

EDUCATIONAL POLICIES IN BRAZIL: THE DISFIGUREMENT OF SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL KNOWLEDGE

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the repercussion of educational policies in Brazil in relation to school and school knowledge conceptions and its incidence on the constitution of educational inequalities in society. The methodology of content analysis of official and unofficial documents of the World Bank and the Ministry of Education is used in order to identify policies to school and curriculum guidelines, which could be leading to the disfigurement of emancipatory functions of school knowledge. The text advocates the access to cultural and scientific knowledge as a means of promoting and expanding the development of the higher mental processes of students, in close conjunction with their sociocultural and institutional practices, and as a condition of overcoming educational inequalities.

EDUCATION PUBLIC POLICY • PUBLIC SCHOOLS POLICIES • SCHOOL
KNOWLEDGE • INTERNATIONAL ORGANISMS

A DISTURBING QUESTION: WHAT ARE SCHOOLS FOR?

The dilemmas regarding the objectives and the types of school functioning are recurrent in the history of education, at least, due to the fact that educational practices in society are linked to the interests of groups and also to international and national power relations. Likewise, such practices are linked to theoretical disputes in human sciences and education in relation to school objectives, types of organization and management and the conduction of the teaching and learning processes. The occurrence of dissent in the field of education about the objectives and the functions of the school can be explained, to a large extent, by the existence of a large number of diffuse meanings of “quality of education” in the academic world and institutions with different positions in the progressive field (LIBÂNEO, 2011). In the scope of official policies, research has shown that educational policies applied to schools in the last decades have been influenced by orientations coming from international organisms, which have considerable impact on school conceptions and knowledge and on curriculum formulation. Recent studies indicate, for instance, that one of the most recurrent orientation in the World Bank documents is the institutionalization of policies to alleviate poverty expressed in a conception of school as a place of sheltering and social protection. One of their ingredients is the implementation of an instrumental curriculum or a curriculum

aimed at obtaining immediate results. Such policies bring together the disfigurement of the school as a place of cultural and scientific development and, as a consequence, the devaluation of meaningful school knowledge.

A critical approach to the relationship between education and poverty requires, above all, a fundamental question: What are schools for? And, mainly, what are the schools for the poor for? The definition of the objectives and functions of the school has a direct impact on pedagogical projects, on the curriculum, on the types of organization and management of the school, on continued teachers' formation, on the types of pedagogical assistance to teachers, on the classroom dynamics, on the kinds of the system evaluation, on learning evaluation, etc. These objectives also guide the definition of national education policies and guidelines. The question, what are schools for?, is the title of Michael Young's (2007) paper, in which tensions and conflicts of interests in a wider society in relation to the objectives and functions of the school are presented. The author discusses the enquiries that educators and critical sociologists raise in relation to the role of schools. In his perspective, these points of view are as wrong as the neoliberal government policies that seek to adjust schools to economic needs, which is a completely misguided position. According to the author, the tension between political/economic demands and educational realities is one of the major educational questions of our time. In his paper, Young (2007, p. 1288-1294) develops an argument that the existence of the school has a specific purpose, which is to promote knowledge acquisition. The denial of this purpose means: "the denial of the conditions for acquiring 'powerful knowledge' to the very pupils who are already at a disadvantage due to their social circumstances". The author says that there is no contradiction between democracy and social justice and the role of the schools in promoting knowledge acquisition.

In the Brazilian context, a wide range of answers to the question mentioned at the beginning of the topic can be identified, which indicates visible disagreements between educational researchers, civil servants, militants of scientific associations and professionals when it comes to the objectives and ways of functioning schools. It can be assumed that this dissension has an influence on the different meanings of quality in education and contributes to the weakening of school public policies.

In recent years, considering, at least, the official documents of education policies and guidelines, the debates carried out in events and publications in the field as well as in the theoretical orientation for teacher development, it is possible to identify three orientations in relation to the purposes and ways of functioning schools: the

multilateral organisms orientation, especially from the World Bank, for educational policies for poverty protection associated with an instrumental curriculum or a curriculum aimed at obtaining immediate results; a sociological/intercultural orientation aimed at social and cultural diversity linked, in general, with studies in curriculum field; and also a dialectal-critical orientation based on the tradition of the Cultural-historical theory or in other versions of social critical pedagogies.¹ The first one has been dominant in the Brazilian educational system due to the linkage between educational policies and the orientation of multilateral international organisms. The documents produced by them associate the functioning of the educational system with programs of poverty alleviation and reduction of social exclusion, among them, the instrumental curriculum and a curriculum aimed at obtaining immediate results. The second orientation, the sociological/intercultural one, of socio-critical nature, defends a curriculum of educational experiences, in other words, the development through social and cultural experiences in educative situations (for example, practices of sharing different values and solidarity based on everyday experiences and acceptance of social and cultural diversity). The third one, which is also critical, defends a curriculum based on cultural and scientific development in interconnection to social and cultural practices. It considers schools as one of the most important institutions for the democratization of society and for social inclusion. Furthermore, it is a place that provides the means of appropriating socially constituted systemized knowledge which is the base for the development of character and intellectual capacities by means of the process of teaching-learning. These orientations have different quality of education references, in which, in turn, influence the way that the school and classroom activities are conceived. In this paper, the first and the third orientations will be debated in terms of school conceptions and school knowledge.

