

# The teaching participation in curricular elaboration processes: Paulo Freire's democratic experience in São Paulo

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** The Curriculum Reorientation Movement proposed by educator Paulo Freire and carried out in the city of São Paulo, from 1989 to 1992, when he was secretary of education, was an educational management experience that, by developing a public policy for the production of curriculum documents for primary schools, recognized the key position of the teacher's work at school and moved it to the center of the discussion process, inaugurating a dynamic of dialogue and reflection that had not been experienced so far. **Objective:** To think and discuss about which has been the place for teaching work in the curricular policies, as well as its effects on the teaching profession and identity. **Design:** a part of a research already completed, for which documents, interviews and the analysis of the relevant bibliography were taken as the basis for taking and analyzing data from the investigated process. The documents are all those prepared by the management to conduct the curriculum policy in question; Among the interviewees, a small group composed of different actors involved in the curriculum reorientation process (manager, specialist technician, pedagogical advisor and teacher) was used to compose a panel of points of view of the different subjects responsible for the formulation, mediation and execution curriculum policies in schools; and by the bibliographical research. **Setting and participants:** Although the interviews do not explicitly constitute the cut that originated this text, some of the curricular policy makers and also mathematics teachers who worked in public schools in São Paulo at the time were interviewed. **Data collection and analysis:** The documents analyzed were obtained from the Memory Center of the Municipal Education Department of São Paulo. The analysis allowed us to identify a set of documents that led to curriculum reorganization. We identified, in documents, interviews and bibliographical research, how teachers participated in the curriculum development process. **Results:** The “non-place” given to teaching work in the prescriptive curricular policies, such as the BNCC, actively produces the teaching work

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as fragile, inconsistent, ineffective, and inefficient, weakening it and favoring its deprofessionalization. This weakening of the teaching work, actively produced, is used, as in a cycle, to justify more centralized, more prescriptive, and more authoritarian curricular policies. **Conclusion:** a democratic experience in curriculum policy can reaffirm the autonomy, authority and otherness of teachers. Freire's curriculum policy, despite its limits and obstacles, presented itself as capable of promoting and expanding the spaces for its collective and authorial participation and construction.

**Keywords:** Curriculum; curricular policy; Paulo Freire; teaching work; Mathematics Education; Teaching autonomy.

### **A participação docente em processos de elaboração curricular: a experiência democrática de Paulo Freire em São Paulo**

#### **RESUMO**

**Contexto:** O Movimento de Reorientação Curricular proposto pelo educador Paulo Freire e realizado na cidade de São Paulo, de 1989 a 1992, quando era secretário de educação, foi uma experiência de gestão educacional que, ao desenvolver uma política pública de produção de documentos curriculares para as escolas primárias, reconheceram o lugar-chave do trabalho do professor na escola e colocaram-no no centro do processo de discussão, inaugurando uma dinâmica de diálogo e reflexão até então não vivida. **Objetivo:** Refletir e discutir sobre qual tem sido o lugar destinado ao trabalho docente nas políticas curriculares, assim como seus efeitos sobre a profissão e a identidade docentes. **Design:** Apresenta um recorte da pesquisa concluída, orientada metodologicamente: pela análise documental dos documentos elaborados pela gestão para conduzir a política curricular em tela; pelas entrevistas com diferentes atores responsáveis pela formulação das políticas e pela mediação com as escolas; e pela pesquisa bibliográfica. **Ambiente e participantes:** Embora as entrevistas não constituam explicitamente o recorte que originou este texto, foram entrevistados alguns dos elaboradores da política curricular e também professores de matemática que atuavam em escolas públicas paulistanas à época. **Coleta e análise de dados:** Os documentos analisados foram obtidos do Centro de Memória da Secretaria Municipal de Educação de São Paulo. A análise nos permitiu identificar um conjunto de documentos que conduziam a reorganização curricular. Identificamos, nos documentos, nas entrevistas e na pesquisa bibliográfica, como se deu a participação docente no processo de elaboração curricular. **Resultados:** O “não lugar” atribuído ao trabalho docente nas políticas curriculares prescritivas, como o BNCC, produz ativamente o trabalho docente como frágil, inconsistente, ineficaz e ineficaz, fragilizando-o e favorecendo a sua desprofissionalização. Esse enfraquecimento do trabalho docente, produzido ativamente, é utilizado, como em um ciclo, para justificar políticas curriculares mais centralizadas, mais prescritivas e mais autoritárias. **Conclusão:** uma experiência democrática na política curricular pode reafirmar a autonomia, autoridade e alteridade dos professores. A política curricular de Freire, apesar de seus limites e

entraves, apresentou-se capaz de promover e ampliar os espaços de sua participação e construção coletiva e autoral.

**Palavras-chave:** Currículo; política curricular; Paulo Freire; trabalho docente; Educação Matemática; Autonomia docente.

## INTRODUCTION

The teaching work has already taken on different characteristics according to the societies organization, the forces involved in the education's constitution and control. The thought produced configures a significant inventory of the teacher's role in the different social formations over time.

