



## “ENEM, Chego Junto, Chego Bem”: Promoting the Transition to Higher Education in Public Schools in the State of Ceará, Brazil

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**Abstract:** Transition to higher education is still a very unequal process in Brazil. Generally, the proportion of students who take the National High School Exam (*Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio*, ENEM) is much lower in public school systems than in private schools. An important initiative to promote the transition to higher education is “ENEM, Chego Junto, Chego Bem” (ECJCB), a program created by the Ceará state government. This program factors in the diversity of obstacles preventing students from taking the exam (e.g., lack of motivation; lack of documentation for registering for ENEM; lack of means of transportation to the exam site). This study describes the process of problem acknowledgement, the ECJCB formulators’ ideas, the policy instruments used, and probable mechanisms triggered by such instruments. We draw on theories of the policy process, particularly the advocacy coalition framework, and on studies about policy design. The research is based on semi-structured interviews with key actors involved in the formulation and implementation of the ECJCB. Our results indicate that formulators’ shared beliefs shaped the program – for example, the belief in students’ and public schools’ capacity and the belief that the state’s public schools should take preparation for ENEM as a central theme. Also prominent are the engagement strategies used by the school system.

**Keywords:** high school education; higher education; advocacy coalition framework (ACF); public policy analysis; policy design; policy instruments; mechanistic perspective; Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio (ENEM); “ENEM, Chego Junto, Chego Bem”; Ceará; Brazil

### “ENEM, Chego Junto, Chego Bem”: Promoviendo la transición hacia la educación superior en las escuelas públicas de Ceará, Brasil

**Resumen:** La transición hacia la educación superior ha ocurrido de forma muy desigual en Brasil. En general, la proporción de estudiantes que participan en el Examen Nacional de Educación Media (*Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio*, ENEM) es mucho menor en las escuelas públicas que en las privadas. Una iniciativa importante en la transición a la educación superior es el “ENEM, Chego Junto, Chego Bem” (ECJCB), un programa del estado de Ceará que considera la diversidad de obstáculos que enfrentan los estudiantes en las escuelas públicas (por ejemplo, falta de motivación, falta de documentos para inscripción en el ENEM; falta de medios de transporte al sitio de prueba). Este estudio describe el proceso de reconocimiento del problema, las ideas de los formuladores del ECJCB, los instrumentos de política utilizados y los posibles mecanismos desencadenados por dichos instrumentos. Se utilizan teorías sobre el *policy process*, en particular el *Advocacy Coalition Framework*, y bibliografía sobre *policy design*. La investigación se apoya en entrevistas semiestructuradas a actores clave en la formulación e implementación de la política. Los resultados indican que las creencias compartidas de los formuladores dieron forma al programa, como la seguridad en la capacidad de los estudiantes y las escuelas públicas, y el convencimiento de que la preparación para el ENEM debe ser un tema central en las escuelas públicas. Por igual, se destacan las estrategias de compromiso de la red de escuelas.

**Palabras-clave:** educación media; educación superior; *advocacy coalition framework* (ACF); análisis de políticas públicas; *policy design*; instrumentos de política pública; perspectiva mecanicista; Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio (ENEM); “ENEM, Chego Junto, Chego Bem”; Ceará; Brasil

### “ENEM, Chego Junto, Chego Bem”: Promoção da transição para a educação superior nas escolas estaduais do Ceará, Brasil

**Resumo:** A transição para o ensino superior ainda tem ocorrido de forma muito desigual no Brasil. Em geral, a proporção de alunos que participam do Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio (ENEM) é muito menor nas redes estaduais que nas escolas privadas. Uma iniciativa de relevo na transição para o ensino superior é o “ENEM, Chego Junto, Chego Bem” (ECJCB), programa do estado do Ceará que considera a diversidade dos obstáculos encarados pelos alunos das escolas públicas (e.g., falta de motivação; falta de documentos para inscrição no ENEM; falta de meios de locomoção até o local de prova). Este estudo descreve o processo de reconhecimento do problema, as ideias dos formuladores do ECJCB, os instrumentos de política utilizados e os prováveis mecanismos acionados por tais instrumentos. São mobilizadas teorias sobre *policy process*, em particular o *Advocacy Coalition Framework*, e escritos sobre *policy design*. A pesquisa apoia-se em entrevistas semiestructuradas com atores-chave para a formulação e a implementação da política. Resultados indicam que as crenças compartilhadas entre formuladores moldaram o programa, entre elas a crença na capacidade dos alunos e das escolas públicas, e a crença de que a preparação para o ENEM deva ser tema central nas escolas estaduais. São também salientes as estratégias de engajamento da rede.

**Palavras-chave:** ensino médio; ensino superior; *advocacy coalition framework* (ACF); análise de políticas públicas; *policy design*; instrumentos de política pública; perspectiva mecanicista; Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio (ENEM); “ENEM, Chego Junto, Chego Bem”; Ceará; Brasil

## “ENEM, *Chego Junto, Chego Bem*”: Promoting the Transition to Higher Education in Public Schools in the State of Ceará, Brazil<sup>1,2</sup>

In Brazil, the National High School Exam (*Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio*, ENEM) plays a central role in the allocation of places in higher education; together with the Unified Selection System (*Sistema de Seleção Unificada*, Sisu), it reduces the costs associated with participating in selection processes (Nogueira et al., 2017) and shows potential to reduce social disparities. Yet the opportunity to access higher education institutions remains highly unequal. Students from states’ public schools<sup>3</sup> generally register for ENEM at a much lower rate than their counterparts in private schools. Those who are more socially vulnerable face various types of obstacles, from logistic barriers to subjective limitations. Examples are the lack of documentation to complete their registration, lack of means to go to the exam site (Maia, 2019), lack of knowledge of the exam content, and low academic self-concept.<sup>4</sup>

In Brazil, transitions between different education levels are often transitions between school systems of different government levels – e.g., from a municipal school to a state or federal school. Such transitions are delicate moments that require, on the one hand, institutional capacity (Abbott-Chapman, 2011; Fagundes Luce & Espinar, 2014) and, on the other, adaptation by the individuals who go through these experiences (Galton et al., 1999; Lebourg et al., 2021).

In particular, the responsibility for coordinating the transition to higher education is not well defined in the Brazilian federative model. While federal initiatives such as ENEM and Sisu reduce costs and uncertainties associated with this transition, no entity in the public education system is specifically tasked with encouraging student participation in admissions processes. Private schools, on the other hand, usually employ robust strategies to encourage their students to participate<sup>5</sup> in the national exam and to apply for college. Such a disparity increases the inequalities in access to tertiary education.

Given that each high school system in a given level of government decides on the investments it will make to encourage participation in ENEM among high school students, a problem of educational federalism arises (Abrucio, 2010): the central effort to democratize access to higher education – via ENEM, the University for All Program (*Programa Universidade para Todos*, Prouni), Sisu, and the Quotas Law (*Lei de Cotas*, federal law n. 12,711/2012), among other national initiatives – has not yet been coordinated with subnational governments. Therefore, states, as the main providers of high school education in Brazil, may or may not take on the task of supporting the transition of young people to higher education.

In this vein, Ceará is a prominent case. Since 2009, actions have been taken by the state government regarding the transition to higher education, with a focus on ENEM. These actions, which initially consisted in distributing books with exams of previous years as study material, took

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<sup>1</sup> This article is largely based on Flora de Paula Gonçalves Holanda Maia’s master’s thesis, supervised by Ana Paula Karruz and defended in July 2022 to obtain a master’s degree in political science from the Federal University of Minas Gerais.

<sup>2</sup> This article was originally written in Portuguese. It was translated by Karin Blikstad.

<sup>3</sup> In Brazil, state governments provide almost all seats available in public secondary education.

<sup>4</sup> Academic self-concept is “a mental representation of one’s personal competencies in academic domains in general [in this case, the domain of tertiary education], or in relation to a specific school-subject” (Korhonen et al., 2016, p. 22).

<sup>5</sup> We use the verb “participate” and the noun “participation” to indicate the act of taking the ENEM – i.e., attending the exam. Thus, the intended meaning is different from just registering for ENEM.

shape in a relatively short period. Since 2012,<sup>6</sup> the program *ENEM, Chego Junto, Chego Bem* (ECJCB) consists of a set of initiatives to mobilize and prepare students in the state's public schools for ENEM. This program's actions<sup>7</sup> take place throughout the school year and are distinct in nature – e.g., assisting students in gathering documents for registration, holding cultural events to encourage students to register and take the exam, and academic preparation. Its target population comprises high school students and students in their final years of Youth and Adult Education (*Educação de Jovens e Adultos*, EJA). Currently, the ECJCB is under the purview of the Coordination Office of Student Protagonism,<sup>8</sup> but it has undergone some changes, both in terms of its position within the Ceará Department of Education (*Secretaria de Educação do Ceará*, Seduc) and its actions.

There is evidence supporting the hypothesis that the ECJCB has effectively “changed the game” in what concerns the transition to higher education. In 2010, Ceará was in the eighth position among the federation units with the highest proportion of high school graduating students who registered for ENEM; in 2011, the state was in the sixth position. Between 2012 and 2017, the state ranked among the top four positions; in 2018, 2019, and 2020 (the last year with available data), it ranked first.<sup>9</sup> Notably, since 2015 the proportion of students in Ceará who concluded high school in one of the state's public schools and registered for ENEM was even higher than among their counterparts in private schools.

Our research is thus guided by the following questions: *A.* Which actors were relevant for creating this policy and how are their beliefs reflected in the recognition of the problem (of low participation in ENEM) and formulation of the policy? *B.* Which policy instruments were used to address this problem? *C.* How do the ECJCB instruments contribute to the program's effectiveness?

