

Youth protagonism in the policy of the new secondary education


ARTIGO

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Abstract

The article aimed to identify how youth protagonism has been referenced in the official texts of the New Middle School policy, as well as to understand the contribution of this protagonism to secondary education. The methodology used is of a qualitative nature and, for data construction, bibliographical and documentary research was used, in addition to a structured quiz. In the theoretical framework, Lopes (2013) was used to deal with post-structuralism, while the curriculum was seen in Lopes and Macedo (2011). With Ball (1992) and Mainardes (2006) the policy cycle was presented. The final considerations point out that the reference to youth protagonism in official texts is aimed at understanding young people as subjects with rights, capable of making decisions and acting in spheres such as work.

Keywords: Youth protagonism. New High School. Policy cycle.

Protagonismo juvenil na política do novo ensino médio¹

Resumo

O artigo tem como objetivo identificar de que forma o protagonismo juvenil vem sendo referenciado nos textos oficiais da política do Novo Ensino Médio, como também, perceber a contribuição desse protagonismo para o ensino médio. A metodologia utilizada é de caráter qualitativo e, para construção dos dados, utilizamos a pesquisa bibliográfica e documental, além de um questionário estruturado. No referencial teórico empregamos Lopes (2013) para tratar o pós-estruturalismo e Lopes e Macedo (2011) para embasar o currículo. Com Ball (1992) e Mainardes (2006) apresentamos o ciclo de políticas. As considerações finais apontam que a referência ao protagonismo juvenil nos textos oficiais é voltada para o entendimento de jovem como sujeito de direitos, capaz de tomar decisões e atuar em esferas como a do trabalho.

Palavras-chave: Protagonismo juvenil. Novo Ensino Médio. Ciclo de políticas.

¹ Este artigo refere-se a um recorte do Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso (TCC) da primeira autora.

1 Introduction

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Youth protagonism is understood as a social tool that allows young people to be the author and main actor in the development of an action in different social spaces, whether at school or in their community. Therefore, student protagonism is more related to the young person's performance in some action limited to the school space, either through projects or activities developed by other authors. In this way, the term "youth protagonism" allows a wider range of action by the young people themselves and the important concepts related to the theme.

In high school, the project called New High School (NEM) has emphasized the students' youthful protagonism as a means for the students' education, aiming at improving the quality of teaching and better preparing the young people to face the world around them.

Thus, due to the emphasis on the possibilities of youth action, one can ask: in what way can youth leadership, as presented and encouraged in the official documents of the reform, contribute to the development of the current educational policy? In order to answer this question, we intend to understand how juvenile leadership is referenced in the official documents, understanding the construction of the concept. Based on this, we will analyze the possible contributions provided by juvenile leadership in the current policy. In synthesis: what are the contributions of juvenile protagonism to the school from the New High School policy? What are the meanings of youth protagonism in the official documents of the NEM?

To construct the data we used research classified as documentary and bibliographic. In the documentary research we studied the official documents that govern the New High School program, in order to analyze whether there is attention or reference to youth protagonism in any way and how the term is understood in them. In the bibliographical research, we emphasize authors who approach the theme using a decentered perspective of the concepts. In an attempt to reach the general objective, we applied a structured questionnaire through the Google Forms tool. The questionnaire was

addressed to high school students and its purpose was to understand how youth protagonism has been mentioned in schools and if students have knowledge about the term and its meaning.

The questionnaire was composed of eleven objective and subjective questions. In all, fifteen students contributed by answering the questionnaire. The students who answered the survey are from five different schools, from three different municipalities, two located in the interior of Rio Grande do Norte and one in the interior of Ceará state. They were divided among the three high school grades.

For the analysis of the data constructed, we used the qualitative approach, characterized by allowing an attempt to understand in detail the meanings and situational characteristics presented without the need for quantitative measures (RICHARDSON, 2012).

