

Educational Reforms and the Impact on Management of Public Schools in Brazil

Giselle Ferreira Amaral de Miranda Azevedo¹, Francisca das Chagas Silva Lima²

(1. Federal Institute of Maranhão, Brazil; 2. Federal University of Maranhão, Brazil)

Abstract: This article is part of the initial studies that we developed for the Master's Degree Graduate Program in Education research for the Federal University of Maranhão (UFMA). From a bibliographical research, it looks to analyze the context of capital's globalization and, consequently, the productive restructuring and its impact on educational reforms proposed by international organizations, whose recommendations offer managerialist models to the administration of the systems and public schools. It does focus on the principle of democratic management provided by the Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, 1988, and the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education n° 9.394/96, which has, as biggest challenge, its execution through practices that encourage the people's participation as a political and democratic act.

Key words: educational politics, educational reforms and democratic management

1. Introduction

The globalization of the capital supported by productive restructuring has entered in the most varied sectors: economic, political, social, cultural and also in the educational field in order to impose its determinations in support of economic growth, based on profit and the development of a Minimal State through the privatization of public goods and by limiting the access to the public policies. These dictates affect schools and, consequently, the formation of students, which will be directed to the preparation of skilled labor through a deliberate and alienating technique.

There is in public education, both in basic and college education, a strong influence of multilateral organizations concerning regulatory policies as a result of agreements in national, regional and global scale. This influence impacts in the management, organization and funding forms, and even in the regulation of these institutions' social functions. This way, they meet the logic of the privatization of education, creating in the thoughts of population those public services in general, and specifically the education, are poor quality based, encouraging the privatization of the public goods.

Mendes (2009) points out that:

According to Saviani (1992), from the end of the 80's, the political orientation (neoliberal) assumes the failure of the public school as if this fact was not the inability of the State to meet the demands and needs of the

Giselle Azevedo, Pedagogue, Master in Education, Federal Institute of Maranhão (IFMA); research areas/interests: educational politics. E-mail: gisafamaral78@gmail.com.

Francisca das Chagas Lima, Pedagogue, Doctor in education, Federal University of Maranhão (UFMA); research areas/interests: educational politics. E-mail: fransluma@bol.com.br.

population. This approach, according to the author, “allows it advocates, also in the context of education, the primacy of the private sector governed by the laws of the market” (Saviani, 1992, p. 11; Mendes, 2009, p. 83).

The private sector takes more and more strength in the educational context where everyone who can pay for private education is in search of a supposed better quality; meanwhile the popular sectors seek public institutions of education for not having the economic and social conditions to consume the goods produced collectively. Soon the Brazilian public education was stigmatized with precarious quality, a school for the poor people only.

In this way, they constantly spread speeches in favour of the centrality in basic education for the individuals’ training, which objective is developing skills that meet labour market preparing, i.e. within a new context of mercantilization of production. The citizen shall be understood as a client, who can and must be prepared to consume and sell his workforce. These speeches are disseminated by international organizations that emphasize the important role education occupies in this neo-liberal context (World Bank, IMF, UNESCO, United Nations Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean — ECLAC). This would be a way to improve the Brazilian education, offering basic education to prepare and give conditions to individuals to enter and stay in the labour market increasingly competitive.

Education becomes a strong mechanism for the perpetuation and dissemination of the guidelines established by international organizations, primarily in emerging countries such as Brazil, where inequality and poverty are high as well as the terrible educational indicators. So, the reforms established based on centrality in basic education, more specifically in high school, have as main goal, to prepare students for the labour market taking into consideration the interests of capitalists under the false discourse of employability.

In this context, Oliveira (2010) emphasizes:

It has become commonplace in the last decade, relating to the centrality in basic education as a necessary condition for the admission of the people in the third millennium, from the rules of the codes of Modernity. The argument is based on the indispensable character of this teaching mode for all individuals. References range from the affirmation that this level of education would be the minimum required to insert workers in the labour market productive process, to the argument that it would be necessary the assimilation of knowledge gained from the Basic education, for a real citizen participation in society. In all cases, there’s a concern about education like a mechanism enabling better income distribution (p. 118).