With the first question, we aim to understand how the state government of Ceará came to adopt a policy whose central theme is the transition to higher education. Specifically, we seek to describe the process in which the problem was recognized, the goals were established, the implementation instruments were chosen, the coordination structures were built, and the expected outcomes were defined. To this end, we first had to identify the actors in order to describe the belief system and coalitions at play, if any. Since we did not find sources that provided information about ECJCB key actors, it was up to us to identify this group, in addition to characterizing their beliefs.

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<sup>6</sup> Even though the ECJCB is in place since 2012, the program has only recently become state law – specifically, law n. 17,572, of July 22, 2021, which establishes the *Ceará Educa Mais* Program. The ECJCB is one of its actions (art. 2, X). See <https://www2.al.ce.gov.br/legislativo/legislacao5/leis2021/17572.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> In this article, we indistinctly use the terms “policy” and “program” to refer to the ECJCB.

<sup>8</sup> This coordination office reports directly to the Executive Office of High School and Professional Education (*Secretaria Executiva do Ensino Médio e Profissional*) located in the Ceará Department of Education (Seduc). Its organization chart is available at: [https://www.seduc.ce.gov.br/wp-content/uploads/sites/37/2019/06/organograma\\_2019.pdf](https://www.seduc.ce.gov.br/wp-content/uploads/sites/37/2019/06/organograma_2019.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> This is our calculation, based on the 2010 to 2020 editions of the “Synopsis of Basic Education Statistics” (*Sinopse Estatística da Educação Básica*) and the “ENEM Statistical Synopsis” (*Sinopse Estatística do ENEM*), published by the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (*Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira*, Inep). This information has inconsistencies that are, at least in part, explained by the fact that ENEM takes students' self-declaration (which is not verified) to build its data on the number of high school graduating seniors. In some cases, the number of self-declared high school graduating students (typically, third-year students and, in a minority of high school programs that last one more year, fourth-year students) who registered for ENEM is higher than the cohort of high school seniors in the federal unit, according to data from the School Census. For this reason, we chose to display the relative position of the federation units according to the proportion of self-declared graduating students registered for ENEM, instead of exhibiting that proportion itself – which, due to the above-mentioned inconsistencies, occasionally assumes a value greater than one.

Question *B* calls for a detailed and structured description of the program, while question *C* provokes a reflection on the causal mechanisms triggered by the ECJCB. We believe our findings can offer timely input to help develop other education policies designed to support the transition to higher education, which are especially important given that the number of ENEM registrations is in decline (*Folha de S.Paulo*, 2021).

To address question *A*, we draw on the advocacy coalition framework (ACF) proposed by Sabatier (1998) and some of its revisions, particularly the one that was recently carried out by Weible and colleagues (2020). This approach allows us to focus on the high school education subsystem in Ceará and on the factors and actors (organized in coalitions) that influenced the ECJCB. To tackle questions *B* and *C*, we rely on the literature on policy design (e.g., Capano & Howlett, 2021; Howlett, 2009). It is our interest to identify and classify the instruments used in the ECJCB and surmise how they might have been able to change the behavior of the target population as expected by the formulators. Some of the aspects to be examined are the type of instruments and main resource mobilized, the conditions that encourage policy actors to adopt such instruments, and the mechanisms that affect behavior (of managers, educators, and students).

The remainder of the article is organized into four sections. In the first section, we describe the research design, time frame, and techniques used in data collection and analysis.<sup>10</sup> The second and third sections present each a theoretical framework, followed by an empirical application – the second section seeks to answer question *A*, while the third addresses questions *B* and *C*. In the fourth section, we conclude.

## Methodological Approach

A qualitative research approach is adopted, based on semi-structured interviews with key actors.<sup>11</sup> This choice was made after a search in newspapers, on Seduc’s website, and on the website of the Legislative Assembly of Ceará showed that there were no materials that expressed the policy sponsors’ beliefs at the time the policy was formulated. Also, a specific question was included in the first interviews about the existence of documents that described ECJCB’s formulation process. We received only one set of slides, which the managers in charge of the program had used to present it in its early years. This material, however, did not bring any information that could not be found on Seduc’s website. Since the actors’ beliefs were not documented during the formulation process, applying retrospective interviews became crucial to accessing such beliefs; moreover, the interviews revealed and clarified aspects of the instruments and their implications.

The interview guide was formulated based on our research questions and the theoretical perspectives mobilized in this study: ACF concepts, policy instruments, and mechanisms; we also incorporated questions about the context in which the ECJCB was formulated and implemented, among other questions. The interview guide, available in the Appendix, is organized in six sections, covering the following topics: actor’s identification; genesis of the ECJCB, its characteristics, and changes over time; actor’s beliefs; broader context; support for and resistance to the ECJCB; and general assessment of the policy. Question *A* mainly benefits from the questions in sections 1, 3, and 5 of the interview guide. Questions *B* and *C* are addressed primarily in sections 2, 4, and 6. The

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<sup>10</sup> We adopted a less usual structure as we present our methodological approach before the theoretical discussion. The same methodological approach was used to address all three research questions, but we used two different theoretical perspectives (ACF and the policy design approach); for the sake of expositional clarity, each theory is discussed next to their respective empirical analyzes.

<sup>11</sup> This research project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Minas Gerais (CAAE: 39469120.0.0000.5149).

guide also contains a final item requesting the interviewee to name other actors that should be contacted; we thus mapped a network of relevant actors associated with the ECJCB. During each interview, and following the semi-structured nature of this data collection instrument, new questions were added.

Of the 15 interviewees, ten had worked at Seduc when the policy was being formulated and/or had held a position with decision-making power over this program – four former education secretaries and six Seduc civil servants who were heads of regional coordination offices or of coordination offices in Seduc's headquarters (based in Fortaleza) between 2007 and 2019. The other interviewees are two school principals, one civil servant working at a Regional Coordination Office for Education Development (*Coordenadoria Regional de Desenvolvimento da Educação*, Crede), one Seduc civil servant, and a professor at the Federal University of Ceará (*Universidade Federal do Ceará*, UFC).

The interviews were manually transcribed, and the transcriptions were coded in the program QDA Miner Lite Version according to the initial code tree shown in Figure A1 (Appendix). The main categories we used are based on the policy process and policy design literature, which will be detailed in the next section; the categories are external factors, belief system, instruments, and resources. In addition, we used other purely descriptive categories to systematize facts that do not necessarily affect this policy subsystem but concern the broader educational context in the state (i.e., categories "Policy background/history" and "Actors," the latter referring to interviewees' identification data).

Content analysis was carried out mainly by verifying whether a certain theme was present in the *corpus* (Bardin, 1977); additionally, we considered the frequency of some themes. For our analysis, which involves a relatively small sample of 15 interviewees, frequency is not always a useful measure. Certain elements might be mentioned only once, or just a few times, and still be noteworthy.

Admittedly, the relatively long interval between the ECJCB's formulation and the present day, combined with people's perception that the program has been a success, may have led interviewees to review their beliefs, possibly making such beliefs more favorable to the model implemented than they were at the time of the formulation. Nonetheless, the interviewees reported differences of opinion, especially about the goal of reaching a 100% student participation rate in ENEM (discussed ahead). This suggests that a possible reinterpretation of beliefs has not eliminate altogether diversity of opinion among the interviewees.

## Advocacy Coalitions

This section introduces the advocacy coalition approach (Sabatier, 1998), presents the model's key concepts, and comments on a recent revision carried out by Weible and colleagues (2020). Moreover, we show that the belief system not only has shaped the ECJCB coalition's shared perspective but has also been critical for the recognition of the problem. In this section, we also list the main external factors that influenced this policy process.

The ACF has been widely applied in the analysis of public policies (Weible et al., 2020). In proposing this conceptual framework, Sabatier (1998) intended to understand factors that affect the policy process, which involves problem definition, formulation, implementation, and revision of a given policy within a specific domain. This domain is the policy subsystem, which, according to the ACF, is the key unit of analysis for understanding policy processes (Sabatier & Weible, 2007).

Policy subsystems are spaces delimited both functionally and geographically (Sabatier & Weible, 2007) – in other words, they are circumscribed in what they do and where they do it. Subsystems may nest within one another (Sabatier, 1998). For example, the air pollution subsystem may be nested in the environment subsystem. Within subsystems, governmental and non-

governmental actors (e.g., interest groups, researchers, and journalists) are constantly seeking to influence the policy in question. When they share beliefs, actors in a subsystem may act in coordination to defend interests, especially normative values and beliefs about a given public policy.

Beliefs are organized into a three-level structure, creating a system. Its most abstract level, called *deep core*, refers to policy actors' normative values in general. At the intermediate level are the *policy core beliefs* – they concern the normative and empirical beliefs related specifically to the policy subsystem in question. At this level in the belief system are the perceptions about the cause and magnitude of the problem, the possible solutions, and the overall goals of a given policy (Sabatier, 1998). Therefore, the policy core is the level associated with the process of recognizing a social issue as a problem to be tackled. Finally, the less abstract level, *secondary beliefs*, refers to the instruments used to achieve the outlined goals; it can also refer to solutions and problems in a specific part of the subsystem. These levels are organized hierarchically. Deep core beliefs are almost completely shielded from changes; policy core beliefs are moderately susceptible to changes, while secondary beliefs are highly susceptible to transformations (Sabatier, 1998).

In the ACF, policy processes are influenced by the interaction between subsystem actors, their belief systems, resources, and choices of policy instruments. In addition, factors external to the subsystem also affect the level and distribution of resources among policy actors in the short or long term. These may be more stable factors – e.g., problem attributes, sociocultural values, distribution of natural resources, and legal framework – or less stable factors – e.g., public opinion, governmental coalition, the impact of other subsystems, and events that change socioeconomic conditions (Weible et al., 2009).

