

World Bank proposals for Brazilian educational policy (2016-2018)*

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Abstract

In this article, we discuss the proposals of the World Bank for Brazilian education policy from 2016 to 2018. To this end, we examined excerpts from four documents issued by the World Bank (2016, 2017a, 2017b, 2018), an international organization that provides loans and technical advice to member countries, as well as plays an expressive role in intellectual production, through the preparation of a set of documents that subsidize the implementation of educational policies. We found in our study a World Bank's emphasis on state and education reform, in which the fulfillment of basic educational needs is considered as one of the fundamental variables to manage poverty levels. It would be possible through education, which promotes the acquisition of skills and competencies during the school years, to foster jobs and consequently obtain income to reduce poverty. It seems that education is conceived as a central element for alleviating the effects of poverty and promoting equity in the four World Bank documents analyzed. Education is also pointed out as one of the reasons for the inefficiency of public spending in Brazil, which tends to express an alignment with the neoliberal project of society, starting in the 1990s.

Keywords

Brazilian educational policy – World Bank – Neoliberalism – Poverty.

* The author take full responsibility for the translation of the text, including titles of books/articles and the quotations originally published in Portuguese.

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Introduction

In this article we present the study of Brazilian educational policy from the 1990s on, which is in part related to the reform of the Brazilian state and, therefore, responds to the process of satisfying basic educational needs, aiming to manage poverty levels. In the same way, international organizations began to systematically interfere in the education of developing countries, under the justification of the priority given to elementary/basic education, which, from an economic point of view, would provide greater return and, politically, would promote equity.

Among the international organizations, we highlight the World Bank in this study, for granting loans to its member countries, as well as producing a set of documents constituting a broad production of knowledge for and about the countries to which the loans are granted. We also emphasize the intellectual function of the World Bank through publications aimed particularly at developing countries, recommending the implementation of public policies.

Thus, in this article we aimed at discussing the World Bank's propositions for Brazilian education policy between 2016² and 2018. To this end, we discussed excerpts from four documents issued by the World Bank in the delimited period of study, namely: *Retaking the path to inclusion, growth and sustainability (2016)*; *Informe sobre el desarrollo mundial 2018: Mensajes principales: aprender para hacer realidad la promesa de la educación (2017a)*; *A fair adjustment: efficiency and equity of public spending in Brazil (2017b)*; and *World Development Report 2018: Learning to realize education's promise World Bank Group, 2018*.

These four World Bank documents comprised the documentary *corpus* of the research for the master's thesis of Guerra (2020), which in part addressed the interference and proposals of international organizations in policies for elementary and middle school (2006-2016). Such documents expressed the continuity of the policy of World Bank's since the 1990s, while at the same time responded to new social demands.

The document *The state in a changing world* (World Bank, 1997) is used to explain how the proposals of World Bank continue to impact the formulation of social and educational policies in the current context. The analysis is also based on the studies of Fonseca (1998a, 1998b); Tommasi (1998); Arruda (1998); Coraggio (1998); Silva (2000, 2002); Oliveira and Fonseca (2001); Frigotto and Ciavatta (2003); Figueiredo (2006, 2009); Zanardini, I. (2007); Zanardini, J. (2008); Pereira (2009, 2018); Deitos (2010); Shiroma, Moraes, and Evangelista (2011); Evangelista and Leher (2012); and Evangelista and Triches (2012).

Aspects of the interference of the World Bank in Brazilian education policy

The educational policy undertaken in Brazil since the 1990s represented the articulation between hegemonic economic and political forces based on neoliberalism. In

2- Dilma Vana Rousseff, democratically re-elected in 2014, was removed from the government by the impeachment process on August 31, 2016 and Vice President Michel Miguel Elias Temer Lulia replaced her.

that decade, international organizations began to interfere systematically in educational issues in Latin American and Caribbean countries, particularly with regard to educational policy, through technical and pedagogical advice, international conferences and the preparation of various documents (FRIGOTTO; CIAVATTA, 2003; DEITOS, 2010; SHIROMA; MORAES; EVANGELISTA, 2011).