INTERNATIONAL ORIENTATION FOR SCHOOL POLICIES

The internationalization of educational policies is a movement of globalization in which international and multilateral agencies, such as monetary, commercial, finance, and credit, formulate recommendations on public policies for emerging countries or countries in development. These recommendations include ways of regulating policies deriving from cooperation agreements, mainly in health and education areas. According to Herrero (2013), these organisms or agencies were created by the United States of America, during the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944, hosted in New Hampshire (The US), to regulate, under

¹ Full detailed characterization of these orientations were discussed in previous papers (LIBÁNEO, 2014a, 2014b).

international law, their predominance in worldwide affairs, leading the plan for economic reconstruction in countries devastated by the II World War. The Conference gathered 44 nations with the objective of rebuilding capitalism, by determining new rules for economic and trade relations among the countries. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were in charge of it. At first, the World Bank aimed at providing loans at low interest so that countries devastated by war could be rebuilt. With the growth of economic globalization, the Bank started to provide loans to countries in development so that they could implement proper infrastructure and also to impose control policies on the economic and social policies in these countries.

In education, internationalization means modeling the educational system and institutions according to supranational expectations designed by international organisms and linked to countries with large economic power. It is also based on a globally structured agenda for education, which is reproduced in documents of national educational policies such as guidelines, programs, law projects, etc. The international organisms that develop most social policies, mainly in education, are: the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – Unesco; The World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank – IDB; The United Nations Development Program – UNDP and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). It is important to highlight that these organizations, which are familiar with bureaucratic mechanisms of relationship with the poor or emerging countries, act through international conferences and meetings, such as The World Conference on Education for All (1990), The E-9 Summit Delhi, India (1993), the Education for All (EFA) Forum – Dakar (UNESCO, 2000), and others. As a result of these meetings, documents were produced and signed by member countries and the World Bank policies orientations and techniques have been used as a reference to educational policies in Brazil (BRASIL, 2013; SAVIANI, 2009; EVANGELISTA, 2013).

Studies carried out by Leher (1998), De Tommasi, Warde and Haddad (1996), Frigotto and Ciavatta (2003), Neves (2005), Evangelista and Shiroma (2006), Shiroma, Garcia and Campos (2011), Freitas (2011), and others, have been discussing the repercussion of the educational policies internationalization on the planning and on the guidelines of the Brazilian educational system. Other studies, such as those by as Zanardini (2006), Libâneo (2012), Miranda and Santos (2012), Simônia Silva (2014b), Reis (2014) and Zanardini (2014) try to analyze the impact of these policies on the objectives and on types of public school functioning. The investigations show that multilateral institutions' purposes have been always linked to financial and technical cooperation by means of loans for the development of health, education and basic sanitation programs supported by formal agreements among countries

according to regulatory norms and efficiently designed strategies, including actions for political intervention in the signatory countries. According to M. Abádia Silva (2014, p. 64), at the beginning of 1990, in Thatcher and Reagan's governments, there were some changes in the political and economic foundations of international organisms which resulted in the consolidation of the neoliberal doctrine seated on the tripod deregulation, privatization and liberalization of the markets and on the reform policies directed at the modernization of the State, towards less State and more market. Therefore, international organisms created strategies linked to the globalization of the economic criteria: loans and social policies for emerging countries in order to restore economic growth, especially in education and health; the transformation of education into a business based on a consumerist and commercial logic opening up the commodification of education in a global extent; and the privatization of education and health management. Still according to M. Abádia Silva (2014a, p. 67), political and educational decisions as well as the choice of priorities do not occur within countries only, but also articulate with political, economic and entrepreneurial power in a macro political sphere in which international organisms have a decisive role.

In this context, a universal standard of educational policies based on measurable goals and indicators as criteria for curriculum governability was established in an international scope, targeting the control of national education systems. In the 1990s, because of the recognition of the antisocial effects of the implemented economic policies by international organisms, strategies related to social policies were created. They were subordinated to policies for education to meet capitalist globalization interests and the objective was to alleviate poverty. According to Leher (1999, p. 9):

Far from being a marginal question, education is the center of the World Bank propositions, as a requirement for an *inexorable* globalization, fulfilling an important ideological function to operate the contradictions stemming from the structural exclusion of peripheral countries that is intensifying in unprecedented ways. The World Bank inscribes the education in the poverty *alleviation* policies as an ideology capable of avoiding the "explosion" of the peripheral countries and regions and providing for neoliberalism in a near future in which there is a possibility of a kind of social inclusion (all those who are qualified will be able to fight for a job, with equal opportunity"). For this, education is put on the top of its program of tuition in peripheral regions. (words highlighted by the author)