ACF diagrams are usually presented with two opposing coalitions (see Appendix, Figure A2, where we reproduced a diagram by Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018, p. 143), because studies that apply this model most frequently examine situations with adversarial coalitions (Weible, Sabatier & McQueen, 2009). However, this configuration does not exhaust the number and types of coalitions that may be present in a given subsystem.

Weible and colleagues (2020) revisited the ACF model to incorporate lessons learned and improvements. One of the important additions to the model is a typology for classifying coalitions formed within a given subsystem (Figure 1). According to Weible et al. (2020), the ideal coalition type (i.e., adversarial coalitions, as in the first ACF studies) has seven attributes, namely: i) policy actors (e.g., governmental actors in political positions or positions in the public bureaucracy, journalists, academics, social movements); ii) with shared beliefs about the policy; iii) acting in coordination; iv) enjoying stability over time; v) coexisting with an opposing coalition; vi) commanding non-minority resources; and vii) behaving non-cooperatively toward other coalitions. If one of these attributes is non-existent or ephemeral, that means that one of the coalition subtypes is active – ranging from a disconnected coalition to a cooperative coalition.

In Figure 1, we see that the disconnected or potential coalition (subtype 1) is not yet a de facto coalition. If policy actors begin to coordinate their actions but do not sustain such coordination, they form an ephemeral coalition or a coalition of convenience (subtype 2). If the beliefs and coordinated actions are stable over time and there is no opposition, then there is a dominant coalition without opposition (subtype 3). If there is opposition within a subsystem, it should be investigated to see whether another coalition was formed. In case there is an opposing coalition, it might be a minority coalition (subtype 4) or it might be an adversarial coalition. In the latter case, if there is coordinated action between the coalitions, these are cooperative coalitions (subtype 5).<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, if coalitions command comparable resources but do not cooperate,

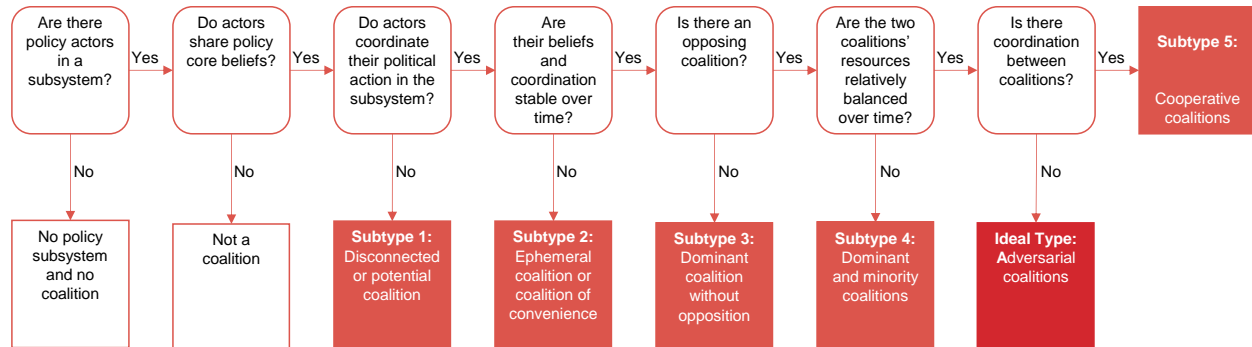
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<sup>12</sup> “Coordination between rivals exists when they decide to work together in the policy process. This often involves negotiating agreements, consensus-based decision making, and sharing of resources. The intent of

these are the ideal coalition type illustrated in the classic ACF diagram: adversarial coalitions (Weible et al., 2020).

**Figure 1**

*Coalition Subtypes*



Source: Adapted from Weible et al. (2020, p. 1068).

### Question A: Actors, Ideas, and Problem Recognition

Coalition actors recognize a problem based on their beliefs (Sabatier, 1998). The high school education subsystem in Ceará has chronic problems and specific problems. A high student dropout rate was already known to be a problem since the beginning of the Cid Gomes administration,<sup>13</sup> in 2007. On the other hand, the low number of students in the state's public schools who register for ENEM is a specific problem that was recognized in 2009, when the exam began to be used in selection processes for higher education. This is a complex problem, whose layers were gradually identified as the ECJCB actions were being implemented.

The actors with decision-making power over the ECJCB during the policy formulation period were Seduc's secretary, deputy secretary, executive secretaries, the coordinators at Seduc's headquarters, and Seduc's regional coordinators. In 2007, when Cid Gomes began his term as governor, he appointed to the education department two actors who had participated in Sobral's education reform,<sup>14</sup> a reform that is recognized as a success for its literacy results. Adding these two actors to the education department – Izolda Cela<sup>15</sup> and Maurício Holanda Maia<sup>16</sup> – significantly

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such cross-coalition coordination often involves goals of achieving win-win policy outcomes" (Weible et al., 2020, p. 1065).

<sup>13</sup> Cid Gomes, affiliated with the Brazilian Socialist Party (*Partido Socialista Brasileiro*, PSB), was elected governor of Ceará in the 2006 election. He was reelected in 2010 while still in the same party. In 2013, he joined the Republican Party of Social Order (*Partido Republicano da Ordem Social*, PROS). In 2015, he switched to the Democratic Labor Party (*Partido Democrático Trabalhista*, PDT), to which he is currently affiliated.

<sup>14</sup> Sobral is a municipality in Ceará's countryside, where Cid Gomes was the mayor from 1997 to 2005. Sobral's education reform was implemented between 2001 and 2004.

<sup>15</sup> Izolda Cela was Ceará's secretary of education between 2007 and 2014 and vice-governor between 2015 and 2022. Currently, she is the state's governor; she took office in 2022, after the resignation of Camilo Santana (Workers' Party, PT, in the Portuguese acronym). She was affiliated with the PT (2001-2013), PROS (2013-2016), and PDT (2016-2022); at present, she is not affiliated with a political party.

<sup>16</sup> Maurício Holanda Maia was Ceará's deputy secretary of education between 2007 and 2014 and secretary of education between 2014 and 2016.



affected the trajectory of Ceará’s education policy, as they brought an educational perspective strongly centered on programs designed to evaluate and award prominent schools (Sumiya, 2015; Vieira, Plank, and Vidal, 2019). In addition, at least two former school principals from Sobral became heads of Seduc coordination offices. Our findings reinforce the idea that the Sobral experience is a legacy that appears in the beliefs shared not only by Seduc secretaries but also by the coordinators in the ECJCB coalition.

Governor Camilo Santana (Workers’ Party – PT), who took office in 2015 following Cid Gomes’ second term, pressed ahead with his predecessor’s education policy. The coalition that shared policy core beliefs with respect to the ECJCB remained in Seduc during Santana’s government. The fact that policy actors engaged in sustained coordinated activities is evidence that there was an advocacy coalition (Sabatier, 1998). As detailed below, this is a dominant coalition without opposition. Chart 1, created based on the analysis of the interviews, describes the coalition’s beliefs on the topic of high school education and transition to higher education.

**Chart 1**

*Belief System of the ECJCB Dominant Coalition*

Level of the belief system	Belief
Deep core beliefs	* Education is everyone’s right.
	* Admission to higher education is a marker of social ascension, and it increases the possibility of economic ascension.
	* The state must support and encourage young people to enter higher education.
	* Admission to higher education should be a democratic process, and students in the state’s public schools should have the same opportunities to participate in ENEM as do the more affluent students.
<i>Fundamental normative precepts</i>	
Policy core beliefs	* Transition to higher education should be a central theme in the state’s public schools.
	* The state’s public schools should direct as much effort to students’ transition to higher education as private schools do.
	* The state’s public schools are capable of preparing their students for the transition to higher education.
	* Students in the state’s public schools can perform well enough to enter higher education.
	* Young people are autonomous, and the success of youth policies is conditioned by the participation of their target population.
<i>Empirical precepts</i>	
	* High dropout rates among high school students are mainly caused by the ambiguity of this level of education (academic preparation vs. labor market oriented preparation).
	* Low academic self-concept drives students to exclude the possibility of pursuing higher education.
	* Students in the state’s public schools have low levels of participation in ENEM in part because of social inequalities.

Level of the belief system	Belief
Policy Core Beliefs	* The policy must face problems of different natures: pedagogical (preparing students for the exam), logistic (documentation, transportation, lodging, meals) and psychological (motivation and academic self-concept).
Secondary beliefs	* The state's public school system should be actively involved in assuring that 100% of high school seniors register for ENEM.

*Source:* Created by the authors, based on interviews.

The coalition has deep core beliefs that transcend the Ceará high school education subsystem: the coalition contends that education is everyone's right. It also recognizes that, historically, only the elites have attained higher education, and the coalition believes that higher education should be democratized. To this end, the state must provide support to young people, so all have the same opportunities to participate in ENEM as do the more affluent students.

Those in charge of Ceará's education policy as of 2007 observed that educational dropout was a chronic problem in the state's public school system.<sup>17</sup> Interviewee 2 associates this with the historical ambiguity regarding the purpose of high school. The school community, without knowing for sure the purpose of their efforts – whether they would prepare students to enter the labor market or to continue their studies – did not have a shared goal to be achieved; in fact, the “lack of correlation between [...] principles and goals” of high school education is an already documented concern (Lebourg et al., 2021, p. 95, free translation). Interviewees also mentioned a certain level of apathy among civil servants in the state's public school system, which would be another implication of this ambiguity. In the first years of this state administration, unsuccessful attempts were made to restructure high school education, with an ambition of mobilizing the state's school communities.

