remote teaching calendars and 65% of them provided digital inclusion notices for the student community. Figure 4, Panel B, makes such a discrepancy noticeable when one observes the level of response of four institutions that did not approve remote teaching emergency calendars, but that have published digital inclusion notices: Federal Institute of Pará (IFPA - Instituto Federal do Pará), Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRRJ - Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro), Federal Rural University of the Semi-Arid (UFRSA - Universidade Federal Rural do Semi-Árido) and Federal University of Espírito Santo (UFES - Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo). The sum of courses provided by these institutions equals 11 major degree courses in rural education.

The information shown in Figure 4, Panel B, emphasizes that three institutions have adhered to remote learning, although they did not offer the opportunity for students to apply for digital inclusion grants and scholarships; these institutions were Federal Institute of Farroupilha (IFFar - Instituto Federal de Farroupilha), Federal University of Grande Dourados (UFGD - Universidade Federal da Grande Dourados) and Federal University of Viçosa (UFV - Universidade Federal de Viçosa). Together, these institutions offer five courses in rural education. However, there is an even more complex issue in the context of precariousness and expansion of inequalities in access to education, namely: deactivation of two rural education courses that had been implemented by IFFa, in 2014, in Jaguari County, Rio Grande do Sul State hinterlands. Furthermore, these three institutions are located in states featured by the strong presence of indigenous and quilombola communities – i.e., Mato Grosso do Sul, Minas Gerais and Rio Grande do Sul (IBGE, 2019a, 2019b). Therefore, lack of digital inclusion notices disarticulates the possibility of achieving right to education, as it exposes and expands different vulnerability levels experienced by rural populations, both in and outside federal universities and institutes.

Variable “specificities of digital inclusion notices” was included in the data collection process to help better understanding the vulnerability levels experienced by the rural populations taken into consideration by IFES’ digital inclusion policies. Of the twenty-two institutions that offer the rural education course and that have published digital inclusion notices, only two universities have published notices specifically aimed at indigenous and quilombola peoples, namely: Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG - Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais) and Federal University of Pampa (UNIPAMPA). On July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020, UFMG has issued PRAE/FUMP Call n. 05/2020, which publicly opened the “registration in *Programa UFMG Meu*

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<sup>14</sup> In the scope of PRONERA, some universities offer single classes, rather than regular annual classes, as other initial training courses often do. Thus, the investigated database shows limitations, since the e-MEC portal does not allow this differentiation between courses. Therefore, such a lack of differentiation has also limited the analysis of closing courses.

*Lugar: Inclusão Digital/Modalidade V* [UFMG My Place Program: Digital Inclusion/Modality V] - Acquisition of information technology and communication equipment for indigenous and quilombola students” (UFMG, 2020). UNIPAMPA, in its turn, released - on August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020 - the PRAEC Internal Call n. 3/2020, which was an Indigenous and Quilombola permanence support plan that covered:

Students of face-to-face undergraduate courses, who got their place through specific selection processes for indigenous and quilombola peoples, as well as for major degree courses in Rural Education, or through the reservation of places for indigenous and quilombola peoples, in the Unified Selection System (SiSU - Sistema de Seleção Unificada), in the academic year 2020. (UNIPAMPA, 2020)

University of Brasília (UnB) has indicated the possibility of enrolling rural populations, by pointing out that “1.3. Students who have passed the Indigenous entrance exam ruled by ACT 002/2015 FUB/FUNAI may enroll in the current Notice, according to the follow-up and classification list sent by DIV/Coquei” (UNB, 2020). Thus, the herein presented data make it clear that even a decade after Decree n. 7352/2010, and despite the significant number of rural education courses distributed in all Brazilian regions, rural populations continue to be outraged in their fundamental rights, including inside federal universities and institutes. Based on the current data reading and analysis, the approval of emergency remote teaching without specific digital inclusion notices for rural populations, as shown in Figure 4, represents the likely dismantling of the essence of pedagogy of alternation, as it was proposed by the rural social movements.

The essence of the pedagogy of alternation is consolidated in the human sociability dimension, as provided for in the Proposal for the Regulation of the Pedagogy of Alternation that has been addressed at CNE. Article 6 of the aforementioned proposal establishes the principles of the pedagogy of alternation, which comprise “learning capable of interconnecting popular, traditional, scientific and technological knowledge to ensure integration among educators, students, families, and social and community organizations in its territorial coverage area” (CNE, 2020c). Thus, the analyzed data have indicated that the pedagogy of alternation has been made precarious in its sociability dimension, since almost all institutions offering major degree courses in rural education did not show solid ways of providing digital inclusion for rural populations, through public notices and specific items aimed at meeting their demands.