Numerous analysis documents and strategy proposals by the World Bank cover various themes. Nonetheless, for this paper, it is important to discuss the framed orientations regarding the relationships between education and economic development, and particularly, the role of education for social groups at a disadvantage. In the 1990's, the orientations started to incorporate themes such as justice, equity and inclusion which should appear in educational policies in emerging countries in an "education for poverty alleviation" tone (EVANGELISTA; SHIROMA, 2006). In the 1992 World Bank document, education is considered as a cornerstone for economic growth and social development and is one of the main means to improve individuals' well-being. It says in the document:

It increases the productive capacity of societies and their political, economic and scientific institutions and contributes for poverty reduction, adding value and efficiency to the work of the poor and alleviating the consequences of poverty in issues linked to the population, to health and nutrition. (BANCO MUNDIAL, 1992)

Thus, it is possible to verify the moral and economical intentionality to promote education, aiming to adjust it to the demands of capital globalization once the growth of poverty would have a negative effect on globalization (EVANGELISTA; SHIROMA, 2006).

The World Conference on Education for All (1990), written in The World Conference on Education for All, hosted in Jontien, in 1990, had as subtitle "meeting basic learning needs". After defining the needs (human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, etc.), the document makes it clear that to learn means "incorporate useful knowledge, reasoning ability, skills, and values" and, therefore, "basic education must be on actual learning acquisition and effective outcome of learning that requires a performance evaluation system" In terms of Declaration of Jontien:

Article 4 - Focusing on learning - Whether or not expanded educational opportunities will translate into meaningful development - for an individual or for society - depends ultimately on whether people actually learn as a result of those opportunities, i.e., whether they incorporate useful knowledge, reasoning ability, skills, and values. The focus of basic education must, therefore, be on actual learning acquisition and outcome, rather than exclusively upon enrolment, continued participation in organized programmes and completion of certification requirements. Active and participatory approaches are particularly valuable in assuring learning acquisition and allowing learners to reach their fullest potential. It is, therefore,

necessary to define acceptable levels of learning acquisition for educational programmes and to improve and apply systems of assessing learning achievement. (UNESCO, 1990)

It is clear that these principles, focused on meeting basic learning needs, have a role in promoting poverty reduction through useful knowledge and evaluation of results. According to Boom (2004, p. 215), at the beginning of the 1990's, the Declaration proposes a more cooperative international context to support development and to improve all human beings' well-being in favor of social improvement and also avoiding marginality (even economic) and poverty. According to the author, the tenor of human development in the World Bank documents has as a premise the reorganization of economic policies in order to meet the poorest people's needs. According to the glossary of the Declaration, human development means "general well-being of human beings as a focus and objective for development and learning as a way to improve quality of life". Hence, it is a development centered in enhancing the individual's productive energy. More specifically, human development is understood as "a term that is used in a restricted meaning and refers to the development and conservation of people's capacity in order to contribute to economic and social development". Boom says (2004, p. 220),

Despite the fact that this new strategy is expressed in terms of humanitarian goals and the preservation of freedom, it searches for a new control of the countries and their resources. Moreover, the new strategy focuses on the human being as the most important resource and all efforts should be made not only as an object of exploitation but as an individual that demands and consumes and is, therefore, susceptible to entering the market. In summary, human development is a mirage with which we intend to boost up the new relocation of global policy in which the market operates as the economic guide for excellence and the productivity of the individual is the central proposal of this strategy.

Basic education, therefore, becomes an indispensable tool for changes in global capitalism and for global economic success especially for those directed at the social groups at a bigger disadvantage, as it assures a productive potential "for all", in other words, for the poorest. In the World Bank documents' terms, education is the solution to prevent capitalism expansion from problems as marginality and poverty. Therefore, the school and learning are, in first place, the solution for social and economic problems within the global market criteria. Meeting basic education learning needs means the creation of

necessary input so that students can achieve learning as a product, in other words, knowledge and skills which the student will need for the work market. Besides the World Bank strategies for education, there have been recent and explicit statements about the subordination of education to the work market. As a result, the document, which sets strategies for the period of 2011 to 2020, presents the objectives of “Learning for All” for the next decade:

Linkages between education and labor markets. Improving the labor-market relevance of education is an objective of the strategy. Many young people in developing countries are leaving school and entering the labor market without the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary for employment in a competitive modern economy. This leaves thousands of young people frustrated and disillusioned that they are not earning the promised returns to education. By focusing on learning, the new strategy looks beyond enrollment and years of schooling completed to whether school-leavers will be able to find a job and earn a living. The system approach to education reform recognizes employers as key stakeholders in education and regards nonformal skills training as part of a continuum of learning opportunities for acquiring key knowledge and skills. Efforts are underway in the Bank, in collaboration with development partners, to develop a framework and tools to measure the skills and competencies of a country’s labor force. One aim of these efforts is to increase the share of education projects that include labor-market objectives and thereby improve the acquisition of workforce skills. (BANCO MUNDIAL, 2011, p. 44)