[Before 2007] I had, you know, this feeling, this perception about the mobilization of the state's school communities [...] a little ... a little discouraged and something like the Department and schools were opponents, not partners. (Interviewee 9)

When we started to... to [implement the ECJCB]... I can see that it was a binding factor, like, we would call everyone “Let's dream together with these kids, of them entering the university, and [let's] put it on the agenda.” This was very much on the agenda of vocational schools, which were already much more focused. But that wasn't reaching the regular school system. And when we introduced this [idea] to people in the school communities, I say that it was almost as if this was the PAIC<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> The high school dropout rate in Ceará's school system in 2007 was 16.4%; in 2018, it was 5.0% (Barbosa, 2021). In Brazil as a whole, the rate in states' public school systems was 15.5% in 2007 and 10.9% in 2018 (Inep, 2022).

<sup>18</sup> According to Seduc's website, the Literacy at the Right Age Program (*Programa de Alfabetização na Idade Certa*, PAIC) is “a program for the cooperation between the state government and municipalities in Ceará with the purpose of supporting municipalities teach public school students to read and write by the end of the second year of elementary school.” The PAIC provides municipalities with continuing education for teachers and support for school managers, among other actions. The program was developed based on the experience of the education reform implemented in the municipality of Sobral, which started in 2001 and inspired the creation in 2004 of the Ceará Committee for the Elimination of School Illiteracy, by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Ceará. The PAIC was created in 2005, upon completion of the Committee's work, with UNICEF as the technical and financial partner and with the participation of 60 municipalities, via a

of high school education. [...] Because it seemed that we had managed to identify what was the mobilizing element for the high school community, which was this idea of encouraging these kids to continue their studies. It seems like this has given it more substance than that narrative of educating for life. (Interviewee 4)

The Department then developed this understanding. In the sense of... “look... so, there’s a game there.” At that moment we were discussing how we would structure high school education, curriculum, teacher training, to connect... the students and the schools, to reduce dropout... in short, a series of very serious problems that we still have today. (Interviewee 2)

The state’s public education system would then take the transition to higher education as a purpose in which policy managers, teachers, and students could be engaged. Although the interviewees do not offer a clear date for when each of the ECJCB activities started (even though it was asked), Interviewee 1 said that in 2008 high-ranking officials were interested in knowing how many former students had entered higher education – a concern that had not exist before.

When the new ENEM, proposed by the federal government in 2009, and Sisu, launched in 2010, gained popularity, the issue of the transition to higher education was embraced by relevant actors – and their beliefs – in the high school subsystem in Ceará. The normative view in the dominant coalition is that entering higher education is a marker of social and economic ascension and that all students should have the same opportunity to access it. Also, there had already been scattered initiatives aimed at preparing students for the exam, promoted spontaneously by school managers and teachers in the state’s public schools. Thus, this external event (using ENEM as an admissions exam) catalyzed the state’s school system in the direction of preparing students for the exam.

When the issue of transition to higher education became part of Seduc’s agenda, the first problem identified by policy actors was that the Department did not even regularly produce follow-up information on student registration for ENEM and graduates’ transition to higher education. The first data collected by the Department confirmed what had been predicted: the number of students who registered for the exam or entered higher education was very low. Realizing this was a problem, the coalition acted based on the belief that the transition to higher education should be a central theme in the state’s public schools.

One of Seduc’s first initiatives was to publicly support the Federal University of Ceará’s (UFC) decision to adopt ENEM and Sisu in its admissions process. (O Estado, 2010). The UFC abandoned its own admissions exam (*vestibular*) in 2010 (for entrance in 2011) and replaced it with the national exam, which reinforced the notion of an agenda opportunity that had taken shape in Seduc in 2009. High-ranking officials in Seduc strategically used this change to the UFC’s admissions process in their discourse to mobilize the state’s public school system.

But you see, ENEM/Sisu gave all the... let’s say... the tangibility that did not exist before. And it was also very important because Sisu had different levels of acceptance... different levels and times in which each Brazilian federal university adopted it. [...] But the Federal University of Ceará, it played a very important role

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cooperation pact. In 2007, the PAIC became one of the state government’s priorities. The PAIC contributed to the structuring, by the Ministry of Education, of the National Pact for Literacy at the Right Age (*Pacto Nacional Alfabetização na Idade Certa*, PNAIC), in force from 2012 to 2017. More information available at: <https://idadecerta.seduc.ce.gov.br/index.php/o-paic/objetivos-e-competencia>; <https://idadecerta.seduc.ce.gov.br/index.php/o-paic/historico/historia>.

because it was the first major Brazilian university to put all its places in Sisu's universal process, and without weighting the fields distinctively... so of science... of social sciences... (Interviewee 1)

Other factors external to the subsystem reinforced the policy actors' perception that lower-income students' chances of entering higher education had increased. In 2012, the Quotas Law was passed, reserving for public school graduates 50% of places in federal higher education institutions. Moreover, between 2010 and 2013, two new federal universities were created in Ceará (*Universidade da Integração Internacional da Lusofonia Afro-Brasileira* and *Universidade Federal do Cariri*). For many interviewees, the ECJCB is the result of a movement that started outside the subsystem and continued within it.

And then you had, like I said, a convergence. ENEM was gaining strength, we had the Quotas Law at that time, we had the expansion of the university network, right? (Interviewee 4)

Well, in 2012 we had the Quotas Law, which is another milestone for this issue because half of the places started to be defined by quotas. (Interviewee 1)

Convinced that the state's public schools are able to prepare their students for the transition to higher education and that students, in turn, can perform well enough to achieve such a transition, policy actors had yet to tackle students' low academic self-concept, which affected the future expectations of the target population.

Usually, higher education was not in the plans of public school students. Especially in the early years of the ECJCB, most of the students who participated in the program and were admitted to higher education institutions were the first in their families to do so. Repeatedly, the interviewees mentioned the effort made to convince students of their capacity to enter a higher education institution. This abstract dimension of the problem is pointed out by our sources as a crucial point to be observed in policy formulation. Logistic and pedagogical arrangements alone would not be effective if students did not believe in themselves and did not engage in the proposed policy.

So, they [students] did not consider [entering higher education]. It was like it really wasn't for them, you know. It was like it wasn't for them. And in the public school community itself, we saw that. We detected this, in terms of the expectations of young people in general. (Interviewee 8)

Preparation in terms of content and preparation in terms of motivation. Acting only on one thing doesn't work, it does not. If I just motivate and don't work the content, if I just... It doesn't work. It has to be both. (Interviewee 10)

In 2011, while seeking information about the reasons for the students' low level of participation in the exam, the regional coordinators were informed by school managers that most students did not even register for the exam because they lacked personal documentation. This situation confirmed the coalition's shared belief that the low level of participation in ENEM among students in the state's public school system was partly due to social inequalities.

Such understanding of the causes of the problem would be strengthened in the initial years of the ECJCB. Policy actors realized that students not only needed support to obtain the necessary documentation, but they also lacked resources to afford paying for food on the exam days and transportation to the exam site and back home; also, students in the countryside needed lodging

during the weekend in which the exam was held.<sup>19</sup> All these dimensions of the problem concern the social inequality that translates into unequal educational opportunities. For students, each of these obstacles was insurmountable without government support.

As predicted by the ACF, disagreements within the coalition occurred at the level of the secondary beliefs. Opinions differed mainly on whether the goal should be to register for ENEM 100% of public school seniors. The policy actors who at the time opposed this more ambitious goal argued i) that this was a very large number of students, close to 100 thousand, and that the government would not be able to offer support on this scale; and ii) that students had to choose for themselves, so Seduc employees should not strive to convince those who did not want to participate. Those who were in favor of the 100% goal at the time of the formulation saw it as a symbolic target; they were aware that reaching it was unlikely but thought that the school community should at least seek to register all seniors. Opposition to this goal appeared much more often at the beginning of the program; currently, policy actors seem to aspire unanimously for all students to be registered.

So, initially, there was a big debate. Which I think has run its course. That was the 100% debate. [...] The question of our goal being 100%, it's a symbolic goal. It is a goal that has to do with equity, that has to do with leaving no one behind... Why are we giving up on a person before it even happens? So, the idea of 100% registration is very strong. But it has to be supported by a discourse. And I think this narrative, it gained momentum in the three, four years following 2011. (Interviewee 2)

There was another practical reason why this goal was stressed. Since there is a long interval between the time when students must register for ENEM and the day of the exam, policy actors saw a risk that students who did not want to apply for the exam at the beginning of the year would change their minds throughout the year, when most mobilization activities take place. Taking this risk into account, the Department's guideline for civil servants in the state's public school system was to make the utmost effort to register all students.

Despite having different secondary beliefs, policy actors in charge of implementing the ECJCB mobilized their deep core beliefs and policy core beliefs to recognize the problem. Problem recognition occurred gradually, as different dimensions of the problem were perceived in the course of the first years (e.g., need for transportation). Adaptability was a constant feature of the ECJCB process.

Thus, for policy actors in the high school education subsystem in Ceará, it was up to the state government to offer logistic, pedagogical, and psycho-emotional support to potential ENEM participants. They believed that the government should do that by taking on the multidimensional problem driving so many of the state's public school students not to register for the most important higher education admissions exam. In that vein, the coalition also argued that the public school system should direct as many efforts to the transition to higher education as private schools.

In short, based on the analysis of the data we collected, we identified a dominant coalition without opposition that was active in the high school policy subsystem in Ceará's Department of Education during the formulation of the ECJCB. This coalition is united by its deep core beliefs and policy core beliefs, with some disagreements regarding policy instruments. As predicted by Sabatier (1998), if there are disagreements within a coalition, they are likely to be related to the third level of beliefs (secondary beliefs); this type of disagreement does not prevent the formation of a coalition. The beliefs of the coalition we identified are reflected in the process of recognition of the problem

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<sup>19</sup> Until 2016, the ENEM tests were applied on a Saturday and Sunday of a single weekend. Since 2017, the tests have been applied on two Sundays.

and its multiple dimensions, as well as in the decisions made during the formulation and implementation of the ECJCB.

