

BNCC and teaching performance: a policy on the scene

ARTICLE

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Abstract

This article comprises part of a master's research in development, which investigates the performance of the Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC) in the schools of the Municipal Education Network of Mossoró/RN. It seeks to understand how this policy is interpreted and translated by teachers, questioning the possibility of homogenizing the curriculum, given the unpredictability of the “school floor”, considering that other meanings and demands are being reconfigured in the multiple scenarios. The research is characterized as qualitative and assumes the Policy Cycle articulated with the Theory of Action, for data analysis and interpretation. The initial results make it possible to infer that policies are interpreted in a unique way in different school institutions and that they result in new meanings in the context of practice, where other disputes for hegemony come into scene.

Keywords: Curriculum policies. BNCC. Policy Cycle.

BNCC e atuação docente: uma política em cena

Resumo

O presente artigo compreende parte de uma pesquisa de mestrado em desenvolvimento, a qual investiga a atuação da Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC) nas escolas da Rede Municipal de Ensino de Mossoró/RN. Busca entender como essa política é interpretada e traduzida pelos docentes problematizando a possibilidade de homogeneização do currículo, dada a imprevisibilidade do “chão da escola”, considerando que outros sentidos e demandas vão sendo reconfiguradas nos múltiplos cenários. A pesquisa se caracteriza como de natureza qualitativa e assume o Ciclo de Políticas articulado a teoria da atuação, para análise e interpretação dos dados. Os resultados iniciais possibilitam inferir que as políticas são interpretadas de forma única em diferentes instituições escolares e, que resultam em novas significações no contexto da prática, onde outras disputas por hegemonia, entram em cena.

Palavras-chave: Políticas de currículo. BNCC. Ciclo de Políticas.

1 Introduction

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This article comprises part of a master's research under development, conducted in the Municipality of Mossoró, in the State of Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil, focusing on the educational policies of the Municipal Education Network. The study focuses on educational policies and is inserted in the research line Human Formation and Teacher Professional Development of the Postgraduate Program in Education (POSEDUC) of the State University of Rio Grande do Norte (UERN). The object of this research is the Common National Curriculum Base (BNCC), and aims to understand how the BNCC is interpreted and acted upon in the municipal public schools of Mossoró/RN.

The BNCC was established by Resolution CNE/CP No. 2 and approved in 2017 for Kindergarten and Elementary School; and, in 2018, its final version, with the inclusion of High School. It is a normative document that sets the minimum content and objectives to be developed throughout the stages and modalities of basic education, to be applied in all schools of the public and private, urban and rural education systems in Brazil.

The obligation to establish a common national base is intended to ensure the right to full education and to determine the quality of education in Brazil. According to the presentation text of the BNCC, in addition to the curricula, "it will influence the initial and continued training of educators, the production of teaching materials, the assessment matrices, and the national exams that will be reviewed in light of the approved text of the Base" (BRASIL, 2018, p. 5).

Such document asserts the commitment to the perspective of comprehensive education, as it states that "with the Base, we will ensure the set of essential learning to Brazilian students, their full development through the ten general competencies for Basic Education" (BRASIL, 2018, p. 5).

Therefore, the BNCC proposes a set of learning described as essential, based on the development of skills and abilities, which are embodied in the pedagogical scope, the rights to learning and development. Thus, it defines competencies as "the mobilization of

knowledge (concepts and procedures), skills (practical, cognitive and socioemotional), attitudes and values to solve complex demands of everyday life, the full exercise of citizenship and the world of work" (BRASIL, 2018, p. 8)

In this sense, the document includes the knowledge listed as essential, the skills and abilities desired for Brazilian students in each year and stage of basic education. In view of this, the BNCC implementation guide states that the school systems have the mission to build and adapt their curricula to the Common National Curriculum.

It is important to note that the intention of a common national curriculum is not something recent; on the contrary, it is something that has been discussed since the 1988 Constitution, when it establishes, in its article 210, the need to set minimum content for primary education, as a way to ensure "common basic training and respect for cultural and artistic values, national and regional" (BRASIL, 1988, p.77).

The proposition of a common curriculum for basic education was also present in the Law of Directives and Bases for Education (LDB) nº 9394/96, in its article 26. In the same perspective, the National Curricular Parameters (PCN) of 1997, which, although not compulsory, were configured as a reference for the elaboration of the curriculum for primary and secondary education, with the objective of guaranteeing all Brazilian children and young people the right to enjoy the body of knowledge recognized as necessary for the exercise of citizenship.

