

Upper secondary education reform: communication deficit and political intercurrentences

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Abstract: The recent approval of the new Law that will govern the Brazilian Upper Secondary Education entailed a series of questions about its procedural strategy and about the very feasibility of its implementation. Issued as a Provisional Executive Order, it was quickly assessed and approved by the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, excluding from the discussion the social sectors focused on education. The necessary communication processes, understood as dialogical processes – crucial to discussing a matter possibly affecting the practices of the whole level of basic education – were not pursued, resulting in a Law debated solely in ministerial offices and in the National Congress offices of government leaders.

Keywords: upper secondary education; reform; communication; education; public policy.

Resumo: A recente aprovação da nova Lei que regerá o Ensino Médio brasileiro trouxe consigo uma série de indagações acerca da estratégia como foi encaminhada e da própria factibilidade quanto à sua implantação. Nascida como Medida Provisória, conheceu rápido trâmite na Câmara e no Senado, deixando à margem a participação dos setores sociais voltados ao tema da educação. Os necessários processos de comunicação, compreendidos como trânsitos dialógicos – decisivos para o tratamento de matéria com o alcance de uma mudança de rota em ciclo do ensino básico –, deixaram de ser acionados, resultando em uma Lei cujos interlocutores foram os gabinetes ministeriais e as salas de lideranças governistas do Congresso Nacional.

Palavras-chave: ensino médio; reforma; comunicação; educação; políticas públicas.

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1. INTRODUCTION

On February 16, 2017, was enacted the law to reform upper secondary education in Brazil. Originating in a Provisional Executive Order (MPV 746/2016) - and after minor adjustments and accelerated proceedings in Congress and the Senate - the legal document, discounted the opposition votes, was approved. For its implementation, however, it is necessary to approve the National Curricular Common Base (BNCC – *Base Nacional Comum Curricular*), the curricular guidelines already examined by the Ministry of Education (MEC), and put it to a vote in the National Education Council (CNE)¹.

The Reform is composed of measures that impact both the National Education Law (LDB – *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional*) and the organizational and functional structure of that level of education². The path to be followed until the implementation of the Project in schools is long and with numerous obstacles, including inconsistencies that have been pointed out by segments of civil society. A critical point of convergence among those involved in the subject – even though there are some political or conceptual differences concerning the Reform among them – concerns the haste in the submission and approval of the governmental proposal, given that, under the cover of a Provisional Executive Order, a flippant attitude soon hampered the imperative communication and discussion in a process of such magnitude and with so many impacts on our formal education.

In this article, we seek to recognize how simultaneously took place the development of the Law enacted by the Presidency of the Republic and certain political practices directed to building a new power configuration in response to the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff.

Curiously, in the agreement between the parties of the consortium that promoted impeachment, it was the party *Democratas* (DEM) that took on the Ministry of Education; that is, there was a reversal to a situation of decades ago. It should be noted that during the dictatorial period, that Ministry, given its strategic position for political and ideological control, was handed over to the most faithful allies of the regime.

Between 1964 and 1985, with few exceptions, the Ministers of Education came from a group consisting predominantly of members of the party *Aliança Renovadora Nacional* (ARENA: 1966-1979) or its allies. The breakup of ARENA resulted in parties that are also aimed at keeping the Ministry under their influence, such as the *Partido da Frente Liberal* (PFL: 1985-2007). In the very beginning of the 6th Republic, President José Sarney appointed two PFL members to the position, Marco Maciel (1985-1986) and then Jorge Bornhausen (1986-1987), old traveling companions at ARENA, the party of support to the dictatorship. And even in the administration of Fernando Collor de Mello

