

Public policies in education: reflective considerations on the PDE - educational development program of the state of Paraná¹

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ABSTRACT

This text presents preliminary data from an ongoing research on PDE - Educational Development Program in Paraná State. The goal is to identify elements that will contribute to the construction of assessment indicators about the impact of the program on public schools of Paraná State in terms of improving the professional qualification of teachers and their results in improving the quality of teaching in the educational public system. At this stage of the research, documents from the SEED (Paraná State Department of Education) about the PDE available on the *Dia a Dia Educação* portal were used, in addition to bibliographic sources. Data from two studies on the profile of Brazilian adolescents were also used in order to assist in discussions about public policy on screen considering the public to which it is intended. Some initial notes in this study indicate the need to rethink the educational public policies and the PDE as an alternative for the improvement of education in Paraná State. The school has to be thought as space for the construction of the citizenship by continued training of its teachers.

Key words: Educational Policies. Teacher formation. Educational development program.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of inequality in Brazil is recognized both in the academic world as well as by common sense. The fight against this inequality, however, does not have the necessary dimension to be overcome for several reasons. Some people assign it to a "cultural inheritance" that dates back to the Brazilian colonial period and it has never considered a priority for the construction of the civic habit of democratic participation in public decisions. Others point out the contemporary neo-liberal context, mainly from the 1980s, to cite just two lines of possible analysis regarding this topic (FURTADO, 1974; MATOSO, 2010). Notwithstanding the reflections of this nature, we must not forget that the inequality issue, mainly from the second half of the 20th century, also began to be treated in Brazil from an economic category in principle, but that ended up winning various developments such as an analytical category one (BRESSER-PEREIRA, 2012;

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PREBISCH, 1949). This concept became consensus and it is always present when public policies are discussed. In a way, all public policies aspire to the "development of"

For a public policy to meet the demands for development (in the broadest sense of this concept), it is crucial to ensure the participation of all those involved in decision-making processes: we take on here the necessary eminently democratic character of the public policies formulation. The dynamic relationship between public power and public policies influencing their actions (even that they are built by the public power at various times), we must consider that the validity of any public policy lies in the care of the society demands. In this respect, to form for social participation in decision-making processes - education is a political act, as Freire (2003) says - is a fundamental demand *a priori*. It is always good to remember that all education is intentional for the individuals' formation (of course, guided by public policies) which can produce both change and rupture in the existing social standards.

This understanding requires reflections on the construction of arenas and networks of participation that in principle should make democratically the design, formulation, implementation and evaluation of educational policies as a whole. The participation is fundamental to the educational policies not to be restricted to mere "adjustment" of the sector with the creation of laws that express limits and recoveries under different perspectives, but mainly with the induction of new actions, with a certain freedom in terms of postulates and their necessary revisions: a more or less open and flexible way to lead the effective uses of public resources to meet the demands of their social functions. Thus, the dilemma is how to make the public policy keep its induction characteristic and not restricted to mere regulation as noted above.

In this way and at this moment, the aim of this reflection is not to explore with depth the guiding concepts of the public policies field, in particular the educational policies, but present some quick impressions on the PDE - Educational Development Program of Paraná State (that must be not confused with the federal government PDE), which is a state public policy within the educational field. From this start, it is necessary to think about the public policy concept from the perspective of its efficiency and effectiveness. So, in order to understand the fundamental issues to whom a public policy

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is intended to be, and what context is required, this text is divided into two parts: on the first part, there are some quick comments on the idea of an education crisis as conceived by Arendt associated to some recent research on the behavior of young people in Brazil. On the second part, it is problematized the public policy concept in education in order to contribute to the improvement of the Brazilian educational process by taking as reference for analysis some initial approximations on the PDE. Following these considerations about the background on which these reflections are included, we hope that these first impressions presented here from this research in initial progress may indicate paths for the debate in order to deepen the reflection on the impact of this educational public policy in the State of Paraná, by thinking about it in the perspective of a laboratory for understanding the social dynamics inherent to it and its results.

Public Policy in education: contemporary demands

Discussing public policies in the educational area is a complex and challenging topic at the same time. It is a complex issue because it must be considered theoretical concepts (government, power, politics, education, etc.) that do not have ideological consensus on the existing literature. Besides, they change historically and, at the same time, they affirm and/or (re)configure themselves under different polarities from the everyday life tensions built on them and reflected in a dialectical perspective. It is challenging because there is a general consensus in relation to the statement that "education in Brazil needs to be radically transformed and improved". For this reason, considerations highlighted in this field need enlargement, deepening and, mainly, disclosure in order to engage all people affected by various public educational policies. The reflection, analysis, dissemination and assessment are necessary because, among other reasons, there is on the part of teachers and public school managers - those who have a direct action on the educational processes due to their public function in a more intense and effective way - the perception that the education system is riddled with "failures", which allows its confrontation. There are only formulations of public policies

that meet these demands effectively when the social problems that motivated their existence have been properly punctuated and unrestricted discussed. Therefore, it is noticed the need for continual reflection and analysis of educational public policies, in terms of their formulation and impacts, once the problem itself and the theoretical suppositions of its analysis require continual reflection that points to hypotheses of feasible work in practical and valid terms considering the reach of goals expected toward the Brazilian educational context. Arendt summarizes well this foundational movement of the reality to affirm that:

"If politics is the product of the action, what does acting mean? [...] the original meaning of *agere* expresses the activity in its continuous exercise in contrast with *facere* that expresses activity performed in a given moment" (ARENDT, 1972, p. 22)²

In this way, a public policy particularly in the educational area assumes its ample debate in society before, during and after its implementation that requires a constant assessment of the process and the expected results for which it is not only *facere*, but *agere*. From the procedural-operational point of view, educational policies become obsolete and/or harmless if they are not continuously revisited once the society is in a continuous transformation movement. It is necessary to discuss the epistemological foundation of the meanings of education for young people regarding to what they expect from the society and from what the society expects from them. Basically, the educational public policies must point to the preparation of these young people so that they can meet the challenges of the 21st century, by stimulating reflection and dialog, fundamentals of a critical thinking that aims at searching for solutions to the daily problems from a democratic approach.

Thinking about the idea of public policies in education associated with the idea of social development is directly related to the work of problematization of the educational

² In Portuguese: "Se a política é produto da ação, o que significa agir? [...] o sentido original de *agere* exprime a atividade no seu exercício contínuo, em contraste com *facere* que exprime atividade executada num determinado instante" (ARENDT, 1972, p.22)

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reality. The PDE is a program that assists teachers who work with students, especially in the range of the age from 11 to 18. Who are these adolescents? Until a few centuries ago, the concept of "adolescence" did not exist and the child was simply understood and treated as an adult in miniature. In historical terms, the conception that the child would have specificities in relation to adults and that these characteristics should be taken into account dates back to the 17th and 18th centuries in France (ÀRIES, 1978). In several countries, the conceptions of child and adolescence were built in a complex and dialectical way, with many advances and setbacks due to the most diverse political, economic and cultural circumstances. We believe that the current balance of this historical process is positive in Brazil. For example, nowadays there is the legal provision of security of the rights of children and adolescents established by the Child and Adolescent Statute (Law no. 8,069 of July 13, 1990), despite the criticisms of this legislation and the distancing between the law and the reality of thousands of Brazilians who in theory would be contemplated for it. In this sense, it is important to have an understanding of the universe that a public policy in education is intended considering the specificities of the contemporary context and facing the universe of expectations that are open by the globalization and by the technological advances.

We present here some data from two studies that deal with the profile of adolescents with respect to the relationships between school-technology-society. The first study was presented in 2012 and its title is "Interactive Generations in Brazil: children and adolescents in front of the screens" henceforth GIB. It was organized by Grupo Telefônica and its collaborators were the Forum Interactive Generations, the University of Navarra, USP's Escola do Futuro (School of the Future) and IBOPE. The second study entitled "What the young people from low-income families think about the school" (henceforth OPJ) presented in June 2013 was organized by the group Telefônica, Victor Civita Foundation and CEBRAP. It is clear that the handling of information resulting from them cannot ignore the motivations for carrying out these researches, who gave their economic and ideological support and the intended purposes. However, it is not the aim of these reflections to criticize the ideological aspect or the methodology used in these

two studies at this moment. It was only sought to select some data collected in the studies and provide some information that may help to understand specificities of the students' profile in this second decade of the 21st century, by offering clues to reflect on the challenges associated with them, and how the PDE policy can be understood as social impact and expected results.

Among other elements, the first study highlights the mediations built in network by digital systems. It is about hybridism and convergence among the digital media and the access of young people to them. It also demonstrates their increasing use by such audience in terms of diversification of uses and an increasingly growing in terms of time spent in their use. For example, this is due to the growth of access to digital media: in 2005, 17 % of the households in the urban area owned computers and 13% had internet access. In 2011 this proportion had risen to 51% and 43% respectively (GIB, 2012, p. 33). This access impacts or induces to a change in the adolescents' profile, even because the computer is in the adolescent's room for almost half of the respondents. While 8% of the respondents learned how to use computer at school, 66% said that they learned to use the computer/ access the internet alone and the others with friends and family (GIB, 2012, p. 98). However, by means of a multiple choice question about what "activities are carried out on the internet", 54.9% said they use it for school tasks (GIB, 2012, p. 105), but the educational contents are accessed only in 19.5% of cases (GIB, 2012, p. 109). More than 80% of the respondents use social networks (GIB, 2012, p. 115), and in another multiple choice question, 35% reported that they are "nervous or upset" when they are not allowed to use such resources for some reason. (GIB, 2012, p. 135). However, for 74% of the respondents, the use of the internet does not imply either a reward or punishment. (GIB, 2012, p. 142). In the same study, 74.7% of respondents reported having cell phone (GIB, 2012, p. 159) while only 19.8 % of those who have such device obtained it after the age of 14 (GIB, 2012, p. 166). This study also shows that videogame, TV and other digital devices are left behind if compared to the computer and the cell phone. One of the results of this study is the perception that the young people have developed the capability of simultaneous execution of different tasks.