Consecutively, Law No. 13.005/2014 enacted the National Education Plan (PNE), consolidating the idea of a common curriculum, since the Common National Curricular Base is cited in the strategies as a way to fulfill some of its goals, based on the proposal to improve the quality of education.

Thus, the need for a common national curriculum is reiterated in each of these normative documents and, from the legal order, the Ministry of Education, in 2015, began the process of building the BNCC, which took place amid disputes, tensions and clashes, involving academia, researchers in the field of curriculum, agencies and entities and culminating with its approval in 2017/2018.

The political tensions that marked the BNCC formulation process did not end with its promulgation, because the performance of this document is marked by disputes of meanings. In this sense, it is necessary to understand that policies are interpreted and materialized in different and varied ways. The actors involved are not "mere implementers" of policies, as they recreate, dialogue, hybridize, restructure and negotiate spaces and discourses with and among the subjects involved in the process (BALL, MAGUIRE, BRAUN, 2016).

We agree with Macedo (2014), when he states that the defense of a Common National Base seeks to hegemonize meanings, from the perspective of ensuring quality education, and indicates the possibility of control of what will be taught and learned. The BNCC is a policy that interweaves curriculum, management and teaching work, so we believe it is important to analyze the process of implementation of this document in the school context, since this scenario involves creative processes of translation and reinterpretation.

Regarding curriculum policy, we advocate with Lopes (2006, p. 140), that "opting for a curricular organization and a selection of contents, no matter how much is the debate around its definition, is to assume that there is only one way or that there is a better way". Thus, we operate with the understanding of curriculum as a continuous process built daily in and by schools, going beyond what is prescribed in official guidelines (LOPES, MACEDO, 2011).

Given the above, the current research seeks to understand how the BNCC policy comes into play and how it is being implemented in schools in the Municipal Education Network of Mossoró. With this, we intend to understand the BNCC as a curriculum policy, in addition to understanding the different perspectives and debates around its implementation. We will analyze the meanings produced by teachers in the context of practice and how this policy is re-signified in the municipality of Mossoró/RN.

In this paper, we present, in addition to the introductory section and the final considerations, three more sections. In the first, we address the theoretical and methodological aspects of the research; in the second, the policy cycle and the theory of

performance in the context of the BNCC; and, in the third, we focus on the context of influence and production of the BNCC.

2 Theoretical and methodological aspects of the research

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We present the theoretical and methodological aspects of the research highlighting that the approach adopted does not conceive the separation between theory and method, because we understand these as dimensions that interrelate in the production of research.

This is, therefore, a qualitative research of exploratory nature, characterized by the insertion of the researcher in the environment to be studied, in order to relate the data formulated to the local context of the subjects involved. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1994, p. 49), qualitative research requires understanding, so that "[...] the world is examined with the idea that nothing is trivial, that everything has the potential to constitute a clue that allows us to establish a more enlightening understanding of our object of study".

We seek to operate with a post-structuralist conception, because we understand that the production of meaning is inexhaustible. Thus, we agree with Lopes (2013, p. 13), when he states that "[...] there are no fixed structures that definitively close the meaning, but only discursive structuring and restructuring", since the analysis, in this perspective, seeks to "highlight the plurality of language games that make the process of meaning provisional, without final closure" (idem, p. 13).

According to Mainardes, Ferreira, and Tello (2011, p. 156), poststructuralists "consider the action of subjects a crucial aspect for understanding policies and emphasize the fluidity of power and its possession by different agents". Thus, we conceive that, in a post-structural perspective, it is not possible to identify universal structures that are common in all cultures, because the contexts in which the subjects are inserted are diverse and multifaceted.

The research in question is configured as bibliographic, for basing and conducting studies of reference texts on the subject, and documentary, for using documents that make up the educational policy, in which the core of the analysis will be the Common National

Curricular Base, as well as ordinances, laws and national and municipal curriculum guidelines and current curricula in schools; and field research, by the presence in schools, thus enabling the correlation of the proposals of these documents to the development of teaching practice in the context of their performance.