Thus, the text is structured by dividing it into sections, beginning with the Introduction, in which an initial presentation of the elements is made, providing a contextualization of the object of study, the research question, the objectives, and the theoretical and methodological path adopted. In the section Youth Protagonism and the New High School we present, divided into subsections, a history of the use of the term youth protagonism over the last years, also a history of the New High School policy, and how youth protagonism is presented in the official documents of the New High School policy. In the section Policies, meanings of curriculum, and context, we discuss the theoretical framework, bringing the authors who discuss the theme and presenting the theory used and the understandings of the central concepts adopted throughout the text. The next section, Youth Protagonism from the students, is destined to the analysis of the objects studied here. In it, we seek to get closer to an answer to the initial research question, based on the analysis of the questions answered by the students. In the final considerations, the initial objectives are resumed and the temporary results of the research are presented, always susceptible to change.

2 Youth Protagonism and the New High School

2.1 History of youth protagonism in Brazil

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Before starting a history about youth protagonism in Brazil, we believe it is interesting to understand a little about the meaning of this term in a more general way. Starting from the etymology of the word 'protagonism' we have its meaning as 'the first', the main one. Protagonism can also be interpreted as an exercise that allows us not to be indifferent to the problems that happen around us, in our time. It is linked to our capacity to interfere in the way things happen, exercising a changing role in the scenarios of social life. Therefore, youth protagonism is technically linked to the fact that young people are the main actors in actions in different areas of their lives. These actions mainly concern the social environment, such as the school, the community, and society in a broader sense.

In addition to this broader definition, different authors have been conceptualizing what would be juvenile protagonism from their study perspectives. Among these authors is the educator Antonio Carlos Gomes da Costa, one of the main Brazilian names when it comes to youth protagonism and its direct relationship to education. According to Antônio Carlos, the process in which the young person is the central element in the educational practice can be defined as youth protagonism. In this process, the young person participates actively in all its stages, which allows a participation and social contribution in the environment in which this individual is inserted (SILVA, 2015).

Another definition of what would be the youth protagonism is brought by Rabello (2004), who understands that the protagonism is linked to the performance of adolescents and young people through a constructive participation in the processes. From the involvement with issues that affect the youth themselves and even more general social issues. In other words, young people can think in a more global way, but act in a more local way, in their own community. In this way, young people can contribute

to processes such as problem solving and the search for securing rights, whether at school or in their community.

In high school educational institutions, protagonism stands out because it is a time in the young person's life when they are going through changes, uncertainties, restlessness, and also need to make choices. Therefore, providing young people with some autonomy and freedom so that they can make their own decisions and choices is an attitude that also contributes to the development of actions led by these same young people. In this way, the individual starts to take a position in situations and even real problems of the school environment, seeking possible solutions for them (COSTA, 2001).

Official documents also talk about juvenile protagonism and youth. In the National Curricular Guidelines for Secondary Education (DCNEM), in the opinion No. 5/2011, youth is conceptualized as a condition,

socio-historical-cultural category of subjects that needs to be considered in its multiple dimensions, with its own specificities that are not restricted to the biological and age dimensions, but that are articulated with a multiplicity of social and cultural crossings, producing multiple youth cultures or many youths.)

When there is this space for interpretation of youth in the plural, being understood as multiple and different, there is also the possibility of interpreting young people no longer as equal, homogeneous subjects. It is then possible to perceive the high school student as having his own interests, worldviews, needs, and singularities.

Although quotes referring to juvenile protagonism have been observed since the mid-nineties, it wasn't so long ago that youth started to be recognized as a group with particularities and specific needs. That is, there was a period in which young people were not recognized as subjects of rights and their claims were not considered important.

Moving on to the legislative sphere, we highlight the emergence, in 2003, of the first Special Commission on Public Policies for Youth (CEJUVENT). The commission played an important role in the elaboration of documents that served as a base for the elaboration of legal frameworks aimed at young people, such as the Youth Statute. A year later, in 2004, the National Youth Secretariat (SNJ) was developed. This secretariat

was linked to the General Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic and its purpose was to be close to and support public policies aimed at young people.