In the next section, we describe the instruments used in the implementation of the ECJCB and list potential causal mechanisms affecting the behavior of the targets (regional managers, school managers, educators, and students).

## Policy Instruments and Causal Mechanisms

This section consists of two subsections. Both the theoretical foundation (policy instruments and causal mechanisms) and the empirical analysis appear in each subsection, which addresses, respectively, questions *B* and *C*.

### Question *B*: Instruments Applied by the ECJCB

With question *B*, our goal is to carry out a description of the ECJCB policy instruments in order to achieve a better understanding of the program. What fronts or actions (i.e., policy instruments) are undertaken under the program? How can we characterize and group these instruments? We start with the definition of instrument: “[p]olicy instruments are techniques of governance that, one way or another, involve the utilization of state authority or its conscious limitation” (Howlett, 2005, p. 31).

Policy instruments have been classified into typologies (or taxonomies),<sup>20</sup> which highlight dimensions such as purpose, nature of the main resources mobilized, and level of direct state involvement. As for the purpose of instruments, they may be substantive or procedural. Substantive instruments directly affect the production and distribution of goods and services in society – e.g., awareness campaigns on matters of public interest, quotas for access to goods or services, subsidies, and public companies. Procedural instruments, on the other hand, act indirectly on the production and distribution of goods and services (the outcomes), via the management of state-society relations;<sup>21</sup> examples include the selective provision of information, the establishment of formal evaluations of public policies, financing of interest groups, and administrative reorganization (Howlett, 2000, 2009).

Turning to the main resources, Hood’s (1986) taxonomy should be highlighted because of its notoriety. This classification was designed to provide a better understanding of substantive instruments, but it can be extended to those of a procedural nature. It involves four categories, abbreviated by the acronym NATO: *nodality* (information), *authority* (coercive authority), *treasure* (budgetary or financial resources), and *organization* (teams or government structures). Instruments often mobilize more than one resource; Hood’s (1986) typology highlights the most critical resource, the *governing resource*. Chart A1 (Appendix) presents examples of substantive and procedural instruments, grouped according to the critical resource they apply. The policy implementation style corresponds to a specific combination (a mix or portfolio) of applied substantive and procedural instruments (Howlett, 2009).

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<sup>20</sup> A sample of these taxonomies can be found in Howlett (2000, pp. 426-427, footnote 12).

<sup>21</sup> “We can thus define procedural instruments as those policy techniques or mechanisms designed to affect how a policy is formulated and implemented. This includes administrative processes and activities for selecting, deploying, and calibrating substantive tools. Therefore, procedural tools do not affect outcomes as directly compared to substantive tools (such as taxes, regulations, sanctions and levies) but are often required for substantive tools to function effectively or, as in the case of industry consultations or public hearings, to allow them to gain legitimacy and enhance compliance” (Bali et al., 2021, p. 298).

One can see that the ECJCB mostly applies substantive instruments, using all four types of governing resources (Chart 2, next page). Information is the critical resource used in majority of these instruments.

One of the program’s instruments is curriculum-based; contents tested in the exam are taught in day-to-day school activities over the year but also during occasional events, such as special classes with invited teachers. The information passed on to students is also intended to prepare them to navigate admissions processes. This training not only discusses the operation of nationwide policies designed to democratize access to higher education, such as the Student Financing Fund (*Fundo de Financiamento Estudantil*, Fies), but it also addresses technical aspects of ENEM (e.g., item response theory, minimum passing score, Sisu).

In order to strengthen these activities designed to prepare students for ENEM, the ECJCB holds the Lecture Cycle. The Lecture Cycle usually takes place in August, when each school appoints a teacher to participate in lectures designed to enhance students’ preparedness for the ENEM. After participating in the lectures, the chosen teacher offers the same training to the other teachers in his or her school.

The coalition’s shared belief that young people have autonomy and that the success of youth policies depends on the target’s participation (Chart 1) is reflected in the adoption of the fourth informational instrument (Chart 2). This is the campaign to encourage student participation in ENEM, which involves events with public figures and role models (e.g., high school graduates who were successful in their transition to higher education); it is expected that these encounters will “conquer” young people by displaying public figures’ approval for the ECJCB.

What is it that a soccer player from Ceará [a soccer team] has to do with ENEM?  
Everything and nothing. We used to put players from Ceará, Fortaleza [another soccer team]... And so much so that they even asked, “What does a forró singer have to do with it?” – “Everything. It’s the same audience.” So, there we go after the soccer player, the forró singer, after Xande do Aviões [forró singer], Wesley Safadão [singer]... they have everything to do with ENEM, with the youth. (Interviewee 10)

Celebrating the good results achieved, interviewees often talk about activities that take place in these events, situations where the schools’ performance is made visible to inspire students who are in the first and second years of high school. This celebration plays an important role in this policy; it generates a positive feedback effect since it increases the mobilization of actors within the high school community. In fact, recognition activities are frequently carried out, first to celebrate the students who have registered for ENEM and then those who managed to enter higher education. These are symbolic activities in which the high school community engages intensively: such events act as a form of feedback that, we assume, increases students’ self-esteem and their confidence in the schools’ capacity to prepare them to enter higher education.

**Chart 2***ECJCB Instruments, by Purpose and Governing Resource*

Purpose	Governing Resource			
	Information	Authority	Treasure	Organization
Substantive instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* ENEM-based curriculum development</li> <li>* Preparing students to navigate admissions processes</li> <li>* Pedagogical preparation for teachers so they can better prepare students for ENEM (Lecture Cycle<sup>†</sup>)</li> <li>* Campaign to encourage students to participate in ENEM (events, use of public figures and role models)</li> <li>* Follow-up data collection (via the Integrated School Management System – <i>Sistema Integrado de Gestão Escolar, SIGE</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Setting a goal for student participation in ENEM (100%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Logistic support (documentation, transportation, lodging, and meals)</li> <li>* Students awards<sup>‡</sup></li> </ul>	
Procedural instruments				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Autonomous regional bodies (Credes and Sefors<sup>§</sup>), which possess authority to make budgetary expenses and to improve program design, and have a seat on Seduc's Executive Committee</li> <li>* Partnership with municipalities to enable transportation</li> <li>* Giving Seduc's high ranks the responsibility for the ECJCB</li> </ul>

*Source:* Created by the authors, based on interviews.

<sup>†</sup> The Lecture Cycle usually takes place in August, when each school appoints a teacher to participate in lectures on how to better prepare students for ENEM. After participating in the lectures, the chosen teacher replicates them to the other teachers in his or her school. <sup>‡</sup> Here we consider the *Palpite Premiado* (Winning Guess) award, which is sponsored by the ECJCB; however, other awards exist independently of the ECJCB, such as the Spaece and the essay awards (discussed below). <sup>§</sup> These are the Superintendencies of the Fortaleza Public Schools (*Superintendências das Escolas Estaduais de Fortaleza, Sefors*); Fortaleza is Ceará's capital city.



Data collection for following up on indicators is the last information-based instrument. As soon as policy actors noticed they did not have all relevant data, as described in the previous section, a module for monitoring ECJCB indicators was added to the Integrated School Management System (*Sistema Integrado de Gestão Escolar – SIGE*). Without such an instrument, it would not be possible to assess whether the participation goal has been achieved, nor would it be possible to grant students their awards. The SIGE allows regional coordinators to daily follow up on the number of students per school who requested an exemption from ENEM registration fee and who registered for ENEM. This generates active monitoring of the policy.

When I was in a Crede, we waited til the end of the day to see what my percentage was, what it was not... and that way schools were being involved in a salutary fashion. (Interviewee 6)

Using an authority resource, policy actors established the goal of 100% participation in ENEM, a goal that had been the subject of much discussion within the coalition.<sup>22</sup>

Logistic support is one of the instruments that use treasure as its governing resource. It is offered at various stages of this policy: to obtain the documents necessary for registering for ENEM, to provide, on the day of the exam, transportation, food, and, for the students who need it, lodging.<sup>23</sup>

Another treasure-based instrument is the award granted to students to encourage their engagement. *Palpite Premiado* (Winning Guess) is an annual challenge set by the state government to reward students who get the closest to guessing the correct number of the state’s public school students who were admitted to higher education institutions (Seduc, 2019). In 2018, for example, 10 students who were awarded could choose between getting tickets to see a soccer match at the Arena Castelão stadium, tickets to spend a day in a water park, or the opportunity to participate in events promoted by Seduc (Seduc, 2018).

Two other awards, although not part of the ECJCB, recognize students’ good effort in preparing for ENEM and their good performance in the exam. The contest *ENEM, Chego Junto, Chego a 1000!* is a partnership between Seduc and the Demócrito Rocha Foundation (FDR, in its Portuguese acronym), a non-profit, non-governmental organization. The competition involves three stages: the school-level stage, the regional-level stage (at the level of Credes and Sefors), and the state-level stage. Third-year high school students and EJA (Youth and Adult Education) students submit ENEM-style essays, which are evaluated by a committee put together by the FDR. In the school-level stage, all students ranked first in each participating school receive a certificate of honorable mention issued by Seduc. In the regional-level stage, all students ranked first in each regional coordination office get a smartphone. And in the state-level stage, the top three students get a notebook, while the three respective teachers get a smartphone (Seduc, 2021).

