

# Education and Poverty: an empowerment approach

Alexandra Alves de Oliveira

CIIE-FPCEUP | alexoliveira@fpce.up.pt

## OBJECTIVE & CONTEXT

The objective of the research was to analyse the relation between education and poverty from the perception of beneficiaries of food help on education as promoter of empowerment.

It was held between 2008 and 2009, in the scope of the European Master of Development Studies in Social and Educational Sciences, specialization in “European Perspectives on Social Inclusion”

## METHODOLOGY

It was used a qualitative methodological approach, by the attainment of 13 interviews to beneficiaries of food help in two care institutions. The data was treated with content analysis.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Poverty as a multidimensional concept (Rodrigues *et al*, 2005)
- Dimensions that influence poverty condition: family or self ownership, residence territory, job conditions, housing, health, education, power and participation (Rodrigues *et al*, 2005; Sen, 1981; Doyal & Gough, 1991; Bruto da Costa, 2005).
- Link between poverty and education by the Theory of Human Need (Doyal & Gough, 1991). Two basic human needs common to all human beings: survival (health) and autonomy. Established a connection between the need survival and poverty, by one side, and the need autonomy and education, on the other hand.

## RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS

The results evidence that interviewees attribute a negligible value to formal education in what respects to its effects on income and employment. However, they place some hope in education and its effects on upward social mobility in what concerns to their children. Despite this hope, they also show some resignation with the possibility that their children do not pursue their studies. These apparent contradictions seem to result mainly from their low expectations about life and also from some internalization of self-exclusion (Clavel, 2004) resulting from the disbelief on their capabilities and potential.

Perceptions of beneficiaries of food help...	
...About life expectations	
<b>For themselves</b>	<p><b>Low expectations</b></p> <p>E12 – with 3 children it's difficult, I think it's difficult, but... there is anything like...not trying (woman, 32 years old, 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 3 children)</p> <p>E5 – Not at the present. E5 – Why? Because, look, it is like this, if I go to school, I won't earn, right? And who will support her? (woman, 20 years old, 8<sup>th</sup> grade, 1 daughter)</p>
<b>For their descendants</b>	<p><b>High expectations</b></p> <p>E12 – for them? I even liked that they would go to University! happen to like! and were... or doctors or ... what they liked in the same area, because (woman, 32 years old, 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 3 children)</p> <p>E10 – Me? even if it kills me! They will study until they graduate! By having a straw in their hand! (woman, 38 years old, 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 2 children)</p> <p><b>Contradictions between desire and vision of reality</b></p> <p>E1 – so, I liked that she had an education, yes? (pause) if she fits! But if not, will work as will others, as I was and I have no shame, isn't it? (pause) Now, everything depends on her (woman, 42 years old, 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 1 daughter)</p> <p>E7 – But for the kid, I want that he always study. - I even wanted him to continue, but it is very difficult for everyone. (man, 49 years old, 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 1 son)</p>

Perceptions of beneficiaries of food help...	
...About formal education	
<b>Effects on employment</b>	<p><b>Positive effects</b></p> <p>E11 – can help us get better jobs, more or less that (man, 37 years old, master graduate, 1 daughter)</p> <p><b>None or negative effects</b></p> <p>E7 – I have a colleague... that has the 12th grade and can't get a job anywhere; he's working on garbage, so... it's a little difficult now! (man, 49 years old, 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 1 son)</p>
<b>Effects on income</b>	<p><b>Positive effects</b></p> <p>E5 – For instance, if I've had study, maybe I wouldn't be a waitress! I would work in a job with better income; I could give a better life... to my daughter! (woman, 20 years old, 8<sup>th</sup> grade, 1 daughter)</p> <p>E10 – for instance, my salary would double, if I had training, for that I'm sure! (woman, 38 years old, 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 2 children)</p> <p><b>None or negative effects</b></p> <p>E1 – No, even this week I've heard on the news, people that were, I don't know if you saw on TV... graduated, poor people, crying! (pause) earn a misery! Subject themselves to anything! So, it is not by education, it is not because they have a graduation that (pause), isn't it? (woman, 42 years old, 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 1 daughter)</p>
<b>Effects on personal value and social relations</b>	<p><b>Positive effects</b></p> <p>E10 – other people's respect would be another. Even the bosses, because I see, they don't treat me badly, they treat me very well, but I see how they treat other people that are graduated and me, (...) they have another respect (woman, 38 years old, 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 2 children)</p> <p>E6b – about having relationships, because... We acquire another kind of education and vocabulary and everything else... and... there's that sentence «knowledge does not take place», isn't it? (man, 36 years old, 9<sup>th</sup> grade, without children)</p>

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