



Original Article

Changes for continuity: the mark of pedagogical duality in different projects for secondary education in Brazil

Mudanças para a permanência: a marca da dualidade pedagógica em diferentes projetos para o ensino médio no Brasil

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Abstract

In Brazil, since the “First Republic”, education has undergone reforms that affect all its levels, including high school. At the core of these reforms, this level of education is traditionally marked by educational dualism, reproducing the power structures present in Brazilian society. The latest of these reforms, instituted in 2018, assigned high schools the function of subsidizing young people in the construction of their future life projects. The 2018 reform is understood in this text as an attempt to adapt the education of Brazilian youth in line with the status quo. “Youth Studies” has emerged as an interface field between various areas that have, in one way or another, the “School” and its processes as a point of debate. This debate draws on official documents in the field of basic education in Brazil to discuss the Full-Time Education Program (*Programa Ensino Integral – PEI*), instituted by the São Paulo State Department of Education in 2012, which, in a pioneering manner in the country, centralized the curricula of junior high school and high school in the construction of what was called “life projects” for students, creating specific schools for this purpose. With the experiences developed so far, according to those sources and related literature, it is possible to assert the continuity of educational dualism in high school, which, above all, does not provide a full and disinterested education for most young people who seek, in public school, references for a better life, often hindered by the place they occupy and from where the future can be projected.

Keywords: High School, Youth, Adolescent, Education, Projects.

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Resumo

No Brasil, desde a “Primeira República”, a educação vem sofrendo reformas que afetam todos os seus níveis, inclusive o ensino médio. No cerne dessas reformas, esse nível de ensino é tradicionalmente marcado pelo dualismo educacional, reproduzindo as estruturas de poder presentes na sociedade brasileira. A última dessas reformas, instaurada em 2018, delegou ao ensino médio a função de subsidiar jovens na construção de seus projetos de futuro. A reforma de 2018 é apreendida neste texto como uma tentativa de adequar a formação da juventude brasileira em consonância ao *status quo*. Os “Estudos das Juventudes” têm se configurado como um campo de interface entre várias áreas que têm, de um modo ou de outro, a “Escola” e seus processos como um ponto de debate. Esse debate toma como fonte os documentos oficiais no âmbito da educação básica no Brasil para discutir o Programa Ensino Integral (PEI), instituído pela Secretaria Estadual de Educação de São Paulo em 2012, que, de forma pioneira no país, centralizou os currículos do ensino fundamental (anos finais) e ensino médio na construção do que se denominou “projetos de vida” dos alunos, criando escolas específicas para esse fim. Com as experiências desenvolvidas até aqui, conforme aquelas fontes e com a literatura correlata, pode-se afirmar a permanência do dualismo educacional no ensino médio, que, antes de tudo, não efetiva uma formação plena e desinteressada para a maior parte dos jovens que buscam na escola pública referências para uma vida melhor, muitas vezes inviabilizada pelo lugar que se ocupa e de onde o futuro pode ser projetado.

Palavras-chave: Ensino Médio, Juventude, Adolescentes, Educação, Projetos.

Introduction

In Brazil, high school has undergone a process of fragmentation from which two main types of schools have emerged: one of general culture and another of technical-professional nature, marking the duality of this level of education (Nosella, 2015). The technical-professional schools were created in the 1930s, with the Francisco Campos Reform and the Organic Laws of the 1940s. These schools were directed toward the children of the working class, whose destiny was the struggle for jobs. On the other hand, schools of general culture were aimed at preparing the ruling elites, and for this, the path involved entry into higher education (Saviani et al., 2014; Nosella, 2016).

The two distinct branches of education, each aimed at their specific clientele, have maintained the educational inequalities present among us since the beginning of the last century, denouncing the difficulty of overcoming educational dualism and, consequently, social inequalities. For Kuenzer (2000), the link between educational proposals and government policies is undeniable, especially those aimed at young people¹. This author reports that these proposals also correspond to a conception of society that is the product of the political choice of a certain group in power, as well as of the changes in the world of work.

¹ It is worth noting that, in social reality, there is no single type of youth, but rather heterogeneous groups of young people (Esteves & Abramovay, 2007). In line with Pais (1993), we recognize the existence of multiple youth cultures, formed by the different interests and social integrations of young people, which define the experiences of being young far beyond their age.

