

Presentation: Brazil and Chile: Educational Policies and Neoliberalism in the Marches and Countermarches of the 2000s

Apresentação: Brasil e Chile: políticas educacionais e neoliberalismo nas marchas e contramarchas dos anos 2000

Presentación: Brasil y Chile: políticas educativas y neoliberalismo en las marchas y contramarchas de los años 2000

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the dossier “Teacher appreciation in the Brazilian and Chilean context in the face of the marches and countermarches of neoliberalism”, considering the singular social and political conditions of these countries in which neoliberalism was conceived and implemented. Based on the idea that the essence of politics is the debate of the conjuncture, the authors present the elements that define what they call neoliberal marches and countermarches. Starting from this key idea the eight articles that make up the dossier are presented focusing on the issues training policies, remuneration and teachers’ working conditions in Brazil and Chile. The different approaches that make up the analysis reveal a somewhat negotiated agenda that preserves the elements of neoliberalism incorporated in contemporary educational policies.

Keywords: Educational Policies. Teacher Appreciation. Teacher Training. Neoliberalism.

RESUMO

Neste artigo é apresentado o dossiê “Valorização docente nos contextos do Brasil e do Chile frente

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às marchas e contramarchas do neoliberalismo”, considerando-se as condições sociais e políticas únicas, tanto no Brasil quanto no Chile, em que o neoliberalismo foi concebido e implementado. Partindo-se da ideia de que a essência da política é o debate da conjuntura, são apresentados os elementos definitórios para o que os organizadores entendem como marchas e contramarchas do neoliberalismo. Esta ideia-chave é o ponto de partida para a apresentação dos oito artigos que compõem o dossiê, nos quais é evidenciada a centralidade das políticas de formação, remuneração e condições de trabalho dos docentes no Brasil e no Chile. As várias abordagens que compõem as análises mostram uma agenda cotidiana, de certa maneira negociada, que mantém os elementos do neoliberalismo incorporados nas políticas educacionais contemporâneas.

Palavras-chave: Políticas Educacionais. Valorização Docente. Formação de Professores. neoliberalismo.

RESUMEN

En este artículo se presenta el dossier “Valorización docente en el contexto de Brasil y de Chile frente a las marchas y contramarchas del neoliberalismo”, considerándose las singulares condiciones sociales y políticas de ambos países durante el período en el cual el neoliberalismo fue concebido e implementado. La idea básica del presente texto es la de que la naturaleza de la política y de la coyuntura nacional en cada caso constituyen los factores que definen lo que los organizadores del dossier entienden como marchas y contramarchas del neoliberalismo. A partir de esta idea clave se introducen los ocho artículos que integran el dossier, los que ponen en evidencia la centralidad de las políticas de formación, remuneración y condiciones de trabajo que caracterizan tanto la preparación como el desempeño de docentes de Brasil y de Chile. Los variados abordajes que componen los análisis desarrollados por los autores de los artículos muestran una agenda cotidiana que preserva la presencia del neoliberalismo en las políticas educacionales contemporâneas.

Palabras clave: Políticas Educativas. Valorización Docente. Formación de Profesores, Neoliberalismo.

The dossier presented in this text was elaborated under unique social and political conditions both in Brazil and Chile.

Firstly, we highlight the context in which it was conceived, presuming a different outcome in both countries. In fact, in the first semester of 2022, Chile seemed to be heading towards a process that would culminate in the sanction, via plebiscite, of a new political constitution, different from the one in force since the military dictatorship. This possibility indicated that the country would acknowledge the social nature of rights, previously understood as private. Brazil, on the other hand, in the 2022 pre-electoral period, was running the risk of maintaining a government that tried, by all means, a transition that was exactly the opposite of the Chilean one, announcing a growing process of privatization of the social rights enshrined in the 1988 Constitution.

However, historical processes are not usually symmetrical to allow simple and

schematized explanations. In this case, neither did Chile sanction a new constitutional bill of rights nor did Brazil elect the conservative political project, even though it still strains the country. There were changes, of course, but none of them turned out to be the expected ones nor happened in the way they were anticipated. The analysis of the causes and factors that generated these singularities will be addressed in another paper.

What we can assert is that the dynamism, fluidity, or liquidity, borrowing Bauman's (2000) concept, that characterize the development context of educational systems lead to a diachronic perspective that should avoid, however, the imposition of the interpretation of social processes on educational processes, even though they seem to coincide sometimes.