The second award was instituted by state law n. 14,483/2009, which authorized the executive branch, via Seduc, to award high school students in the state of Ceará with a notebook<sup>24</sup> based on

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<sup>22</sup> In this article, we chose to classify the instruments according to Hood (1986). However, is not exactly correct to define the goal of 100% participation in ENEM as an instrument of authority, since there is no provision of sanctions or other clearly imposed costs in case of non-compliance with this target. This goal is possibly better described as a hortatory instrument (Schneider & Ingram, 1990), as it uses intangible resources and cultivates desired behaviors.

<sup>23</sup> Providing lodging was especially relevant in the years in which ENEM was held on a Saturday and Sunday of the same weekend. Since 2017, when the exam started to be carried out on two Sundays, the logistics of the ECJCB had to be adapted, especially in terms of transportation, for which the demand grew.

<sup>24</sup> The original wording (law n. 14,483/2009) provided for a “microcomputer” award; in 2014, law n. 15,572 changed this wording, now referring to a “notebook.”

their performance in the Permanent Evaluation System of Basic Education (*Sistema Permanente de Avaliação da Educação Básica*, Spaece),<sup>25</sup> under the program Learn for Real (*Aprender pra Valor*). In 2014, state law n. 15,572 amended the previous law, specifying that the award would also consider students' performance in ENEM. Minimum thresholds for awards are regulated by a decree issued by the governor each year. Between 2016 and 2021, more than 80 thousand notebooks were distributed (Casa Civil, 2021). Based on the results of Spaece in 2013 and 2014, Carvalho (2019) evaluated how receiving the award (computer) affected the students' expectations of attending undergraduate programs. The findings suggest that, for students, the award is an indicator of their academic ability, and it raises their expectations regarding higher education.

Procedural instruments were also adopted by the policy, although to a lesser degree. Seduc regional bodies – Credes e the Superintendencies of the Fortaleza Public Schools (*Superintendências das Escolas Estaduais de Fortaleza*, Sefors) have the autonomy to authorize expenses and, more than that, to adjust ECJCB actions to local conditions. This region-centric administrative design was established before the ECJCB had been created. Still, it was crucial for its implementation, as we will detail in the next section. Partnerships with municipalities also existed before and were used as an ECJCB instrument to provide transportation for students to get to ENEM sites.

Finally, giving Seduc's high ranks the responsibility for the ECJCB constitutes another procedural instrument. The issue of supporting students' transition to higher education was initially a competence of the middle management (*Gerência Executiva*), who reported to top-level management (Seduc secretaries and advisory bodies). In 2011, this competence was moved to the highest level of the Department's hierarchy, "inside the [Secretary's] Office" (Interviewee 2), along with a three-person team in charge of dealing only with the ECJCB. This would speed up the bureaucratic processes necessary to formulate and implement this policy (Interviewee 10). In 2012, after the program had been formulated, it was reallocated under the purview of the Coordination Office of Student Protagonism, which reports directly to the Seduc's Executive Department of High School and Professional Education.

### **Question C: Causal Mechanisms and Effectiveness of the ECJCB**

Question C, on how the ECJCB instruments contribute to the program's effectiveness, is addressed in an exploratory fashion, with an answer that, albeit preliminary, does deal with causal inference. We exam how ECJCB's instruments activate causal mechanisms that end up affecting the behavior of managers, teachers, and high school seniors, in the sense of increasing the likelihood that students register for ENEM and take the exam. In this analysis, we use the mechanistic perspective proposed by Capano and Howlett (2021).

The term "mechanistic perspective" may lead to different interpretations, including one that moves politics away from the design of public policy; however, this is not the correct connotation. The mechanistic perspective highlights processes and reactions caused by policy instruments. It focuses on describing how a given policy can affect the target's behavior. Thus, the mechanistic perspective seeks to avoid making causal inferences based only on anecdotal references or correlational logic and instead focuses on explanations of "how" the intervention works; then, based on the reasonableness of such accounts, the researcher can substantiate expectations or analyses regarding policy effects.

Interest in causal mechanisms in political analysis has been growing. Capano and Howlett (2021) mention studies that apply mechanistic explanatory logic in political science, among which

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<sup>25</sup> This is a large-scale census evaluation, promoted annually by the state government; it covers state and municipal schools and is currently applied to students in grades 2, 5, and 9 and high school students in the year 3 (<https://www.seduc.ce.gov.br/spaece/>).

Tilly (2001), Gerring (2008), Hedström (2008), and Faletti and Lynch (2009). Capano and Howlett (2021), as well as the other contributors in the same special issue on mechanisms in the “Public Policy and Administration” journal, discuss in detail how policies affect social processes in activating mechanisms to achieve certain outcomes.

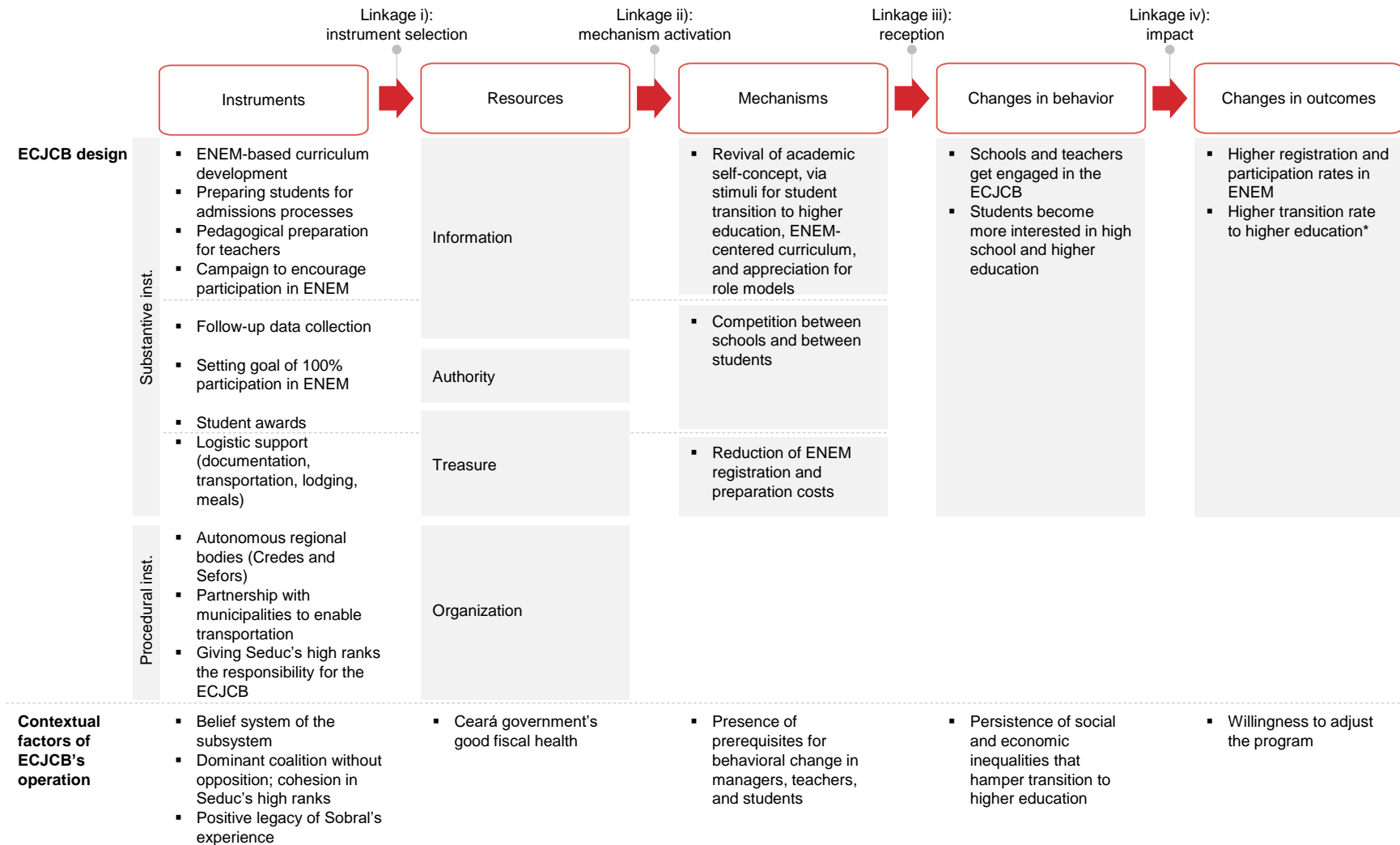
There is broad agreement in this literature that a mechanism, being “theoretical propositions about causal tendencies” [...], are sets of entities and activities organized to produce a regular series of changes from a beginning state to an end one [...]. These mechanisms are constructs that allow us to understand what really occurs inside the “black box” of social processes, including policy target behavior. (p. 145)

Capano, Howlett, and Ramesh (2019) and Capano and Howlett (2021) propose to analyze policy designs based on a mechanistic sequence made of three components. Activators are events or activities that trigger first- or second-order causal mechanisms. Examples of activators are policy instruments, previous mechanistic processes, and specific contextual events (e.g., those generated by socio-political, economic dynamics or by individual political actors). First-order mechanisms are those that directly affect the behavior of individuals and groups in reaction to stimuli elicited by activators. An example is the cost reduction achieved as the bureaucratic process for registering new companies is simplified. Second-order mechanisms are reactions to the previous use of activators; they refer to the family of policy feedback-based mechanisms. Here is an illustration:

For example, in higher education policy, the introduction of national research standards to measure the quality of university research is a design intervention (“activator”) through which policy-makers can pursue the improvement of research quality through the activation of the mechanism of institutional competition (“first-order mechanism”). This mechanism is supposed to be quite strong: a significant amount of public funding is allocated through this type of exercise. Theoretically, [...] through competition, the overall national quality of research should increase in the medium run and that through “second-order mechanisms” such as learning or blame avoidance, institutions should institutionalize the new situation [reorganizing their structures and processes to be better adapted to the new context of competition]. (Capano et al., 2019, p. 7)

The mechanistic perspective on policy design focuses on the causal chain that connects existing behaviors to desired ones. This process takes place in specific policy contexts, where policy instruments trigger mechanisms that drive behavioral change in order to incite certain future behaviors. The linkages in this chain are critical to achieving the desired outcome. Capano and Howlett (2021) identify four of these linkages, which are i) instrument selection: the link between instruments and available critical resources; it is noteworthy that instruments can be applied “at different levels of intensity, affecting the degree or speed to which a mechanism is activated” (p. 152); ii) mechanism activation: the link between resources and the mechanisms activated by the applied instruments; iii) reception: the link between mechanisms and post-activation behaviors; and iv) impact: the link between these behaviors and policy outcomes. According to the authors, context is important because “in general each link in a mechanistic chain is affected by contextual factors which can serve to block or make the linkages across the tools-output chain problematic, that is making a design outcome more difficult to predict and control (Faletti e Lynch, 2009)” (Capano & Howlett, 2021, p. 150). In Figure 2, we illustrate the causal chain based on the ECJCB, taking into account the first-order mechanisms.

