

The present number of *Education and Research* brings the results of our second edition prepared from a guided call for papers, this time on the theme *Inequality, difference and public policies for education*. The journal's Editorial Commission proposed initially a section on this theme and made it public within the academic field, with the purpose of bringing to light what has been produced, and of gathering in a single volume reflections on this theme suggested under different hues, empirical approaches and theoretical perspectives. The result showed us the strong interest and the deep impact of this theme in the field of education. We received 151 expanded abstracts on a variety of aspects, coming from every region of the country. Faced with the large number of works submitted and with the high quality of so many of them, we decided to dedicate the whole edition to the theme proposed, making it possible to display the diversification of perspectives under which this theme has been investigated and debated.

Based on the criteria described in the initial call for papers, we selected 14 complete and original articles, which were then subjected to the standard assessment process by peers and to final approval by the Editorial Commission. We thank to all those who have taken part in this process, submitting or evaluating proposals, and reviewing and finalizing the articles within the deadlines established, thereby collaborating effectively to maintain the periodicity and the quality of this journal.

Such ready and massive response from so many researchers from Brazil and abroad to our call for papers confirms our initial premise: the debate about inequality and difference has been gaining strength in the last decades, reverberating in the definition and implementation of educational public policies. We understand that these significant questions in contemporary societies relate to the struggles for the right to difference/equality and for the expansion of citizenship, struggles that confront and resist various social processes of inequality, exclusion and dissociation, made worse these days by the crises of the social, political and economic, local, regional and world orders.

Within Brazilian education, the debate is current and has intensified. We witness a significant increase in laws, plans and programs aimed at facing inequality, be it related to handicap, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, generation and/or territoriality. However, both in creating and in implementing the proposed public policies, as well as in their academic analysis, we observe that terms such as *inequality*, *diversity* and *difference* take on various meanings: now they appear as equivalent, then as dichotomic elements, without the concepts ever being established precisely. There are also inversions and mistakes, especially in policies focusing on evaluating education, which require equality of merit and performance when the situations of the subjects evaluated are unequal.

Herein lies one of the qualities of the collection of articles offered in this edition: they show us the several faces of the debate on this theme during the last decades, and demonstrate the effort towards a better conceptual precision, without neglecting the polysemy of these terms across different societies, cultures and epochs, thereby avoiding a rigid framing of notions that are being constituted historically. The attention of the authors is also turned to results of studies, to the analysis of public policies conceived and developed in each field, as well as to the impact and overall result of some of these policies. In short, the articles gathered here afford us careful reflections on the contradictions surrounding the concepts of diversity, difference and inequality, on the role of educational policies in hindering and/or promoting the democratization of basic education and, consequently, on the inconsistencies of proposals and actions focused on the access and permanence of children, adolescents, youngsters, men, women, handicapped people, blacks, whites and indigenous populations in Brazilian schools.

We present initially to articles discussing the concept of inequality, diversity, difference and justice. Based on a survey of the academic production published in journals from 1990 to 2007, and on the analysis of official documents describing the federal government's educational policy during the mandate of former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Tatiane Cosentino Rodrigues and Anete Abramowicz in the text entitled *The contemporary debate on diversity and difference in education policies and studies* examine different uses, conceptions and meanings attributed to the concepts of culture, diversity and difference in education, establishing a contrast between uses and theoretical conceptualizations. In *Equality, inequality and differences: what is a fair school?*, Flávia Schilling expounds results of a study on the perceptions of fair and unfair collected among students of the Pedagogy course of the University of São Paulo (USP) and among secondary education pupils, as well as teachers and administrators, in a public school in São Paulo. The author highlights the difficulty in obtaining an abstract definition of what is fair, and it is through the analysis of the injustice occurred at schools that her work reaches some definitions of what could be regarded as a fair school. She shows us, however, that this same school turns out to be a difficult, conflict-ridden place.

