

A reflection on education: curriculum

Gabriella da Silva Mendes¹ 

Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brasil

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Abstract

This work proposes to reflect on the approach to the school curriculum, considering the various debates in the educational sphere in Brazil. Students often come from various social contexts, and when it comes to education, the curriculum is not open to discussions such as: combating violence, ethnic-racial, gender and sexual orientation intolerance; not to mention when schools do not have the autonomy to deal with these different social frameworks. The quality of education in any country is related to the existence of institutions, whose basic pillars are what to teach (courses), who to teach (teachers), where and how to teach (school organization and management), assessment and motivation. Currently, I note that there is a worrying "wave of reform of curriculum education", which must be taken seriously and treated with caution, since education reform can be initiated at any time, but its effectiveness will depend on the functioning of all pillars of basic education, mentioned above.

Keywords: Curriculum. Education. Reforms. Curriculum analysis.

Uma reflexão sobre educação: currículo

Resumo

Este trabalho se propõe a realizar uma reflexão sobre a abordagem do currículo escolar, pensando nos variados debates na esfera educacional no Brasil. Muitas vezes, os alunos são oriundos de vários contextos sociais, e se tratando de educação, o currículo não se abre para discussões como: combate a violência, intolerância étnico-racial, gênero e de orientação sexual; sem contar quando as escolas não têm autonomia para lidarem com esses diferentes enquadramentos sociais. A qualidade da educação em qualquer país está relacionada à existência de instituições, que têm como pilares básicos o que ensinar (cursos), quem ensinar (professores), onde e como ensinar (organização e gestão escolar), avaliação e motivação. Na atualidade, observo que existe uma preocupante "onda de reforma da educação curricular", que deve ser levada a sério e tratada com cautela, pois, a reforma da educação pode ser iniciada a qualquer momento, mas sua eficácia dependerá do



funcionamento de todos os pilares da educação básica, mencionados acima.

Palavras-chave: Currículo. Educação. Reforma curricular. Análise curricular.

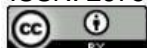
1 Introduction

The debate about the success or failure of the Brazilian school curriculum should develop in a new direction, and we should rethink its real existence. When we begin to discuss this nature, we start from the assumption that courses exist in our education system, even if their existence is not enough to solve the current problem. Costa (2012) makes important questions that are worth mentioning, within the discussion:

Are we on the right track when we try to correct a curriculum of questionable existence? (Costa, 2012, p. 13).

From the work of Silva (2007), the first assumption is that the curriculum is the result of a choice, which undermines other knowledge considered less important and become part of the curriculum. The second is that the curriculum impacts the formation of personal identity and subjectivity. Third, the curriculum is a matter of power. Silva (2007, p.12) corroborates the last statement, emphasizing: "Selecting, attributing a type of knowledge and highlighting identity or subjectivity among multiple possibilities is an operation of power".

If we want to resort to the etymology of the word "curriculum", which comes from the Latin curriculum, "race track", we can say that in the course of this "race" that is the curriculum we end up becoming what we are. In everyday discussions, when we think about curriculum we think only about knowledge, forgetting that the knowledge that constitutes the curriculum is inextricably, centrally, vitally, involved in what we are, in what we become: in our identity, in our subjectivity. Perhaps we could say that, besides being a matter of knowledge, the curriculum is also a matter of identity. (Silva, 2007, p.15).





According to Sacristán (1996), the processes of defining curriculum policies are necessary in studies focused on school, its culture, its codes and organizational modes, without, however, losing sight of the articulation of school work to the broad historical-cultural context. The curriculum is the way in which the school culture mediates between individuals and society, with the purpose of training these individuals:

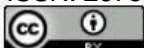
[...] the curriculum - as it is often said - is a selection of culture, it is, however, a sui generis culture, a particular version of culture; not only because it is a selection with certain criteria, as the most common definitions usually reiterate, but by the format they adopt. School culture is a characterization, or rather, a reconstruction of culture, made because of the very conditions in which schooling reflects its behavioral and organizational guidelines. (Sacristán, 1996, p. 35).