We understand that social and educational processes of change, transformation, and mutation cannot simply be substituted. While all this was happening in Brazil and Chile, both countries, as well as the whole world, were experiencing the slow end of the COVID-19 pandemic which, since 2020, has imposed a new rhythm on social processes and, as a consequence, a new rhythm on the educational system. It was only in 2022 that schools were, in fact, fully opened after the closure due to the pandemic control policies of the pandemic and its massive and devastating effects. The health protection measures taken as a consequence of worldwide governmental recognition of the disease and the need to adopt social distancing and activity control through public health systems resulted in school closures to prevent the spread of the virus and unnecessary exposure of students to contagion.

To avoid contagion, however, we were led to drastic changes regarding the learning conditions and professional demands on teachers. The great challenges imposed by the pandemic on these professionals, who had to adapt their practices to new technologies, students' learning, and school system management will be addressed in another article.

But this does not mean that we should neglect the role of the pandemic and its consequences on teachers' working conditions in the last period since, as a result of it, many questions were raised regarding teacher training, the nature of education, and teachers' work. These doubts concern aspects as diverse as the effects of the economic, political, and cultural context worldwide on teachers' professional situation, their training conditions, remuneration, characteristics of the curriculum, and other facets of their professional activity.

Concerning the professional development context, there are many variables to be examined and there is a growing reluctance to catalog it using a single formula to capture its diversity. There is a complex net of factors in whose structure economic, social, political, and cultural components blend, allowing an understanding of the teaching work. Each seems to have an autonomous structure and, at the same time, to be characterized by multiple paths that intercommunicate with one another. They seem to diverge and converge at the same time, and, therefore, explanatory schemes are adopted to capture a solidity that vanishes into thin air, as Marx says.

The appropriation of Marxian language is not a mere figurative, metaphorical appearance, but reflects an ontological-institutional quality, proper to social modernity that, in effect, Marx was characterizing in the Manifesto (1984). We believe that such characterization inaugurated the oblique way in which attempts have been made to describe the modern situation since Marx, and the same tendency is expressed in different ways in the successive attempts of sociology and more recent cultural criticism. Several of these developments have focused on the use of “neoliberalism” as a category of analysis. Since 2000, this term has replaced the term “postmodern”, which characterized the debate over the shape of the social bond and the post-industrial cultural atmosphere. The notion of “neoliberalism” has been understood as a broader category than “postmodern” in current debates.

Regarding the debates on educational policies, we understand that the concept of neoliberalism influences national States or local governments’ actions by incorporating elements of result-oriented management to the detriment of bureaucratic management concerned with the means of offering a public policy. These elements subvert the perspective committed to the construction of protection policies centered on the right to citizenship into policies of competition between institutions and, sometimes, between individuals under the false perspective of affirming merit as an individual path. This result-oriented agenda has spread around the world in different ways (VERGER, 2018) and some of its agents and challenges are discussed in this dossier.

The first article of the dossier entitled “**A influência do Banco Interamericano de Desenvolvimento na formação dos/das professores/as da educação básica no Brasil**” [The influence of the Inter-American Development Bank on the training of basic education teachers in Brazil] focuses on teacher training. It should be said that part of this international panorama affecting teachers’ situation in Brazil is the result of the way multilateral organizations, such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), have conditioned teacher training. This is not a new fact, although there is still much to be known about the specific content of this conditioning and the adhesion of rulers to these guidelines. Indeed, it is not just a matter of a neutral relationship between financial resources and national policies, but a way of establishing the thematic agenda of this policy through the creation of social networks that integrate local or transnational private companies in education management, particularly in the case of the article by da Silva Lima Aranha and Baçal de Oliveira on the Municipality of Manaus and teacher training.

Teacher training is considered a central factor in improving the quality of education, therefore, it has become an important ideological battlefield since it represents an action that can favor the incorporation of hegemonic positions in the faculty. In particular, continuing teacher training has been opened to privatization through the participation of multiple private actors who seek to influence not only the training project itself but also fundraising through strategies of action that include the active participation of public

and private agents, as is the case of Manaus. Therefore, there is certainly a growing process of mercantilization of continuing training needs and private profit mechanisms enabled by the mediation of public bodies.

On the other hand, this is a phenomenon that has enjoyed wide diffusion in the Chilean educational system. In Chile, education has been the object of different forms of privatization, whose background can be used as a reference—whether for chronological or conceptual reasons—that allows judging the novelty of similar phenomena when experienced in other political realities, or simply concluding that it is a reiteration. In addition, the empirical evidence provided by the study on the influence of the Interamerican Bank on continuing teacher training in Brazil is considered a relevant contribution.