The study is under development and is currently in the phase of document analysis and field research, with semi-structured interviews, which will be held in the context of the Municipal Secretariat of Education (SME) and in the context of two schools of the Municipal Education Network of Mossoró. It is important to note that, in the SME, two members of the pedagogical team have already been interviewed. In the two schools, in turn, the interviews are in progress, being held with two teachers from the early years, the supervisor and the manager of each teaching unit, for a total of eight people interviewed.

The analysis of the data obtained with the research is based on Stephen Ball's policy cycle and on the theory of performance by Ball and collaborators, in order to understand the contextual, historical, and sociocultural factors that affect schools after educational policies are put into practice. We dialogued with the studies of Lopes (2004; 2015), Macedo (2019), Frangella (2020; 2021), Ball and Mainardes (2011) and Lopes and Macedo (2011), authors who investigate educational policies. Thus, we seek to understand how the subjects/actors interpret, respond and re-signify the curriculum in their respective contexts of performance.

It is worth noting that, in this article, we reflect on the BNCC and the contexts of influence and production of the text that gave rise to the Base, also evoking the initial results of the interviews conducted.

3 The Policy Cycle and Performance Theory in the context of the BNCC

Given the centrality of the curriculum in education policies and the promulgation of the BNCC with a "salvationist" discourse, which announces a common base throughout the national territory as a guarantee of quality education, it is important to discern in which contexts these discourses are produced and reconfigured in their arenas of action and

disputes. In this sense, we agree with Frangella (2021), when he argues that, when thinking about the narrative constructed about the BNCC and its promulgation, it is necessary to observe the movements that maintain the disputes around its performance in education networks.

To understand the various contexts in which the BNCC was developed and is being employed in schools, we used the continuous cycle of policies by Stephen Ball and collaborators, based on the studies of Mainardes (2006; 2008) articulated with the theory of performance of Ball, Maguire and Braun (2016). In this sense, Mainardes (2006) highlights that

the policy cycle approach constitutes a useful analytical framework for the analysis of educational programs and policies, and that this approach allows for the critical analysis of the trajectory of educational programs and policies from their initial formulation to their implementation in the context of practice and its effects (MAINARDES, 2006, p. 48).

Taking as reference the studies of Ball, Maguire and Braun (2016), we understand the policy as "discursive processes, which are complexly configured, contextually mediated and institutionally delivered" (BALL; MAGUIRE; BRAUN, 2016, p. 13). Thus, although the BNCC presents in its texts, the idea of prescription of what to teach and how schools should do is not a guarantee that this policy will be developed "just like" it was prepared, since schools are permeated by different cultures and the professionals who work in them, reinterpret these policies and create their own logic of action.

Thus, we agree with Ball's statement, in an interview with Mainardes (2015, p. 165), that "policy is constructed and made in all kinds of arenas, at all kinds of levels, by all kinds of people. This highlights that policy is not limited to policymakers, but is constructed in diverse spaces and contexts, including schools.

In this sense, for Ball, educational policies should therefore be analyzed as text and discourse. This is because the texts recorded in written or unwritten form are products of multiple influences and agendas and do not present fixed and clear meanings, whose formulations involve intentions and negotiations within the State and in the policy formulation process. In turn, the discourse is based on the practices that constitute the

place of speech and the rules that determine and direct the power of those who speak, given that only some voices are recognized as legitimate and therefore, invested with authorities (MAINARDES; FERREIRA; TELLO, 2011).

The continuous policy cycle consists of five contexts: the context of influence, the context of text production, the context of practice, the context of outcomes (effects) and the context of policy strategy. For the analysis of the produced material, we will focus on the contexts of influence, text production and practice, considering the cyclical character, which does not establish a temporal dimension nor a defined sequence.

In the context of influence, discourses are elaborated and articulations produced, in order to contemplate demands that meet national and international interests, multilateral agencies, political networks, public and private sectors, volunteers, among others (MAINARDES, 2006). This is a space for the conflict of ideas by common or opposing groups, who fight for hegemony to legitimize concepts and solutions that culminate in the definition of the discourse that will support the defended policy.

In the context of text production, policies are translated and discourses gain materiality. Texts represent politics in various forms: official texts - regulations, ordinances, laws, pamphlets, media, political texts, official pronouncements, videos, magazines, and other artifacts, which serve to make politics echo.

As highlighted by Lopes and Macedo (2011, p. 248), the culture present in the institutions and the beliefs, values and identities of the professionals who work in them, favor the reinterpretation of these policies, allowing that "new meanings can be added to the different concepts". Thus, there is no way to control the meanings given to the text, because other readings are made and other interpretations are subjectivized.