In this educational approach, the school and the teaching roles referent to scientific contents and the development of the capacity of thinking are absent despite the use of inspiring terms as human development, learning for all, equity, social inclusion. The school is reduced to “minimum” contents of learning in a simplified and lightweight school attached to immediate demands for work force preparation. The principles based on the meeting of the basic learning needs need to be unveiled because it is a matter of creating input so that the students reach learning as a product given as secondary the processes of learning. For this, all that matters is to establish desirable levels of knowledge acquisition, in other words, a list of competences and a performance evaluation system that prove learning in a sense of shaping productive individuals for immediate employability. Therefore, the function of the teaching is reduced to the transmission of “minimum” contents, the role of teachers is devaluated, and

consequently, everything that is related to pedagogy, to didactics and to teaching.

There is enough evidence, therefore, that educational policies have been ruling the schools policies in our country since 1990 and it is suspected that they have been affecting school functioning as well as the didactic and pedagogical teacher's work negatively. Education is reduced to the solution of social and economic problems and also to market criteria. Besides, they affect the school's role in relation to its prior objectives that are to teach contents and promote the development of the students' intellectual capacities. Therefore, such policies impoverish the school and produce low student performance rates, provoking the social exclusion of the students in schools, even before the social exclusion promoted by society.

POLICIES FOR BRAZILIAN SCHOOLS: WHICH SOCIAL AND PEDAGOGICAL FUNCTIONS ARE POINTED OUT?

Brazil's history of education has intense moments of discussion and formulation of school policies, which is not the object of this paper. We could mentioned the role of the classic pedagogies, like the Catholic Pedagogy and the Hebartian Method within the traditional conception of education that is still present in schools. Later, in the first decades of the XX century, the New School movement (Progressive Education Movement) introduced policies inspired in John Dewey's ideas and other modern orientations, expressed in the Manifesto of the Pioneers of New School, launched in 1932 by Anísio Teixeira. It is important to remember the role of the National Association of Education – Ande –, in the 1980's, in favor of the democratization of education by meaningful contents. More recently, there have been movements supporting the increase in value of public schools by educators, almost always, semiofficial ones. Nowadays, Brazilian educational policies are grounded on international organism's orientations since its adhesion to the formal recommendations of the World Conference on Education for All, sponsored by Unesco and the World Bank, as analyzed in this paper before. There are plenty of analyses that prove this linkage especially after the transitional period to democracy in successive governments. Orientations based on economic analysis reverberate upon educational policies. In 2009, Algebaile characterized the expansion policies of schools in Brazil as using them for "mitigating potential conflicts linked to the intensification of poverty, the reduction of rights and the destruction of horizons".

Official policies for schools in our country present today two complementary curriculum orientations, subordinated to policies of

poverty reduction, meeting strategies of competitive maintenance in the context of globalization and market diversification. In the frame of poverty alleviation policies, there is an instrumental curriculum or a curriculum aimed at obtaining immediate results which lists a set of minimum contents necessary for work and jobs associated with a curriculum for social integration and social care. This curriculum includes strong appeal to social inclusion and diversity attention which aims to form a type of citizenship based on solidarity and the restraint of social conflicts. The majority of the Brazilian states adopt in their policies both conceptions. This curriculum aimed at obtaining immediate results is marked by the formulation of goals of competence, the transmission of contents in a handout format, the mechanical process of learning and training for taking tests. There is no interest in the psychological, social and cultural aspects of the students, nor in their ~~social and~~ cultural-social practices or in the historical context and the levels of the curriculum decision, as recently shown in Simônia Silva (2014b) and Fernandes' (2015) studies. Thus, it is not a school that intends to teach meaningful knowledge, to contribute to the promotion and to the expansion of higher level processes, to help students to understand and analyze the reality and to develop processes of thinking. On the contrary, it is a school that is centered in practical knowledge, in skills and techniques and leads to precarious employability for those who depend on work alone.

For the purpose of this paper, it is important to consider some data regarding the ongoing policies in Brazil as a manifestation of the international organisms' orientations, mainly from Unesco and the World Bank. These policies are intentionally drawn to meet social diversity, which in some extent, are strategies for poverty alleviation, as analyzed in the previous subsection. Here, however, the intention is to argue how such policies contribute to the disfigurement of the school and the school knowledge.