1. This text was ready when new facts came to light. Cesar Callegari asked to leave the presidency of the committee of the National Curricular Common Base of Upper Secondary Education, and published an article in the newspaper *Folha de S. Paulo* on July 03, 2018, in which he states: "This law needs to be revoked, the current secondary education BNCC rejected and the matter discussed again with society." (CALLEGARI, Cesar. Revogar a lei do ensino médio. Norma pode agravar desigualdades educacionais. *Folha de S. Paulo*, 03 jul. 2018. Disponível em: <<https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/opinia0/2018/07/cesar-callegari-revogar-a-lei-do-ensino-medio.shtml>>). On 07/08/2018, the media announced that the Ministry of Education was withdrawing the document to make adjustments in obscure points. Then, the National Council of Secretaries of Education (CONSED) reported that it will promote a public consultation on the BNCC, appointing for that the date of 08/08/2018, and promising to involve 28 thousand schools throughout the country. This brief recapitulation shows the misunderstandings that surround the subject, several of them pointed out in our text. We understand that it is crucial to participate in this debate, which is why we carried out this reflection still in the thick of the controversies involving the so-called reform of High School.

2. Articles of the LDB (Law nº 9,394, dated December 20, 1996) and Law nº 11,494, of 2007 (Fund for Basic Education Development – FUNDEB) are amended. In addition, it establishes the Policy of Promotion of Full-time Upper Secondary Education.

(1990-1992), the Ministry was headed by ARENA/PFL members such as Carlos Chiarelli (1990-1991) and Eraldo Tinoco Melo (1992-1992). José Goldemberg (1991-1992) was an exception.

This picture will begin to change in the Itamar Franco period (1992-1995), with the appointment of Murílio Avellar Hingel (1992-1995), a teacher who opposed the dictatorship. Next, we observe the organic rise to power of the forces that had fought against the military regime. First, Fernando Henrique Cardoso kept as head of MEC, over his two administrations, Paulo Renato Sousa (1995-2003), a member of the *Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira* (PSDB). Afterwards, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva nominated over his two terms a sequence of three ministers associated with the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), Cristóvão Buarque (2003-2004), Tarso Genro (2004-2005) and Fernando Haddad, who remained in the post during Dilma Roussef's presidency (2005-2012). Over her six years of presidency, she appointed seven education ministers, including Aloísio Mercadante (PT) two times.

We can observe in the two periods under the aegis of PSDB and PT and in the Itamar Franco presidency that the political group that had been hegemonic for decades in the Ministry of Education was kept out of the Ministry, at least considering the senior key positions. Consequently, a new generation, with other ideological, programmatic and even partisan references, ascended in the career structure of the Ministry.

Considering this history, it is understandable that Michel Temer, after his peculiar ascension to power, has appointed as a Minister of Education a member of the Democratas (DEM) – whose roots date back to the old line that began with ARENA, and its subsequent designations: *Partido Democrático Social* (PDS) and *Partido da Frente Liberal* (PFL) – reconnecting the old and the new Republic. The head between 2016 and 2018, José Mendonça Bezerra Filho, with neither staff nor experience in the area, appointed as direct assistants a group of educational administrators who worked in federal and state PSDB's administrations. In other words, a long time away from the MEC and almost wiped out as a political party during the PT era – its survival, ironically, was due to the tsunami that toppled President Dilma Roussef's - the DEM and its inheritance returned to the Ministry as a result of the power allocation agreed on to promote the impeachment. The subsequent movement of possibly putting in motion the educational programs desired by the new holders of power depended on the so-called modernizing vision of their traditional ally, the PSDB.

The production context of the problematic reform of the Upper Secondary Education brings with it the hallmarks of a country in the middle of a deep political crisis and in which political agreements and alliances establish guidelines whose scope directly relate to the problems of governability and the search for some form of popular legitimization. In situations of this kind, there is a troubling

risk of resorting to marketing strategies, if not to spurious pacts, which could be pertinent to the case. In other words, the eagerness to promote political propaganda and to secure positions of power can subordinate educational purposes to partisan interests, ideological scripts, economic operations – in this case, a scenario that at the same time depresses public education funding and enables privatization initiatives in school systems.