Among these international organizations, we focused our analysis on four documents from the World Bank, a multilateral funding organization, created in 1944, which operates with credit operations, financing and investments for projects in various areas. It is worth clarifying, initially, that the World Bank Group is currently composed of 189 member countries and has employees from more than 170 countries:

The World Bank Group is one of the world's largest sources of funding and knowledge for developing countries. Its five institutions share a commitment to reducing poverty, increasing shared prosperity, and promoting sustainable development. (WORLD BANK GROUP, 2019)³.

The five institutions linked to the World Bank Group are: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD); the International Finance Corporation (IFC); the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA); and the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID). Each institution has its own governmental bodies, constituent agreements, and member countries. Brazil joined the IBRD in 1946, the IFC in 1956, the IAF in 1963, MIGA in 1993, and is not a member of ICSID (WORLD BANK GROUP, 2019).

However, the World Bank institutions providing financing and technical advice to developing country governments are only of the IBRD and the IAF. The IBRD has profit-making activities and provides loans to the public sector of the poorest middle-income countries on near-market terms. The IAF, on the other hand, relies on voluntary contributions and makes long-term loans to poor countries, with little capacity to lend on market terms. Partnerships with the private sector are carried out by IFC, MIGA, and ICSID (WORLD BANK GROUP, 2019).

Fonseca (1998a) points out that the World Bank/IBRD has been active in the Brazilian public sector as a funding agency in the area of infrastructure since the 1940s. However, from the 1970s on, it became the largest and most relevant source of financing in the social sector. Together with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank has also been involved in the process of reform and modernization of the Brazilian state, which began in the 1990s and was one of the conditionalities of the loans for structural and sector adjustments, through the process of renegotiation of the foreign debt and the opening of trade.

For the World Bank, strictly speaking, financing health and nutrition, education, population issues, urban development, and water supply and sanitation are considered social investments. In this sense,

3- “El Grupo Banco Mundial, una de las fuentes más importantes de financiamiento y conocimiento para los países en desarrollo, está integrado por cinco instituciones que se han comprometido a reducir la pobreza, aumentar la prosperidad compartida y promover el desarrollo sostenible” (GRUPO BANCO MUNDIAL, 2019, s/p).

In the mid-1970s, health and education became among the most important, given their potential to reduce poverty. The Brazilian social sector received, in the 1970-1990 period, about 15% of total credits, of which 1.6% went to education. The assignment of resources to health, in Brazil, begun in the 1980s, corresponding to 1.7% in relation to social credits. (GONZALEZ, 1990 *apud* FONSECA, 1998a, s/p).

From 1980 to 1995 there were four projects executed with the Ministry of Education (MEC), three of them aimed at elementary education in municipalities with population growth rates above 4% per year, which revealed the influence of the World Bank in Brazilian education (FONSECA, 1998a). In the 1990s, World Bank intervention in Brazilian elementary education reached a financing total of about US\$1 billion (TOMMASI, 1998), with the approval of six projects in thirteen Brazilian states⁴.

The process of negotiating projects for the Brazilian education sector between Brazil and international organizations is permeated by contradictions and interference from national and international economic and political interests. Thus, the processes that permeate the international agreements are not homogeneous, but on the contrary, the negotiations and the execution of the financing projects are complex and time consuming, considering the different interests.

Based on the Brazilian experience,

[...] it is possible to state that the World Bank's technical and financial cooperation has not been a neutral interaction, but rather a mechanism for the diffusion of international conceptions, especially those coming from the funding agency itself. These conceptions include instrumental aspects, such as project planning and management models, to conceptual and ideological formulations capable of guiding the agenda of the sector under financing. (OLIVEIRA; FONSECA, 2001, p. 64).

From the 1970s on, and especially in the 1990s in Latin America, education gained greater importance in the formulations of the World Bank, as it would play a decisive role in economic growth, particularly with regard to basic education for the poor. The productivity of the poor assumed great importance for the World Bank, which included education, health and rural development in its credit framework, Initially it was restricted to infrastructure projects, in order to provide the essential elements for increasing productivity (FONSECA, 1998a).