### **Nature and knowledge of teaching: from the researches to the institutionalization and vice versa**

Nóvoa (1995, 2009), Tardif (2013), Paulo Freire (1996, 1997), among many others, have much of their work focused on reflection on the teaching profession, the knowledge of this profession and the meanings given to the teacher's work in contemporary times. As a common denominator, it is identified in the literature about the topic the comprehension that builds the teacher work and links it to social development in which inequality, injustice and social differences were included in the list of problems that need to be faced, also through education, to have inclusive, fair and democratic societies.

In terms of institutionalizing the purposes of Education, the current LDB<sup>1</sup> advocates in its Art. 2nd that:

The education, a duty of the family and the State, inspired by the principles of freedom and by the ideals of human solidarity, aims the full development of the student, his preparation for the citizenship exercise and his qualification for work. (Brazil, 1996)

The teacher, as an education professional, as a subject who also learns while exercising his profession, has his recognition punctuated in the LDB, in its Art. 61:

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1 Available in:  
<https://www2.senado.leg.br/bdsf/bitstream/handle/id/70320/65.pdf?sequence=3>.  
Consulted in October 10th 2020.

They are considered to be basic school education professionals those who, are active in it and have been trained in recognized courses, they are: I – teachers qualified at high school or graduation level for teaching in early childhood education and in elementary and high education; II – workers in education graduated in pedagogy, with qualifications in administration, planning, supervision, inspection and educational guidance, as well as with masters or doctoral degrees in the same areas; III – workers in education, with a technical or higher education degree in a pedagogical or similar area; IV - professionals with notorious knowledge recognized by the respective education systems, to teach contents in areas related to their training or professional experience, attested by specific qualification or teaching practice in public or private educational units or private corporations, in which they have worked exclusively to comply with item V of the caput of art. 36; and 42 of the national education Law of guidelines and bases; V – graduated professionals who have done pedagogical complementation, as provided by the National Education Council. (Brazil, 1996)

And, regarding their education, in a single paragraph of the LDB (Law of guidelines and bases), criteria and parameters of profession recognition and of the purposes of teaching acting are identified:

Single paragraph. The education professionals training, in order to meet the specifics of their activities exercise, as well as the objectives of the different basic education steps and modalities, will have as fundamentals: I - the presence of a solid basic training, which provides the knowledge of the scientific and social fundamentals of their work skills; II – the association between theories and practices, through supervised internships and in-service training; III – the use of the previous training and experiences, in educational institutions and in other activities. (Brazil, 1996)

The teacher training and professional development theme gets projection and becomes an object of interest for analysis and investigation, especially in the context of changing curricular references and paradigms. It also becomes an element of dispute in different processes and spaces, especially in those that concern the formulation and management of educational public policies.

Generally speaking, different countries have experienced reform processes in the educational field in the last two decades. Reciprocally, attention to the teacher's role, to his knowledge and to his practice put on evidence the curricular innovation processes observed in different countries. In other words, the understanding of the teacher's role and its practice has changed significantly over time as a result of the change in conceptions about the educational process; from local or regional initiatives to institute alternative educational projects; as well as a result of the investigations carried out and the knowledge produced on the topic.

Several studies carried out with the purpose of investigating the nature, characteristics and components of the teacher's professional knowledge are significant milestones, according to the perspectives observed in Garcia (1997):

- from the cognitive psychology, Leinhart and Greeno, 1986;
- with the central interest in analyzing the learning to teach processes, Shulman, 1986, 1987; Wilson et al., 1987; Grossman et al. 1989;
- from the professional work, Llinares, 1991; Bromme, 1988;
- with the attention focused on the “practice”, Elbaz, 1983; Schön, 1983; Feiman-Nemser & Folden, 1986; Clandinin & Connelly, 1988.

What happens in this case is a change of perspective in which the new element is the attention to the knowledge and to what the teacher is able to think and to do based on what he thinks, that is, it can be said that studies make justice to the teacher and the nature of his profession. The teacher starts to be seen as an active subject in the teaching process and, therefore, it is essential to know and understand his previous knowledge, perceptions and reasoning processes that he carries out and that guide his teaching practice. It is about identifying the professional knowledge of the teacher, understood by Llinares & Sanchez (1990) as practical experience accumulated by the teacher in the performance of certain teaching tasks.

Nowadays there is a relative discursive consensus that the teacher mobilizes a wide range of knowledge acquired in the training processes experienced by him and in his life history. This teaching knowledge has been broadly mapped, by studies and researches in education, carried out inside and outside the country, from the 1980s onwards, when, in a more systematic

way, the attention of researchers and teachers trainers went beyond the teaching process – a process that was reduced to the application of effective methodologies (often thought by others) and to the transmission of the knowledge of their subject. Such attention focused on the teacher as a subject endowed with beliefs, conceptions, in whose training and performance theory and practice are articulated, characterizing, in the context of training and research on teacher training, the so-called "the teacher's thought paradigm" and, subsequently, the metaphors of the "reflective teacher" and the "research teacher" with an impact on the initial teacher training courses. (Santos, 2016, p. 182)

It is important, however, to consider that from the sum of lived experiences and of the teacher training and professional development processes the knowledge that is the basis for sustaining the teaching activity is constituted. According to Santos (2016), from this process comes the substrate characterized by the autonomy, authority and alterity of teachers, inseparable residual elements, inherent to the training, the profession's nature and the teaching condition, therefore, constitutive of the teacher's being:

*Autonomy* in which the ethical sense is sought at school and in society in which the teacher operates according to minimum rules of argumentation and democratic coexistence and according to historical values, constructed in a consensual manner that support decisions-making (Bazán y González, 2007). *Authority* that is established by the teaching management, by the attention to the asymmetries, differences and individual difficulties that manifest themselves in the classroom based on the subject domain and its approach, based on communication, dialogue, interactions and cooperation between teacher and students and between students. *Alterity*, because as the classroom is a context in which asymmetries and differences prevail (among others in the relation to the Mathematics), putting oneself in the other's shoes by observing the different learning styles, the times of each one, the meanings given to notions, concepts and ideas make the teacher the only subject who, in the teaching-learning relationship, is able to put himself in the student's place; to interpret arguments, to identify and ask questions, to evaluate. (Santos, 2016, p. 182)

This set of information, added to his experiences and life history, allows the future teacher and the teacher exercising his profession to establish criteria to make decisions, to realize conditions to be respected or created and the type of strategies, resources to be used for the treat of mathematical knowledge in the classroom.

The teacher's forming field for the teaching of Mathematics dialogues with an axiological ethical, transdisciplinary perspective and is crossed by it, producing fertile residues that constitute a professional *ethos* of this teacher. However, it must be said that, in recent decades, the brazilian public education teachers profession, especially those in basic education, has rapidly deteriorated, frequently revealing the neglect and abandonment of public authorities in relation to the working conditions and the professional dignity.

It should be noted that in the case of the teacher formation for the teaching of Mathematics and the role of this teacher at school, there is an associated conflict since the social representations of Mathematics and its teaching (which highlight an image of a difficult, abstract, exact subject, associated with meritocracy, in which emphatic use of imperative verbs and various types of injunctions is made), as well as the privileged approaches in teaching (mechanistic and structuralist) generate difficulties in learning and in the relationship that students establish with Mathematics. It is necessary, in our opinion, an approach centered on the "mathematization" of reality and on the resolution and formulation of problems that symbolize doing and learning mathematics in class, mobilizing proper elements of this perspective in the construction and negotiation of meanings: social interactions, communication, argumentation, metacognition, different reasonings (inductive, deductive and especially abductive) involved in the relationship of the subjects with the Mathematics.

Thus, the understanding of the teacher's professional work nature in the educational process and of the elements that constitute it are fully characterized, so that there are sufficient conditions to formulate and develop initiatives and experiences according to this legacy. The spaces of teacher formation institutionalization have recognized the teaching profession and offered guidelines for their education through legal references, curricular orientations for this training to be carried out minimally in training programs and courses, even though it is observed that this is a dispute place, as can be seen from the effort to adjust courses and their curricula, developed in the Universities by education councils, aiming to link, both in form and content, these training

processes to the government policies for the national curriculum bases production.

The research was intensified as a subsidiary element of this institutionalization and this interests dispute. The public policies aimed directly to the teacher training, or other educational policies that see the teacher as a repeating agent, take out the teacher from this active subject role, productive and propositive that we know is inherent to his professionalism.

After the country's democratization, in 1985, the educational debate between teachers, teachers trainers, their associations and representatives who joined the parliament strengthened. A civil society active movement influenced, as much as it was possible, in the power game responsible for the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution and of the Guidelines and Bases Law of 1996 and for the guidelines and opinions edition for basic education and teacher training in higher education teaching institutions. These two macro legal references, therefore, started to institute and guide processes of curricular reformulations that were already being produced inside schools, between professionals and their groups or associative institutions, as well as in the teachers formation spheres. Local and regional curricular proposals were prepared before the LDB/96, however, in the sequence and in consonance with this, the production of national curricular documents (PCN, RCNEI, BNCC) was prioritized, which began to guide the official curricula production, in the municipal and stadual spheres.

The curricular reformulation promoted during Paulo Freire's administration, as the municipal education secretary in São Paulo, takes place simultaneously with the curricular proposals elaboration process in different states and municipalities of the federation, what was verified even in the LDB pre-institution period. One of the aspects considered relevant was how the basic education teachers participated in the curricular documents elaboration, which would support their school practices. In this aspect, the experience of the São Paulo city was quite innovative, because it was based on the idea of making the teachers process of participation and involvement in school units more horizontal.

## **THE TEACHING WORK IN FREIRE'S CURRICULAR POLICY**

Autonomy, alterity and authority of teachers, in Santos (2016) perspective, result compromised, weakened from this expropriation process

and it makes the teaching work that is constituted in them vulnerable. The process of formulating the Curriculum Common National Base (BNCC, Brazil, 2017) serves as a good illustration of these teachers' qualities expropriation processes, reducing us to mere executors. Characterized as a step taken "against the PNE<sup>2</sup>" by Dourado & Aguiar (2018), the BNCC is the result of a severely undemocratic process as denounced by Cássio (2019), which cannot be decontextualized, including of the improper management of Michel Temer. As stated by Cury, Reis & Zanardi (2018), the construction of a highly prescriptive curricular document, as it is the case, reveals the purpose of "making a set of knowledge, skills and competences, which is not, yet, neither common nor national, common and national through its teaching obligation" (Cury, Reis & Zanardi, 2018, p. 60). That is why it is so relevant and necessary to denounce that "as a historical process, it should be noted that the BNCC was not consensual, it was not agreed and, therefore, there are several questions about its legitimacy" (Dourado & Siqueira, 2019, p. 294).