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The second study had its focus on low-income young people between the ages of 15 to 19 in São Paulo and Recife. This research analyzed secondary data mainly from the PNAD, in order to build a general framework of the subjects studied by highlighting elements such as school dropout, and the relation age/grade concluded. It shows the drop of proficiency in Portuguese and mathematics between the years of 1999 and 2005 in addition to a decline in the number of students attending evening classes in high school. In this study, when the students were asked about the use of the internet/computer at school, considering the variables "there is no computer", "there is computer and rarely use it", the answers were "yes" to 65.3 % of the students in São Paulo, and 55.7% in Recife (OPJ, 2013, p . 78). More than half of these respondents would not abandon their work if the class load at schools was expanded. For 37.9% of them the school was poorly preserved (OPJ, 2013, p.97) and 24.3% did not feel safe at school (OPJ, 2013, p.101). Although 78.1% said that they go to school to learn important things for their lives and for the future, 19.7% stated that the reason to go to school is only to obtain a diploma (OPJ, 2013, p . 89). For 76.7% of them, the classmates play too many pranks and make such mess to the point of disrupting classes (OPJ, 2013, p. 106) while 59.9% responded that they were not part of the group that acts this way. The teachers are well evaluated by students in relation to explanation of contents, interest in learning and supporting students with difficulty, but it was also pointed out the absence of teachers as something common for 47% of the respondents. (OPJ, 2013, p . 113).

The sum of this information points to the following question, among others: what kind of public policies in the area of education must be built and encouraged, whereas the material conditions of students in formation and the teachers that teach them, and bearing in mind the social inequalities and the need to overcome them, their interests, expectations and perceptions of the world?

Public Policy in education: preliminary approximations on the PDE

To whom is the school for? For the student and for the society. In accordance with the LDB, 9394/96, in its first article, second subparagraph, "§ 2 the school education must be bound to the world of work and to the social practice". In other words, it is the role of the Brazilian educational system returns to society the young people who were entrusted to the school as citizens and workers.

However, the data from the two studies above indicate the problems of social inequality from a digital inclusion conception, among other things. And it is on account of this order of findings that it is necessary to think about the effectiveness of public policies in terms of producing social development. This assumption is based on the fact that development is not something exclusive to the economic field. The development of a society is not measured by GDP or another similar indicator, but mainly by elements that involve the idea of existence in a more just and fraternal society. So, it can be said that development is the radicalization of democracy: the economic, political and social democracy. The simple access to school does not mean formation for work and citizenship. Especially in education, the role of public policies is to define ways to meet the demands of society, whereas the notion of human rights as a process under unceasing construction. Not only is an educational policy in compliance with the law, but also – not to say mainly – with an emancipatory pedagogical process that should be guided by the principles of gratuity, quality, secularism, democratic management and universal attendance – by deepening and enlarging them in an endless movement. For the effectiveness of this legislation it has to be considered discussions such as the guarantee of adequate conditions to pedagogical work, its didactic, social, cultural aspects and its infrastructure, among others. Consequently, it is necessary the evaluation of public policies in terms of their formulation, implementation and results.

After taking into account these considerations on the challenges that the public policies in education need to overcome, we chose to reflect specifically on the PDE which appears as a government policy and becomes a State policy. The reasons for choosing

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such program are diverse as, for example, the innovative character of its proposal, its formulation process, and the scope of its implementation - an average of 2,000 teachers/year in the public school system, among others. According to the institutional site of the Department of Education of Paraná State:

The PDE is a public policy of State regulated by the Complementary Law no. 130, of July 14, 2010 which establishes a dialog between the teachers of higher education and the basic education, through oriented theoretical-practical activities, resulting in knowledge production and qualitative changes in the school practice of public school in Paraná state. The Educational Development Program – PDE integrated with the activities of continued formation in education rules the teacher’s promotion to the III level of the career, as it is laid down in the "Career plan of the state teaching " of the law. Its purpose is to provide teachers from the state public school system theoretical-methodological subsidies to the development of systematized educational actions, resulting in resizing of its practice. (SEED/PR, 2013)³

The PDE is not a regulatory public policy, but an instituting one. According to the "synthesis document", version 2013,

The Program is based on the continuous movement of improvement of the teacher formation in the school space, by strengthening the link between Basic Education and Higher Education. It is developed in partnership with the State Department of Science, Technology and Higher Education/SETI, the State Department of Education/SEED and the public institutions of Higher Education/IES of Paraná State. (PDE - Document Summary, 2013)⁴.