In 2005, the National Youth Council (CONJUVE) was created with the objective of directly requesting the executive branch to put into effect public policies for young people. All these advances and demands that had been developed previously served as a basis for the creation, still in 2005, of the National Youth Secretariat. With one of its roles being to promote programs aimed at the youth segment, the creation of the secretariat was an initiative of the young people themselves, with the intention of making the government realize the need to guarantee the rights of this public. From this visibility, in 2010, the word "youth" was inserted in the Federal Constitution. Moreover, three years later, in 2013, the Youth Statute was created, representing yet another advance in guaranteeing the rights of Brazilian youth. The Statute deals with the rights of youth, the principles and guidelines of public policies aimed at youth, and also deals with the National Youth System (SINAJUVE). It is in the referred statute that we find, for the purpose of the Laws and guidelines, the definition that young people are people who are between the ages of 15 (fifteen) and 29 (twenty-nine).

Based on this gradual development and reference to youth and youth protagonism over the years, it becomes noticeable the importance of taking the theme into the educational environment. Realizing this, the government leaders started to include issues related to the theme in their agendas. These issues have been highlighted, especially in the educational field in which young people are most present, high school. In this way, the emphasis and reference to youth protagonism has been happening, with more emphasis, in the proposed curriculum reform for high school, since the reform has as its main innovation the insertion of this protagonism in the teaching modality.

2.2 Trajectory of the New High School policy

The New High School policy (NEM) corresponds to a significant change in the structure of the Brazilian education system. According to the Ministry of Education (MEC),

the NEM seeks to bring young people even closer to the labor market and its transformations, promising a more up-to-date education, having as the structuring axes for high school: work, science, technology and culture. Among its proposals, one that stands out is the intention to establish a common curriculum for all schools in the country, using the Common National Curricular Base (BNCC). Along with this, the student can still organize and select his or her area of interest. The MEC justifies this as a way to give students more autonomy to decide their own future and education.

Law 13.415 amends the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education and marks changes in educational policy. Initially, we have the changes in the workload of high school, proposing a gradual increase from eight hundred hours per year to a minimum of one thousand four hundred hours per year, aiming at the expansion of full high school.

Following with the changes resulting from the policy, we have the de-obligation of curricular subjects. Previously, the curriculum had a total of thirteen compulsory subjects, which were mathematics, Portuguese, English, biology, chemistry, physics, geography, history, philosophy, sociology, art, physical education and literature. With the reform, students will have three of these compulsory subjects, Portuguese, mathematics and English. Moreover, the content will be organized according to areas of knowledge, which are five: languages and their technologies, mathematics and its technologies, natural sciences and its technologies, applied humanities and social sciences and, finally, technical and professional education. The goal is that half of the workload of high school will be dedicated to mandatory content and the remaining hours will be for the student to choose among the areas of knowledge.

Still on the composition of the curriculum in the reform, we have the training itineraries. The itineraries are characterized as a set of projects, workshops, disciplines, among other curricular situations, they can be a type of deepening in the areas of knowledge already mentioned and can be chosen by students. According to Law 13.415/2017, in its article 36, the offer of itineraries must occur "according to the relevance to the local context and the possibility of the education systems".

2.3 Youth Protagonism in the official documents of the New High School policy

Initially, it is worth noting that the expression youth protagonism does not appear many times in these documents, but when it is mentioned, it ends up having more than one meaning attributed to it. These meanings are not well defined, allowing for different interpretations of the term. Most of the time, the expression has been used by the government without a clear conceptualization. However, not only in government documents, but in other spheres, the expression has become synonymous with a possible recognition of young people as active citizens, realizing the social and political importance of young people (SOUZA, 2007).