The discourse of centrality in basic education started to grow in the 90’s, as education has become a fundamental way for the consolidation of the dictates of capital, requiring its suitability to the needs of globalization and profit generation. Basic Education turns to fill a need for preparation of cheap labour, because the low rate of schooling in developing countries requires a quick preparation with the purpose of contributing to the increase in productivity through less paperwork and centralization, where prevails the establishment of excluding and classifying evaluation measures, with focus on the fulfillment of goals on the teacher’s part and the implementation of school management based on neo-liberal Managerialism, focused on efficiency, effectiveness, control of resources and productivity of teachers and students.

Thus, there is a fast growth of private investments in education, particularly college education, as it has become a very low-quality business in the hands of private education institutions, that in their vast majority are not concerned with a solid formation and teaching based on research and extension. They have much less to provide in a kind of education that emancipates and releases the man from the bonds of the capital’s alienation.

Dourado (2011) emphasizes that:

The 1990 consolidates the privatization logic of college education, through the intensification of the processes

of diversification and institutional differentiation in this level of education, in a scenario marked by the State reform, anchored in the perspective of minimization of the role of the State on public policies (p. 56).

There is a growth of non-university institutions, restricted to teaching, that marks the clash between defenders of a better-quality public education including teaching, research and extension, and those who advocate for a higher education focused in education with emphasis in qualifying evaluations and results over processes. This type of education does not form a critical and participative student. This question is highlighted by Chauí, when he points out this type of University.

Does not build and does not create thought, only the language of meaning, density and mystery, destroys the curiosity and admiration that lead to the discovery of new, negates all pretense of historic transformation as conscious action of human beings in certain material conditions (Chauí, 1999, p. 222; Golden, 2011, p. 56).

This type of education is not supported on a critical stance, but in the mere appropriation of expertise targeted to social reproduction and the sale of educational services that became a natural expansion of private sector, impacting public institutions that are losing its autonomy and resources, being submitted to the pressure of adapting their research in favour of the market's needs.

Facing this reality of alienation and human objectification, the development of other men is necessary and relevant. Training in its full, complete meaning in every senses: social, cultural, educational and economic issues, and to ensure a more effective participation in society. Education has an important contribution to the consolidation of this process of change.

2. The School Management in the Context of Educational Reforms

Based on the neo-liberal paradigm, the 90's once marked by strong economic restructuring sectors, brought several changes to the educational management, which should follow the capitalist guidelines placed worldwide, especially to the educational field that pointed to a specific labour training.

One of the main actions was to make the State more efficient and agile, with the consolidation of actions directed to a public service more effective, flexible, decentralized less bureaucratic and more managerial, with technical and human rationalization. The school management has come to be organized on the basis of Managerialism's principles and total quality.

According to Fonseca and Oliveira (2009):

The changes that have guided the Brazilian State reform had immediate effects in the management of the educational system. In the 1990s, it was developed methods of management that promised to improve the indicators of dropout and repetition rates, despite of the students' incomes, autonomy and participation of the family, the educational community and society in general, affecting decisions to school. In this way, the efficient school management was understood as the one capable of producing more with less costs, including seeking alternative sources for the school funding (p. 235).

It is important to note that Brazil has been suffering great influence of international organizations, in particular the World Bank. Since the 70's, through the funding of large industrial projects, it aimed to modernize the infrastructure in the country, thus contributing to a high concentration of incomes and destruction of Brazilian flora. From the 80's on, the World Bank, in addition to performing loans under new conditions, began to interfere in developing countries' social policies, including Brazil, being one of the main responsible for the implementation of neo-liberal policies based on more appropriated development conditions.

Soares (1998) highlights:

The World Bank exerts profound influence on the direction of global development. Its importance today is due not only to the volume of their loans and the breadth of their areas of expertise, but also to the strategic character that it has been playing in the process of neoliberal restructuring of developing countries, through structural adjustment policies (p. 15).

It is further understandable the importance and the power the World Bank carries out in the context of neo-liberal modernization of so-called emerging countries. It is also observed the occurrence of transference of practices applied in the private sector to the public sphere context, making these latter more competitive within the capitalist productive restructuring.

We can say, in this context, the World Bank as one of the financial agencies with direct action in the field of education, is responsible for financing several neo-liberal projects proposed by educational policies in Brazil.

According to Fonseca and Oliveira (2009):

In the 90's, international organizations had a strong presence in Brazil, including UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank (WB). In Basic Education, the latter has been projected as the main international cooperation agency, either for the territorial and temporal range of its projects or by the magnitude of financing (p. 235).