Brazil's alignment with IMF and World Bank policies and strategies was accelerated in 1991 with the consented submission to the stabilization plan and adjustments to institutional reforms. Accordingly, educational policies referring to public basic education were oriented in consonance with the economic project implemented in Latin American

4- Of the six projects, two went to the Northeast region, covering all states: "Basic Education in the Northeast II" (Maranhão, Ceará, Pernambuco and Sergipe) and "Basic Education in the Northeast III" (Piauí, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, Alagoas and Bahia). The other projects went to the states of Minas Gerais: "Project to Improve the Quality of Basic Education in Minas Gerais"; São Paulo: "Project Innovations in Basic Education in São Paulo" (INNOVATIONS); Espírito Santo: "State of Espírito Santo Basic Education Project"; and Paraná: "Quality Project in Public Education in Paraná" (PQE).

countries. Thus, the interference of international financial institutions occurred through the subordination of governments to a set previously established conditions for granting the loans (SILVA, 2002).

The World Bank argued that the lack of reforms in education has brought economic, social and political costs to developing countries and not carrying them out would prevent the promotion of quality, productivity, modernization and insertion of the country in the globalization process (FIGUEIREDO, 2006; ZANARDINI, I., 2007). Following this reasoning, the state should be responsible for providing basic services in education and health, aiming to keep poverty at bearable levels in order to ensure the minimum conditions for the implementation of economic adjustment policies (FIGUEIREDO, 2006).

The World Bank expanded its functions to keep acting more and more as a central political organ, especially as a coordinator of the global development process (FONSECA, 1998a, 1998b), through the production of a series of political documents that support the theoretical-conceptual referential for the economic and social policy area. Therefore, among the concepts derived from World Bank documents that underpin the funding process and simultaneously influence the development of Brazilian education policies there were: economic development, sustainable development, autonomy, equity, poverty, learning, efficiency, and justice.

The agreement that constituted the World Bank/IBRD determines non-intervention in the policies of member countries. However, when it became the mentor of governments in the southern hemisphere it began to exert great influence on the politics of developing countries, and although it defends the free market, it is an interventionist institution. In this sense, one of its main actions includes providing advice to countries, through the production of knowledge (CORAGGIO, 1998; ARRUDA, 1998; PEREIRA, 2009).

The research that underpins the advice provided by the World Bank produces evidence even contrary to its own recommendations, which may be related to the correlation of international forces, added to microeconomic analyses. To exemplify, we point out the discrepancy between the discourse for the improvement of quality in education and the proposal for the reduction of resources for social policies. Therefore, the emphasis on education is not limited to financing credit lines, but to inducing measures associated with educational reforms. We highlight the World Bank's tendency to supposedly know the socioeconomic and educational reality of developing countries. This condition gives it a certain authority to influence the proposition of educational reforms (CORAGGIO, 1998). In the field of economics, even with a short history of producing innovative knowledge, the World Bank

[...] enjoys legitimacy as a bastion of development expertise. Its publications are a reference worldwide for public managers, researchers, and opinion makers in the most diverse areas. Although it cultivates the appearance of technical excellence, the research conducted by the World Bank is highly normative, serving to proselytize its political agenda. In fact, the intellectual activity of the World Bank does not submit to the rules of the scientific field, governed by peer review and the need to have plurality of approaches and a broad and balanced view of the evidence. (PEREIRA, 2018, p. 3).

Furthermore, Pereira (2018) points out that the World Bank's research is backed up by its own previous research, or is requested by the institution. To exemplify, the report *The state in a changing world* (1997)

is devoted to the role and effectiveness of the state: what the state should do, how it should do it, and how to do it better in a rapidly changing world. These issues are high on the agenda of developing and industrial countries. (WORLD BANK, 1997, p. IV).