Goodson (1995) notes that the development of a curriculum is a field of social conflict, many of which are conveyed by agents outside the field of education, who end up not consulting educators. Thus "the struggle to define a curriculum involves socio-political priorities and intellectual discourse" (Goodson, 1995, p. 28). Understanding the existence of these conflicts allows us to better grasp the process of curriculum development and the forces at work in its formation.

Writing a curriculum is not an easy task, even more so in the context in which we live in Brazil. Currently, Penna (2016), highlights that political voices loaded with conservatism and with retrograde intentions try to exclude the educational dimension of schooling, replacing it by a language of learning. These archaic interests are embodied in the "School without Party" program, which constitutes:

[...] This is a threat to any emancipatory educational project that dialogues with students and the reality in which they live, and limits a greater subjectivation of students. In the conception of this project, the role of the teacher would be limited to "the transmission of knowledge produced in another space, thus being barred the possibility of exercising the function of educator. (Penna, 2016, p.28).

It should be put a curriculum that would allow the teacher to have greater autonomy and freedom of teaching; and would provide general guidelines that would guide the teaching-learning process.





Recent works by Canettieri, Paranaíba, and Santos (2021) show that changes for the new curricular reorganization aim to bring school education closer to the reality of young people, to contain school dropout, to increase the number of vacancies, and to restructure the curriculum to meet the new challenges of the 21st century. But, this way, we can see how there is a tendency to bring demands, dislocated from the reality of the subject and as an instrument to serve the social work system.

2 Methodology

This study was developed through the theoretical and methodological debate of renowned authors and specialists in the discussion of the proposed curriculum, revisiting concepts addressed by them.

3. Resultados e Discussão

Thinking about the curriculum

According to the critical curriculum theory described by Moreira & Silva (1995), the curriculum is historically dated, implying power relations and producing individual and social identities. In education, the school started to function as a transmitter of values and customs, being a channel for professional qualification and specialization. This context has configured the school curriculum as an instrument of control and maintenance of social hegemony, besides the non-use of the hidden curriculum (consisting of all those aspects of the school environment that contribute implicitly to relevant social learning), and making some questions such as: the curriculum organization by subjects, and the non-use of "popular culture", being a mechanism for reproduction of existing power relations in society, where children of rich and powerful parents benefit from the inclusion by the curriculum unlike the less privileged classes that suffer exclusion by it.

Through this educational analysis, the authors Moreira & Silva (1995), explain how power relations are extended through the curriculum, through the contents and guidelines





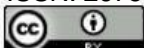
as "forces", ranging from dominant classes to routines and daily institutional rituals. It is then proposed a hegemonic official curriculum, producing social identities and being maintainer of the status quo and cultural field of construction and production of meanings and senses, a struggle for transformed power relations.

The research of Moreira & Silva (1995), shows that two curricular trends emerged between the 1920s and the early 1970s. One of humanistic character that developed in Brazil: the *escolanovismo* (John Dewey and William Heard Kilpatrick) valuing the students' interests and another that constituted the *tecnicismo*, controlled and directed pedagogical practice (John Franklin Bobbitt), when the curriculum develops desirable aspects of the human personality. Both trends sought to adapt the school and the curriculum to the new capitalist order.

Moreira & Silva (1995) explain that from 1973 on, several curriculum specialists rejected the behaviorist and empiricist curriculum conception, because it was instrumental and apolitical. In order to reconceptualize the field, two major trends were developed: the rules (or norms) that guide practice and the implication of moral values on the person and society, the critical theory (Michael Apple and Henry Geroux), with emphasis on the social and linked to the New Sociology of Curriculum (Michael Young and Basil Bernstein), and the hermeneutics, with emphasis on subjectivity (William Pinar). Consequently, the emphasis on curriculum planning, implementation, and control ends, also highlighting how curriculum has the power to control teachers' accreditation and their potential for freedom in the classroom.

As Goodson (2007) analyzes, it is necessary that everyone involved with curriculum, propose what is actually important to be worked with students, which method will be used, always trying to be aware of what is happening around them, the needs, desires and goals of students to occur effectively what is proposed both in the school's Political Pedagogical Project, as in the teacher's Pedagogical Proposal.