They sought to produce in the educational system, specifically in the school management, more efficiency, less bureaucracy and greater productivity at a lower cost. In this way, the Government needed to be rethought taking a less bureaucratic and centralized configuration, based on efficient and effective Managerialism, concerned with the quantitative results in the detriment of qualitative aspect, i.e. not with the educational process that is the heart of the matter for us.

In the context of the State's reform, a new model of school management becomes implemented in Brazilian schools based on managerial, technical administration, following business models.

Barreto (2007) points out:

Following the line of thought of Bresser Pereira (2005), the educational systems were obsolete, inefficient, ineffective, facing low productivity, before the business demands, because of its centralized and bureaucratic structure. Hence the need to modernize and adopt teaching systems and management models that could adjust education to emergent demands of the economy and the labor market. The market wanted the formation of a new type of worker able to adapt to changes in the production system (p. 39).

In the light of above, educational systems and school management started to restructure themselves in order to meet administrative and organizational parameters imposed by this new market setting. The speech of the school modernization and management takes power and is based on the aspect of rationality, which became the main reference for educational policy analysis, comparing school institution to a company. For the school to adapt to the new market restructuring, its organization has undergone modifications that affected the way schools used management, the relationship between teachers and students, the curriculum, the teaching-learning process, in short, the specific aspects of educational reality.

Therefore, it's necessary to rethink this management model adopted by the Brazilian public schools that promotes more rational material and human resources in search of a supposed educational quality.

Within the framework of educational systems, we found two opposites models of school management: on one side is a management based on democratic principles and on the other side a management based on the

market-liberal managerialism.

As international organizations are targeting the educational policies of the countries of Latin America, especially in Brazil, the educational sector had to adapt to this political, social and economic context, which was to prevail in the 90's, linking education to the training of skilled labour to operate in a market increasingly demanding and competitive.

Dinair Leal da Hora (2010) emphasizes that:

The federal Government started in 1995, from its very beginning, held large changes in the normative framework of school education, in the curriculum and content in the form of management of educational systems and school units, using mostly the authoritative determination and, also, appealing to the use of engines that search agreements (p. 67).

School happens to be understood as a space for the implementation of the policies established by the Brazilian Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), fulfilling the dictates of neo-liberal policy for the commercial and private education reproducing the capitalist world's new order, influenced by the logic of the market, transforming values, attitudes, the curriculum, the training and expertise of teachers, as well as how to manage the school space, which will enhance rationalization of resources, technical in the detriment of human work.

The manager's work takes another direction with the speech of following challenges in Brazil and the world, specifically in the profile of educational professionals. Then, school couldn't be left out of these changes, and they have the fundamental role of adapting itself to a more flexible, decentralized administration with focus is production, the reduction of the number of students who dropout and fail. In this context, the key is the achievement targets and not the process to be built.

Regarding the decentralization aspect, so emphasized in these neo-liberal policies, Oliveira et al. (2014), explains:

The administrative, financial and educational decentralization and flexibility in the organization and functioning of the schools are important aspects of the educational reform initiated in the 90's, which brought greater autonomy in the management of school units. The autonomy represents a significant gain for education professionals in the sense that they have greater freedom to organize their work and school times. Implies, on the other hand, the expansion of functions and greater accountability of their educational success (p. 534).

The decentralization shall be used as means of the Government to take its responsibility away from the quality of education, leaving it at total culpability of the success of the students to school, so the institution has brought a heavy burden of tasks and responsibilities to education professionals, specifically to the principal, who happens to be a prime target of the whole community. This action is most often imposed by central agencies without providing adequate, physical and material, structures for schools.

The World Bank also proposes an assessment system based on learning results, which gains relevance in that circumstance, because the external evaluation is one of the most effective ways to measure learning results of the students. As well as what was spent by alumnus, in other words, the focus is on the final product, which has generated great impact at teaching work, which shall be conditioned to qualifying standardized and excluding reviews.

About this type of evaluation, Oliveira et al. (2014) points out:

The results of the assessment tests are used as a tool to compare educational systems, and the quality and

effectiveness of the education system are to be measured by the results obtained by the students. These comparisons have been widely used in both national and international scope to criticize the education systems, their curriculum and organizational form and to justify changes in educational policy, including in relation to teachers (p. 536)

The concept of procedural and formative evaluation as a construction of knowledge and quality of the teaching-learning process, is not considered in this neo-liberal conception of consumerist and managerial approach, which radically affects school and its practices, impacting on curricular organization, teaching practices, on the profile and formation of students, on the work of the principal and on the relationships built on the school's floor.