³ In Portuguese: “O PDE é uma política pública de Estado regulamentado pela Lei Complementar nº 130, de 14 de julho de 2010 que estabelece o diálogo entre os professores do ensino superior e os da educação básica, através de atividades teórico-práticas orientadas, tendo como resultado a produção de conhecimento e mudanças qualitativas na prática escolar da escola pública paranaense. O Programa de Desenvolvimento Educacional - PDE, integrado às atividades da formação continuada em educação, disciplina a promoção do professor para o nível III da carreira, conforme previsto no "Plano de carreira do magistério estadual" da referida lei. Seu objetivo é proporcionar aos professores da rede pública estadual subsídios teórico-metodológicos para o desenvolvimento de ações educacionais sistematizadas, e que resultem em redimensionamento de sua prática”. (SEED/PR, 2013)

⁴ In Portuguese: “O Programa tem como base o movimento contínuo de aperfeiçoamento de formação dos professores no espaço escolar, fortalecendo a articulação entre a Educação Básica e o Ensino Superior. É desenvolvido em parceria com a Secretaria de Estado da Ciência, Tecnologia e Ensino Superior/SETI, Secretaria Estadual de Educação/SEED e as Instituições de Ensino Superior/IES públicas do Estado do Paraná”. (PDE - Documento Síntese, 2013).

This formation program is carried out in the period of two years. In the first year, the PDE teacher is 100% released of his/her classroom activities (but with remuneration) and in the second year, 25 % totalizing 960 hours of activities organized in three areas of action:

a) Axis 1: integration between theory and practice activities that include the construction of a pedagogical intervention project in the school and the pedagogical didactic production (materials/referrals to be worked in school). After the implementation of these activities, it is requested the production of an article as a final work about the experience carried out under the guidance of a professor from an IES (Higher Education Institution).

b) Axis 2: activities for theoretical study that include participation in seminars, workshops, courses and mini-courses, web conferences and other similar events promoted by SEED and by the IES.

c) Axis 3: technological formation that includes both information about the use of the Monitoring System and Network Integration - SACIR as well as the preparation of an online course based on the Axis 1 activities for a group limited to 15 teachers called Network Working Group/GTR conducted through the Learning Management System, fully online.

This public policy for teacher formation aiming at qualification for better attendance to students whose some characteristics were pointed out at the beginning of this article has challenges such as:

- a) To maintain and continuously extend the investment in teacher formation.
- b) To bring closer together the dialogue between the EIS and the public school system of primary education.
- c) To continuously extend the production of strategies, systematization and dissemination of teaching materials and teaching methodologies.

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- d) To continually reaffirm the inseparability of teaching, research and extension.
- e) To continuously bring together those directly involved with young people in educational actions with the public managers of education from the understanding and discussion of the current legislation, aiming at continuous improvement.

Preliminary Considerations

The construction of a developed society in accordance with political, economic and social issues requires an educational practice that promotes the ability of criticism as well as the formulation of proposals that break with the injustice and social inequality.

It is essential to break with a historic culture of inertia of the civil society. The reconstruction of the public sphere by tightening private and public interests triggers the dialectical movement which causes conflicts of paradigms and promotes diversity since the antagonisms are the (democratic) condition to overcome social black spots. But there is no democratic society without democratic citizens. There is no development when the citizens are not critical and do not build their rights in the fight against the setbacks in life. The dynamism of the democratic process suggests the possibility of the creation of new rights and the taking of these spaces as well as their effective use for its exercise.

Democracy cannot be learned by the simple fact of being there. The concept requires both a theoretical and practical learning and the development of democratic skills, which is possible by the continuous presentation of practices that lead to this development. The great challenge is to transform docile and indifferent subjects into citizens, as it is prescribed on the educational legislation in Brazil with a rationally questioning and emotionally passionate look on the paths to build the society.

Considering the specificities of the educational policies it is necessary to locate their qualities with clarity to promote them, and their weaknesses to change them. To qualitatively assess the results of public policies in education means among other things thinking of the improvement of the teachers' professional practice, the level of students' satisfaction with the completed course and the society with the performance of these students in terms of both their action as citizens and as workers. Some initial notes of this

study indicate the PDE as an alternative to the improvement of Education in the Paraná State, by thinking the school as a space for the construction of citizen practice. The continuing education achieved by teachers aims to meet the contemporary specificities of the audience to which it is intended to be in the context for expanding the possibilities of the use of technologies associated with the school conception and the material condition of the students' existence. To ascertain the extent to which this attendance is carried out and how it can be improved is one of expectations of unfolding the reflections started here.

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