So, not making it democratically agreed with the legitimate *practicing-and-thinkers*<sup>3</sup> of the curriculum deeply contributes to this expropriation process of the inherently creative role of the teaching work, contributing to its *deprofessionalization*. Therefore, we converged on the defense that the conception that mobilizes it "is a result of a curriculum that distrusts the transforming potential of the lived context, of the dialogue and of the problematization as guiding principles of the curriculum construction (Cury, Reis & Zanardi, 2018, p. 87). For this reason, we also characterize it as one of those processes that expropriate and make the teaching work vulnerable, alienating it, even from the autonomy provided by the already mentioned Guidelines and Bases Law.

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2 National Education Plan (2014-2024) established by the Federal Law 13,005/2014, as a set of goals and strategies to face, within ten years, serious Brazilian education issues, the product of "intense national mobilizations, demonstrating that the national education entities remained mobilized for the maintenance, expansion and consolidation of the broader and more socially referenced right of education achievements" (Mendonça, 2018, p. 38).

Available in: [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/\\_ato2011-2014/2014/lei/113005.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2011-2014/2014/lei/113005.htm)

3 We make use of the terminology suggested by Inês Barbosa de Oliveira (2013) on her research about the *practiced-and-thought* curricula, based on the Sociology of Absences and Emergencies by Boaventura Sousa Santos (2007) contributions.

That said, we refer to the investigations that have been shared in previous works (Valle, 2019; Valle & Santos, 2018) whose purpose is to argue in favor of the thesis that the educational public policies mobilized by Paulo Freire, as the São Paulo Municipal Education Secretary (SME-SP), and his team<sup>4</sup> broke with this neotechnicist logic, unable to recognize and respect the autonomy, authority and alterity of the teachers.

The research adopted a methodological orientation based on document analysis, interviews and literature review:

- a) to compose the documental analysis, we identified the publications produced by the SME-SP, from 1989 to 1992, made available by the Multimedia and Memory Center of the same agency. The analysis converged to the following documents, which contents were directly related to the curricular proposal in focus, listed below with their respective years of publication:
- Education in São Paulo city: an act of courage (1989);
  - The Curriculum Reorientation Movement in the São Paulo Municipal Education Department: Document 1 (1989);
  - Construction of the school curriculum through interdisciplinarity (1989);
  - Building the popular public education: Year 2 (1990);
  - The Curriculum Reorientation Movement in the São Paulo Municipal Education Department: Document 2 (1990);
  - Training notebooks (01) – Series: Pedagogical Action through Interdisciplinarity (1990);
  - The interdisciplinary project at school (1990);
  - Building popular public education: Year 3 (1991);
  - Training notebooks (03) – Series: Pedagogical Action through Interdisciplinarity (1991);

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4 Paul Singer (1996) produced relevant records on how the principles of decentralization, participation and autonomy were mobilized in different areas of the municipal management.

- The Curriculum Reorientation Movement in the São Paulo Municipal Education Department: Document 3 –The school problematization: the view of educators, students and parents (1991);
- The Curriculum Reorientation Movement in the São Paulo Municipal Education Department: Document 4 – The child and the drawing (1991);
- The Curriculum Reorientation Movement in the São Paulo Municipal Education Department: Document 5 - Area vision (1992);
- The Curriculum Reorientation Movement in the São Paulo Municipal Education Department: Document 6 – Practice reports (1992).

b) composing the set of interviews, we have:

- agents responsible for formulating the educational policies, in particular those related to the curriculum, such as the directors of the Technical Guidance Department (DOT) and of the Administration and Finance Department (DAF), in addition to the SME-SP Staff Chief, who is also Freire's successor in the charge;
- members of the teams responsible for mediating the work with the (and in) schools, the Educational Action Centers coordinators; and,
- Mathematics teachers who taught at that time in the municipal schools system from São Paulo<sup>5</sup>;

c) c) in the literature review and study of the theoretical references from the curriculum area and the mathematics education, we dedicated to the interface with Freire's work and principles (Valle, 2019).

With an emphasis on the curricular policy proposed at the time, we intend to enunciate subsidies that help us, not to reproduce the experience in

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5 All interviews were transcribed and are available in full with the referred thesis (Valle, 2019).

focus, but to critically guide the proposition of policies amidst the intense disputes that take place in the curricular field.