According to Mainardes (2006), policies are textual interventions that present material limitations and possibilities. The actors who experience the policies respond to these texts in the context of practice. The context of practice, in turn, comprises the space of action of the policy, subject to interpretation and re-creation. It is in this context that policy produces effects and policy texts have consequences that can significantly alter or transform the original policy. Thus, politics is put on the stage, with the school as the arena.

It is important to consider, however, that schools are located in different communities and, therefore, have different characteristics.

In this context, the action of different subjects gives politics its own meanings, because they read it based on their experiences, values, and stories, making it not a naive reading. Some accept it, some resist it, and others react with indifference. For each of these groups, the policy has a meaning that may resemble or differ from the intended intention in its original form.

The dynamic nature of reinterpretation and translation, present in the policy cycle, strengthens the understanding that there is no linear path in the development of policies and that they are in constant movement, suffering interference from the subjects in each experienced context, and that there is, therefore, no possibility of control in the re-readings and interpretations produced.

From this perspective, Ball, Maguire, and Braun (2016) developed the theory of performance, which considers the contextual dimensions of the school, thus complementing the policy cycle. In this sense, we consider pertinent the use of both constructs in our research, since it consists of a powerful theoretical and methodological framework for the analysis of educational policies, as it allows us to understand how policies are interpreted, translated or re-signified in their performance spaces.

Regarding the understanding of the context in the performance of policies, the authors propose an analysis from four contextual dimensions, characterized by them as: situated contexts, professional cultures, material contexts, and external contexts. We agree with Ball, Maguire and Braun (2016, p.63), when they postulate the context as a mediating factor in the performance of policies, since schools have unique characteristics, even if, in some aspects, they show similarities. Thus, for these authors, "context is obviously always specific. It is also dynamic and changing, both inside and outside schools".

The use of the policy cycle and the theory of performance as a heuristic resource in this research allows us to understand the path taken by the BNCC policy and how other interpretations are inferred in each context, in an attempt to understand the BNCC performance process in public schools in the Municipal Education Network of Mossoró/RN.

4 The context of influence and production of the BNCC

The scenario of educational policies is presented in a movement of reference to neoliberal policies and in the face of the globalization phenomenon. In this sense, it is important to understand that educational policies suffer external influences from other nationalities. For Ball (2001, p. 102), the "creation of national policies is inevitably a process of 'bricolage'; a constant process of borrowing and copying fragments and parts of ideas from other contexts" that, even going through a process of reinterpretation, materialize common aspects.

At present, a wide network of International Organizations interact and compete to elevate their discourses around policy solutions, preferably in the field of educational policy at the global level. For Ball (2014), the advocacy of a national curriculum does not circumscribe a national policy, but is articulated to global discourses originating from international bodies that penetrate national policy discourses, influence and are incorporated into local contexts.

Ball (2014) operates with the concept of networks, seeking to map this movement of displacement of policies, with regard to the flow and mobility of things, people and ideas, when relating the local and national with the global context. Thus, for him, the "political networks are a new kind of "social", involving specific types of social relations, flows and movements (BALL, 2014, p. 29, emphasis added).

Indeed, "political networks constitute a new form of governance, although it does not occur in a single, coherent way" (BALL, 2014, p. 34). Thus, these new forms of networked governance gain strength as contributors to overcoming the crisis in public education, articulated to a series of proposals that promise to solve the problems of education. These policies are developed and evaluated by these groups: multilateral agencies, national governments, non-governmental organizations, think tanks, and various interest groups.

For a better understanding of how the market disputes and influences on education policies take place, especially about the BNCC, it is important to highlight the actions of

international organizations, such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank, as well as the influence of Brazilian institutes, foundations and consultancies, such as: Ayrton Senna Institute, Natura Institute, Lemann Foundation, Itaú Social Foundation, among others. These institutions also establish partnerships with governments represented by the National Union of Municipal Managers (UNDIME) and the National Council of Secretaries of Education (CONSED).

The implementation of the BNCC includes large-scale assessments, teacher training and the production of material. In this sense, the Base becomes the object of market dispute, since this is a project that was supported by groups and institutions linked to All for Education and foundations, institutes and entities, revolving around a very disputed educational market, which involves the sale of educational materials, private consultancies and service provision, which replace what schools and education systems currently do.