Based on Freire's (2006) thought, the Educational Reforms should value the student, formulating a curriculum that allows the formation of a student endowed with critical and reflective thinking, questioning the traditional narratives, criticizing the





hierarchization of histories and cultures, work important themes (such as prejudice, gender issues, and intolerance, through transversality) and enable a curriculum that aims to give the student the possibility to dialogue the knowledge learned with the reality in which he lives, thus improving his reading of the world.

As one of the proposals by Freitas Neto (2010) points out, transversality should be adopted, as far as possible, throughout the curriculum. It consists in considering the discipline and its contents as means and the treatment of transversal issues as an end. According to the author:

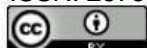
These themes, present in the reality of Brazilians, should be constant references in the school practice of elementary and high school students. The proposal is to establish them as final goals to be addressed in all subjects, bringing them closer to the students' daily lives, in order to avoid, somehow, the gap between the knowledge presented by the teacher and the students' expectations and needs. (Freitas Neto, 2010, p.59).

[...] citizenship, social inequalities, ethno-racial prejudice, the role of women in history, cultural plurality, religious tolerance, and sexual and gender diversity. The idea, contrary to what one might initially think, is not to eliminate content from the curriculum but to go beyond it. (Freitas Neto, 2010, p.64).

It is necessary to think about a curriculum that somehow aggregates these proposals, that makes education more dynamic and less plastered. In other words, teaching should not become a mere transmission of content. As Bittencourt (2004, p.19) states: "when this does not occur, the dynamics of subjectivity becomes stagnant, when education is taught as something simply certain, given".

Considering this issue, a curriculum that does not give up the important contents should be thought out, but does not deprive the students of a cultural orientation, of a more relative look in relation to their social environment. In agreement with Schmidt (2010), one should not only build a national memory, but also a family, social, and collective memory.

As stated above, it is imperative to seek dialogues with the students' daily lives. This is what Schmidt (2010, p.24) called "meaningful learning, which roughly means an articulation between the development of critical thinking with something that represents some meaning to the students".





The post-critical theories discussed by Monteiro & Gabriel (2014), offer relevant elements for this discussion about the reformulation of a curriculum, with the inclusion of the teacher's role articulated with these factors. In this sense, the teacher would contribute with:

Constructions that will help your students understand the diversity of experiences of different human societies in a critical perspective that transforms/configures senses about the world, enabling them to understand/explain contradictions, processes, "intrigues", and possibilities. (Monteiro & Gabriel, 2014, p.35).

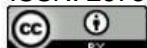
Making this brief reflection, it is necessary that educators and other individuals involved in curriculum analysis and theorization can increasingly formulate educational projects that reduce social inequalities, at least in the school environment, not refraining from taking into consideration the different ways of conceiving knowledge, taking into account the different existing historical and cultural contexts.

The curriculum, school failure, and the reforms

The social problems and the changes suffered by our economic/productive system reflect directly in the educational system, and the main way of communication and dissemination of ideas and principles is the curriculum that cannot be considered only as a grid of school subjects or as a course program. The curriculum should not be limited to this, because it is characterized by the multiplicity of issues related to it, and according to Castanho (1995) it is through the curriculum that the macro social structure penetrates the micro social structure.

The current curriculum, then, follows to the letter the articulations of those who are in a position of denominators before society, where according to Freire (1999), the school is not neutral, being a reflection of society, and as such reproduces its social practices, thus collaborating often to maintain the "status quo" in order to perpetuate the power situation of some over others.

Based on Barros; Fontenele; Nunes (2012), these speeches and facts cause us to worry about the current scenario of education in Brazil. Noting a total neglect of public





education, students year after year fail, drop out or even fail to attend school, a fact that contradicts the established laws, which determine the right to attend school and get a quality education.

The curriculum should contribute for the school to fulfill its role of emancipating and providing the individual with subsidies so that he/she becomes capable of reflecting about his/her reality, as well as acting on it in order to change it, exercising his/her role as an active and interactive citizen within his/her environment, collaborates in order to disseminate the hegemonic culture, which culminates in reproducing the existing injustices and inequalities in the social environment.

Freire (1986) believes that the curriculum should be adapted to the reality of the learner and the teacher should work on the basis of dialogical education, based on the knowledge that the learner brings to the classroom.