In short, as we will discuss, it is a democratic experience with the educational public policy that does not subordinate or put on the second place the teaching work, but recognizes it as indispensable for *thinking-and-making* curriculum and its policies. Contrary to the “Official Journals Pedagogy” (Saul, 1998), Freire's Curriculum Reorientation Movement, as it was called, was conceived under an emancipatory rationality, which understands the curriculum

(...) not as a ready, finished product to be consumed, but as a process in constant construction, which is made and remade. Fundamentally, as a path where **the participation of the actors who interact in the educational process is a condition to its construction.** (Saul, 1998, p. 155, our emphasis)

To recognize the participation of the actors who interact in the educational process as a condition for the curriculum construction represents, as we argued, an initiative that privileges the teaching work rather than neglecting or belittling it. In fact, the principles on which the curricular policy is structured are the following:

- a) the collective construction, which must be expressed through a wide participatory process in decisions and actions about the curriculum;
- b) the respect for the school autonomy principle, allowing valuable practices to be rescued, at the same time that curricular experiences that favor the diversity in the unit are created and recreated;
- c) the appreciation of the theory-practice unit that is translated into action-reflection-action on curricular experiences. It is essential that the practice in specific situations precedes the gradual expansion of the curricular construction process for the network schools. This perspective will allow the learning of the process before expanding it, enabling, at the same time, the systematization of both the process and the results of the curricular reconstruction;
- d) the permanent training of the teaching professionals, which must necessarily start from a critical analysis of the curriculum in action, in other words, it must start from what actually happens at school, seeking, through the successes and failures awareness, to identify

the critical points that need more substantiation, practices review and its overcoming. (São Paulo, 1991, p. 7-8)

Such principles oriented the curricular policy, to which schools could adhere without any obligation that would harm their autonomy<sup>6</sup>. Given the unprecedented nature of this curricular policy and of the principles that underlie it, in the history from São Paulo, Freire resorted to partnership with universities from São Paulo<sup>7</sup> so that they could contribute offering theoretical-methodological support to the proposal feasibility. As a result of the partnerships established, many researchers started to follow the daily life of the schools that joined the movement. In this context,

Freire and his colleagues left the universities pedestal and the bureaucracy stifling environment and adventured themselves into the miserable slums and awkward desks of the students. There is no doubt that the bold steps taken with the initiatives such as the Inter Project definitely brought qualitative changes to the municipality's public schools during the PT government. In the words of one of its main theorists, "we succeeded created, in theory and in practice, a new concept of developing a participatory curriculum, in which the several teams involved - professors, SME-PT specialists, university advisors - constantly and systematically interacting with each other, together they built the way forward". (Towers, O'Cadiz & Wong, 2002, p. 112)

The Curricular Reorientation Movement was systematized and registered in a set of six documents, which became popularly known as "the little notebooks". Their printed copies reached all the municipal network schools. The first of them, dedicated to the school problematization, brought

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6 To the schools whose teams of teachers did not wish to adhere to the Pedagogical Action through Interdisciplinarity proposal (or "Inter Project", as it became popularly known among the teachers) were given the possibility of submitting other projects around which the schools were organized or they wanted to organize themselves. There was public funding for these projects (Valle, 2019), as well as for those that adhered.

7 São Paulo University (USP), Campinas State University (UNICAMP) and Pontifical São Paulo Catholic University (PUC-SP). The researchers teams, which also learned daily with the originality of the proposal, accompanied the teaching work, supporting it through a privileged dialogue role.

together the educators, students and their families perspectives about “the school we have” and “the school we want”<sup>8</sup> (Saul, 1998), indispensable to the Curricular Reorientation Movement.

From the school problematization, the study of reality was carried out to identify the generating themes<sup>9</sup>, a central concept in the Pedagogy of the Oppressed conception (Freire, 2012), and this movement was systematized in the following documents.

It was expected that the path of teaching and learning would be more or less in stages such as: starting from a theme chosen by the school community and/or by the classroom group - therefore, in general, outside of a properly school subject field -, to problematize this theme with the students, leading them to formulate questions and, based on the formulated questions, to develop the so-called school knowledge. (Forner & Domite, 2014, p. 160)

After clarifying and discussing, in the subsequent documents, the developments of the curricular proposal in the school subjects context, we arrived at the sixth and last published document, which constitutes the Practice Reports Notebook. As its title suggests, the document “rescues some practices of educators who have been undertaking the curricular reorientation through their daily actions in the classroom”. (São Paulo, 1992, p. 1) On the same page of the document, we read that “each report is accompanied by some reflections and references in which the NAE<sup>10</sup>, DOT and University Advisors teams emphasize some fundamental aspects”.

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8 This is even the title of the documentary that shares part of the interviews carried out during Valle's doctoral research (2019). Available in: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hAsYQd7af00>

9 The generating themes, a fundamental part of Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (2012, p. 120), are defined based on his conception that “it will be from the present, existential, concrete situation, reflecting the set of aspirations of the people, that we will be able to organize the education or the political action programmatic content”. To be more specific, Freire (2012, p. 126) argues that the generating themes are identified from what he calls “limit situations”, that is, present, existential, concrete situations that impose limits, restrictions, to the every human being ontological vocation of “being more”.

10 After an administrative reform, the former Teaching Regional Offices are reconfigured as Educational Action Nucleus (NAE) that would work intermediating the

Furthermore, it should be emphasized that the purpose of this last notebook was not to become a “cookbook” or, as stated in the document itself, “to publicize model classes”. The purpose was, instead of that, “to publicize some experiences, among the many ones that exist in the Network, to help educators to reflect, research and create their own paths based on what others have already covered.” (São Paulo, 1992, p. 2)

The comments made by the specialists, researchers, about the pedagogical practices shared in the notebooks, contributed to the “action-reflection-action” movement, of reflection on the practice itself, recognized by Freire as an inalienable part of the teaching work. For the educator, “the theoretical discourse itself, necessary for the critical reflection, has to be in such a concrete way that it is almost confused with the practice”. (Freire, 1997, p. 40)

For this reason, the publication of the notebooks with the teachers reports about their practices, commented by experts, became an interesting tool for permanent training of the municipal network, which could learn, having the reports as parameters, a way to identify what worked well, what didn't work and, mainly, ways to overcome what didn't work.