The state reform was articulated to the set of economic reforms, at the same time that it provided support for structural and sector adjustments. Thus, the innovative solutions indicated by the World Bank (1997) reaffirmed the measures already foreseen in the *The Master plan for the reform of the Brazilian state* (1995)⁵. Therefore, the guidelines set forth in this plan were in harmony with those of the World Bank (1997), reinforcing what had been announced, especially in relation to the state's capacity for governability⁶ which would be achieved through

[...] the planned transition from a rigid and inefficient type of bureaucratic public administration, focused on itself and on internal control, to a flexible and efficient managerial public administration, focused on serving the citizenry. (BRASIL, 1995, p. 12).

Education reform, which is part of the state reform process, is also justified in the World Bank report (1997), with priority given to elementary education, since from an economic point of view it would provide a greater social return and, politically, it would be supported by the relevance of promoting equity. Likewise, elementary/middle education is understood as the one that, together with basic health, can promote the struggle against poverty and inequality, which could generate instability and violence. The report indicates

Public policies and programs must aim not merely to deliver growth but to ensure that the benefits of market-led growth are shared, particularly through investments in basic education and health. (WORLD BANK, 1997, p. 4).

We reiterate, in this sense, that the report *The state in a changing world* (1997) had great influence in the reform of basic education and school management in the 1990s, because it would be necessary to establish new paradigms of knowledge and learning. The "new paradigm", supported by post-modernity and, in part, by the ideology of globalization and liberal assumptions, still has as its central theme the continuity of

5- *O Plano diretor da reforma do aparelho do Estado* (1995) [The Master Plan for the reform of the Brazilian state] was the first document of the Ministry of Administration and State Reform (MARE), having Luiz Carlos Bresser Pereira as one of the articulators of the reform and modernization of the state.

6- Governance would be a fundamental criterion for successful reforms. In the process of implementing adjustment policies, the state should guarantee the stability and security of the system. The emphasis on governance is associated with the government's ability to carry out the adjustment policies defined by international bodies (LEHER, 1998).

educational reform in order to adapt it to the world cultural and economic scenario, which has been outlined since the 1990s (ZANARDINI, I., 2007).

The World Bank stands out,

[...] issuing guidelines and implementing economic, political, and ideological strategies for the permanent movement of reproduction of capital, dictating rules for the actions of the state and educational policies. As a result of the incorporation of the World Bank prescription in Brazil, there were changes in evaluation policies, components, therefore, of the state reform itself. (ZANARDINI, J., 2008, p. 91).

It is worth reflecting, therefore, on the margin of autonomy of the countries that negotiate credits to select which policies will be financed, which inputs will be acquired, as well as what will be the possible alternatives to meet educational demands. In this sense, Fonseca (1998a, 1998b) points out that in the 1990s the strategies to improve education were related to the acquisition of teaching materials, to the detriment of human resources. Thus, financial institutions reduced the improvement of the quality of education to a set of economic regulations to be introduced in the educational sector that were, in reality, interventionist policies that weakened national institutions (SILVA, 2000).

Basic education has been strategic to the World Bank, seen as a determining factor in reducing poverty and providing equity. The document *Retaking the path to inclusion, growth and sustainability* (2016), makes a systematic diagnosis of Brazil signaling that it is one of the most unequal countries in the world, with respect to economic opportunities and access to basic services. However, it recognizes that in the last decade the socioeconomic advances in Brazil have been remarkable and, starting in 2003, the country has been recognized for its advances in poverty reduction, in which millions of people have been lifted out of poverty:

Between 2002 and 2010, about two-thirds of GDP growth came from increases in the quantity and quality of labor inputs, which on average added 2.7 percentage points to average growth, as Brazil went through an accelerated demographic transition and reaped the rewards of expanded access to education. (BANCO MUNDIAL, 2016, p. xviii).

Improved access to basic health and education and increasing social transfers contributed to reducing poverty and decreasing inequality in Brazil throughout the 2000s. However, the World Bank (2016) points out that the low quality of public education still persists. The document *Informe sobre el desarrollo mundial 2018 - Mensajes principales: aprender para hacer realidad la promesa de la educación* (2017) points out that

Children from marginalized homes are the most in need of a good education to thrive in life. But without learning, education cannot be the determining factor in ending poverty and promoting shared prosperity⁷. (BANCO MUNDIAL, 2017a, p. 1, our translation).