The standard curriculum, the transfer curriculum, is a mechanical and authoritarian way of thinking about how to organize a program, which implies, above all, a tremendous lack of confidence in the creativity of the students and in the ability of the teachers! Because, ultimately, when certain power centers establish what should be done in class, their authoritarian way denies the exercise of creativity among teachers and students. The right, above all, is commanding and manipulating, from a distance, the activities of educators and students. (FREIRE, 1986, p.97).

We realize in the reflections of Barros; Fontenele; Nunes (2012), that before a complex process of new meaning of values, ideas and attitudes with regard to personal and cultural relationships in a globalized world with new guidelines that determine new attitudes and ways of thinking and acting, the curriculum is one of the determining factors for the implementation and dissemination of school practices, as well as interfere in the social behavior of individuals, because it is no longer limited to the choice of content that guide the teaching. It influences the political, social, and economic behaviors of society, since the notion of curriculum goes far beyond a set of practices and content to be followed by the school. We realize that many educators do not hold the definition of the curriculum, as well as its scope and importance, which makes us realize the impracticality of a





meaningful teaching practice, because for this there is the need to be aware of what the curriculum is for and to whom it is intended.

Different experiences and policies implemented in Brazil have been trying to bring new solutions to the old problem of school failure. It has been related to the high failure and dropout rates in elementary schools throughout Brazil. This phenomenon has been explained by different reasons and has been addressed through various strategies and educational policies.

Patto (1996) analyzes theories that historically explain the "production of school failure" in Brazil. According to these theories, the school is organized for children from socially and economically favored classes. In this school context, children from popular classes, without the cultural and economic conditions of their wealthier peers, would have less chances of success in their studies.

However, Souza (2000) also indicates other interpretations, which understand school failure as a form of resistance, as a way for students belonging to marginalized groups both socially and culturally or ethnically to assert their difference and their identity.

According to Fleuri (2015), both the explanation of failure as a result of the elitization of school, and as resistance from the popular classes, do not clarify the exclusionary character of the school structure, that is, why the school does not understand and does not promote the creative and critical potentialities of students.

Still under the reflection of Fleuri (2015), we notice that understanding and facing the challenge of school failure seem to get entangled in a pendulum and dichotomous movement. The causes are sometimes sought in external factors, sometimes in factors internal to the school system. The school space is seen, bipolarly, as reproduction or transformation, maintenance of the standards of the dominant sectors or the rise of the less privileged layers of the population.. Para Arroyo (2000):

[...] however, school failure can be explained both by the "logic of exclusion", inherent to all Brazilian social institutions, since they were generated "to reinforce an unequal and excluding society", and by the "culture of exclusion", materialized in the organization and structure of the school system. (ARROYO, 2000, p. 13).





With the reflections mentioned above, we should consider talking about school failure, and it is important to observe when learning difficulties come to cover up the weakness of the school, focusing on the student all the failure of not learning. The teaching staff's lack of didactic knowledge is at the root of school failure.

Failure is often due to the education the individual has had. For a healthy education, it is very important that it must be followed up directly by those responsible for it, so that it has a strong foundation.

The main causes of school failure come mostly from the education systems that fail to meet the diversity of needs present in schools, failing to identify where the learning maladaptations are located, and leading the student to discover his own way of learning, considering as a crucial point his particular way of relating to knowledge, that is, school learning.

School failure can also occur depending on the family, cultural, social, and political context in which the individual may be inserted.

In view of this we relate the curriculum to a cultural issue which favors the one that ensures the hegemony of the dominant classes to the detriment of the dominated classes, nullifying the very concept of culture, given that this is, "culture is everything produced by man." Thus, we can analyze that the curriculum contributes to the effectiveness of social reproduction, through the transmission of the dominant culture, ensuring its hegemony, providing the "truth" to this culture, its values, its tastes, its customs and habits, which are now considered the "culture", despising the customs and values of the dominated classes, which, in turn, become worthless. (SILVA, 2003, p.11).