In the guiding documents, we also identified that, in this case, “the concept of training here is that our teachers can: a) to know better what they already know; b) to know what they don't know yet; c) to produce new knowledge, connected to their interests, as an instrument-knowledge”. (São Paulo, 1990, p. 32) Once again, the relevance and need for this to be a movement accompanied by the specialists critical eye is highlighted, what is revealed in the critical reading work, commented on, of the pedagogical practices already in progress. By incorporating them, Freire and his team allow practices carried out in a localized, contingent way to be objects of study for the entire municipal network, inserting them in a broader movement of *making-and-thinking*<sup>11</sup> curriculum in a critical way.

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Technical Guidance Board (DOT) and the schools from each region. We highlight the fact that the same administrative reform institutes the NAEs as executing units, equipping them, also financially, in an unprecedented way in the city too. (Valle, 2019)

11 Here we make use of an enunciative possibility used to explain the search for dissolving/facing certain dichotomies in the proper way of enunciating them. (Oliveira, 2013)

Thus, one more assumption of the Curricular Reorientation Movement is evident: overcoming the dichotomy between those who think and those who make curriculum, so present in Brazilian curricular policies, especially in its most recent case.

Freire's proposal constitutes itself, then, in the opposition – and potential overcoming – of this curricular policies paradigmatic structure that, incorporating the modernity fault of applying the factory production logic, on a large scale, to the school context, intends that different teachers in different schools and contexts execute/reproduce the same prescribed curriculum. The Freirean perspective mobilized in his curriculum policy was configured in the proposition that the official curriculum would become permeable to the curricula in action, already in progress, of the municipal network. It is about the recognition of the artisanal character of the curriculum, within the scope of a policy in which teachers, school and school community, the Department and partner universities are, in fact, focused on the pedagogical work.

In the same Practice Reports Notebook, Document 6, we find reports of teachers who worked with mental calculation, proportional relations between the salary and the basic food parcel, visits to the bakery, logic games, water consumption, measuring heights and volumes, the home; and school areas, visits to the supermarket, geometry experiments with vegetable gardens, assessment practices and a cornmeal cake preparation. In the document organizers understanding, "in each of the reports we can recognize numerous attitudes of the educator considered positive within our proposal, some of which, once exercised, will hardly stop to be part of this educator's scenario and pedagogical performance". (São Paulo, 1992, p. 97) They are, as they declare, "irreversible processes of change".

The reports, still mixing elements of traditional pedagogies with daring attitudes, clearly reveal the marks of a continuous, permanent movement of reflection on the practice itself, which does not end. There is also the statement that "the teacher who starts his work in the classroom with a dialogue about a subject of the student's daily life, guiding the discussion to problems that can generate mathematical knowledge, will probably not go back to be a mere contents previously established transmitter". (São Paulo, 1992, p. 97) In this document, therefore, what catches our attention is the fact that it summarizes the search of the entire Curriculum Reorientation Movement that, as its organizers say, consists of a "work methodology that involves the educator in the practice of thinking and making curriculum". (p. 99)

The administration, at the time, was also dedicated to the fight for guaranteeing the necessary conditions for the teaching work realization, in its entirety, especially from the perspective of a critical, popular and democratic curriculum. On the one hand, the work structures were changed:

By proposing the cycle system in the new *Municipal Schools Common Regulation*, the management considered that the school should invest in collective work, so that this system would work. To guarantee this collective work, the Teacher's Full-Time Journey (for which the teacher would receive the equivalent of 30 hours) was created, consisting of:

- a) 20 hours of work with the students, in the classroom;
- b) 10 hours of class preparation work, collective work and community service. (Oliveira, 2002, p. 72-73)

The Full-Time Journey, mentioned above, is still recognized today as a milestone in the history of the municipal network from São Paulo, becoming widely recognized as a necessary and effective public policy to promote the working conditions demanded by teaching. Indeed, the initiative converges to what would become, in 2008, a great achievement for the teaching in the Brazilian Basic Education: with Law 11.738/2008, which instituted the teaching minimum salary and it was also established that a third of the teachers' weekly journey should be reserved for planning, research and training activities. (Fernandes & Rodriguez, 2011)

It was a movement of construction not only of a new work logic for schools, but, above all, of a change in the management of pedagogical work, what also involved another logic of its organization and financing. On the other hand, in parallel with the construction of the specific journey for studies and planning, the possibilities of permanent training were installed, also necessary for the Curricular Reorientation Movement structuring. When organizing it, its proponents systematized the principles on which the ongoing training would happen:

The underlying principles of the educators training program, proposed in his administration, were enunciated as follows: a) the educator is the subject of his practice, being responsible for creating and recreating it; b) the training of the educator must equip him to create and recreate his practice through the reflection about his daily life; c) the training of the educator must be constant, systematized because the practice is made

and remade; d) pedagogical practice requires the own knowledge genesis understanding, that is, how the process of knowing takes place; e) the educator training program is a condition for the curricular reorientation process; f) the basic axes of the educator training program need to meet the physiognomy of the desired school, as the horizon of the new pedagogical proposal, the need to supply basic training elements for educators and the appropriation, by them, of the human knowledge scientific advances that can contribute to the quality of the desired school. (Saul, 2012, p. 402)

The principles mentioned in the excerpt above are illustrative of what was intended to be built from 1989 to 1992 in São Paulo in order to implement the Curriculum Reorientation Movement. From our perspective, it is a process based on a triad of fundamental pillars to achieve what Freire and his team wanted for the municipal network:

- the functional structure, guaranteed by the proposition of a Regiment that instituted part of the journey to the teachers to have the necessary time for training, as well as the construction, carefully agreed with the municipal network, of a Public Teaching Career Plan, unanimously approved by the City Councilors Council in the last year of government; (Valle, 2019)
- a permanent training program that, built on the mentioned principles, guaranteed to the teachers the intellectual and follow-up conditions to carry out the proposal; and finally,
- the adhesion of the schools that wished to participate as a criterion for the inclusion/participation in the Curriculum Reorientation Movement, also providing public funding to the schools that wished to build other projects and pedagogical proposals.

This set, with the actions built in other areas of the municipal management (Singer, 1996; Chauí, 1995), provided another recognition to the teaching work, to the teacher's *knowledge-and-actions* learned in the experience. Not only that: the assumption that it is not possible to build curriculum policies disregarding the teaching work, despising or simply ignoring it, was linked to the need of providing decent and concrete conditions for the teaching work. In other words, the recognition that teachers are not mere executors or reproducers of prescribed curricula - also because the teaching work is constituted by hybridisms and recontextualizations of different types

(Ball, 2001) – subsidizes us to the demand for concrete conditions, 'including the salaries ones', for carrying out this work, which involves planning, elaboration, creation, invention and research.

There were, as might be expected, obstacles faced by Freire and his team in the SME-SP. Some stood out, with greater emphasis, in the interviews carried out with the mathematics teachers who taught in the municipal network at that time:

- the political-ideological resistance to the project presented by Paulo Freire and Luiza Erundina;
- a tendency towards the reductionist simplification of the generating themes understanding mobilized in the pedagogical practices of the municipal network, implying limits to the curricular reorganization and the mathematical knowledge deepening;
- the problems arising from the lack of resources to guarantee the same monitoring conditions for all schools, especially during the expansion of the movement, which, in four years, starts with ten schools and reaches more than three hundred <sup>12</sup>.

Indeed, such aspects, problematic or limiting in the Freirean proposal context, show that the “presence”, the teaching participation in these curricular elaboration processes depends on the conditions for participation being ensured. The problem arises, therefore, when there is not even the condition for participation.

## **THE TEACHER'S AUTHORITY ABSENCE IN THE CURRICULAR POLICIES**

Santos (2002), criticizing the existence of a certain indolent, lazy reason, which nature is discussed in his work, affirms that this rationality has systematically led us, in different areas, to the experience waste. In the context of this indolent reason, which wastes the experience, Santos (2020, p. 28) will argue “that much of what does not exist in our reality is actively produced as non-existent, and so the biggest trap for us is to reduce the reality to what

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12 To understand these and other obstacles faced during the Freirean curriculum policy construction, we recommend the reading of Valle (2019), with an emphasis on the topic “3.4. The reality roughness in the artisanal construction of the curriculum.”

exists". This means that we are actively and systematically led to perceive as fragile, inconsistent, ineffective or even absent/inexistent certain procedures, manners, *thinking-and-doing*, individuals, communities, cultures, epistemologies.

In opposition to the indolent reason, this "lazy rationality, which actually produces as absent a lot of reality that could be present" (Santos, 2007, p. 20), we are dedicated, in summary, to the critique the way in which the official curricular policies have systematically made invisible, constructing as absent, the *thought-and-practiced* curricula (Oliveira, 2013), curricular proposals that were successful while respecting the teachers and schools autonomy, the emancipatory everyday practices, the unpublished-viable ones (Freire, 2012), so necessary for the emancipation. Therefore, we used the expression *thought-and-practiced* curricula:

(...) recently created with the objective of making clear the inseparability that we understand to exist between practice and theory, between reflection and action. Thus, we replaced the term practiced curricula, previously used, for this one. This is because we understand that there is, in the daily life of schools, a daily creation of curricula by teachers and students in the classroom, generated from the dialogue between theoretical references and reflections, concrete possibilities and limits of each circumstance and from the articulation between the multiple networks of subjects and of knowledge present in schools. (Oliveira, 2013, p. 3-4)

Emancipatory practices already in progress systematically produced as absent, precarious, contingent, impure, all wasted by our indolent rationality incapable of recognizing them as practices capable of informing us about possibilities and limits, tensions and potentialities, obstacles and ways of the practice itself. In this sense, Oliveira's (2013) concern leads us to the Sociology of Absences (Santos, 2020), as it denounces that "a good part of our curricular proposals have been unable to incorporate these experiences, intending to hover above the practical activity of the subjects who constitute the school" (Alves et al, 2002, p. 41), producing absence in its place.

