Between the proposals for inclusion and the persistence of inequality in education

This issue of *Education and Research* highlights a theme that has been increasingly present in educational debates and policies over the past decades: inclusion. In the set of fourteen texts gathered here, eight refer directly to inclusion and three address assessment issues which are indirectly linked to the challenge of providing quality education for all.

A closer look at historically constructed inclusion policies can confirm the trend expressed in the reflections that have been gathered here. The defense of the inclusion of social groups made unequal (ARROYO, 2010) in education public policy in Brazil has aroused significant interest from both the academia and society in general, especially in recent decades.

The exclusion conditions to which these collectives are subjected have been identified by the state and civil society and, in such process, public social policies should be implemented by the former. However, the relationships between state and civil society are complex, since both articulate and compete fiercely around interests which are sometimes opposite and which are present in one and/or another. In this arena of conflicting and sometimes contradictory relationships, different projects for society are under discussion.

The 1990s were marked by the internationalization and globalization of economic markets and by the trend of redefining the role of the state. Different impacts were produced in the field of social policies, creating and/or intensifying tensions between the maintenance of social inequalities and the pressure for recognition of differences as collective rights (FRASER, 2007). In many different ways, and by various means, the struggle for inclusion was present in many international and national educational policies, in its different moments.

Albeit cautiously, the Brazilian government and organized civil society participated in international conferences over the 1990s and early twenty-first century, aiming at developing a new educational pact. Such a pact focused on issues of socio-cultural diversity, even though it was oriented to meeting universal access goals, of an increase in schooling (and although such schooling might have been understood only as primary education) and to curriculum flexibility, among others.

The recommendations in the World Declaration on Education for All (UNESCO, 1990) evidenced the role to be assumed by the state and the sharing of such a role with civil society, which resulted in the need of a broad movement of negotiation between the many social, political and economic instances involved in the provision of education (SHIROMA; MORAES; EVANGELISTA, 2002). The introduction of the cultural

diversity perspective was made explicit in the National Curriculum Guidelines published by the Ministry of Education of Brazil in the second half of the 1990s, in a volume on Cultural Plurality, which:

[...] comprises the knowledge and appreciation of ethnic and cultural characteristics of different social groups who live in the country, socioeconomic inequalities and the criticism of discriminatory and exclusionary social relations which permeate Brazilian society. It thus provides students with the opportunity to know Brazil as a complex, multifaceted and sometimes paradoxical country. (BRASIL, 1997, p. 121)

In this issue of *Education and Research*, the article "Jean-Jacques Rousseau between a poetics of the surface and the idea of childhood", by Marlene de Souza Dozol, focuses on the generational dimension of the aforementioned plurality, by referring to the creation of "a pedagogy which combines the intelligible and the sensitive in its way of theorizing and working on children" which encompasses certain ways of "conceiving of and conducting childhood" to "allow and protect the flow of experience and impressions characteristic of children". We are faced with intriguing questions about the pedagogical relationships which we establish with beings who come into the world and drive us to review concepts, and about the differences and singularities in view of what we conceive of childhood and children as subjects of rights.

Also on the generational dimension, but now focusing on the inclusion of young people and adults, another group with different age ranges also suffering exclusion, the article "The social pedagogical effectiveness of imprisonment", by Roberto da Silva, discusses prison education, with reference to the approval of *Diretrizes Nacionais para a Oferta da Educação em Estabelecimentos Penais* (National Guidelines for Education in Prisons) in 2009 as an opportunity to "test pedagogical innovations that have not been implemented in the regular education system", in defense of education which allows young people and adults deprived of their freedom to develop skills and abilities, so that they have a better condition to compete for the opportunities created by society.

Another dimension of inclusion in education is discussed by Flavio Boleiz, who emphasizes the importance of "systems specific of popular education". On the basis of Célestin Freinet's and Paulo Freire's ideas, the author argues for the potential of popular education for inclusion, especially because he considers that its confluences are materialized by the understanding that the relationship between educator and educated occurs through the "educational process". The author defines this process "as an appropriate activity for the education of students", which has functions which allow, provoke and promote "self-transformation", by their reshaping the world and seizing the "new world", always aiming to tackle the socioeconomic and cultural inequalities characteristic of capitalist societies.

With the purpose of approximating the thought of Bourdieu and that of Moscovici, Rita de Cássia Pereira Lima and Pedro Humberto Faria Campos, in the article "Field and group: a

conceptual approximation between Pierre Bourdieu and the social representation theory of Moscovici", take the notion of field as a starting point and conclude that both authors emphasize "the symbolic dimension in the construction of reality" and, in its educational application, they propose to overcome "the subjectivity-objectivity dichotomy in the individual-society relationship" [...] and "construct a psychosocial view of education". By adopting a problematizing approach toward the two theories, the authors defend that the action in the school is a field of forces between groups in conflict or not. Thus, we can say that the notions discussed in this article are theoretical and practical tools to grasp the specifics of the school and the challenges it faces when it seeks to ensure inclusion in the production and reproduction of inequalities and in social struggles.