The concern over the overhaul of the Upper Secondary Education is not new, as can be read, for example, in the Bill 6840/2013³. The rigid model, of a merely introductory nature, not always in agreement with the desires of young people between the ages of 15 and 17, has as an almost unique alternative the way to the University. The Education at a Glance 2017 report⁴ of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) – certainly unsuspected to be part of a leftist conspiracy – present some numbers to our reflection:

Only 53% of Brazilian students aged 15 are enrolled in Upper Secondary Education; those aged 16 represent 67%; among those aged 17 years, the figure is 55%. Of them only half complete the course in three years. Completion in five years of studies, with two grade repetitions, raises the rate to 57%.

According to the National Household Sample Survey (PNAD), by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE)⁵, in 2017 the rate of youngsters between 18 and 24 years old attending college was 23.8%. And 15.7% of all Brazilians had a college degree – the National Education Plan (PNE) introduced the goal of reaching 50% by 2024. According to the IBGE's survey, there were 8.07 million students enrolled in the Upper Secondary Education: 7.02 million in public schools and 1.05 million in private ones. Around 1.9 million of this age group completed secondary studies.

In its traditional design, the Upper Secondary Education looks like a crossing territory, in which circulate a group of students that will arrive at the end of the journey destined to pursue higher education. The rest of them, a contingent of millions of excluded youngsters, especially those belonging to the most vulnerable socio-economic strata, are destined to appear in statistics related to high school dropout. The debates on the National Education Plan (PNE) only reinforce the seriousness of the problem, which even mobilized the Dilma Rousseff administration, whose efforts, however, encountered obstacles in a context known for its adverse political nature⁶.

The enacted Upper Secondary Education reform presents a fundamental flaw. It was referred to the National Congress not as a Bill (PL – *Projeto de Lei*), but in the form of a Provisional Executive Order (MP – *Medida Provisória*) – which that it necessarily has to be submitted to a vote within 120 days, while possibly being amended by deputies and senators, and comes into force after publication in the Official Gazette. This extremely urgent voting procedure is relevant in circumstances involving serious crises, tragedies, problems to be solved in the short term. But it is totally inopportune when dealing with a complex subject such as education and, in this specific case, the overhaul of a

3. BRASIL. PL 6840/2013. Available from: <<http://www.camara.gov.br/proposicoesWeb/fichadetramitacao?idProposicao=602570>>. Access on: Dec. 14, 2018.

4. DOUMET, Marie-Helene. What's new? **Education Indicators in Focus**, n. 63. Available from: <<http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/educationindicatorsinfocus.htm>>. Access on: Dec. 14, 2018.

5. IBGE. **Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua** (Monthly). 2017. Available from: <<https://ww2.ibge.gov.br/home/estatistica/pesquisas/calendario.php#1>>. Access on: Dec. 14, 2018.

6. A fact recognized by the former minister Mendonça Filho, although in a crooked way and with no intention to better contribute to the debate: "There was, yes, a manifestation, in her television advertising, of commitment to what is essential in terms of education reform of upper secondary education in Brazil. Videos even circulated on the internet. What the deposed president lacked, provoked Mendonça, was 'courage or willingness to further the reform.'" (SOUSA, Josias. *Para ministro, mudar ensino médio é tão importante quanto reformar a economia*. SOUSA, Josias. *Para ministro, mudar ensino médio é tão importante quanto reformar a economia*. **Blog do Josias**, 28 set. 2016. Available from: <<http://josiasdesouza.blogosfera.uol.com.br/2016/09/28/para-ministro-mudar-ensino-medio-e-tao-importante-quanto-reformar-economia/>>. Access on: Dec. 14, 2018.

whole level of education, with implications for millions of young people. The then Attorney General, Rodrigo Janot, went so far as to argue that the MP was unconstitutional - this claim brought the matter to the Federal Supreme Court (STF), where it is to be considered by the appointed rapporteur, justice Edson Fachin – because it is not the proper legal instrument to promote structural changes in public policies.