A larger group of articles expresses the relevance of the theme of handicap to the debate about difference, diversity and inequality in education, which was made clear by the large number of abstract received on this subject. We opened here the space for four texts that examine distinct aspects of special education policy within national and international contexts. Two of them emphasize the debate about education for the deaf. Ana Claudia Balieiro Lodi, in the text *Bilingual education for the deaf and inclusion under the National Policy on Special Education and Decree 5.626/05*, unveils the different meanings of bilingual education and inclusion in the documents examined in the light of Bakhtin's discursive-enunciative theory. To the author, whilst the *National Policy on Special Education* defends the inclusion of deaf pupils into the regular education system, Decree 5.626/05 defines education for the deaf as a specific field of knowledge, drawing it apart from special education. In *A policy for bilingual education extensive to*

deaf pupils of the municipality of São Paulo, Cristina Broglia Feitosa de Lacerda, Neiva de Aquino Albres and Silvana Lucena dos Santos Drago examine this same theme, now with emphasis on the current education policy for deaf pupils in the municipality of São Paulo, which has deaf pupils immersed into the two different educational contexts described in the previous article: municipal schools of bilingual education (for the deaf) and regular schools (that accept both hearing and deaf pupils).

Next, Carla K. Vasques, Simone Moschen and Roselene Gurski make a discussion of the implementation of inclusion guidelines based on the philosophical hermeneutics, which gives the times and reading focus presented in their work. Under the title *Between text and life: a reading of special education policies*, the article concludes that equality and differences are recognized in the documents as principles. However, in the concrete reality at schools there still persists a notion of the different as unequal. In the fourth text of this section, Monica Maria Farid Rahme offers us an analysis of some of the central issues related to the educational experiences of inclusion developed in three countries. In *Inclusion and internationalization of the rights to education: the Brazilian, North American and Italian experiences*, the author indicates, among other aspects, the growing process of internationalization of the right to education that engenders similarities between these distinct realities.

A third group of articles analyzes dimensions more specific, and even more plural, of difference and inequality, discussing conceptual aspects, challenges and problems generated by the conduction of specific programs and policies associated to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual diversity, generation and space within the school context. These works problematize results, impacts and mistakes of government programs applied in urban and rural contexts for youngsters, children, blacks, homosexuals, and indigenous populations. They are articles that come close to each other when they touch upon the wider questions raised by the theme of inequalities/difference, but that thwart any effort to put them in a sequence. We shall, nonetheless, hazard an alternative among many possible.

The first two texts in this group can be brought together by the ethnical-racial axis. In *Challenges of multicultural curriculum in higher education for indigenous people*, Moisés David, Maria Lúcia Melo and João Manoel da Silva Malheiro center on the question of how universities have faced the curriculum challenges of offering education to indigenous populations that reach higher education. Making use of official documents and information from the news portals, the authors outline the reality of the education of indigenous populations in the country, and confirm some of its problems through a research with university students coming from indigenous populations and study at the Federal University of Pará. Observing that the courses are offered under an ethnocentric perspective, the article refuses the popular idea that the access to education can be reduced to merely offering places or to a curriculum logic that is hegemonic and inflexible, affirming a conception of multicultural curriculum that is based on the respect to diversity, to cultural knowledges and values, as well as to the dialogue between different social

groups. The article *Policies to promote racial equality and programs for textbook free distribution* by Paulo Vinicius Baptista da Silva, Rozana Teixeira and Tânia Mara Pacifico studies the relation between policies of promotion of racial equality and the distribution of textbooks. More specifically, the authors investigate how textbooks in Portuguese, History, Geography and Sciences represent black people and the relations between whites and blacks. Considering that the rules of the *National Textbook Program* make recommendations concerning the valuation of ethnical-racial segments, they conclude that there is still a predominance of discourses and images that denote hierarchies between whites and blacks, and that suggest the presence of racism.

In the sequence, prejudice and racial stigmatization give room to inequality between genders and to sexual diversity in the text *Follow me, the good ones: trouble and sorrow in confronting heteronormativity in the school environment*. In this article, Fernando Seffner discusses how complex is the relation between the questions of gender and sexuality in daily school practices, and how difficult it is to choose the different outside a normativity instituted and accepted by the majority, even when there is the intention of fighting against prejudice. This is the case of the actions proposed in three public schools of the city of Porto Alegre, which were observed and analyzed by the authors with intent of making a “conceptual and political discussion that today involves categories such as difference, diversity, inclusion, equality, and inequality, articulating them with categories of the specific field: gender, sexuality, and masculinities, thought about within the school environment”.