7- “Los niños de hogares marginados son los que más necesitan de una buena educación para prosperar en la vida. Pero sin aprendizaje, la educación no puede ser el factor determinante para poner fin a la pobreza y fomentar la prosperidad compartida” (BANCO MUNDIAL, 2017a, p. 1)

In the same direction, the World Bank (2017a) argues that learning outcomes are almost always much worse among the low-income population, with many of the children from these families not even having access to school. In this logic, these serious problems constitute a “learning crisis.” In light of this, the three dimensions of the “learning crisis” are defined as follows:

The first is the unsatisfactory learning outcomes. The second dimension of the learning crisis is its immediate causes, which in schools manifest themselves in the breakdown of the relationship between teaching and learning. [...] The third dimension of the crisis is its deeper systemic causes [...] many of the deeper causes of the learning crisis are political in nature⁸. (BANCO MUNDIAL, 2017a, p. 1-3, our translation).

Regarding the second dimension of the “learning crisis”, we identified four aspects that cause it:

Children do not arrive at school prepared to learn. Malnutrition, disease, poor parental investments, and the difficult conditions associated with poverty undermine early childhood learning. Teachers often lack the skills and motivation to teach effectively. Teachers are the main factor affecting learning in schools. [...] Often, materials do not reach classrooms, or when they are available, they have no effect on learning. Poor administration and governance tend to undermine the quality of schooling⁹ (BANCO MUNDIAL, 2017a, p. 2, our translation, emphasis added).

As we presented the dimensions and aspects of the “learning crisis”, the *World Development Report 2018: Learning to realize education’s promise World Bank Group*, 2018 proposes that changing the unsatisfactory results depends on the education systems that must implement three strategies that

- *Assess learning* – to make it a serious goal. Measure and track learning better; use the results to guide action.
- *Act on evidence* – to make schools work for all learners. Use evidence to guide innovation and practice.
- *Align actors* – to make the whole system work for learning. Tackle the technical and political barriers to learning at scale.¹⁰. (WORLD BANK, 2018, p. 16).

8- “La primera son los resultados de aprendizaje poco satisfactorios. [...] La segunda dimensión de la crisis del aprendizaje son sus causas inmediatas, que en las escuelas se manifiestan en el quiebre de la relación entre la enseñanza y el aprendizaje. [...] La tercera dimensión de la crisis son sus causas sistémicas más profundas [...] muchas de las causas más profundas de la crisis del aprendizaje son de naturaleza política” (BANCO MUNDIAL, 2017a, p. 1-3).

9- “*Los niños no llegan a la escuela preparados para aprender.* La malnutrición, las enfermedades, las escasas inversiones parentales y las difíciles condiciones asociadas con la pobreza menoscaban el aprendizaje en la primera infancia. [...] *A menudo los docentes no tienen las competencias ni la motivación para enseñar de manera eficaz.* Los docentes son el principal factor que afecta el aprendizaje en las escuelas. [...] *Con frecuencia, los insumos no llegan a las aulas o, cuando se cuenta con ellos, no tienen un efecto en el aprendizaje.* [...] *Una mala administración y gobernanza suelen menoscabar la calidad de la escolarización*” (BANCO MUNDIAL, 2017a, p. 2).

10- “[...] constituyen el ABC de las reformas educativas exitosas:

- *Aprender más sobre el nivel de aprendizaje para que su mejora sea un objetivo formal y medible.* Medir mejor el aprendizaje y mejorar su seguimiento; utilizar esos resultados para orientar las medidas que deban adoptarse.

Therefore, for the World Bank, “Schooling without learning is a terrible waste of precious resources and of human potential. Worse, it is an injustice. Without learning, students will be locked into lives of poverty and exclusion¹¹” (WORLD BANK, 2018, p. xi). Therefore, it asserts that reforms in education allow countries to enjoy the benefits generated by education such as long-term economic growth by preparing people for life and work.