Moving on to the documents that govern the New High School policy, we first have Provisional Measure No. 746, dated September 22, 2016. The document has no citation of the word protagonism, nor of its variations protagonista or protagonizar. However, the document does make some references to the terms youth and young people. With the argument that since the official creation of the LDB in 1996, twenty years later the measures adopted for high school have not produced the expected results. The MP makes reference to article 35 (thirty-five) of the LDB, arguing that the article proposes that high school educates autonomous individuals, capable of transforming the reality in which they live. Based on this, it exposes that the young people who are being trained do not meet the requirements that the Law foresees. Another moment in which the MP mentions youth is in its argument that the high school curriculum did not dialogue directly with young people and youth, besides citing this lack of dialogue also with the productive sector and the demands present in the 21st century (BRASIL, 2016).

The main determination cited in the MP is the flexibilization of high school that, according to the document, would allow the youth the opportunity to choose the knowledge he or she wishes to acquire through the formative itineraries and also the technical professional training, being able to leave basic education and enter the world of work. According to the Provisional Measure, these aspects of choice would be attractive

to young people, since they provide the possibility of choice in what each individual wants to follow.

As a result of the Provisional Measure, Law No. 13.415, of February 16, 2017 is published. It amends the Law of Directives and Bases and institutes the Policy to Promote the Implementation of Full-Time High Schools. Throughout the document no citation is found referring to the word protagonist or protagonism. There is also no mention of the words juvenile, youth, or youth. The absence of this direct reference to the expression youth protagonism allows us to question if there is really an interest, on the part of those who formulate the policy text, in promoting this protagonism. However, despite this absence of reference and based on the theoretical basis used, we can affirm that the policy will always arrive at the school in a different way than it does in the text. Thus, beyond the official document, putting juvenile protagonism into practice will depend much more on the context in which the policy is being used than what the policy text proposes.

A possible meaning attributed to youth protagonism in the official NEM texts would be linked to the recognition of young people as a social subject capable of making their own decisions, defining their life project, and acting politically and financially in society. Moreover, this reference to the term is also understood as a way to politicize the young individual. This politicization happens through actions initiated by the government and aimed directly at this public due to the increase in the population of young people.

3 Policies, Senses of Curriculum, and Context

The theoretical reference used here is based on a decentered perspective of concepts, approaching discussions held in post-structuralist theory. One of the characteristics of post-structuralist theory is that it allows the non-fixation of meanings, an opening of them. This openness is favorable for concepts to be constructed, but not finalized or closed. That is, in this theory concepts will always be susceptible to change and always be questioned (SILVA, 2005).

In the article entitled Post-critical theories, politics and curriculum, Lopes (2013) begins informing that, in Brazil, it was from the 90s (nineties) that the post-critical theories began. This initiation was possible based on the appropriation of readings of the philosopher Michael Foucault and had its development from the translations of the philosopher's studies by the author Tomaz Tadeu da Silva.

Still in the same article, the author brings points for a possible justification to the growth of post-critical theories in the last years all over the world. The increase of postmodern characteristics has directly influenced this expansion, such as the growth of particular demands and struggles of difference, the rapid cultural exchanges and global flows. Besides the "[...] end of utopias and certainties, of crumbling of the idea of truth centered on empirical proof, objectivity [...]" (LOPES, 2013, p. 8). The acceleration of global processes, time and the decrease of distances, are also responsible for this process.

According to the author, the human being is a failed construct, who is not able to control the meanings of what he says and is also not able to know who he is. This limitation of not knowing who you are happens because this information depends on the other who is around you, depends on the context in which you are inserted. Thus, the human being is always an inconclusive subject, a dependent signifier of a signification always postponed, never reaching a conclusion (LOPES, 2013).

From the referential presented, we understand that the conceptualization of youth protagonism depends directly on the context in which it is inserted, who is speaking, certain historical events of that period and the interests of who is formulating the concept.