Also referring to social struggles but from another perspective, Marlene Ribeiro, in the article "Land reform, agricultural work and rural education: unveiling historical connections", recalls the need for examining the historical constitution of forces competing for different social projects: on one side, those representing "the work in the countryside, associated with land reform and education"; on the other side, the "forces representing the capital, linked to large farms and agribusiness". According to the author, this historical review is essential not only to "understand the huge obstacles that rural education needs to overcome to be implemented and consolidated" but also to guarantee the rights of this segment of society, preserving its specificities and also guiding public policy on education so that it embraces this reality.

Still on the same path of understanding the factors that may favor inclusion in schools, Teresa Terron-Caro and Veronica Cobano-Delgado Palma bring to the debate the analysis of the Spanish context. In the text "Interculturalism and inclusion of Moroccan students in primary education in Andalusia", they follow foreign students of Moroccan origin and identify as obstacles language and multiple identity. Male and female students state they have a dual identity, both Moroccan and Spanish. The authors warn that this reality poses challenges to educators, who need to perform pedagogical interventions in order not only to ensure inclusion and the coexistence of these multiple identities, but also to invest in the acquisition of Spanish in school.

Another issue related to the challenges of the unrestricted expansion of inclusion in schools is explored in the article "Drug abuse prevention in school: challenges and possibilities for the role of the educator". In it, André Moreira, Claudia Lemos Vóvio and Denise De Micheli point out that this is a major concern in today's society and highlight the role of schools in combating it. The results of the study conducted with junior highschool teachers from public schools in Sao Paulo city revealed two different potentialities. On the one hand, teachers agree on the preventive role of schools and the authors noticed the importance of their knowledge as references for the qualification "of drug use prevention projects and programs for use in schools". On the other hand, the authors point out several factors that may hinder prevention. One of the challenges mentioned is the linear relationship established between drug use, violence and abnormality, in

addition to the "accountability of other institutions for prevention" in the face of the numerous demands delegated to teachers.

All these dimensions of the struggles for inclusion are facets of the demands for equality, which indicate achievements, but also bring new tensions and challenges. Some of them are the unequal structural conditions which are also indicated in several articles. As Sabrina Moehlecke (2009) reminds us, in Brazil, there is not a consolidated policy of inclusion yet, since actions are fragmented and do not have a firm commitment to tackling the structural causes of inequality, as it is evidenced, for example, by the fact that inclusion receives less than 1% of the budget of the Ministry of Education (RODRIGUES; ABRAMOWITZ, 2013).

The proposal of policies of differences faces many problems. The main ones are the scarcity of state actions to provide services for all and the effects of the current universal policies on specific areas, such as rural, special, indigenous and Quilombo education, and the inclusion of ethnic, racial, gender relations and sexual diversity in the curriculum and in educational policies. However, even when the state gives answers to these demands – often with partial returns which may only serve to decrease the tension of the claims of social movements –, it does so without bringing solutions to tackle the structural factors of inequality in income distribution. This can strengthen its role as a mere provider of focused and compensatory policies (MOEHLECKE, 2009; ARROYO, 2010).

Some of these themes have not been explored in the articles published in this issue of the journal, but many of them bring careful reflections on several of the cruel effects of the denial of rights to collective subjects made unequal. The reflections gathered here make even more sense when added to the debate on the role of selection and evaluation assigned to schools and educational policies. This is the case of another set of articles which examine such selection and evaluation mechanisms.

In "Concealed selection in public schools: practices, processes and generating principles", by means of interviews with secretaries of schools on the outskirts of the city, who are responsible for enrollment, the authors Luciana Alves, Antonio Augusto Gomes Batista, Vanda Mendes Ribeiro and Mauricio Ernica identify selection practices. They underline that "avoidance" and "forced transfer or concealed expulsion" are procedures used by public schools to perform exclusionary selection, which aims at preserving a "disciplined school environment". Marked by strong prejudices, these selection procedures openly disregard any principle of inclusive schooling and tend to punish mainly families "with lower socioeconomic and cultural levels". Such procedures are added to other also exclusionary measures, such as blaming teachers, and assessing teaching practices and teachers themselves.