Society – represented by teachers, students, parents, professionals working in various educational activities – was excluded from the debate; the result was a rearrangement of what already existed, with corrigenda and modifications promoted by a ministerial commission and approved without substantive changes by the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. Next, a sudden announcement that provoked heated reactions from quite different segments, including a television presenter, a football coach, a Supreme Court justice – namely, Fausto Silva, Tite and Ricardo Lewandowski⁷ – in a very rare and ecumenical convergence in a country so politically polarized, who negatively expressed themselves about the non-obligatory nature of school subjects such as Arts, Spanish, Philosophy, Physical Education; all of this just after the Summer Olympics games in Rio de Janeiro and the corresponding campaign to emphasize sports practices in schools. Despite the fact that the Ministry of Education has retreated in some of the cases mentioned, namely Physical Education and Arts, there was a general feeling that the rush, besides being an enemy of perfection, is at the service of improvisation and circumstantial political arrangements. In a highly unpopular government whose proposals to “get the country out of the crisis” combine the ruse of misinformation and contradictory statements by senior officials, which seems to make the already fragile head of the government even more vulnerable (in his laconic role of admonishing ministers, denying what was said and defending himself against accusations involving corruption), establishing a “positive agenda” has gained top priority. The quick pace given to the Upper Secondary Education reform by resorting to a Provisional Executive Order reveals, first of all, the government’s need to offer the country something to make a strong impression, a political propaganda, to cheer the audience, even though the promise carries with it the marks of its own incompleteness. If it could function as a “bargaining chip,” the proposed changes to overhaul the Upper Secondary Education did not begun well, turning fundamental problems into a diversionary shadow play.

We could end our reflection at this point showing the haste of a process that ran over the National Education Forum (FNE), established the 1988’s Constitution and put into operation 22 years later, in 2010, by the National Conference of Education (CNE). The precipitateness of a government that has the distinction of being the least popular in all Brazilian republican history, formed by interest-driven alliances, some of them unspeakable, others preposterous (just look at the deference of former minister Mendonça Filho receiving in his cabinet messengers carrying an absurd education policy proposal oddly named School without Party, whose greatest accomplishment has been to align opinions contrary to its implantation,

7. The justice asserted: “Some unnamed [persons], closed in their offices, decided: ‘let’s exclude physical education, arts, this and that’. The population was not consulted”. (IMPEACHMENT foi ‘tropeço da democracia’, diz Lewandowski. **Folha de S. Paulo**. Sept. 09, 2016. Available from: <<https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2016/09/1817948-impeachment-foi-tropeco-da-democracia-diz-lewandowski.shtml>>. Access on: Dec. 14, 2018).

coming from the Attorney General's Office and of justices of the Supreme Federal Court), only reveals the disdain for the effective improvement of education in our country. Despite these snags, it is important to observe a little more closely some of the terms of the approved Law that are only awaiting the final proceedings of the National Education Council (CNE) for possible implementation, provided that the imbroglio explained in note 1 of our article can be untangled.

Reading the approved text allows us to identify several articles and paragraphs that display the concerns expressed in previous debates and documents, as we have already mentioned, and which aimed at expected changes in Upper Secondary Education, but which are still in the process of development and require a dialogue with society. With respect to what was originally formulated in the Provisional Executive Order, there is little of new in the enacted Law. It reveals itself as a document composed of corrections, additions and exclusions to the LDB, whose foundations rest in three main axes, on which we will return later: curricular flexibilization; full-time school; technical education. We will add, for reflection, a fourth and diffuse element: teachers' work conditions.

The course load increases from 800 to 1,400 hours – with a minimum of 1,000 hours per year in the first five years; 60% of the curriculum will be composed of compulsory subjects and 40% optional subjects. At least one of the three years of the level will be common to all students. Article 36 states that the new curriculum will have specific “formative itineraries” whose content will be chosen by the student among the following areas: Languages and their technologies; Mathematics and its technologies; Natural Sciences and their technologies; Applied Human and Social Sciences; Technical and professional training. The specifics will be defined by local educational networks and their schools, being compulsory the offer of at least two of the indicated areas. The inclusion of new compulsory subjects in the BNCC will depend on the approval of the National Education Council and the homologation of the Minister of Education. The Upper Secondary Education may be organized in the form of modules or credit system with specific terminology.