The school, instead of transforming, paradoxically excludes and segregates the less privileged, leading them to failure and guaranteeing the dissemination of the "status quo. To Giroux (1997):

Schools do more than objectively impart a common set of values and knowledge. Rather, schools are places that represent forms of knowledge, language practices, social relations and values that are particular relations to and exclusions from the broader culture. As such, schools serve to introduce and legitimize particular forms of social life. (GIROUX, 1997, p.162).

In order for there to be an advance in Brazilian education, it is necessary to adapt the current curriculum to the reality of our country, so that this student, based on his reality,





can expand his knowledge to become truly significant for him, in his context. And so that in this way, the school can exercise its role of transformation in society.

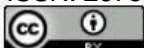
[...] The need for a "reconstruction" of education is notorious, and intrinsically to this, the curriculum appears as one of the main ways for this to occur in an organized and objective way. We do not want to say that through the rehabilitation of the curriculum all problems of education will be solved, but that through this, it is possible to start a restructuring of our education, because we believe that the adequacy of the curriculum to our reality, taking into account the different cultures, as well as the awakening of teachers, so that they do not reproduce a knowledge that is proposed to them, ready and finished within a curriculum plan, but that they see the curriculum as a guideline for the development of a praxis that aims a political and social training, which will provide subsidies to those who in the future may participate actively in the transformation of society. (BARROS; FONTENELE; NUNES, 2012, p.12).

5 Final considerations

We have noticed throughout the historical process how education has been constituted in the face of a constant dispute between the dominant sectors of society and the popular layers, who seek in it possibilities of intervention and occupation of spaces that guarantee economic, political, and social power.

Public schools have always needed national policies that favored an education based on the construction of autonomy, inclusion, and respect for diversity. In this view, the debate and the struggle over the social quality of education should include the planning of public policies for education that, articulated with the processes of political organization of the segments of civil society, propose a greater political openness and with this, new conceptions of education.

More democratic laws and educational norms are increasingly necessary, but they are not enough to guarantee the construction of democratic and critical curriculum proposals. For, analyzing the school as a whole and the student inserted in it, it becomes worrisome the lamentable state of the crumbling of knowledge, which, transformed into crumbs, reveals a crumbled intelligence and an epistemological horizon that is too reduced. Despite the efforts made in recent years, we still haven't managed to structure an efficient educational system, that is, unable to ensure the democratization by offering vacancies that broaden the access of the masses to educational institutions, there are still not enough investments to provide conditions for improvements in this area. We must be careful to avoid that this set of activities and goals are used only to justify the decline in the quality of education through





evaluations that "measure" in an excluding and classifying way the student's performance in order to legitimize privatization policies. The challenge is not only to put the school and education at the center of the policies, but to promote and guarantee, in the face of this globalized and neoliberal context adopted by many governments, the training of teachers, equity, school autonomy, equality, critical citizenship, the participation of civil society, the formation of citizens. Quality for whom? To what end? What form of evaluation? These questions should permeate and guide the discussions in the educational field. In short, the attainment of these necessary goals implies much more than shifting resources, it must put the student at the center, restructure the contents, methods, evaluation systems and school management models, provide conditions to guarantee learning, recognize that basic education takes place throughout life and in multiple environments. (PIAIA; SCALABRIN, 2011, p. 16288).

To talk about curriculum in 21st century education is to talk about a curriculum of uncertainties, and this is the great challenge. Because it deals with uncertainty, the curriculum cannot be static. Sufficiency and flexibility of the curriculum are essential for the democratic school curriculum to make it more dialogical, transformative, and participatory.

The best teaching method is to provide students with skills to deal with the characteristics of today's society, emphasizing students' autonomy to seek new knowledge through creativity and creative collaborative actions. We realize that to talk about courses we need to look at several educational axes, where the school is the protagonist and its participants (teachers and students) are at the center of the discussion and training. When we reflect on the most diverse changes in the school environment, we also need to analyze the views of teacher training.

According to Oliveira; Sales (2015), discussions about the process of teacher training are commonly approached from two professional perspectives: those who are undergraduates, beginning their training at a higher level; and those who are in the exercise of teaching and continue in the process of their professional training. Contemporarily, we question the perspective on continued training, since we understand that such training occurs in the exercise of the profession - hence the option of adopting the perspective of on-the-job training, based on Marcelo García (1999) cited by Soares & Cunha (2010, p.31), who defines teacher training as follows:

[...] the area of knowledge, research, and theoretical and practical proposals that, in the context of Didactics and School Organization, studies the processes by which





teachers - in training or in practice - engage individually or in teams, in learning experiences through which they acquire or improve their knowledge, skills, and dispositions, and which enable them to intervene professionally in the development of their teaching, the curriculum, and the school, with the aim of improving the quality of the education that students receive.