The conceptualization of curriculum is also necessary in an attempt to answer the general objective of this research. The curriculum is defined based on the theory that is chosen to define it, and more than one theory can be used. In the theory used in this work, all school environments produce curriculum, including the student. From this, we seek to present a brief history of what is understood by curriculum from the work Curriculum Theories (LOPES; MACEDO, 2011).

Initially, the authors bring the concept of curriculum as the organization of learning experiences and situations. Soon after, they present the idea that there is no answer to the question 'what is curriculum? New meanings have always been created for the possible answer, always referring to existing meanings and denying them. With this, the authors discuss the most relevant meanings of curriculum starting in the 17th century. The first meaning dates back to 1633, and refers to the idea of organizing the educational experience or learning plan. For many authors, the studies on curriculum date back to the early 1900's, when there was the American industrialization and to 1920, with the Escola Nova movement in Brazil. From then on, the need to decide on what to teach arises.

Following with the historical context of the early twentieth century, there appears the need for a school that prepares young people to deal with psychosocial and economic situations that arise at this age. Thus, the school and the curriculum become instruments of social control. In this context, three traditions in the curriculum field are important: efficiencyism, progressivism, and Ralph Tyler's proposals. The first tradition is based on concepts such as efficiency, effectiveness, and economy, in which the curriculum should prepare students for adult economic life. The second tradition has John Dewey as its precursor. This curriculum theory views learning as an ongoing process rather than as preparation for adult life. The focus of the curriculum would be on solving social problems. In the last tradition, Tyler proposes to articulate techniques of efficiency with progressive thinking. A curriculum theory centered on goal formulation with linear and administrative procedures. The definition of curriculum is similar in these three traditions when it becomes prescriptive, a planning of activities according to objective and scientific criteria. The curriculum dynamics goes through the process of production and implementation of the curriculum (LOPES; MACEDO, 2011).

In 1975, another definition for curriculum appears when Willian Pinar defines it as an action, a particular meaning, something that each individual will have with himself and with the world. And also provide the subject with educational experiences that allow him to understand his biographical situation (LOPES; MACEDO, 2011).

From these meanings given to the curriculum historically, we realize that it can also be used, along with the school, as a tool for social control. For example, when it determines what knowledge will be passed to certain classes. The theorists argue that the curriculum should be something open to the subjects' experiences that go beyond the socially prescribed knowledge.

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Finally, taking post-structuralism as the theory used to search for the conceptualization of curriculum, the authors consider that, from this perspective, the curriculum would not be anything and the definitions previously presented to it would be hegemonized discourses that give their own meanings. That is, the definition will always vary according to the subjects that are dominating the respective discourses. To conclude, curriculum would be a producer of meanings, without any distinctions, as those existing in other theories (LOPES; MACEDO, 2011).

In relation to the hegemonized discourses that permeate the search for meanings, we have politics as another important element for the work. Its conceptualization is also subject to the power relations of the context to which one wishes to conceptualize the term. In other words, there are many interpretations of the policy process, but there is also much discourse and power. This power comes mainly through knowledge, being able to produce more active subjects that understand their own subjectivity. Although in this process of understanding themselves they are subject to different forms of power that will influence their understandings (BALL, 2016).

The main policy referenced in this paper is the New High School, however, from the theoretical basis used, we also understand youth protagonism as a policy.

The NEM is the policy that appears in official documents, in a context of text production. Youth leadership, on the other hand, also appears in this same context, but it is more evident in the context of practice. This difference is related to the responsibility that is placed on teachers and students so that they are able to put the policy into practice, but what is known is that most people who create these policies, at the time of their text production, are not aware of the reality of the environment where the policy will be experienced in practice (BALL, 2016). For a better understanding of this statement, it

is important to present the methodology of policy analysis, the policy cycle, its different contexts, and how youth protagonism can be understood as a policy.