One of the most expressive orientations of the Board of Education's (MEC) policies is the proposal of full-time education in the *Integral Education* document (BRASIL, 2009), published as a reference text for discussion. This proposal, with the expansion of school time, it is understood that it is important to change the school's conventional role by taking up other non-school functions such as protective and educator functions. In that sense, integral education is seen as a process that encompasses the multiple dimensions of student's development with the objective of integral development together with the expansion of school time and the offer of diversified activities articulating with the pedagogical project (BRASIL, 2009, p. 18). Integrality is understood as the development of cognitive, political, social, ethical, cultural and emotional aspects. Quality of education implies attention to differences "according to ethnic background, gender awareness, sexual orientation,

age groups and geographical origins” (BRASIL, 2009, p. 10). Therefore, to answer to those multiple functions, the school “starts to incorporate a set of responsibilities which were not considered typical of schools, but if they are not guaranteed in the school project they might make pedagogical work impossible (BRASIL, 2009, p. 17).

The main proposal that mobilizes the defense of integral education is of course: “the right for a education with quality is a key element for expansion and the guarantee for other human and social rights, and also for democracy itself, and the universal public school materializes this right” (BRASIL, 2009, p. 13). Therefore, it is important to defend the universalization of access, the permanence and learning in the school in order to overcome inequalities and the consolidation of the right to diversity. In order to reach this proposal integral education schools should be integrated to the State efforts in “offering redistributive policies to reduce poverty” (BRASIL, 2009, p. 10). There are several investigations which form a correlation between poverty and low school performance.

The political and administrative strategy for integral education implementation requires that it intensifies “the processes of territorialization of social policies, articulated from the school spaces by intragovernmental dialogue and local communities (BRASIL, 2009, p. 9). The concept of territorialization has been used in international organisms and government documents in order to redefine the role of the State in articulation with civil society. The document defines ways of articulating the State and society and among private and public agents to conciliate the roles of the State and local communities and agencies. In education, the execution of educational policies implies the appropriation and the use of various social spaces such as health policies, welfare, actions towards the participation of enterprises in schools, families, civil society members, social and educational actions that involve communities, public spaces, etc. A full-time school summarizes the territorialization concept. According to this document, “recent experiences [...] point to a necessity to articulate other public policies with diverse experiences, [...] other professionals and public equipment in a perspective to guarantee school success” (BRASIL, 2009, p. 13). More specifically,

The articulation between Education, Social Assistance, Culture and Sport with other public policies might constitute an important intervention for social protection, prevention and in case of children and adolescent rights violation, and also for the improvement of school performance and a decrease in school evasion, especially in more vulnerable territories. (BRASIL, 2009, p. 25)

In this orientation, integral education is the synthesis of the responsibilities between public power, school community and civil society that brings together a collective commitment and the construction of a project of education that respects human rights and democracy (BRASIL, 2009, p. 27). Let's move on then, to some critical considerations.

The first critical point to be addressed is that the school is put in a strategic place by MEC's documents so that social and economic problems, which may affect social and political order, can be solved. This strategy is in accordance with the World Bank's view and with the World Declaration on Education for all. It understands that education is a way for poverty reduction and a possibility for employability. The World Bank document *Priorities and strategies for education* (1995, p. 23) is very clear in this sense:

Education is critical for economic growth and poverty reduction [...] The World Bank's strategy for reducing poverty focuses on promoting the productive use of labor-the main asset of the poor-and providing basic social services to the poor [...] Education-especially basic (primary and lower-secondary) education-helps reduce poverty by increasing the productivity of the poor. By reducing fertility and improving health, and by equipping people with the skills they need to participate fully in the economy and in society.

Based on these principles, governmental actions are oriented towards poverty alleviation by public policies of social inclusion for vulnerable groups and social risk situations, especially. Investigations by researchers such as Leher (1998), Algebaile (2009), Evangelista and Shiroma (2006), Evangelista (2013) and Libâneo (2012, 2013) confirm that social policies that are subordinated to educational policies are formulated in accordance with economic reasonability management even when diversity recommendations are required. For instance, the European Community document says that "managing our diversity to promote and guarantee equity and justice is not something simply "good" but is an essential condition in a complex world in constant change". Carvalho (UNIÃO EUROPEIA, 2009,² apud CARVALHO, 2012, p. 86) completes this idea stating that:

The option for the management of diversity strategy is related to the drastic changes that the countries have been experiencing, especially, in terms of population. Such changes have been affecting the companies, not only in relation to diversity of people to be hired and of the beneficiaries of the products and services

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EUROPEAN UNION.
Managing Diversity - what's in it for business? Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/fdad/cms/stopdiscrimination/downloads/423_Factsheets_Pdf/Factsheets_PT_pdf/423_PT_Div.pdf>. Access on: Nov 03 2009.

developed, but also pertaining to the diversity of goods and services to be delivery to a specific segment of consumers.

The management of social and cultural diversity, present in international documents and also recurrent in MEC's, compose a part of the orientations for reducing problems and social conflicts, reason why schools need to promote values of solidarity and human recognition to prevent and mitigate social conflicts. It is important to promote certain values and attitudes so the poor can integrate economically and socially into society, in other words, it is a strategy that aims to promote competitiveness in a context of market globalization. Such conditions assure that the individuals are responsible for their own actions, because poverty, misery and social marginality would be associated with a certain individual incompetence of the poor.