Considering a different logic, probably more difficult to connect with processes such as privatization and the characteristics of late capitalism, the article by professors Infante Malchias and Araya Crisóstomo entitled “**Interdisciplinaridade como desafio para educar na contemporaneidade**” [Interdisciplinarity as a challenge to educate in contemporary times] highlights aspects that are less elaborated by research education, in the context of which, however, we can also detect other variants of the transformations produced by late capitalism in education, particularly concerning teachers’ initial training. The article argues for the need for an interdisciplinary approach to teacher training for two reasons: The first one is serious problems produced by late capitalism development, which distanced students from bachelor degree courses, therefore, inhibiting the possibilities of exchanges over time; The second is a significant change on the way knowledge is presented in the training of new teachers. Therefore, interdisciplinarity seems to be a possible solution concerning both cases: awareness of a variety of perspectives concerning reality and the fragmentation of knowledge.

Interdisciplinarity, thus, becomes an ontological and epistemological demand since it is understood as a way to recompose the crisis to which late capitalism led us in terms of knowledge and the reality that shape our capacity for social and political agency.

The article on interdisciplinarity opens a section of the Dossier on curriculum issues. The text entitled “**Negociação das políticas-práticas curriculares: o desenvolvimento profissional de professores(as) orientado para a decisão curricular**” [Negotiation of curricular policies-practices: teachers’ professional development oriented to curricular decision] by Maria Julia Carvalho de Melo, Lucinalva Andrade Ataíde de Almeida and Carlinda Leite, places the debate on the city of Caruaru—an expression of how the Brazilian federative structure allows for a wide range of studies that seek to investigate a variety of solutions adopted from educational trends in specific territories. The work aforementioned shows the possibilities of teacher agency at another level of the educational policy, that is, in the curricular field and how it can shape teacher autonomy.

The interesting point of the article, besides its multiple details, concerns how the struggles for curriculum configuration reflect the possibilities of teachers’ agency as

education professionals who could bring out curricular solutions adequately adapted to the economic, social, and cultural realities despite global curriculum standardization, strongly present in school policies.

The similarity of this phenomenon in Brazil and Chile is impressive: In both countries, despite postponement in the debate about educational policies, the curricular configuration becomes a field that gives way to the exercise of teaching development skills, insofar as they allow teachers to exercise their autonomy, mediated by a professional sense to adapt the contents and objectives of the curriculum to local realities.

The problem of approach is evident in the case of managerialism as a way to conduct continuing teacher education. The article by Vanderlei José Valim Vieira Filho and Fábio Peres Gonçalves entitled **“Gerencialismo na formação continuada de professores no Brasil: uma análise de documentos propostos pelo Conselho Nacional de Secretários de Educação”** [Managerialism in the Continuing Education of Teachers in Brazil: an analysis of documents proposed by the National Council of Education Secretaries] continues the debate on two trends in the Chilean and Brazilian education, namely, privatization, already mentioned in this dossier, and curriculum standardization, referred to in the previous article, but now under the perspective of the central items of managerialism: evaluation, monitoring, and educational results control.

The importance of this text is to show, based on the case of the National Council of Education Secretaries (CONSED), the continuing education required by the Common Core Curriculum (BNCC), and the New High School (NEM,), how the items of managerialism, which are repeatedly mentioned in different levels of analysis, are structured in education policy. Practice shows that managerialism leads to the alignment with US educational policies and governance, in addition to the aforementioned mechanisms of evaluation, monitoring, and results control. In the particular case of continuing education, which is the object of analysis in this text, these managerial practices are embodied in the invocation of efficiency, the alliance between public agents and private actors, and standardized evaluation systems.

A set of articles referring to both Chile and Brazil report on the teacher's labor situation concerning professional development policies, minimum wage, and teacher appreciation. These have been central issues on the continent in educational reforms after the end of the dictatorships and are still present in current political struggles amid the disputes between positions marked by neoliberalism and the various forms of progressivism in South America.

Even though the dissemination of teacher professional development policies in Chile tends to highlight the advancements produced by the political agreements reached on this matter, it ignores the multiple forms of disputes that teachers had to face to keep visible, according to the legal definition finally achieved, a vision of professional development that would represent them. This is, by the way, an old dispute, and its

elements can be identified in the processes that characterized the so-called “transition to democracy” from the very beginning.

The article entitled “**Concepções dos líderes sindicais sobre o papel dos professores na construção do Sistema de Desenvolvimento Profissional Docente no Chile**” [Union leaders’ conceptions on teacher’s role in the construction of the Teacher Professional Development System in Chile] by Victor Figueroa and Dalila Andrade de Oliveira. Besides the necessary record of the teaching action in the definition of the Professional Teacher Education Law, we highlight as a result of the study an aspect of the debate on the very notion of “professional teacher education”. The discussion framework describes a typical Chilean school system situation concerning mercantilization. What is novel here is concerned with the emergence of an alternative way of understanding teacher professional development that not only refuses to simply agree with the normative framework but understands it as comprising distinctive elements of the normative conception of professionalism that, to account for it, call into question the very frame of reference of the debate, the frame we previously called mercantile.