Oliveira; Sales (2015) also analyze that teaching is a complex profession, learned even slowly, and the processes of learning and teaching continue throughout life. In this sense, the educational space is the ideal environment for the constitution of teacher learning, which is configured as individual and collective, since it happens among peers, in the effective exercise of the profession, requiring certain postures from the teacher to happen, as reported Mizukami (2013, p. 28), when addressing the on-the-job training:

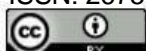
[...] It also implies the development of skills, attitudes, commitment, investigation of one's own performance, willingness to work with peers, evaluation of one's own performance, and constant search for ways to improve one's pedagogical practice in relation to the specific populations with whom one interacts.

For Oliveira; Sales (2015), teacher training is a process that involves the appropriation of didactic and pedagogical knowledge, and knowledge about teaching, which should be held in the institution - a privileged space for such. It is also a formative space, not only for students, but for teachers who become authors and protagonists of their own training, in addition to contributing to the effective professional autonomy.

Candau (2010) also points out three fundamental aspects in the formative processes that should be considered: (a) the educational institution as an on-the-job training ass; (b) valuing the knowledge of teachers, these, widely discussed in various academic productions; and (c) the professional cycle of teachers.

Both Candau (2010) and Leone (2012) agree that professional itinerancy materializes as a heterogeneous process, that the needs, searches, and problems are not the same at different moments of the exercise of teaching and such specificities are ignored in on-the-job training.

Throughout the discussion on the curriculum issue, we realize that in the trajectory of education, according to Bonato (2010), the Brazilian educational system has implemented many reforms and, in this way, education has gone through different





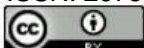
processes in which at some moments it was privileged, while at others it was relegated to hegemonic interests.

The most recent reform occurred in the 1990s, when the economic policy literally surrendered to neoliberalism, causing major changes in the educational system, not leaving teachers unscathed. Thus, continuing education needs to be thought and rethought in order to minimize the harmful effects of an educational policy centered on rationalization that disqualified the teaching work and made teachers responsible for educational maladjustments, making them the target of constant criticism and challenges. If there were problems in the recent past and the remnants of a trivialized educational practice are still present in the educational environment, it is urgent and necessary to rethink teacher training, both initial and continued, since teaching cannot be confused with the transmission of information as a learning process. Therefore, professional training is necessary to demystify this practice, so common nowadays in education. In this aspect, the training should contemplate and establish a historically built knowledge base that becomes significant for the changes in the educational processes. (BONATO, 2010, pp.9-10).

The wave of educational reforms that "haunt" and "isolate" our country cause "a certain fear" that education will once again become technical or even more traditional, and that the retrogressions that have been overcome will return, and the innovations and possibilities for an education with a more egalitarian and fairer curriculum will be left aside. It is necessary to have a debate with the whole society, so that education really fulfills its role and becomes of quality.

Therefore, we realize that teaching is organized in a fragmented way, prioritizing the recall of definitions and facts, as well as standardized solutions, which no longer meet the educational demands. School pedagogical practices need to be reviewed in order to consider everyone in their historical and cultural context.

Even though the BNCC has made a proposal to guide school education towards the development of competencies, they constitute a reality that occurs every day of separation of education. Moreover, if we look critically, we must reveal the purpose of education and the ways to reach democratic education, which form autonomous and responsible citizens and make them active subjects in the maintenance and transformation of society.



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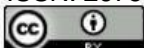
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ⁱ **Gabriella da Silva Mendes**, ORCID:

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1580-4859>

Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro

Currículo: Doutoranda em Educação, Mestre em Educação e Historiadora pela Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro – UFRJ.

Contribuição de autoria: Autoria plena do texto.

Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/1421538301501842>

E-mail: gabiufrj1@gmail.com

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