3. Democratic Management: Challenges and Possibilities in the Context of Educational Reforms

Two diametrically opposed education projects are in vogue in the country. On one side are those who argue for a commercial, efficient, flexible, with teacher's qualifying performance reviews, students and administrators in search of excellence in educational patterns, more accountability of families and communities in the educational process, redefining somehow the State's role given to the public and social policies type of private education. On the other side, there are the advocates of a more democratic, autonomic, participatory — in its full sense — education, where the State is responsible for providing quality education for the whole population, without class distinction or social condition, not a type of participation where private sectors enter the educational sphere like the international organizations have fiercely defended.

This project we're presenting here is about defending a more democratic education, in contrary to the one proposed by the World Bank, that emphasizes, according to Torres (1998), "the World Bank proposes the redefinition of the traditional role of the State in relation to education, a redefinition of the parameters and priorities for public spending, and a greater contribution of families and communities on the costs of education" (Torres, 1998, p. 137).

It is clear that World Bank proposes for education a reduced role of the State and more responsibilities for families, giving space for Non-Governmental Development Organizations input on the school administration. It is in this perspective this organism defends the democratization, the decentralization of corporate and privatized school management, based on a model of school that enhances the quantification, measurement, results with less costs and not the process, not the formation of critical students who have access to a quality education in the social sense and not commercial, exclusively directed for the preparation of the workforce.

The Principal ceases to do his duty, the thinker's space, his educational process's conductor role in various instances and happens to be a technician, a performer of predetermined and designed tasks planned by other professionals who are out or never have been in a classroom as educators.

Torres (1998) shows very well what was placed above:

The economic discourse has come to dominate the educational outlook to such a point that the educational speech itself, the educational achievements in school and in the education system as a whole, the relations and the processes of teaching and learning in class, the pedagogy, education for instance and its bearers, teachers, social educators, experts in education and related fields, are only considered in this speech and its wording. Both the national and international spheres, the educational policy is in general and mainly in the hands of economists or linked to more professionals from the economics or sociology than related to Curriculum or

Pedagogy. Most of people who opine today on what has or does not have to be done in education, taking important decisions in this field, both at the local and worldwide scope, lack the knowledge and experience needed to deal with the fields on which it is pronounced and decide (p. 139).

The Federal Constitution of 1998 and the guidelines of the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education (LDBE) nº 9.394/96 brought basic principles for Brazilian education, specifically for school management. In the 1998 Federal Constitution in article 206, Section VI, highlights “Democratic Management of Public Education, in the form of the law”. The LDBE law nº 9.394/96 of December 20th/1996 emphasized in article 3rd, VIII: “Democratic Management of Public Education, in the form of this law and the legislation of the educational systems.” Also, in the article 14, states:

Art. 14. The systems will define the regulations of democratic administration of public education in basic education, in accordance with its peculiarities and according to the following principles:

- I. Participation of education professionals in the preparation of school’s educational project.
- II. School and local communities’ participation in school councils or equivalents.

It is evident the principle of democratic management of the public school, legal framework guaranteed in law, has as the biggest challenge in its completion in the scope of educational institutions, through a collective work and educational policies towards to liberating and emancipating education.

Consolidating democratic practices inside school and consequently its management, requires the understanding of the concept of democracy, where a series of interwoven values have been hidden and misunderstood by the school community for years. The Brazilian public school is the result of an oppressive and slaving system that perpetuated the duality in educational function of two antagonistic classes for years. It valued the continuity of studies through the college and university education for the elites but had left the vocational training designated to the oppressed classes and then supply workforce.

Currently, the majority of the population continues without access to quality education, which contributes to be on the sidelines of participation and collective decisions that happen in our society and schools, in a specific way. Without full participation of the school community there won’t be, in fact, a democratic management.

We can’t think of the school’s democratic management without reflecting on the concept of the man as a builder of his reality, i.e., of his own history. How is it possible this man can exist in a excluding and capitalist society as the Brazilian one?

Mendes (2009) brings us the following reflection: “The man is a historical being. He doesn’t reinvent everything in every generation. The concept of a man, in the historical sense, is naturally a being of will, therefore, a subject” (p. 35).