**Figure 2**  
Causal Chain between Instruments and Outcomes, Based on ECJCB First-Order Mechanisms



Note: \* The data available did not allow us to determine ECJCB's influence on this variation.

Source: Created by the authors, based on interviews.

The analysis suggests that three first-order causal mechanisms are activated by the ECJCB instruments (Figure 2, next page), in addition to a second-order mechanism that will be discussed at the end of this section. The first first-order mechanism concerns academic self-concept, which, we believe, tends to rise as a response to curriculum development, greater knowledge about options to enter college, teaching training, and campaigns to encourage students. The second first-order mechanism is the competition between schools – to reach the 100% goal – and between students – to win the awards (e.g., notebook); this second mechanism is also activated by the SIGE and information made available by this system. The third first-order mechanism is the reduction of costs associated with registering for ENEM and actually taking the exam; as the ECJCB secures the logistics, it shrinks costs for students. The outcome expected from these mechanisms is behavioral change (of students, teachers, and school and regional managers), culminating in higher participation rates in ENEM. In fact, the transition rate to higher education among students in the state’s public schools increased substantially: in 2011, 4,787 graduates entered higher education; in 2018, 20,207.<sup>26</sup> With the available data, however, we cannot estimate the extent to which the ECJCB caused this variation – for this, we would have to assess ECJCB’s quantitative impact.

Several contextual factors contributed to the development of the ECJCB (see the bottom section of Figure 2), among which are the positive legacy of Sobral’s experience and the good fiscal health of the Ceará government in the early 2010s. In their analysis of Brazilian states’ fiscal situation, Manoel, Ranciaro Neto and Monteiro Neto (2016) showed that Ceará was in very good condition between 2009 and 2015, with low credit risk in this period.

As for the third linkage (reception), Capano and Howlett (2021, pp. 152-153) stress that the policies’ effectiveness depends not only on the resources mobilized but also on “the existence of different ‘receptors’ on the part of policy targets which make them respond in a predictable way to the use of this resource when deployed, and to the level of knowledge policy-makers have concerning those propensities.” Chart 3 presents prerequisites for behavioral change to occur. Essentially, these prerequisites correspond to the existence of “receptors” in targets that allow them to respond to the mechanism and, consequently, change their behavior. In the case of the ECJCB, the target comprises (regional and school) managers, educators, and students.

### Chart 3

#### *Behavioral Prerequisites for the Effectiveness of Causal Mechanisms, by Governing Resource of the Instrument*

Governing resource	Target’s behavioral prerequisite	
	<i>Prerequisite</i>	<i>Description</i>
Information	Credibility/ Trust	Willingness to believe and act on the information provided by the government.
Authority	Legitimacy	Willingness to act according to proscriptions and penalties imposed by the government.
Treasure	Cupidity	Willingness to capture gains and avoid government-imposed losses.
Organization	Competence	Willingness to believe in the bureaucracy’s competence to provide services and rules.

*Source:* Adapted from Capano and Howlett (2021, p. 152)

<sup>26</sup> Data were extracted from the following sources, both of which are state government website pages: <https://www.ceara.gov.br/2014/04/14/educacao-no-ceara-e-destaque-em-rede-nacional-2/>; <https://www.ceara.gov.br/2019/03/28/partiuensinosuperior-ceara-bate-recorde-e-mais-de-20-mil-alunos-de-escolas-publicas-sao-aprovados-em-universidades/>.

Chart 4 summarizes our understanding of the target behavioral prerequisites for each first-order mechanism (which include all mechanisms activated by ECJCB substantive instruments). Some of these understandings are based on evidence extracted from the interviews. Those referring to the students' behavior are assumed since this group was not interviewed.

**Chart 4**

*Behavioral Prerequisites for the Effectiveness of the ECJCB First-order Mechanisms*

Mechanism	Substantive instruments	Governing resource	Behavioral prerequisite	Target population	Assumption or evidence of behavioral prerequisite
Revival of academic self-concept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Curriculum development</li> <li>* Preparing students to navigate admissions processes</li> <li>* Pedagogical preparation for teachers</li> <li>* Campaign to encourage students</li> </ul>	Information	Credibility/Trust	* Students	We <i>assume</i> that students respond to the general narrative that the transition to higher education is feasible and that they update their personal assessment of potential individual success, raising it based on the informational and symbolic resources mobilized by the ECJCB.
Competition between schools and between students	* Follow-up data collection	Information	Credibility/Trust	* Regional coordinators	We found evidence that regional coordinators trust SIGE data and use them to monitor ENEM registrations.
	* Goal of 100% participation in ENEM	Authority	Legitimacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Regional and school managers</li> <li>* Teachers</li> </ul>	We found evidence that initial disagreements among Seduc's high-ranking officials on the 100% goal were overcome because its meaning was reinterpreted: the goal's symbolic nature and the focus on ENEM registration rate (vs. participation rate) were recognized, making this goal more acceptable to several actors.
	* Student Awards	Treasure	Cupidity	* Students	We <i>assume</i> that students recognize potential gains (material and symbolic) associated with awards.
Reduction of ENEM registration and participation costs	* Logistic support (documentation, lodging, meals, transportation,)	Treasure	Cupidity	* Students	We <i>assume</i> that students acknowledge the reduction in costs associated with the logistic support provided.

*Source:* Created by the authors, based on interviews.

Effective and trust-based means of communication are needed for information instruments to activate mechanisms. We highlight here that the policies developed by Seduc are discussed in an executive committee that has been active since the beginning of ECJCB’ formulation and is still in operation. The members are Seduc secretaries, coordinators of Credes, Sefors, and coordination offices based in Seduc headquarters. According to our interviewees, when the program was being formulated and in the first years of its implementation, issues were discussed and decisions were made in this executive committee based on very clear, unanimously-agreed criteria, so that resources were distributed among the regional coordination offices strictly based on technical arguments. The executive committee was instrumental in establishing a relationship of trust between the Credes and Seduc headquarters.

So, we, from the regional office, we were part of an executive committee that brought us close to the secretaries and other Seduc coordinators. And this is a differential for the implementation of policies. Because we built, validated, and legitimized public policies in this committee that are still in place today. (Interviewee 6)

So, there was no such story as “I will say that a school will be inaugurated in the Tauá [Crede] and this will be hidden from the Crede of Tianguá.” There was a spreadsheet and everyone could see it. Because you had need-based criteria, demand-based criteria, criteria for providing service to improve the school system. So, this was all very interesting. [...] So this was all done very dialogically and with clear criteria, which I think is the most important thing. (Interviewee 7)

The executive committee was sometimes convened when decisions regarding ECJCB’s formulation and implementation adjustments had to be made; in such instances, actors would present regional-level information from each of the Credes and Sefors, while administrative guidelines would be put forward by the secretaries. This arena has thus played an enabling role as it allowed for pertinent ECJCB-related information coming from the entire school system to be gathered in a setting that welcomed the perspectives of the various agents involved. As a result, this executive committee enhanced the credibility and trust between central and regional managers; moreover, we believe it increased policy actors’ propensity to use evidence-based strategies (e.g., strategies based on SIGE data) in regional-level administration.

In addition, actors’ positions in the Ceará high school education subsystem have increased bureaucrats’ willingness to adopt ECJCB instruments, particularly among Crede coordinators. As explained in the previous section, we have identified only one dominant coalition without opposition. This is why relations among policy actors were marked by a form of cohesion that, if not perfect, was higher than what is usually seen in public management in Brazil, as Interviewee 1 pointed out. The fact that policy actors agreed on fundamental normative ideas, as well as on ideas about this specific policy and its instruments, has facilitated the presence of the prerequisites typified by Capano and Howlett (2021). Specifically, the existence of shared beliefs among policy actors is the foundation upon which the program’s legitimacy was built in the eyes of Credes’ coordinators.

High-ranking Seduc interviewees reported the perception that the school community was inclined to participate in a policy designed to support ENEM. Such perception is even more relevant if we consider that the same actors who were involved with the program’s formulation had felt at the beginning of the Cid Gomes administration, in 2007, that teachers and other civil servants in the school system were very reluctant toward Seduc’s initiatives.