Kuenzer (2000) states that the dual structure that marked two different paths in the history of Brazilian education originates in the social organization of society and expresses the relations between capital and labor while attempting to resolve it by innovating the school conception would be an act of naivety or dishonesty. Reinforcing this logic, Nascimento (2007) narrates that, historically, the guiding line of policies for high school in Brazil is structured around the capital and labor relationship, commonly responding to the interests of capital.

In addition to the two types of school—general culture and technical-professional—the Brazilian education system presents a variety of school buildings, schedules, and distinct times, schools in the center and on the periphery, private and public, which support the educational duality, hindering the process of school unity that aims at the existence of a regular public school, unitary and for everyone (Nosella, 2015).

It is in this political-social conjuncture that high school establishes itself in Brazil as a stage of secondary education intended for adolescents and young people of an age group that would start around 14-15 years and should be completed by 17-18 years and, like all education in the country, is quite deficient (Nosella, 2011). Therefore, this study sought to analyze the school education directed at young Brazilians and the continuity of educational duality. To this end, a study of documents and literature addressing aspects of the history of high school in Brazil was conducted. Within this scope, the Full-time Education Program (*Programa de Ensino Integral - PEI*) of the state of São Paulo, which has been implemented since 2012, was analyzed focusing on the axis called “Life Project” (São Paulo, 2014). It is assumed that this theme combines with the field of occupational therapy, which, as stated by Lopes & Borba (2022, p. 205), “is related, implicated, and contributes to the field of knowledge of education and the services that are part of this sector, notably the school, in favor of radical inclusion”.

Methodological Approach

The study sought to grasp the apparatus of codes and laws that established the guidelines and norms for the organization of school education for adolescents and young people in Brazil, aiming to understand the creation and continuity of educational duality in secondary education intended for this population. To this end, the legal apparatus was traced through a review of the literature on educational dualism and high school education in the country, taking as sources Cunha (2017), Kuenzer (2000, 2010), Nascimento (2007), Nosella (2002, 2011, 2015, 2016), and Saviani et al. (2014).

The text is organized into three sections. The first section approaches the trajectory of the education of young people in Brazil concerning high school. In the second section, the context of the creation and implementation of PEI in the state of São Paulo is presented, with an emphasis on its pedagogical model and the centrality of what is called the “life project,” as a principle that structures the Program. Finally, the idea of constructing a life project in high school and its approach to the direction of education for work is discussed, reaffirming the continuity of educational duality and the social mark of the education of young people, especially the poor.

The Trajectory of High School in Brazil: a Right Still to Be Pursued

During the First Republic (1889 to 1930), secondary education, responsible for the school education of young people in Brazil, occurred in the so-called lycées, established in the country's capitals and aimed at educating men, and in the so-called 'normal' schools, for women, in addition to the Colégio D. Pedro II in Rio de Janeiro. These institutions were reserved for bureaucratic elites and large landowners. During this period, secondary education underwent reforms that were concerned mainly with the admission of these young people into higher education courses (Santos, 2010).

The first reform, named after Benjamin Constant, occurred in 1890; followed by the Epitácio Pessoa Code in 1901; the Rivadávia Corrêa reform in 1911; the Carlos Maximiliano reform in 1915, and the João Luís Alves reform in 1925. In general, these reforms recognized secondary education as an indispensable foundation for enrollment in higher education courses and promoted subsidies to validate this principle (Santos, 2010). The effects of this set of reforms during the First Republic were restricted and specific, not constituting an educational policy of the Brazilian State.

With the creation of the Ministry of Education and Public Health (MES) in 1930, a process began to define the specificities of the field of education by the State, as well as a movement to construct a national education apparatus, with the creation of codes and laws to establish guidelines, norms, and organization of the different branches and levels of education in the country (Moraes, 1992; Saviani et al., 2014).

Since then, high school in Brazil, with its respective denominations throughout history, has been legally marked by educational dualism. Education became a sector of intense ideological manifestations, reflecting the political-economic context of the time, in which two nation projects competed: the Vargas-era national populism, defending industrialization, and the old project of traditional oligarchies, related to the export agricultural sector (Bittar & Bittar, 2012). An example is the Francisco Campos reform of 1931, whose theoretical and pedagogical foundation was associated with the tensions and conflicts that generated an economic and political crisis during that period and, above all, with the process of constitution of a properly capitalist State, which demanded an education consistent with the country's industrialization progress.