3.1 Policy Cycle

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Youth protagonism is understood here as a policy which, in turn, is subject to different interpretations according to the context in which it is being viewed. In order to interpret the policy from its different contexts, we make use of Ball and Bowe's (1992) Policy Cycle. The use of the cycle as a way to analyze policies allows issues such as the actions of professionals who deal directly with policies and the macro and micro-political processes to be emphasized (MAINARDES, 2006).

According to Mainardes (2006) in his work entitled Policy cycle approach: a contribution to the analysis of educational policies, the authors Ball and Bowe (1992) proposed the creation of a continuous cycle, formed initially by three main contexts. These are the context of influence, the context of text production, and the context of practice. The contexts are characterized by being all interrelated, and there is no time limitation or correct sequence to follow them, so the contexts are understood as steps that do not follow a linearity. Each context is responsible for representing different places and interest groups, which are constantly changing (MAINARDES, 2006).

The first context presented is the context of influence, which is characterized by being where public policies are usually initiated. And it is precisely in this context that interest groups start to weave disputes in an attempt to influence policies based on their social and educational purposes. Within this context the main actors are the social networks built in and around political parties, the government, and the legislative process. Also within this context is the legitimization of the concepts that form a basis for policy development. Because it is a moment in which discourses and concepts are in formation, sometimes these discourses receive support, however, other times they are challenged by other subjects that present broad arguments and that exert some influence in the social networks that are around politics (MAINARDES, 2006).

The context of text production is the second cited by the authors and highlights that political texts produced seek to perform an articulation with language that leads to the interest of a broader audience that lies outside the political realm. "Whereas the context of influence is often related to narrower interests and dogmatic ideologies, political texts are usually articulated with the language of the more general public interest." (MAINARDES, 2006, p. 52) Thus, political texts produced in this context directly represent politics. And this representation can happen in different ways, whether through official texts and political texts, comments on these official texts, pronouncements, even videos, among other types of representations.

Although the texts are directed to the interest of a more general group, the author states that they are not always clear, and may be incoherent and even contradictory. He also points out that texts need to be understood taking into account the historical context and the place in which they were produced. In this context, disputes are also present as a form of competition between groups that wish to control the representation that the policy will have. With this, policies have this textual stage, but they also present limits focused on the material means and their different possibilities in practice (MAINARDES, 2006).

In relation to their material limits and different possibilities, the context of practice applies as the place where the policy can undergo changes. In this third context policies are susceptible to different interpretations. They can also be recreated, resulting in changes between the original policy and the one being experienced in practice. For the authors responsible for creating the cycle, the main point of this context is that policies are not simply implemented in the environment where they arrive. Thus, they are always subject to reinterpretation and recreation, so that there is an adaptation to the new context in which they find themselves (BALL, 1992).

This characteristic of adaptation makes it possible for the professionals who work directly in this context to experience the policy based on their reality, their experiences in that environment. Based on this, the same policy has the possibility of being interpreted in different ways, since the realities and experiences of the subjects are diversified. Another point that the context of practice presents is that those responsible for the policy

texts are not able to control how their texts will be interpreted and put into practice (BALL, 1992). The analysis of a policy in this context allows one to realize that the professionals who have contact with a given policy can actively exercise a reinterpretation of it. Thus, the beliefs and thoughts of these professionals imply directly in the implementation of the policy (MAINARDES, 2006).

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Besides the policy cycle, the context here is also understood "[...] not as a determined physical space or as a set of institutions, but as a set of rules of realization, dependent on regulatory principles [...]" (LOPES, 2015, p. 134). Thus, the concept of context is also subject to change according to the discourses and power relations instituted in the space in which it is being analyzed.

Because context still appears in the background in some studies on educational policies, it is necessary to highlight its relevance for policy research. For example, research conducted in school settings always emphasizes pedagogical and leadership issues, resulting in the lack of an approach to the context experienced by students. The importance of taking context into account for policy analysis lies in the understanding that for a policy to be acted upon it requires a set of factors and conditions that come together in dynamic and objective and often subjective ways (BALL, 2016).