These elements, according to the authors, come from the teaching movement action that tried to safeguard the autonomy, responsibility, and teacher’s public role against forms of alignment, mere transparency, and privatization of the educators’ role. They question the way teacher profession is conceived in the current legislation. The rules for the profession tend to be uncritically articulated with neoliberal criteria, determining educational action from a horizon different from the elements teachers consider key (in this case, Colégio do Professores (Teachers’ School), the organization that historically represented teachers in Chile).

In a similar line of debate, the text “**Por entre direitos afirmados e renegados: a luta docente pelo piso salarial profissional nacional de 20 horas em Campo Grande, MS**” [Between affirmed and denied rights: the struggle of teachers for the national minimum monthly salary on a 20-hour week basis in Campo Grande, MS teaching profession] examines the modalities adopted for teachers’ salary demands and how these can - and should - value the teaching profession.

This is an especially striking case because it shows, in other aspects of the educational system development, how governments tend to devalue or deny rights to teachers due to their imperative need to meet the global standards set by educational reforms. The denial of the right to the National Minimum Salary (PSPN) was expressed many times, since it was not applied despite being guaranteed in the regulation together with the 20 hour weekly payment innovation.

In the Brazilian context, this situation allows an analysis of how the transition from federal to municipal government occurs and the difficulties faced to implement the national guideline, highlighting the case of a major teacher’s municipal strike in Campo Grande, in 2015.

As aforementioned, Brazil is characterized by a decentralized educational provision

responsibility, demanding many local studies to understand national policies' nuances. The text by Andreza Barboza entitled "**Mudanças nos planos de carreira do magistério paulista e a desvalorização docente**" [Changes in the São Paulo state teaching career plans and the teacher's devaluation] takes on the challenges of teacher's appreciation in terms of remuneration in São Paulo, the richest state of the country. Once again, there is the idea of regulating a right by denying it. Firstly, attention is drawn to the bonus strategy of paying the PSPN in this municipal network, which according to the author leads to a flattening of the career, given that the effects of the percentage gains provided for in national law do not apply to the remuneration of the set of teachers in exercise. The key point of the author's debate, however, is how attractive or unattractive the career is, especially after a new legal order was approved in the state of São Paulo, in 2022. The change in the way payment was done, from salary to subsidy, eliminates from the career plan the progressions that include teachers' length of service. This is a change related to a discourse focused on results, reinforcing the concept of neoliberal countermeasures, as proposed in the dossier.

Lastly, Renata Cecília Estormovski and Rosimar Serena Siqueira Esquinsani wrote an article entitled "**(Des)valorização docente na educação básica brasileira: a naturalização da precarização promovida pelas premiações de professores**" [(De)valuation of teachers in Brazilian basic education: the naturalization of precariousness promoted by teacher awards]. This article brings another context and other factors that emphasize the challenges of teacher work appreciation. In this case, through a system of rewards that hides the denial of rights. In this practice, the "Prêmio Educador Nota 10" [Educator Grade 10 Award] is a strategy that imposes a particular conception of teachers' work, and its analysis, according to the authors, allows us to refute its implicit criteria.

The recognition of teachers' success relies on their ability to undertake, compete and accumulate merits, as these are some elements, among many others, linked to the precariousness of their work, leading us to believe that teachers can overcome obstacles as a result of individual effort alone.

We finished the organization of this dossier at the very beginning of 2023, after Lula's inauguration as President of the Republic, "representing hope for the world", according to the Chilean president Gabriel Boric. We can understand this idea of hope as the translation of a progressive political perspective. However, once again, reality calls for reflection. The clashes that took place in Brazil, with the attack on the National Congress and the powers of the republic, one week after Lula took office, had the magnitude of domestic terrorism and show us that conservatism is not gone and that an ultra-right is still fighting for power and has no scruples to use force to achieve its goals.

On the other hand, several elements of the dossier show that beyond the most radical agenda of the coup-instigated right, there is a daily agenda, in some way negotiated, that maintains the elements of neoliberalism incorporated into public policies. These movements, which are certainly less violent, but long-lasting and complex, require an

understanding, both of their designs and reasons, of how they convince the various social actors to accept them. Understanding neoliberal marches and countermarches in policies seem to be a constant challenge to reinvent ways of resisting.

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