The lack of affirmative digital inclusion policies focused on rural populations, within the remote education institutionalization scope, contradicts the principle of equal rights to education provided for in the 1988 Federal Constitution. Likewise, it makes the training of rural educators – based on the sociability dimension provided for in Article 7 of the Proposal for the Regulation of the pedagogy of alternation – precarious and unfeasible. According to the aforementioned proposal, “Community Time will be developed in students’ territory and community, and it will encompass research and experimentation activities and processes”, among other activities of educational nature (CNE, 2020c). Given the reality of social distancing and the near inexistence of specific digital inclusion policies for rural populations, the challenge consists in keeping the major degree courses in rural education operating without compromising the essence of the pedagogy of alternation and, therefore, the identity and the political-pedagogical project of these courses. Furthermore, the quality of students’ training processes is another equally-relevant aspect, since Article 19 of the Proposal for the Regulation of the Pedagogy of Alternation provides that:

Basic and Higher Education Schools, as well as other institutions that adopt the Pedagogy of Alternation, must offer the essential pedagogical and financial support to students in order to monitor Communities-Times, by providing adequate infrastructure conditions, in agreement with the local reality and with the diversity of rural, Cerrado, fisherman and forest communities. (CNE, 2020c)

The adequate infrastructure conditions indicated in the Proposal for the Regulation of the Pedagogy of Alternation aim at overcoming the inequality, inequity and vulnerability processes that stood out in pandemic times. Vulnerability is produced in a country like Brazil – where colonization landmarks are constantly updated through racist and fascist discourses – at the expense of categories such as territory, race, gender, and social class, among others. According to the herein presented data, these categories are used by the Federal Government to implement certain hegemonic developmental agendas, to the detriment of the subalternation of rural populations and, thus, to enhance the identity and territorial uprooting strategies. Thus, the research information has indicated that seven of the 87 rural education courses have been only operating for one year, which means that they remain at the initial stage of institutionalization and construction of their Alternation proposals. Furthermore, data have also indicated different aspects of the process making rural educators' training precarious – these aspects have evidenced the weaknesses of these courses in institutional agendas adopted by different IFES.

## Conclusions

Based on the analyzed empirical elements, the current research has indicated the expansion of major degree courses in rural education in all Brazilian regions, in the last decade. At the same time, it also emphasized the fragility of these courses at IFES, with regard to specific affirmative policies aimed at meeting educational demands imposed by remote education. In addition, results have evidenced high rates of Indigenous and Quilombola communities' vulnerability to coronavirus – featured by the number of infections and death cases – at a time when public policies, agendas and fundamental rights of rural populations to education, health, and territory, among others, have been disarticulated. Therefore, results have suggested that all these factors can limit the ability of students enrolled in undergraduate programs in rural education to devote time and concentration to academic studies, as well as to keep their articulations focused on the fight for land. All these elements favor the *perfect scenario* for: *a)* the usurpation of fundamental rights typical of necropolitics; *b)* the expansion of all forms of structural racism and institutional violence; *c)* the concealment and/or underreporting of the number of infections and death cases in rural areas; among other genocidal practices that determine the interests of the land market in Brazil.

The herein presented results – mainly lack of specific notices aimed at meeting demands for digital inclusion of rural populations in documents published by the federal universities and institutes offering LEDoCs – have highlighted a series of elements that reflect the Brazilian reality, namely: *a)* inequalities, negligence and omissions in promoting the right to education; *b)* the fragility of the institutionalization of rural education courses in federal universities and institutes; *c)* lack of specific affirmative policies to prevent rural populations from dropping out of higher education courses during the pandemic; and *d)* institutional neglect and lack of effective responses to the socioeconomic vulnerability of rural populations; among others. These results have suggested that remote education has real implications for the development of major degree courses in rural education, since realities of rural populations, mainly of indigenous and quilombola communities, have been torn apart by the COVID-19 pandemic. Such an issue presupposes different priority aspects of these communities, based on their culture, relationship with both the territory and nature, perceptions about the world and cosmovision.

Furthermore, the current results invite us to reflect about a series of aspects, mainly about the condition of all ten courses implemented in the last five years: *a)* the likely impacts of remote education on the construction of these courses' identity; *b)* the continuity of these major degree courses within the institutional agendas of each university and institute; *c)* temporary course suspension and abandonment by students who live in rural areas and do not have the necessary digital means to continue their studies during the COVID-19 pandemic; *d)* the future impacts of remote education on the quality of rural educators' training processes and its consequences for

basic education. The panoramic reading of results has pointed out that rural populations have historically struggled against all forms of racism and violence, in defense of their lifestyles, nature and territories. Therefore, these populations are also fighting for their right to life and to education, to the detriment of the way the National Policy for the Comprehensive Health of Rural and Forest Populations (PNSIPCF - Política Nacional de Saúde Integral das Populações do Campo e da Floresta) and the Rural Education Policy (Procampo) have been managed during the COVID-19 pandemic, within the scope of federal authorities.

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