The issue of the subjects' choice and its implementation remains obscure, depending on what will be established in the BNCC, on the capabilities of local educational systems, on the students' options in assembling their “formative itineraries”. More consensual is the obligation of including Portuguese and Mathematics throughout the three years. Indigenous communities are entitled to schooling in their own languages. English must be offered from the 6th grade onward, with a second language, preferably Spanish, remaining as optional. Philosophy and Sociology were once again established as compulsory (they were excluded in the executive order), however it is not clear how they will be offered: as specific subjects or composing a comprehensive block vaguely called “studies and practices”⁸, or even distributed across the curriculum.

8. Chapter IV, Applied Human and Social Sciences, presents the following wording in § 2: “The National Curricular Common Base for upper secondary education shall include studies and practices of physical education, art, sociology and philosophy”. As it turns out, something close to some riddle to be deciphered.

The BNCC⁹, in its current stage, demands negotiating a difficult-to-understand labyrinth. The bulky text of almost 600 pages establishes ambiguities where explanations are required, insists on petty details (it lists close to 100 competences and more than 1,500 specific skills) whose result is to hinder current school practices that reflects the Brazilian regional diversity and even risks freezing innovative propositions already in progress¹⁰. This is what the report *Diagnostics and Proposals for Basic Education in Brazil*, produced by the Institute of Advanced Studies of the University of São Paulo¹¹, points out:

The BNCC does not establish the essential and indispensable knowledge that must be apprehended at the end of each stage of basic education. Instead, it determines each small step to be taken, in minute detail, in each grade. It reiterates the fragmentation of subjects and does not articulate the historically split poles of the initial and final years of elementary school [...] Many passages of the document, being unintelligible even for specialists, will not serve to guide the teaching practice. Thus, the text tends to be innocuous, not impelling or preventing the teacher's action, which is largely independent of all these parameters.

Let us consider a little further the axes referred to as structuring the proposal under examination.

1. Flexibilization. This is a point that has long been demanded by educators to allow student mobility, as well as contemplating students' purposes and vocations. In the structure still in force, there are almost always thirteen subjects: Portuguese, Mathematics, English, Spanish, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Arts, Physical Education, History, Geography, Philosophy and Sociology. The Law in question establishes "formative itineraries" and the consequent possibility of organizing the student's study program based on them.

Bearing in mind the conditions already pointed out for the approval of the Reform and the problematic entanglement of issues behind it, doubts abound. Regarding the general topic of flexibilization, there is the fact that young people – who are ultimately responsible for actualizing the curriculum flexibility and thus the specifics of the "formative itineraries" – were not consulted during the approval procedures of the Provisional Executive Order on how they would exercise this flexibility or create their educational itineraries. This time the students *were spoken for, they did not speak*. We are left without knowing what their expectations are, especially relating to their abilities and possibilities to make choices and under what limits and conditions. And now we ask ourselves: Will a tutoring system be set up? Will there be teams to carry out pedagogical orientation and accompaniment¹²?

Furthermore, since the process will depend on actions undertaken by States and even Municipalities in a country marked by stark regional economic differences and, therefore, by differing capacities of expanding or reducing the offer of subjects – the cost increases required by the alteration of the model will serve as an obvious pretext to harden the flexible – it does not seem difficult to foresee the growth in inequalities in formal education, especially in the public system. It is problematic, thus, to imagine that the student will choose freely,

9. BRASIL. **Base Nacional Comum Curricular**, 2018. Disponível em: <<http://basenacionalcomum.mec.gov.br/bncc-ensino-medio>>. Acesso em: jun. 2018.

10. For example, experiences in schools such as: Amorim Lima and Campos Salles (São Paulo); Escola da Serra (Belo Horizonte); Escola da Serra (Belo Horizonte); Escola Maria Peregrina (São José do Rio Preto/SP); Oficina Pindorama (Vargem Grande Paulista/SP); Projeto Âncora (Cotia/SP); Escola Viva São Pedro (Vitória/ES); municipal school systems in Sobral (CE) and Manaus (AM). Such initiatives are discussed in the document referenced below. It should be noted that there are work proposals of extreme interest being carried out in schools and education systems by initiative of groups of teachers, principals etc. Roughly speaking, the BNCC seems to be less than attentive to such actions.