The concept of present learning in the neoliberal proposals and reforms is instrumental in nature and dissolves the function of teaching, the appropriation of culture and science historically accumulated. According to Libâneo (2012), the concept of learning, for the World Bank, expresses on the one hand a narrow view by referring to minimum learning, i.e., basic skills for survival; and on the other hand, it expresses an expanded view, in the sense of going beyond the school and cognitive sphere, including experiences and learning throughout life, i.e., permanently.

According to the logic of the World Bank (2017a), the reward for efforts to implement educational policies based on the proposed principles is an education that helps growth and sustained development. Quality education would drive economic growth and promote employment, income, health, and poverty reduction. It is the skills and competencies acquired during schooling that would provide an individual’s resources for work and life, not just the time spent in school.

However, underlying the indication of the need to promote institutional and administrative reforms in education, we still observe the parameter of economic rationality that, since the 1970s, “[...] highlights the need to support the development of learning methods that allow saving resources, as well as stimulating countries whose primary schooling rates are low, to conduct a review of educational structures” (FIGUEIREDO, 2009, p. 1132).

On the other hand, the report *A fair adjustment: efficiency and equity of public spending in Brazil* (2017b) presents a diagnosis of public spending and points out that the Brazilian government spends poorly and more than it can afford. This report responds to a demand from the federal government in 2016, which requested the World Bank to prepare the document aimed at an analysis of the efficiency and equity of public spending in Brazil, which pointed to alternatives to reduce the fiscal deficit. One argument observed is that some social programs would be benefiting the rich, not effectively achieving the goals advocated by the World Bank itself. For this reason, it proposes saving part of the budget and implementing a “fair adjustment” to achieve a “sustainable trajectory” with the Brazilian fiscal accounts.

Regarding education, the report argues that

• *Basar el diseño de políticas en la evidencia para lograr que las escuelas estén al servicio del aprendizaje de todos los estudiantes.* Utilizar la evidencia para orientar la innovación y la práctica.

• *Construir coaliciones y alinear a los actores para que todo el sistema favorezca el aprendizaje.* Abordar los obstáculos técnicos y políticos que impiden el aprendizaje a escala” (BANCO MUNDIAL, 2018, p. 16, grifo do autor).

11- “Escarolarización sin aprendizaje es una lamentable pérdida de recursos valiosos y de potencial humano. Y lo que es aún peor, constituye una injusticia. Sin aprendizaje, los estudiantes estarán condenados a vivir en la pobreza y la exclusión” (BANCO MUNDIAL, 2018, p. v).

Public spending on primary and secondary education suffers from significant inefficiencies, such that the same level of services could be provided while saving 1 percent of GDP at the local level. Inter-municipal efficiency analysis shows that the current performance in education services could be maintained with 37 percent less resources spent on primary and 47 percent less spent on secondary education, corresponding to savings of approximately 1 percent of GDP. Low student-teacher ratios drive a large part of the inefficiency (39 percent). Increasing the number of students per teacher by 33 percent in primary and 41 percent in secondary schools would save R\$22bn (0.3 percent of GDP) per year. (WORLD BANK, 2017b, p. 14)

In this sense, the report points out that Brazil spends more than necessary on primary and secondary education and that the reduction in spending could be done by increasing the number of students per teacher, since the low teacher/student ratio would be the main cause of inefficiency. This inefficiency would be solved, therefore, by not hiring professionals to replace those who will leave their positions in the future. Another indication concerns the increase of time in teaching activities for the teacher and, in this case, the time in the classroom would be a response to the necessary adjustment.

What has occurred, in this case, is a broadening of the concept of teaching, in which teaching and management are part of the education of the pedagogy graduate. In the teacher training project, on the part of international/multilateral organizations, the emphasis on result control, the acquisition of competencies, and excessive responsibilities prevails. This range of functions configures the “*superteacher*”¹². Therefore, it seems, for “[...] the ongoing pedagogy of capital supposes to convince teachers that their intervention will certainly solve the country’s socioeconomic problems” (EVANGELISTA; LEHER, 2012, p. 13). Thus, it is propagated that public education is of poor quality, in part, because teachers lack the necessary competence and/or motivation to teach.