The second aspect to be highlighted is the explicit mention that the State shares public school responsibilities with society and community. The school is considered as a right for all and it is a State's obligation, but, at the same time, integral education should consider the intersectoriality of public management, the articulation with social society organizations and local communities. The State-society-community tripod represents the belief of the Third-via (an economic and political model adopted by the Labor Party in England in 1998) in relation to the State reconfiguration and the social society's new roles (LIMA; MARTINS, 2005). It is a matter of postulating a democracy based on the development of a social consensus, looking for pacific solutions to problems and social conflicts by solidary, cooperative and participative relations founded in communitarian relations and public and private partnerships. This prospect of new forms of relationship between the State and society it is compatible the World Bank's orientations about the alleviating poverty through a school oriented towards results and immediate employability, programs of professional qualification, connections between educational and social policies, social and educational actions combined with community participation and voluntary work. There is no better strategy than this for the interests of international organisms: to build a collaborative social pact between the rich and the poor oriented towards using differences in order to hide social inequalities, to reduce conflicts and to search for solutions to local and individual social problems. The school, in this way, is a place for social care and social integration, for mediating conflicts and not for providing knowledge and skills for the poor to survive. It is far from what Gramsci used to postulate for subaltern classes: "the intellectual, moral and political elevation of the dominated". It is a school that denies universal knowledge, losing track of its main social mission which is the pedagogical, and putting in second place, the teaching objectives,

the meaningful contents, the development of mental capacities and the support to the students in developing their critical thinking.

Thirdly, it is notorious that integral education proposed by MEC, as in the World Bank documents (LIBÂNEO, 2014a), associates the use of the school for social and political control. In the curriculum aimed at obtaining immediate results, based on measurable goals and standardized exams, the learning-teaching process and the questions related to contents and teaching methods are visibly put in second place. The problem worsens with the use of the school as a place for social policies legitimation. As a result, there is a lack of value of scientific contents and the development of thinking process through the teachers' work. It is common to find two parallel curriculums in schools that take part in the official programs: the school curriculum that is weak, and the "social" curriculum that is called "the communitarian knowledge" linked to social educative actions. Social exclusion within schools occurs with the devaluation of scientific contents and of the pedagogical processes by which students can develop their intellectual capacities, which contraposes the objectives of the educative policies of respect and care for social diversity.

Fourthly and, as a consequence, the disfigurement of the school space arises. The proposal of MEC's full-time schools supposes that schools should do everything that the public sectors do not do. It is expected that schools opt for full socialization in order to meet and make up for the poor's needs in order to build a harmonious educative society. Antonio Nóvoa (2009, p. 60) perceives this language as "excesses in discourse" of the school, in which integral education is strongly linked to the development of citizenship. The function of the school is reduced to the compensation of the needs of the poor as a social mission by diffuse programs. Therefore, knowledge, learning and the development of the personality are put in second place. Nóvoa (2009, p. 64) affirms that there are two sorts of school rhythms: a school as a central place for social care for the poor based on citizenship rhetoric, and the knowledge school and learning for the rich.

Another highly relevant document is the document resulting from the II National Conference on Education – Conae – 2014 deliberations, coordinated by the National Forum of Education – FNE, a public agency responsible for the organization of the II Conae, and which is composed by 40 governmental and civil society institutions.

The document has a generic position about the school's objectives and functions as well as criteria for the quality of education, although it formally states important demands from society in relation to tackling public school problems in this country. Nevertheless, the content is low in propositions about the school profile and the requirements for the

teaching-learning process to meet the demands for the education and teaching of the major social segments of the population.

Education must be understood as social, in which different individuals, contexts, and institutions, and formative dynamics interrelate with each other, and become effective by systematic and non-systematic processes [...]. As a social and cultural practice, education has as a privileged, but not exclusive, locus, the educational institutions, which are places of cultural diffusion, creation and recreation, of investigation of the educational process experienced by students, and therefore, are places that guarantee rights. It is essential to pay attention to the demands of society as a parameter for the development of educational activities. (BRASIL, 2014, p. 64)

According to the document, parameters of the quality of education are a result of a social project that guides the national policy, which, in turn, depends on a system of society values, suffering variations according to temporal and spatial circumstances. Quality criteria, therefore, result from confrontations and agreements of the groups and classes that form the social tissue in each reality (BRASIL, 2014). Education aims to emancipate social individuals.

“Education with quality” is the one that contributes to the student’s development in human, social, cultural, philosophical, scientific, historical, anthropological, emotional, economic, environmental and political aspects so that they can perform their role as a citizen in the world, becoming a reference of quality in the social spectrum. In this sense, quality education is closely linked to the transformation of the reality in the construction of citizenship and ensuring human rights. (BRASIL, 2014, p. 52)

The document states that public education should be free, secular, democratic, and inclusive, and should have social quality for all as a social right. It also says that access should be universalized, the attending hours should be expanded and successful permanence should be guaranteed. “This right materializes in a challenging context for overcoming social inequalities and the recognition and respect for diversity”. It is important to consider students’ characteristics as well as their time and rhythm in the curriculum and in the assessment so that everyone can be included (BRASIL, 2014, p. 65). It is also worth pointing out that access and permanence policies should be guaranteed to less advantaged groups so that they could “carry on and conclude their studies successfully with a high level of quality”. Besides, this development would be an “effective and decisive factor for citizenship, for work market insertion, for quality

of life and income improvement” (BRASIL, 2014, p. 66). The Axis IV lists the State’s obligations in relation to education regarding the compulsory basic education in its various modalities.