The problem, for Santos (2002; 2007), is in the waste of multiple and diverse experiences, but also, more seriously, in the fact that such experiences, in different fields of social practices, are actively produced as non-existent, unimportant, irrelevant and absent. Santos (2007, p. 28) calls the Sociology of Absences the set of ways in which these absences are produced for our indolent,

lazy reason, responsible for “trying to show that what does not exist is actively produced as non-existent, as an unbelievable alternative, as a disposable alternative, invisible to the hegemonic reality of the world”.

Five forms of monoculture – knowledge and rigor, linear time, the naturalization of differences, the dominant scale and capitalist productivism – are articulated to systematically make the ongoing experiences and everything emancipatory in them invisible, wasting them. From this perspective, Oliveira (2013, p. 12) assumes the importance of the “daily development of participatory and solidary practices in all the structural spaces in which we are inserted, as well as the search for its institutionality expansion, assuming, in this sense, capital importance in the social emancipation composition”. After all, curricular proposals cannot be conceived as a space to prescribe changes to an unknown practice!

We argue, in fact, supported by the concept that “a consistent curricular practice can only be found in the knowledge of the subjects who practice in the curriculum”, as underlined by Alves et al (2002, p. 41). It is not a question of naively suppose that the teachers know everything, but also to avoid the naivety that would be to suppose that they know nothing. (Cortella apud Valle, 2019) More than that, it is important for us to recognize what is already being *thought-and-practiced* by the legitimate practitioners of the curriculum, so that we can even understand possibilities and alternatives for interacting with them, as the researchers from the partner universities did at the Freire’s time.

In summary, we want to affirm that the absence of the teaching work in the curricular policies is actively produced as an absence, contrary to what was built in Freire's democratic experience. This “non-place” given to teaching work in the prescriptive curricular policies, such as the BNCC, actively produces the teaching work as fragile, inconsistent, ineffective, inefficient, weakening it and favoring its deprofessionalization. This weakening of the teaching work, actively produced, is used, as in a cycle, to justify more centralized, more prescriptive, and more authoritarian curricular policies.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

*I am a teacher in favor of the beauty of my own practice, beauty that disappears from it if I don't take care of the knowledge I must teach, if I don't fight for this knowledge, if I don't fight for the necessary material conditions without which my body runs the risk of becoming ill and of no longer*

*being the testimony of a tenacious fighter, that tires but does not give up.* (Freire, 1997, p. 38)

In the presentation of the BNCC, prepared by that time Minister of Education Mendonça Filho, in the context of an illegitimate government, we read that the document was “**prepared by experts** from each area of knowledge, with the **valuable** critical and purposeful **participation** of **teaching professionals and of the civil society**”. (Brazil, 2017, p. 5, our emphasis).

The curricular policies built under this paradigm aegis take one direction, that is, they start from the cabinets, the secretariats, the official Education agencies and, in the last instance, from the Ministry itself, towards the schools. This, however, can be seen as just *one* more possible vectorization of/in the curricular public policies, even as a vertical process of the policies production. To characterize this movement of the curricular public policies production, marked by a process that, at the same time, starts from the cabinets towards the schools in a vertical manner, preserving the hierarchies of construction, systematization and circulation of knowledge, allows us to identify it as “a *vector* of these policies”. (Valle, 2019, p. 18)

There is, underlying this vector, its undue naturalization, which makes us consider it as unique, natural or even expected. In this sense, the study of the Curricular Reorientation Movement brings us evidence that it is possible to break this vectorization, proposing the inverse in its place. After all, Freire's curricular policy sets up a paradigm shift in relation to the traditional curricular policies, because it reverses the production vector of these policies.

Considering the presentation text of the Curriculum Common National Base, as well as its underlying conceptions (Galian & Santos, 2018), in relation to the Freirean curricular policies practiced in the highlighted period allows us to verify, even more clearly, the vector inversion to which we referred. In the same way that Mendonça Filho's text presents a document prepared by specialists, with the valuable participation of the teachers and the society, Freire and his team provide us another possibility: “that of a curriculum **constructed** collectively and artisanly **by teachers and society**, with a **valuable contribution of experts** from different areas”. (Valle, 2019, p. 217)

As we learned from Freire's democratic experience in São Paulo, it is possible to invert the production vector of the curricular policies. It is possible to recognize, respect and effectively consider the teaching work in these policies, building opportunities for the teachers participation in the curriculum

elaboration processes. To take it on as a possibility inscribed in the history of Brazilian education implies, therefore, to refuse emphatically any educational policy responsible for the active production of the teaching work as absent, inconsistent and disqualified - policies responsible for compromising, as we have seen, our autonomy, alterity and authority, constituents of the teaching work.

Other experiences, recognizing them, favor the teachers participation in the curricular policies. May we rescue them, promote them and claim for them where they do not exist! After all, there is intelligent life at schools!

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The authors JV and VMS jointly discussed the theoretical-methodological path, as well as the theoretical foundation underlying the text, elaborating it together.

### **DATA AVAILABILITY DECLARATION**

The data, interviews and documents that enabled the results of this study will be made available by the corresponding author, JV, upon reasonable request.

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