We highlight that the recent changes in the pedagogy course, related to the expansion of the functions of the pedagogy licentiate, which incorporate guidelines from international organizations and are part of the set of state reforms that aim to adapt education to neoliberal demands. They are defined in the National Curricular Guidelines for the Pedagogy Course (DCNP), effective through Resolution CNE/CP n° 01/2006 (EVANGELISTA; TRICHES, 2012, p. 186).

Another aspect mentioned in the report *A fair adjustment: efficiency and equity of public spending in Brazil*, (2017b) is that

The constitutional limitation of education spending to 25 percent of municipal revenues may be one of the main causes of inefficient spending. [...] it is likely that in order to comply with constitutional rules, many wealthy municipalities are forced to spend resources that do not necessarily increase learning. This is worrying given the drastic demographic transition the country is undergoing. With the rapid decline in the fertility rate to below 1.8, the number of

12- In relation to the “super-teacher”, it should be clarified that “His meaning is offered by a double role: object of the reform, since it acts modifying the teacher’s role, and instrument of the reform, since it will be through him that the reform will be implemented. In other words, a contradictory movement that shows the relationship between the super-teacher and the instrument-teacher who, being the object of the reform, is responsible for its implementation.

students has been falling rapidly in many municipalities, especially in elementary school. As this fall in the number of students is not necessarily associated with a fall in fiscal revenues, this implies that to comply with the law, many municipalities are obliged to spend more per student, even if this additional expenditure is not necessary. (WORLD BANK, 2017b, p. 14).

As exposed before, the drop in the birth rate caused a reduction in elementary school enrollments, which was not accompanied by a drop in net current revenues. What the World Bank (2017b) infers is that the state, by continuing to guarantee a minimum percentage of revenues, despite the drop in enrollment, would be, once again, being inefficient. Thus, in December 2016 the National Congress approved the Constitutional Amendment number 95 that limits federal spending on primary expenses and provides for greater spending on non-primary expenses. Such expenses concern spending to maintain the state and public services, while non-primary expenses are financial ones, such as public debt. The report *A fair adjustment: efficiency and equity of public spending in Brazil* (2017b) points out that

[...] it [Constitutional Amendment No. 95/2016] *does not ensure the design, quality, and enactment of fiscal reforms needed to comply with the adjustment path established by the rule.* Since the limit on expenditure growth applies only to aggregate primary spending, not to its components or specific programs, it does not provide guidance as to where to reduce spending. In this context, it is crucial to determine which expenditures should be reduced due to their limited effectiveness, their regressive incidence, and their negative impact on productivity, rather than concentrating reductions on those items that can be cut most easily. The quality of the fiscal adjustment will have repercussions for the provision of public services, equity and economic growth. (WORLD BANK, 2017b, p. 33).

Thus, at the same time that education is proclaimed as a central element for the reduction of poverty and sustained development, the World Bank states in the report *A fair adjustment: efficiency and equity of public spending in Brazil* (2017b) that the spending on education in Brazil can and should be reduced. As it points out, the allocation of a percentage of income results in unnecessary spending, as the number of elementary school enrollments has reduced due to the falling birth rate. It also states that “*Spending on higher education is both inefficient and very regressive—a reform of the system could save 0.5 percent of GDP in the federal budget*” (WORLD BANK, 2017b, p. 14), with the proposal to charge tuition fees in public universities.

The World Bank report (2017b) indicates that the results of education in Brazil have improved; however, they are low if we consider the increase in spending. In the same direction, we identified the following considerations:

Brazil's inefficiencies in primary and secondary education are large and have increased. [...]. The low performance of the Brazilian educational system is reflected in high failure and dropout rates, despite low and decreasing student-teacher ratios. [...] The low completion rate of upper secondary education is another indicator of poor performance of the education system. [...]