The role of institutes, foundations, and consultancies appears recurrently in policies: in educational evaluations, in management, in updating curricula, in the production of teaching materials, in teacher training, and in the financing of education. This is a managerialist model that suggests public-private partnerships with the promise that such a model offers better results for the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB), and, therefore, guarantees quality education.

The logic of the evaluation policy based on the ranking also directs the predominance of blaming the teacher for the student's failure to learn and for the school's poor evaluation, without taking into account the economic, social and cultural conditions and the local contexts. Thus, it exempts the collective responsibility of public entities and transfers it to teacher action, justifying the need for improvement in the quality of teachers' education.

The influence of the BNCC on teacher education is evidenced in the BNCC Implementation Guide. In it, seven guiding dimensions of this process are indicated, followed by a training path, whose goal is to guide the work of the Secretariats for the

planning and implementation of continuing education concerning the new reference curricula, integrating the training actions of the education networks.

We realize that, despite the predominance around the idea of a common national curriculum, some voices, contrary to this thought, problematize the foundations underlying the defense of this Base. In this sense, Lopes (2015, p. 454), argues that it is not possible to "make reference to a universal sense of curriculum quality, to a truth about what is the best curriculum in any context", given the contingency of school contexts.

The BNCC, in this perspective, comes in the wake of a game of disputes and interests, whose goals point to a project that responds to the logic of the global market, in which the interests presuppose the qualification of labor for the market, the trade in teaching materials, the expansion of teacher training that favors consultancies and the strengthening of education systems. Finally, the advance of public-private partnerships motivated by the sale of packages with teaching content provided by private institutes and/or supposedly non-profit social organizations.

We agree with Frangella (2020, p. 391), when he states that "there is a silencing about the experiences, practices, conflicts, and demands that the different education networks/schools/teachers have, make, and construct. However, this attempt to predict and determine meanings has not been successful, since, in the act of negotiation, other meanings are constructed in a dialogical and contextual way.

Finally, it is possible to see that, in the name of quality education, the BNCC culminates with the intention of inducing the initial and continuing training of teachers, as well as the production of teaching materials, giving the powers greater centrality over what should be taught. This control has been made by the indicators of large-scale evaluations. There is, in all this, an idea to curb the curriculum policy, defining rules and standards about what is to be discussed and taught, as if it were possible to control the context in which the policies are developed.

5 Concluding remarks

After its approval in 2017, the Common National Curriculum Base has been implemented in the schools of the education networks, in a scenario of many challenges, since the municipalities would have until 2020 to reformulate their curricula, but that, with the pandemic of Covid-19, the schedule failed, since many municipalities could not update or build their curricula in light of the BNCC.

The studies conducted with the current research already allow us to infer that the BNCC is a document that denotes a prescriptive character, built under strong influence of international organizations and other institutional agents of the public and private sectors, in an attempt to control and standardize knowledge. However, when entering the scene in schools, this policy is re-signified, confronted and acted upon due to contingent aspects of the policy itself, as well as by the actions of the actors involved, since the context of practice is dynamic and full of subjectivity.

Through the field research conducted with two pedagogical technicians from the Municipal Department of Education and with two teachers and a supervisor from one of the schools in the research field, it is already possible to see that teachers reveal the need to know this document better, because they say that the text of the BNCC is extensive, its access is given only in online format and the discussions take place in a very specific and generic way.

For these teachers, many of the proposed skills do not match the local reality, especially when it comes to technologies. They also claim that there is no possibility that the skills contained in the Base for each year of education are covered, because the reality of the school does not match with such a proposal.

For Ball, every policy is subject to recontextualization, due to the circulation of discourses and texts from one context to another: "This involves identifying processes of resistance, accommodation, subterfuge and conformism within and between the arenas of practice, and the delineation of conflicts and disparities between the discourses in these arenas" (MAINARDES, 2006, p. 50).

In this sense, "curriculum policies are not only limited to written documents, but include planning processes, experienced and reconstructed in multiple spaces and by multiple subjects in the social body of education" (LOPES, 2004, p. 111).

We consider, therefore, the need for reinterpretation of the speeches produced by teachers, because the contexts in which policies are developed constitute spaces of re-significations and meanings that are not exhausted and do not find closed answers, since this movement is cyclical, transitory and continuous.

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