Because we remember well that when we arrived in 2007, the feeling we had was that schools resented the Department and the Department resented schools. And as

if... Let's say, if you asked a school to describe the Department, the school would describe it as "that office that keeps demanding... sending orders and demanding information from us." And if you were to talk to someone at the Department about the schools, then the description would be "Oh... those people who always complain and send the things we ask for late." So, this rarity, which is not unanimity, right, but this rarity of having a significant set of schools approving a considerable part of the Department's agenda, this is really not... it's really rare. (Interviewee 1)

In line with Capano and Howlett's (2021) framework, Interviewee 2 mentions a target behavioral prerequisite (the target here refers specifically to school managers and teachers) as an important factor in the creation of a public policy. This account illustrates how ECJCB's theme of promoting the transition to college – which was already being explored spontaneously and occasionally by some school managers and teachers – gives legitimacy to the initiative (and, we assume, to the goal of 100% participation in ENEM) in the eyes of the school communities.

So, I think Seduc's merit was its reading of the context. [... The ECJCB] was not a typical public policy, when you had nothing, you do not know those people and thought of something extraordinary, in the sense of being very nice, cool, but doesn't suit people. I think there is a policy-making profile that has to do with knowing the need, but also people's inclination to embrace the cause. This is super modern, right, for those who think about public policy today, right... Not only necessity but gee, people were already heading in that direction. Then let's help them find the horizon. (Interviewee 2)

After the initial differences were overcome and the goal was resignified, it seems that the 100% participation target came to be seen as something well within the range of possibilities, increasing this instrument's perceived legitimacy. According to accounts reported in the previous section, resistance to the 100% participation goal was reduced after actors recognized that this was an aspirational goal and that the focus was on registering as many students as possible for ENEM (to prevent future regret among non-registered students).

With respect to the instruments that employ treasure resources, we assume that students' cupidity would drive them to capture gains, that is, they are sensitive and react to (substantive) potential gains. One of the gains is logistic support, without which students face serious obstacles to taking the exam, such as lack of documentation and transportation to and from the exam site. Also, we assume that students' willingness to be awarded is high.

Another relevant factor is the way in which Seduc has been hierarchically structured, even before the ECJCB. In 2007, when the Cid Gomes administration began, the secretaries in Seduc decided to change Seduc's organization chart to bring the regional advisors to a hierarchical position closer to the top. This decision was based on the understanding that these actors, who guarantee the implementation of the state's education policies regionally, are strategic and should be valued (Interviewee 8). Therefore, what was before called the Regional Center for Education Development (*Centro Regional de Desenvolvimento da Educação*), headed by someone with the position of supervisor, was renamed the Regional Coordination Office for Education Development (*Coordenadoria Regional de Desenvolvimento da Educação*) – without changing the acronym "Crede." The new Crede would be headed by someone in a position of regional coordinator. The main difference between the two models is that in the new one these regional bodies came to participate in the formulation, as well as in the implementation, of education policies in the state.

Already under the new organization model, the first public tender to fill positions in Seduc during the Cid Gomes administration took place in 2007. The list of regional coordinators was



almost completely renewed, and new management guidelines were passed to them by high-ranking officials, which included autonomy, accountability, and management by results. According to Interviewee 6, at that time of their investiture, regional coordinators did not receive a position but rather a role: to make a difference in public schools. This selection process also conveyed another message that would accompany regional coordinators in their work in the following years. There was a candidate for the new position who showed preference for the politics of Cid Gomes' predecessor in government. According to the interviewees, such conflict of ideas historically culminated in the dismissal of dissidents. The fact that this candidate was selected to the position was received as a message that the new administration would use technical, competence-related criteria rather than those of a political and partisan nature. This signaling seems to have positively affected the trust in the leadership and contributed to the continuity of the ECJCB.

Furthermore, the fact that the Credes were brought closer to their respective schools is pointed out as a key factor in ECJCB's longevity. After all, the school is where this policy's day-to-day actions take place. What was previously a demand-led relationship – regional coordination offices demanding from schools and vice versa – was laboriously transformed into a collaborative relationship. In addition to being in close contact with Credes, schools probably responded to the ECJCB's strategy of celebrating and recognizing good results – which included events with the governor, secretaries, and regional coordinators; such a strategy was a demonstration for school managers, teachers, and students that Seduc was fully invested in the initiative and working to achieve a shared goal. Thus, we infer that the use of technical criteria for selecting coordinators, combined with the newly built collaborative relationship between the regional administration offices and schools, may have generated a perception among school managers that regional managers are competent.

The interviews reveal that ECJCB formulators had a reasonable understanding of the policy targets' proclivities (targets being regional and school managers, educators, and students) and consciously used this knowledge to formulate and implement the program. The following are indications of this: i) the use of a theme (preparation for ENEM) that had already spontaneously attracted the interest of some teachers; ii) an understanding of the difficulties students face and how they shape their aspirations, an issue that requires a purposeful effort to change beliefs; iii) and the recognition that symbolic factors (in addition to material ones) are important for engaging the school community. The following citations are evidence of (ii) and (iii).

How is it that a person says, “I want to go to university,” “I don't want to go to university.” And we think like this... look, see... this question of wanting is induced by experiences. If this person... no one believes this person. If no one shows that this person is capable... that they believe in her, she will not want to embarrass herself... So, this longing, it is totally contaminated. (Interviewee 2)

But... our [Seduc administrators] speech was like this: we trust. We're not expecting miracles, and we're not going to criticize, because it's still bad. But we will create a belief-based attitude. And every possibility to improve... a school, to make a new building, to buy equipment for schools, we will celebrate... (Interviewee 1)

You will see the [...], a Crede coordinator going to schools to dance funk with the kids, others who dressed up... we go to a classroom to talk to students. So... that doesn't seem ordinary. You stop and think of a regional coordinator who goes to a classroom of a rural education extension [*extensão rural*] to talk to students about admissions exams and ENEM. [To have] a team from a regional office on a minibus driving to their 18 schools. So, this shows how important this is, right... and the

involvement. So, this energy that you see, the teacher sees... from the governor, the secretary, the coordinator of a Crede, and the school principal... “I’m not alone in this story, everyone is in the same vibe of dreaming about these kids, of seeing these kids thrive.” So, I think this... this narrative, which is not just a narrative, it’s an experience, it’s very powerful in this program. (Interviewee 4)

Finally, we identified a positive feedback effect, a second-order causal mechanism that reinforces the school system’s engagement in the program. The increased number of public high school graduates in the state who accessed higher education seems to have reinforced the belief – among school managers, teachers, and students – that the transition to higher education is a real possibility. We believe that the positive results contribute to reviving students’ academic self-concept and teachers’ self-confidence when it comes to making a difference in students’ life trajectories.

Because when it was a very isolated thing... I myself reproduced this discourse sometimes, you know, when I was in school: “No. If we have 300 kids, and only one was accepted to college, our influence on this one was very small. He’s the one who did it. We can’t get above ourselves and say it was us, no.” When this thing gains scale, this discourse of a self-made student doesn’t fit anymore, right. It may be that I didn’t have that much influence on the cognitive preparation, maybe he got it by himself. But I had a lot of power in mobilizing and in instilling the belief that he was capable. The school was very important for that. (Interviewee 4)

Because every year, let’s say, the news about the number of public school students that had been admitted [to college]... both the number of admitted students and the quality, let’s say, of prestigious majors, right... was great. And this is news that gives public schools credibility, it produces an effect in terms of pride among practitioners, a good type of pride among practitioners in seeing public schools being praised, respected, right... teachers and principals feeling this, right... (Interviewee 1)

## Conclusions

Our ACF-based analysis on the formulation of the ECJCB indicates that a high school education subsystem exists in Ceará, in which a dominant coalition operates without opposition, based on beliefs such as equity, youth protagonism, and the defense of public education. The coordinated action between ECJCB formulators that led to the creation of a robust policy designed to support students’ transition to higher education was possible because there was enough cohesion within the coalition. To a large extent, policy actors not only shared normative precepts at the policy core level, but they also agreed as to the cause of the low participation rate in ENEM among public school students (empirical precepts).

This single, modest-sized coalition composed of government actors is consistent with the postulates of the most recent versions of the ACF. If a given policy issue does not spark intense conflicts and is an emerging issue, the coalition is more likely to have few actors (Weible et al., 2020). Having few actors, in turn, increases policy actors’ ability to coordinate their actions, given that the greater the number of decision-making actors, the more costly collective action tends to be.

Our analyses indicate that the revisions to the ACF effectively expanded the framework’s applicability as they allowed it to accommodate a variety of coalition subtypes (Weible, 2020). Studies on the PAIC – Literacy at the Right Age Program (Sumiya, 2015; Sumiya & Sano, 2021) –

also identified a dominant coalition without opposition (in the case of the PAIC, in Ceará’s broad education subsystem).

We identified 11 policy instruments in the ECJCB: only three of them are procedural instruments, and the others are substantive. In our understanding, the substantive instruments (which involve, among other aspects, pedagogical, psycho-emotional, and logistic support) activate three first-order causal mechanisms: revival of academic self-concept, competition between schools and between students, and reduction of the costs associated with participating in ENEM. In the early years of the program, contextual factors (e.g., the state’s good fiscal health) and the institutional visibility of the ECJCB contributed to its implementation. A second-order mechanism, based on the recognition of ECJCB’s positive results, seems to have taken place, one that enhances the public school system’s (school managers, teachers, and students) engagement in the program.

Future research should expand the set of data sources to include more school managers, teachers, students, and high school graduates from the state’s public schools. These actors will certainly shed light beyond the strict limits of the dominant coalition without opposition we observed in Ceará’s high school education subsystem. They will most likely reveal conflicts and challenges that have not yet been seen in the current *corpus*; they will certainly advance our understanding of the causal mechanisms triggered by the ECJCB.

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## Appendix

[https://bit.ly/appendix\\_ecjcb](https://bit.ly/appendix_ecjcb)

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