The man is the subject of his history. Because he has the ability to think, reflect, act, change, create his reality, actively participating on it and not just reproducing mechanically everything around himself. Education is one of the ways that will empower the formation of this conception of man, of a citizen.

School as a social institution which forms citizens, must be a space for participation of educators, students, parents and the community in general, in order to build a culture of information about decision making processes there.

Hora (2010) highlights very well this question:

To ensure that a school is truly democratic, we must consider two fundamental elements:

(1) the creation of structures and democratic processes where the school life happens, represented by the general participation in the administrative and political issues, in the cooperative planning in school and in the classroom, for the assistance to the concerns, expectations and collective interests and firm stance against racism, injustice, centralized power, poverty and all forms of exclusion and inequality present in the school and society.

(2) the development of a curriculum that offers democratic experiments to the students, whose characteristics are in the multiplicity of information; the right to express themselves and be heard in the social construction of knowledge; in the formation of critical people about reality; in the creative process of expansion of democratic values and organized learning experiences around the problematization and questioning (p. 50).

Democratic management passes by all these elements listed above, because it can't build a meaningful participation without thinking about critical curriculum, covering both scientific knowledge and also school erudition, in creating spaces where the students have voice and time, where they are informed and asked to participate in the school directions and decisions, not only as mere spectators of ready-made opinions imposed from top to bottom.

It's important to comprehend and consolidate the democratic management as a change in the administrative and bureaucratic issues of school, where the manager is not the only one to make decisions, because everyone in the school community should be called to it, starting with the election of principals and, consequently, the formation of School Boards which is one of the effective forms of democratic and participatory management within public schools.

This paradigm breaks down the idea of a centralized, overbearing, individualistic manager, focused on paperwork that contributes in a little, or almost nothing, improvement of the teaching-learning process, because his work does not exceed the boundaries of controlling people and timetables, being the executor of tasks established not by the school community but rather imposed by official agencies, far from the reality in which it operates.

Thinking of a democratic administration is not something simple and easy, especially for the managers who support these bureaucratic and centralist stances, because the participation of professionals who are involved with the educational process cause astonishment. Then, it is important to understand that consolidating participatory practices within that context is difficult and complex.

Establishing a conception of full participation of that school is not a goal to be achieved in a short term. It is, on the contrary, a goal that requires dedication and strength and great will power of those who believe in this aspect as a stronger and democratic school.

Mendes (2009) clarifies his point when he says that:

In the case of a participatory policy, in which the priorities or the principles are defined by the citizens, it is necessary a reflection process organized to take the subjects involved in the definition of politics to realize the need to break with a determined school structure, which is no trivial task, especially in a situation of low participatory tradition (p. 93).

One of the obstacles to the full participation of citizens is in their awareness in the face of their reality, how they see themselves as people who can think and can transform their own environment. The capitalist system alienates and inculcates in people a cruel way of life, excluding them from the access to productions built collectively by humanity. In this way, being marginalized, the man feels incapable, distant and powerless to fight for his own change. This alienation caused by the capitalist system, makes it difficult for people to reflect on how

much they are explored and broken in their social, political, cultural and material life, making these latter objects easily handled by the dominant system.

A democratic administration that guarantees the participation of citizens in the construction of a better school, and a more liberating curriculum, won't answer the dominant pedagogy that uses increasingly aggressive strategies to keep its status quo.

4. Conclusion

The history of Brazilian Education has been shown as major hostile fighting field of two opposite proposals for education. On one side, there is the fighting for perpetuation of oppression and for maintaining the current state of alienation imposed by the capital. On the other side, we have the defenders of an education that emancipates and respects the man in his full sense, as a thinking person and constructor of this History.

Educational Reforms imposed by international agencies (World Bank, IMF, UNESCO, ECLAC) has demonstrated to be at the service of the people whose education is being shaped through the establishment of targets to be achieved and pass by the formation of Labour (workforce), by the implementation of a school management based on managerialism, on efficiency, effectiveness and streamlining of resources. In all cases, there is a concern with Basic Education, more specifically with the elementary school, with the speech of providing a better participation in society, and with a more egalitarian income distribution.

Against these conditions of alienation, it's important to fight for an education consolidated on the principles of critical theory that combats a false culture, directed to consuming and objectifying people, where their intellectual freedom end up being restricted and dissociated from his social-historical context, making them pawns in the capitalist world domination.

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