As can be seen, also in this document the definitions of education, the quality of education and the declaration of the right to an education are generic and diffuse. There are no references and explicit objectives on the role of schools and pedagogical actions as they guide educative practices. Even though educative institutions are considered a specific place for education, there is no mention of the conception of a school and not even an alternative to conventional schools. Without a school project, what is the sense of the extended school day? Or what is the role of the school to overcome social inequalities? What does “high standard of quality” mean in a diffuse view of education and teaching in the document? In an endeavor to support a conception of extended education, which integrates “different individuals, contexts, institutions and formative dynamics”, the school is reduced to social policies. The sense of social quality boils down to a vague idea of education to overcome inequalities and the recognition and respect to diversity in a social project for poverty alleviation that is closer to economic reasons than social and pedagogical ones, well to the taste of multilateral organisms.

This document maintains, thus, the concept of extended education previously analyzed: an education that has been expanded to the point that the centrality of the school, as a place for schooling and for developing moral and emotional as well as intellectual, has been diluted. Instead, there is a school that is responsible for multiple functions including social services (as António Nóva states a “school overflowing”). It becomes a disfigured and indifferent place that lacks identity. It is true that education can occur in many places, not only in the school. The existence of multiple educative practices in society cannot be denied. Nevertheless, due to the poor population’s historical and social condition, social exclusion can increase if the school is left out of the school system. If the school is considered a place for social protection only, for social and cultural experiences and also for consideration of differences and social and cultural diversity, it will be merely reduced to a physical reference for putting in practice governmental social projects and social educative compensatory actions in favor of low income population. Therefore, its role for promoting knowledge, skills and attitudes that promote the development of intellectual capacities is watered down. So it is useless to talk about an extended school day or the overcome of social inequality and acknowledgement and respect for diversity.

The position of Conae’s documents in relation to quality of education is similar to those researchers in education and educational policy makers that cannot associate quality of education to what happens in schools and

in classrooms. They disregard the value of school knowledge. For these sectors, the school is a place for social integration, for social and cultural experiences rather than a place for opportunities for new children and young generations by the appropriation of strong and effective knowledge that will allow them to develop processes of thinking and social and citizenship activities. The specificity of a school education, which is a social practice that is materialized by the provision of effective conditions for scientific, cultural, ethical, political and emotional development of poor children and young people, who need it most, is lost.

The reference-document that is supposed to express the social society's needs cannot answer these questions: what are schools for, mainly those for the poor? Which objectives contribute to reduce social inequalities? Is it a school that aims to broaden the student's cognitive, emotional and moral development? Or is it a place for sheltering and social integration of the poor people? Besides the legitimate demands for a national system for public education, for the increase of public financing index for education, by effective measures for fair salary, for professional career plans and for work conditions for teachers, it would have been appropriate that the document contemplated specifically the objectives and the forms of the didactical-pedagogical functioning of schools and other intra-schools questions, because they are really the ones that promote quality of education.

FOR A SCHOOL FOR CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC DEVELOPMENT ARTICULATED WITH SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

This paper criticizes the conception of an instrumental curriculum or a curriculum aimed at obtaining immediate results because it restricts education to a kit of social survival skills for precarious employability, deprived from meaningful cultural and scientific contents and the development of thinking. Subordinated to poverty reduction policies, social and economic differences, which characterize poverty, are transformed into social prejudice because they cause an impoverished curriculum to be offered to the poor. It also criticizes the educational policies that reduce the school to a place for social care and social integration for the poor, reducing its role to care and meet the social diversity needs of the students.

It is important to make it clear, above all, that the recognition of differences, the social and cultural diversity of human conviviality, especially in the school, represents a great progress in social life. Difference is not exceptionality, but is a constitutive condition for all human beings and no educational action can ignore it. Nevertheless, it important to distinguish social diversity from social inequality. The appreciation of the answer to diversity cannot obscure the reality

of social inequalities. They are not a result of individual and social differences, they are a product of social justice. If an educational policy that promotes social diversity is the major objective of the educational system, and the right for school knowledge is put in second place, the system will end up promoting social inequality. The propagation of this objective, which can be found in MEC's documents, tends to form teachers in a benevolent attitude in relation to the poor children's learning difficulties. "Let's be patient. Poor children are different. They have their own culture, their social and racial characteristics, their rhythms. They need a different teaching method". Following this logic, it becomes necessary to have an easier teaching method and also greater tolerance in the assessment process in order to meet the differences which may lead to the stigmatization of the differences, depriving poor students from the right to equality among human beings. It results in a prejudiced attitude towards poor people. According to Boaventura Santos (2006, p. 470):

We have the right to be equals when our difference puts us in an inferior position. We have the right to be different when our equality decharacterizes us. Hence, the necessity of an equality that acknowledges the differences and of a difference that does not produce, nourish or reproduce inequalities.