11. **DIAGNÓSTICOS e propostas para a educação básica brasileira**, Instituto de Estudos Avançados da Universidade de São Paulo. 2018. Available from: <<http://www.iea.usp.br/publicacoes/textos/diagnosticos-e-propostas-para-a-educacao-basica-brasileira>>. Access on: Dec. 14, 2018.

12. For illustration, there is the fact that schools can adopt a credit system. In this way, when concluding a certain discipline in High School, the student obtains a credit and can take advantage of it either in Technical Education or eventually in the college. Such a procedure, which is possible on paper, demands a level of organization of the schools and of the country's whole general education system that, for now, is only a pipe dream.

for example, one of the areas already mentioned or their possible combinations, because everything will depend on the reality of the education systems and their public or private schools and even on the personal condition of the students. Of these, 30% are enrolled in night high schools; it is important to ask how young people between the ages of 15 and 17 will attend disciplines or areas that are of interest to them when offered in other school units, considering the large number of obstacles to mobility and safety in the case of large cities.

Ultimately, the logic of economic rationalization will play a decisive role, depending on whether local school systems possess the material conditions to meet the requests. It turns out that interests and possibilities cannot always be combined, for example, making students aspiring a technical training subordinate their malleable hopes to the imperatives of objective limitation in choices. We risk starting a paradoxical process of “supervised curricular freedom”. Indeed, in its various disagreements, the reform Law and the BNCC inject within the exalted topic of flexibility the rigor of standardization – 60% of the content is nationally standardized, leaving just 40%¹³ for the diversified itineraries established by different regions and schools – promoting an odd situation that presents at least two developments. On the one hand, the standardized test aimed at the upper secondary education, such as the ENEM and the entrance examinations for the big universities, are of national scope, obviously indicating that curricular standardization will gain prominence, reducing the impact of diversification initiatives. On the other hand, the so-called *sistemas de ensino* (that is, standardized teaching methods), in their economic rationalization in the production of materials, and thus in their imposition of uniformity, in their sale of workbooks and other didactic and pedagogical materials to all regions of the country, will tend to be even more pervasive in upper high schools.

2. Vocational education. The idea of courses aimed at labor market qualification is defensible. There are young people who do not show great interest or aptness for higher education. The reasons are of several orders: socioeconomic, work related, affective, etc. In the current secondary education structure, these students follow an introductory study itinerary, but, in general, there is something missing, since most of the students either drop out or conclude their studies but do not enroll in higher education, as we have already shown. In many cases, they seek other education structures in order to obtain some professional qualification, such as technical schools, federal institutes or courses in the S-System¹⁴.

The new Law, however, is laconic regarding the treatment of this issue. In it we read that the student, when seeking technical and vocational training, must continue studying compulsory subjects and respect the Upper Secondary Education established workload. The areas made available will depend on local arrangements, as set forth in § 8 of article 36:

The offer of technical and vocational training referred to in item V of the caput, conducted in the institution itself or in partnership with other institutions, must

13. The ‘flexible’ subjects can even be offered through Distance Learning.

14. The S-System comprises a set of nine organizations related to professional categories, which receive funding for providing various services. These are: National Rural Apprenticeship Service (SENAR); National Service of Commercial Learning (SENAC); Social Service of Commerce (SESC); National Cooperative Learning Service (SESCOOP); National Service of Industrial Learning (SENAI); Social Service of Industry (SESI); Social Service of Transport (SEST); National Transport Learning Service (SENAT); and the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (SEBRAE).

be approved in advance by the State Education Council, homologated by the State Secretary of Education and certified by the education systems.

Hence there is an understandable doubt about what ultimately is meant by vocational education. Is it a technicist, functionalist vision, to be adapted according to market imperatives and regional labor demands, aimed at the children of the working classes and the unequal struggle they face to occupy better-qualified jobs? As Carlos Roberto Jamil Cury reminds us:

This will confirm something that in the educational history of Brazil is very recurrent, which is what we call the double network, that of *homo sapiens* and *homo saber [homo knowledge]* ... The LDB [National Education Law, which establishes and regulates the organization of Brazilian education] says that the Upper Secondary Education is responsible for the complete formation of the citizen. Now, [with these changes] you are cutting the apple in the middle, between those who will receive a vocational training and those who will receive an intellectual formation¹⁵.