When the focus is directed to the evaluation theme as an educational policy device aimed at improving the quality of education, the standardization of the process disregards diversity in learning. According to Carlos Alberto Ferreira, in "The learning assessment in the Portuguese compulsory education and the reinforcement of the

external summative assessment", this has been used as a form of "measurement" and "monitoring" of "educational quality". His central criticism is that learning assessment tends to value the results at the expense of learning processes, thus reinforcing the "homogenization of education, rather than its suitability for diversity and for the cultural, social and economic identity of each nation-state". Ultimately, it guides teachers' practices to the achievement of good scores by their students in such tests. Also focused on teacher evaluation practices, the article "Evidence for the transformation and complexification of the Chilean model of teaching evaluation", by Javier F. A. Vega Ramírez and Alberto Galaz Ruiz, explores the relationship between the evaluation of teachers, student performance and their outcomes. The authors conclude that there is a need to analyze the complexity of the context that supports the teaching activity and to include some concepts not present in the current Chilean assessment model, such as decentralization, contextualization and participation. Also on the evaluation subject, the article "Psychoanalytic notes: contemporary discourses on educational assessment in Brazil" starts from the finding that the effects of "discursive practices around the external evaluation of basic education[1] and of the management of the public school system by results and incentives" are negative. It is concluded that this "hegemonic discourse" which combines assessment and teacher performance rewards, supported by the "social imaginary" that further evaluation means more quality, "reduces the conditions for education to happen for a large portion of our country's population".

The assessment issue has received an important contribution of Antonio Novoa's thought-provoking analysis of the unreasonable weight of the ideology of the economic value of universities, steeped in the logic of the evaluation of academic production. By questioning this logic, Novoa's translation published here continues the debate on productivism, which started with the mini dossier published in a previous issue of our journal (v. 40, n. 02, 2014), and develops an insightful critique of the values that support it, especially excellence, entrepreneurship, employability and Europeanisation. The author laments the lack of more significant questioning of productivism, entrepreneurial trends, competitive funds and ideologies of modernization, that is, of "the dominant forms of organization and evaluation of professors", which are "strongly constraining our professional lives and our research practices".

This issue of *Education and Research* also brings three articles which draw on philosophy to reflect on education. They do not address the debate on inclusion, but provide important contributions to education today.

In the first of them, "Knowledge, art, and education in Plato's *Republic*", by focusing on the relationship between these aspects, Damião Bezerra Oliveira and Waldir Ferreira de Abreu highlight the educational potential of art, especially of poetry, and conclude that "only philosophy, as it overcomes the charms of language, senses,

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1- Translator's note: In Brazil, *basic education* stands for compulsory education and comprises early childhood, primary and secondary education.

and the sensible world, can extend the limits and possibilities of art, particularly art that uses words". In the second article, "Risky thinking: the relation between philosophy and education", Nadja Hermann discusses the approximation of philosophy and the education consolidated in the foundations of education and its distancing "caused by the scientification of pedagogy". The author delegates to education philosophers the evocation of knowledge from that field "to expand public discussion on topics that interest us, such as violence, ethics, knowledge, and training". In the essay "Wittgensteinian questions to the pedagogy of competences", Rafael Ferreira de Souza Mendes Pereira critically analyzes the assumptions of the pedagogy of competences. Based on the analytical tools of the philosophy of language developed by Ludwig Wittgenstein, the author argues that the pedagogy of competencies may foster the "reification of mental knowledge concerning the learning process". Thus, he discusses the very reforms of school systems that are grounded in the pedagogy of competencies and once again resumes the debate on the quality of education.

Last but not least, this issue brings the interview conducted by Vanessa Dias Moretti, Maria Lucia Panossian and Manoel Oriosvaldo de Moura with Luis Radford, professor at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Canada. In this interview, which focuses on the cultural theory of objectification on the processes of teaching and learning in mathematics education, Luis Radford also covers major issues involving teacher education.

Finally, the reflections gathered here start from the greater visibility of the inclusion issue in the latest public education policies, in the reforms proposed, in the daily life of schools and also in the academic production. They put on the agenda issues ignored before and often regarded as taboo in education.

But the fact that inclusion is part of the academic debate and, somehow, of the political agenda does not ensure that such a theme is actually included in the educational plans and programs or in the evaluation of teaching practices. Ensuring inclusion goes in the same direction as the tackling of social inequalities, which are also accepted in educational policy and school relations. But as Miguel Arroyo (2010, p. 1412) reminds us of, one of the essential lessons for policy analysis is "putting pressure on the duties of the State, aware of the State's limits".

Therefore, the issues raised by many of the articles listed here should be taken into consideration when we reflect on the gains and limitations of the proposals for inclusion, given the persistence of inequality in the creation and implementation of public policies and programs involving educational changes. We believe that the critical examination of the advances and setbacks mentioned here is fundamental to consolidate truly inclusive education.

Claudia Vianna
Rosângela Prieto

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