In another declaration, the same author highlights as a prominent characteristic in society the fact that material inequality and immaterial inequality are deeply connected, above all, with an unequal education (SANTOS, 2000).

These considerations lead to another positioning on the finalities of the school, in other words, the relationship between social and educational inequalities, not taking into account social and cultural diversity. It is proposed that a school with educational quality is the one which ensures those conditions in which all students can appropriate historically produced knowledge and through it reach cognitive, emotional and moral development.

This school requires pedagogical relations that can provide knowledge acquisition, the development of intellectual capacities and personality development by students. These conditions can contribute to the reduction of differences between levels of schooling and the education among social groups, once overcoming social inequality has a close relation to access to knowledge and school learning. Such conception of school takes into consideration students' social and cultural practices, which are diversified. However, such practices should be connected to the teaching and learning processes of the school context in order to establish interconnections between scientific

concepts from school and everyday and local concepts. To sum up, this is a matter of ensuring the right to equality and similarity by providing cultural and scientific development for all students. However, at the same time, it is important to consider the difference, because cultural and scientific development is for different individuals. It is the school, according to Charlot (2005, p. 35), that makes “two principles work at the same time: the cultural difference and the identity as a human being; and the principles of the rights to difference and similarity”.

The pedagogical question, in this case, is: in which way can the students' social condition and their social and cultural practices be included in the work with scientific contents, keeping a two way path between everyday and scientific concepts? In the tradition of Vigotski's studies, the interaction between individuals in sociocultural and institutional interactions has a key role in the development of psychological tools and concept systems, once human beings internalize culturally established forms of psychological operation. This idea has close relationship with the development of scientific concepts in connection with everyday concepts (VIGOSTKI, 2007). Hedergaard and Chaiklin (2005) call this procedure as “double move approach” in teaching. According to the authors, teaching contexts should be organized in a way that theoretical and concept knowledge can be linked to personal knowledge experienced by students in their daily practice, in the family and community. It could be a way to motivate students in different subjects.

The double move in teaching consists on the use of the everyday and local knowledge as well as the theoretical and concept knowledge by the teacher and also the use of this theoretical and concept knowledge in relation to everyday and local knowledge (HEDEGAARD; CHAIKLIN, 2005, p. 81). In this way, the general and the theoretical concepts help the students to apply these internalized concepts in their daily concrete situations.

Through this teaching form, theoretical-conceptual knowledge and local knowledge can become integrated so that this knowledge can enrich children's personal concepts in a way that is useful in their understanding the everyday local practice. In a radical-local perspective, the teacher takes departure in children's understanding and orients children toward tasks and problems in the subject-matter area that can become meaningful for the child and thereby motivating in relation to understanding both theoretical principles and local practice and knowledge of their community. (HEDEGAARD; CHAIKLIN, 2005, p. 81)

Therefore, the learning and teaching process, whose reference is the theoretical and scientific knowledge (in the sense of concept

development or processes of thinking) helps the student to organize their experiences and concepts around a system of concepts. The students acquire mental tools to analyze and understand the complexity of the world around them, so formal abstract concepts can be applied in peoples' daily lives. For this reason, theoretical and scientific knowledge and mental procedures (concepts) open up real possibilities so that the students can use them in their daily social practice and change their life condition and their relationships. To conclude, a quality school is one, above all, which provides conditions for cognitive, emotional and moral development for students, considering their individual, social and cultural characteristics and the social and cultural practices that they experience and take part in.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It was discussed in this paper that public school is still the best place and the best path for a political battle for equality and social inclusion. A view of a democratic school bets on the universality of school culture in the sense that it is the school's responsibility to transmit public knowledge that has a value, independently of circumstances and private interests, in terms of human development. Besides that, it is important to consider cultural diversity, the coexistence of differences and the interaction among individuals from different cultural identities. A lack of dense and substantial cultural contents reduces the possibilities for the poor to reach the cultural world and the development of their intellectual capacities. By doing this, social justice does not happen in a place that could otherwise promote it. In order to do so, it is urgent that a national consensus be reached among educators, public service institutions directors, politicians, researchers and trade unions regarding the appreciation of schools, of school knowledge and, consequently, the teacher's job. They are the key agents for the quality of education. If compulsory school education is the condition to form the people's cultural base, it is necessary for teachers to know the cultural and the scientific contents and the procedures to teach the students so they can take advantage of favorable pay and work conditions, cultural and scientific knowledge, pedagogical development, self-esteem and professional confidence.

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