It is possible to consider that the ultimate goals of the proclaimed vocational education bring on the dangers of discriminating and separating within Upper Secondary Education student categories to be given more or less recognition and valuation: on the one hand, young people destined “to do” and, on the other hand, other youngsters destined “to think.”

3. Full-time education¹⁶. Brazil already accumulates interesting experiences of extending the school time of young people in formal education. There are examples of school models such as the CIEPs and CEUs, which started auspiciously, but whose implementation was interrupted halfway. Many Brazilian states already offer full-time schooling in Upper Secondary Education. According to the 2015 School Census¹⁷, there are 5.6% of students in full-time schooling; the three states with the highest rates are Pernambuco (38%), Rondônia (26.9%) and Ceará (14.3%). In Espírito Santo, in 2018, there were 32 full-time schools in this level (of a total of 240 units). And in the examinations of the Basic Education Evaluation System (SAEB), in 2017, the state’s students obtained the highest average grades in the country.

Despite the possible merits of extending the time students spend in the school, there are still doubts about the curricular arrangements and the policies for ensuring student permanence in school. The legal document we are discussing does not clarify what it means to implement full-time education processes – as we understand it, that is, based on the aggregation of the various elements that must be present to ensure a more comprehensive development of the students. Moreover, the approved text does not consistently reflect the socioeconomic variables that mark the Brazilian regions, an important aspect when it is intended that students spend more time in the school. In the latter case, we know about the heterogeneous reality of the country and the socioeconomic groups and classes whose children attend, especially, the public education. There are students who take nightly courses because they perform work duties during the day or even those that combine work and study. The

15 . ROSSI, Marina. Reforma do Ensino Médio é aprovada no Senado. **El País**. 09 fev. 2017. Available from: <https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2016/12/14/politica/1481746019_681948.html>. Access on: Dec. 14, 2018.

16 . It is beyond our scope to discuss what is a full-time education, integral education, extended school day or extended school shift, and even the educational or socioeconomic implications involved therein.

17 . BRASIL. MEC/INEP. **Censo escolar 2015**. Available from: <<http://inep.gov.br/resultados-e-resumos>>. Access on: Dec. 14, 2018.

full-time proposal without proper policies aimed at student permanence may result, in contrast to expectations, in an increased school dropout – data from the National Survey by Household Sample (PNAD) of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), indicate economic causes as one of the main vectors leading to upper high school abandonment, given the fact that a large part of this contingent of young people need to contribute to the family budget.

The government is announcing that the Federal Government will contribute financial resources to schools that enroll full-time (two unknowns: What happens when the term for disbursements expires? Will schools that do not adopt the program continue to be left in proverbial abandonment?). The Government also promises to invest in the effort, in the first two years, between 1 and 1.5 billion *reais*, corresponding to 2 thousand *reais* per student. This effort is aimed at achieving the PNE goal, which mandates that by 2024 at least 25% of students should be in full-time schooling. The Law approved, however, has an addendum and conditions the disbursement of resources to budget availability. The addendum is short, but strong, and bears bad news, because it represents a paradoxical case of commitment that makes it clear that there is no commitment.