3.2 Youth Protagonism as a policy

In this work, youth protagonism is understood as a curriculum policy, that is, its concept will always be subject to alterations and re-significations, according to the context in which the policy is being interpreted. Resuming the proposed understanding of youth protagonism as a way of recognizing the young person as a social and rights subject, capable of deciding his or her own future, one can notice the sense of completion and resolution that the documents give to young people. Contrary to this idea of a possible conclusion of the being we have the post-structuralist perspectives.

As mentioned before, the human being is susceptible to always being inconclusive, without reaching a definition of what one is, because this information will

always depend on the other around you and on the context in which you are. In this way, it is not only up to the young person to have the knowledge of who he is and what he wants for his life project, this information is something that will directly depend on the conditions, whether social, economic and/or cultural, that surround this individual.

Based on the idea of youth protagonism as a curriculum policy and taking up again the goal of analyzing its contributions to high school, we can state that the school environment that gives space for the youth to really protagonize their actions can become a favorable place for the creation of new policies that favor young people and their interests in school experiences. Even because the educational system that proposes to really give autonomy to the student needs to make use of contemporary tools, structures, and concepts. This comes from the need to prepare students to live in a globalized world, in which they will face different challenges.

4 Youth Protagonism from the students

In order to understand the possible contributions of youth leadership in high school, we applied an online questionnaire to high school students.

The first question in the survey was whether the students had ever heard of youth leadership, and about seventy-three percent (73%) answered 'No', showing a certain lack of reference to the term in the daily school life of these young people.

Youth leadership appears with different conceptualizations according to the students who answered the questionnaire. However, there is a connection between all the answers, which is precisely the idea of young people as the central element of some action. In this way, according to the answers, the protagonism would be focused on the young person as an active agent in his or her environment. The young protagonist would be the one who is always willing to help and take initiatives that favor everyone around him. Besides references to being the protagonist of his own history, the protagonist of his life, through participation in all educational processes.

Based on their individual understandings of what youth protagonism would be, sixty percent (60%) of the students stated that there is no youth protagonism in their respective schools. The other forty percent (40%) who stated that there is youth leadership in their schools argue that it appears in activities such as student councils, class leaders, extracurricular activities such as artistic presentations, social projects that are developed in third grade classes and that aim to help social issues.

When asked if they exercised youth leadership in their schools, sixty percent (60%) said they did not. Forty percent (40%) answered yes, and argued that they exercised this youth leadership based on the basic duties of the students, among them taking care of the school environment, doing their homework, and helping classmates and teachers when necessary. This protagonism would also be exercised through the participation in tutoring and projects, as well as acting as a class leader.

Finally, the students answered whether the management of their respective schools promoted initiatives that fostered youth leadership. Thirty-three percent (33%) stated that there is no such reference. The other percentage states that the school management encourages youth leadership, mainly through the student council, which allows for a mediation between the management and the students of the school.

From the students' contributions to the questionnaire, we can consider that the youth leadership, as well as in the official documents, has been little referenced in the school routine. Even though it is seen as an important agenda for the NEM policy, not all young people are aware of its concept and of what it can represent for their development. In relation to the conceptualization of youth protagonism for the students, the understandings presented about the expression are, in their majority, referring to what has been reproduced in a general way, be it in the media, in the educational environment, and even in official documents: the young person as the center of actions in the environment where he or she is.