Further along this edition Maria Inês Caetano Ferreira, in the text *Educators and the implementation of guidelines against inequality: the case of the Projovem Urbano Program*, presents the results of an investigation about the experience of educators of the above-mentioned program, carried out in the Metropolitan Region of São Paulo, in an effort to establish relations between educators and those being educated in which the respect to differences and the commitment to inclusion are considered. On the basis of theoretical conceptions that propose the school as a field of reproduction of inequality relations, under the teachers’ optics, the author confirms the possibility of effecting less asymmetrical relations that give the youngster more confidence and higher self-esteem.

Using data from assessment systems such as the *Prova Brasil*, the *School Census* and the *Basic Education Development Index* (Ideb), and from characteristics of the profile and of the school unit, the article *School context and educational indicators: unequal conditions for the implementation of an education assessment policy* by Maria Teresa Gonzaga Alves and José Francisco Soares analyzes and discusses the relation between the Ideb and the school context. This study confirms the close relationship between pupils’ low social economic level and low performance, as well as the weight that the infrastructure conditions and school complexity have in intensifying the difficulties to improve the quality of teaching and reach a more favorable development index.

In the text entitled *The international organisms' directions for national policies of early childhood education: on the right to focusing!*, Rosânia Campos identifies the guidelines given by international bodies (UNESCO and UNICEF) for early childhood education in Latin America and the way in which such guidelines are incorporated into local education policies. The analysis focuses on the documents produced by those bodies, which propose “adopting early childhood education as a strategy to tackle poverty and, in so doing, promoting social equity”. For the author, this idea has negative consequences to the extent that it disqualifies the child as a citizen with rights, accentuating the compensatory nature of the policies for the expansion and inclusion of young children. Thus, the study repositions the discussion about early childhood education as a right for all children independently of their social economic level.

Gelsa Knijnik and Fernanda Wanderer, in their article *The Escola Ativa Program, multi-seriated country schools and mathematical education*, discuss the rural facet of this theme through an analysis of the development and impact of the *Escola Ativa Program* (PEA), which is targeted at the area of mathematics and was implemented in rural multi-seriated schools in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. Official documents of the program and interviews with teachers and educators involved in the project constitute the *corpus* of the research conducted by the authors. The elements highlighted indicate that, considering its pedagogical guidelines, the program analyzed is not free from the logic of reproduction of inequalities and reinforces hierarchies between urban and rural lifestyles, particularly in domains such as geometry. The analysis “discloses a tension between the pedagogical guidelines offered to teachers and the activities proposed to the pupils in the area of mathematics, and also that the program steers the conduct of teachers, pupils and, more broadly, of the local population”.

We close this group of articles with *Evolution of methodological models and its relation with educational policy in Spain* by Sonsoles San Román Gago, the only article by a foreign author selected for this edition. In order to discuss the theme under investigation here within the Spanish reality, the author reveals and seeks to understand the relation between the changes in educational policies and the development of cultural, ideological, methodological and curriculum models. The history of the process analyzed offers many examples to demonstrate the strong and enduring influence of politicians and of the Catholic Church in designing curriculum and in defining contents and methodologies that shape different educational policies in that country.

Fully integrated into the debate proposed here, the sociological point of view of Danilo Martuccelli, professor at the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences of Université Paris Descartes (Sorbonne), concludes this edition of Education and Research. The interview with him conducted by Maria da Graça Jacintho Setton and Marília Pontes Sposito is entitled *How individuals become individuals? An interview with Danilo Martuccelli*, and it inaugurates a section of the journal dedicated

to the publication of interviews. In it, Prof Martuccelli speaks about results of his studies developed in France and also with Latin American researchers on individuation processes and on the structural challenges of work and schooling in contemporary societies.

As already customary for our journal, we offer English versions for part of the contents in order to guarantee their largest possible dissemination among the public abroad. In this edition this emphasis was given to the texts by Tatiane Rodrigues and Anete Abramowicz; Ana Claudia Balieiro Lodi; Moisés David Neves, Maria Lúcia Melo and João Manoel da Silva Malheiro; Paulo Vinicius Baptista da Silva, Rozana Teixeira and Tânia Mara Pacifico; Fernando Seffner; and, lastly, to the interview with Prof Danilo Martuccelli – all available on the SciELO site.

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