The economic scenario, at least as it is being presented by specialists, has all the colors, except the rosy one, in a mixture of predictions ranging from prolonged recession, fiscal chaos, to a probable apocalypse from which very few anointed ones will be saved. It has become commonplace to affirm the urgent need to make adjustments in the economy, in public finances, in labor and social security legislation, without which we will ensure a dark future. Leaving aside the composite that mixes the need for adjustments and pure financial terrorism, one of these remedial measures is already in place. It is the PEC 241 or 55 (spending ceiling), which created constitutional impediments for public investments by limiting their readjustments to inflation in the previous year. According to the legal text, the ceiling for 2017 – PEC's first year in force - was defined according to the primary expenses paid in 2016, with a correction of 7.2% – the inflation forecast for that year. From 2018, federal funding will only increase according to the accumulated inflation, in values measured by the National Broad Consumer Price Index (IPCA). Such economic policy will have enormous consequences on spending items that were established by the Constitution of 1988: it will affect the positive results resulting from mandatory budget allocations to areas such as education, health, science and technology, etc. The setting of education spending at 10% of GDP, established by the PNE, in practice has lost its validity. Moreover, the budget of the Ministry of Education for 2018 repeats almost the same value of 2017: 107.5 billion *reais*. It is a fact that Congress approved additional resources of 1.5 billion *reais* to the Fund for Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and Valorization of Education Professionals (FUNDEB); the addendum, however, was vetoed by President Michel Temer when he sanctioned the 2018 Annual Budget Law (LOA), arguing that already exists a provision of 14 billion *reais* in extra resources for the said Fund.

Without going into the details of the ultimate impacts of the PEC, the restriction on public resources allocation to education remain obvious. To adjust all this to the increase in investments demanded by the extension of full-time schooling is something that awaits explanations beyond the fanciful exercise of rhetoric.

Observing the three structuring bases of the Law under examination, it is odd that there is almost no systematic proposal regarding projects aimed at teacher training. The brief passage on this subject is a faulty cure aiming to worsen the disease, and we find it between items IV and V. They are changes and additions to article 61 of the LDB that established that shall be considered workers in education the “holders of a technical or superior degree in pedagogy or related area (Included by Law nº 12.014 of 2009).” The Law in discussion is gaining a new and out of tune wording, since it extends the exercise of basic teaching to: “professionals with reputed knowledge recognized by the respective education systems to teach content of areas related to their training to meet the provisions of item V of the caput of article 36.”

As the document in question establishes vocational education as one of the possible “formative itineraries” of the students, for example, engineers, doctors and dentists with “reputed knowledge” – whatever that means in the present context - are allowed to teach classes in their areas of expertise, such as clinical analysis, prosthetics, computer maintenance etc. We can only imagine the effects on the labor organization and the set of demands of full-time teachers, working together with professionals who would only be part-time teachers and would lack the proper preparation to respond to the daily didactic and pedagogical challenges of the classroom. In addition, it would be necessary to unravel an enigma: what type of specialist “with reputed knowledge” would be willing to accept the routine of being a High School teacher, especially in public ones?

In a document of such magnitude, which mentions concepts such as transversality, itinerary formation, integrated work, apprehension of multiple language codifications, digital communication challenges, project-based learning, etc., we would expect the provision for new teacher training strategies, for example, the inclusion of professional profiles more attentive to the varied links between the fields of communication and education¹⁸.

The ultimate problem, however, when teachers activities are at stake, is: without a consistent policy aimed at initial and continuing training, improving material work conditions and providing decent wages, everything else will be fog to hide the old epigram of Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr: “Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose.” The more things change, the more they stay the same.

18. In Brazil there are countless experiences, academic works, lines of research that deal with the subject. The periodical *Comunicação & Educação*, in several of its issues registers contributions in this sense. Proposals regarding media education in Rio de Janeiro, Education communication in São Paulo, are examples of innovative initiatives that contribute to complying with the item concerning the training of teachers to face the challenges of the contemporary world.

2. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

We verified in these considerations on the reform of Upper Secondary Education that there are many questions whose referral and possible resolution are not clarified in the enacted Law, or in the BNCC. There are obvious weaknesses, lack of public debate, exclusion of the main interested parties and precipitateness that bears little or no relation to the fundamental problems affecting Brazilian education in general and, particularly, the level of education discussed in our text. There seems to be little doubt among teachers, students and experts that changes in Upper Secondary Education are needed, they should, however, occur under a relaxed and agreed-upon atmosphere between all stakeholders. Ensuring a proper communication – understood as a process that is not limited to the drumming of the media drums and political immediacy - based on dialogical processes and the inclusion of different players, would favor the development of a project of educational change capable of meeting citizens' expectations.

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