Despite the possible contributions that the protagonism can bring to the school and the high school, it is still noticeable a certain limitation of where and how young people can really act. For, the policies that emerged aiming at educational reform were

increasingly controlled by the State and the Government. About this, Costa and Lopes (2018), focusing on curriculum policies, argue that

[...] the school knowledge that is projected as contextualized is structured as a way to constitute subjects capable to decide consciously in previously conceived contexts. In this prefixation of contexts, multiple unforeseen and singular possibilities of being and deciding are restricted to a given way of being (and deciding) that is assumed as necessary to (a certain conception of) society, designed by some for all the others. (COSTA; LOPES, 2018, p. 303)

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Even with the possibility of choosing their life project and what they want to learn or even promoting new policies in the school environment, young people will be subject to project actions and decisions already pre-established by power discourses that end up projecting the same choice that will be followed by everyone.

Another issue that can be addressed in protagonism as a policy is that, even without a direct reference to the term in the official documents, there is the possibility of reinterpretation of the official texts. This happens because, according to Ball (1992)

[...] the authors of political texts cannot control the meanings of their texts. Parts may be rejected, selected, ignored, deliberately misunderstood, retorts may be superficial, etc. Moreover, interpretation is a matter of dispute. Different interpretations will be contested as they relate to different interests, one or the other interpretation will predominate, although deviations or minority interpretations may be important. (BALL, 1992, p. 22)

In this way, youth leadership can be experienced in school practice even without appearing in official documents. In other words, the students who participated in the questionnaire and stated that there is no youth protagonism in their schools may be experiencing it on a daily basis, even if they do not know it. This is possible from the interpretation and implementation that will be made of the policy in different contexts and realities, in some the protagonism can be witnessed more clearly, in others it may not even appear.

For Santos (2013), these recreations of policies result in effects that make changes in the officially proposed policy possible. It is in these recreations that the subjects establish a direct relationship with the construction of the policy, whether in the reinterpretation of official texts or in the experiences and exchanges experienced in various contexts. Finally, understanding youth protagonism as a policy allows for the

expansion of its possibilities of both interpretation and implementation in different contexts.

5 Concluding remarks

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This article aims to present how youth leadership has been referenced in the official texts of the New High School policy, as well as to understand its contribution to secondary education. Based on the interpretations and meanings given, the initial concept of youth leadership, the presentations of the legislative policies, the main concepts of the research, and the term youth leadership as a policy, it was possible to approach the initial objectives presented.

The contribution of juvenile protagonism in schools was understood as one of the ways to awaken young people's interest in school experiences. This is because initiatives such as making decisions about their life project or about what they want to learn can directly stimulate their interests. About the presence of the term juvenile protagonism in the official texts of the NEM, we conclude that the term is not mentioned in the MP or in the Law that institutes the policy. However, it is noticeable a reference to protagonism based on the meaning that governmental instances give to it. In this way, the main concept of youth protagonism presented in the official documents is related to the understanding of young people as citizens with rights, being able to actively act in different areas of society, be it in culture, politics, economy, among other means that allow their insertion.

Despite this sense attributed to juvenile protagonism, there are other factors to take into consideration. Among them is protagonism as politics, which makes it always subject to changes in its conceptualization based on the context in which it is being analyzed and the power discourses that surround it. Based on this, the sense of juvenile protagonism as the possibility of young people being the direct agent of their choices and actions is maintained. However, what can also be identified are actions that are said to promote protagonism, but that maintain their own interests and pre-establish, directly or indirectly, what the young person needs to choose and execute. In this way, the young

person is no longer the protagonist of the process, but a passive subject that will attend to what has been established by policies, by the government, by the school, and by other means.

As the policies and references to the youth have increased according to the identification of the demands of their members, it is important to highlight that the programs, policies, and actions aimed at this age group are necessary for their development. The main challenges that Brazilian youth have faced and still face today are the high unemployment rate, an education that does not meet all demands and social classes, and also the issue of public security. These deficits are noticeable especially with the youth found in less favored social classes. Consequently, to face these challenges imposed on young people, it is necessary that they have opportunities to be healthy, whether physically or psychologically, access to a quality education, making them productive and engaged young people, resulting in breaking a pattern and a cycle of lack of opportunities and social vulnerabilities.

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