High age-grade distortion starts in primary education and continues through higher education, resulting in high average cost of producing a graduate. [...]The low quality of teachers is the most important factor constraining education quality. [...]Inefficiency in primary and secondary education is related primarily to an excessive number of teachers. Teachers in Brazil spend part of their time on unproductive activities. On average, teachers spend only 65 percent of their time teaching, against an international best performance benchmark of 85 percent. (WORLD BANK, 2017b, p. 120-126

We reiterate the World Bank's proposal not to reduce the number of students in class, as well as not to increase teachers' salaries. It also recommends increasing teachers' time in the classroom as one way of reducing failure and dropout rates. This aspect contradicts the World Bank's (2017a) assertion that teachers are primarily responsible for learning and that many lack the skills and motivation to teach effectively.

The World Bank considers education as a determining factor in fighting poverty. However, in the report *A fair adjustment: efficiency and equity of public spending in Brazil* (2017b) two findings are pertinent, namely: public spending on education can and should be reduced and the quality¹³ of Brazilian education is considered low. This provides "[...] the intervention of private groups in public education systems, supposedly bearers of the magic wand whose touch will lead education to 'good quality', after all, businessmen know how find results." (EVANGELISTA; LEHER, 2012, p. 12).

The economic bias in the World Bank's focus on education is not necessarily related to the economic aspects of the education system. However, it is expressed in issues inherent to the policies formulated and answered through the same theory and methodology with which they seek to respond to the market economy. The attempt to fit the educational system to the market system and establish relationships among school, business, parents, students, consumers of services, pedagogical relationships and products, is what imprints an economic bias in education (CORAGGIO, 1998).

Besides intellectual production, the World Bank offers cooperation that includes the development of financing projects. Therefore, we observe that the questioning of Fonseca (1998b) about the pertinence of international cooperation as an alternative to the state to propose temporary projects that are limited financially and geographically, conceived as a solution to structural problems that not even the state has solved, remains up-to-date.

Conclusions

Within the limits of this article, we sought to discuss the World Bank's proposals for Brazilian education policy from 2016 to 2018. It appears that the concern with basic education has been of a strategic nature for poverty alleviation, maintaining the labor force, and increasing the productivity of the poor, through the acquisition of minimum skills and competencies. In the same way, by seeking to alleviate the effects of poverty,

13- The discussion on quality in Education is wide and the concept is a historical construction that takes on diverse meanings in different times and spaces. Check, among others: Dourado, Oliveira and Santos (2007).

the provision of basic services, particularly education and health, conceals the structural problems that cause social inequality.

The current World Bank proposals, studied in this article, have incorporated the discourse of poverty alleviation in which the fulfillment of basic educational needs is considered one of the fundamental variables for the management of poverty levels and promotion of equity. On the other hand, it proposes to reform the state and, therefore, education, which is understood as one of the factors responsible for the supposed inefficiency of public spending in Brazil.

The World Bank plays a significant role in the production of knowledge for and about countries, as well as in the granting of loans. Its intellectual production influences the formulation of policies in member countries. We can infer the existence of a confrontation/conflict between the arguments of alleviating poverty and the objectives of minimizing public spending.

The World Bank's proposals depict the alignment of a neoliberal societal project in which the foundations of the analyses carried out are related to the management of economic adjustment policies. The policies implemented in the 1990s find current support for the concretization of objectives that go beyond the correlation of national forces.

The "crisis", when displaced to learning, praises the individuality that is supported by the World Bank's arguments, based on the Theory of Human Capital. The concept of learning, in the neoliberal propositions and reforms, expresses an instrumental character and dissolves the function of teaching, the appropriation of culture and science historically accumulated.

There is also a displacement from the concept of schooling to that of learning. Thus, it seems that the World Bank reinforces that learning results are independent of structural and physical issues in schools. In the same way, it reinforces the defense of enhancing the teaching work by increasing the number of students in class, aiming to reduce education costs. The idea of "lifelong learning" supports the concept of employability. In this case, the World Bank argues that the productivity of the poor is increased through the acquisition of skills and competencies.

In the World Bank's intellectual production from the 1990s on, basic education tends to remain central to alleviating poverty and promoting equity. However, the World Bank affirms the inefficiency of education as an expression of the inefficiency of the state and the misuse of public resources. This entails the precepts of the evaluating state and management by results are resumed, indicating a more forceful continuity of the reform process.

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