The undertaken reforms structured secondary, commercial², and higher education in the country. For secondary education, a serial curriculum and mandatory attendance were established, and this level of education was divided into two parts: "the gymnasial, lasting five years, and the complementary, two years, with a character of specialization – subdivided into pre-medical, pre-law, and pre-polytechnic", to prepare students for higher education (Moraes, 1992, p. 300). However, it was postulated that the purpose of secondary education should not be limited to admission to higher education; on the contrary, it should educate individuals for all major sectors of national activity, reclaiming the propaedeutic aspect and updating it to the modern world (Nosella, 2015).

² Commercial education was exclusively professional and comprised two cycles: the first cycle was propaedeutic, lasting three years, and the auxiliary of commerce, two years and terminal. In the second cycle, "the reform instituted five modalities: secretarial (1 year), bookkeeper (2 years), sales administrator (2 years), actuary (3 years), and expert accountant (3 years)". Only the last two modalities provided access to higher education, but to a single course called Administration and Finance, which lasted three years (Machado, 1989, p. 206).

In contrast, in 1932, the Manifesto of the Pioneers of New Education brought proposals that aimed to comprehensively change Brazilian education, which until then was based on religious, conservative, pragmatic, and dogmatic teaching. For the adherents of the New School (*Escola Nova*), education was the path to the nation's economic and social development, and through its reconstruction, it would be possible to carry out social reconstruction; therefore, it should be public, mandatory, free, and secular. These ideas broadened the debate on education in the country and motivated new processes of change in the educational system (Saviani et al., 2014).

The guidelines and positions of the Manifesto resonated in the constituent debates, and in 1934, the new Constitution established the State's competence to set the guidelines of the national education plan, coordinate and supervise its execution, and develop a national education plan by the National Education Council (CNE) (Saviani et al., 2014).

The Constitution of 1937 determined as the State's exclusive competence the establishment of the Directives and Bases of National Education and the definition of the frameworks of national education, setting the guidelines for the physical, intellectual, and moral formation of children and young people. These determinations unfolded into the Organic Laws of Education of 1942 and 1946, or the Capanema reform, which organized secondary education vertically into two cycles: the gymnasial, lasting four years, and the collegiate, three years. Horizontally, secondary education was divided between the secondary and technical-professional branches, with the latter subdivided into industrial, commercial, and agricultural (Saviani et al., 2014).

According to Nascimento (2007) and Nosella (2016), these legislations demarcated the educational dualism in high school, establishing that, after four years of compulsory primary education, students would have two paths in the realm of formal education: regular secondary education, intended for the elites, and vocational education, for the working classes. These determinations permeate discussions around high school to the present day, revealing the country's difficulty in overcoming this educational inequality.

Among other implications, in this reality immersed in educational dualism, only young people with regular secondary education could enter higher education, marking the exclusion of those who underwent vocational education (Bittar & Bittar, 2012). This inequality generated deep discussions among Brazilian educators, including the defense of a single school system envisioning equal education for children and young people of all classes (Nosella, 2016), as already proposed by the 1932 Manifesto.

At the end of the dictatorial period of the Estado Novo in 1946, the new Constitution established the obligation of the State to set the guidelines and bases of national education, and in 1947, a project was developed that culminated in the first Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDBEN), published only in 1961.

According to Saviani et al. (2014), the LDBEN endorsed educational dualism because, regarding secondary education, it kept the structure of the Capanema reform in force, where:

For the first time, vocational education was integrated into the regular education system, establishing full equivalence between courses, despite not overcoming the structural duality, since two distinct branches of education for different clienteles continued to exist, maintaining the differences that have

been present since the beginnings of Brazilian education (Nascimento, 2007, p. 82).

In the structure of the LDBEN, only the secondary branch allowed access to any higher education career, the normal and technical branches only provided access to careers corresponding to them; if students wanted to change branches within secondary education, they would lose all the studies undertaken at that level of education and would return to the beginning of the desired branch. This condition was gradually relaxed by the LDBEN, insofar as it allowed the validation of studies, where a student could transfer from one branch to another and, after completing any segment of secondary education, enter any higher education course upon passing the entrance exam (Saviani et al., 2014).

Still in the 1960s, the civil-military dictatorship (1964-1985) began a process of general reorientation of education in the country. However, the first legislation that modified the basic education system after the military coup was Law No. 5.692, dated 11 August 1971, which changed the names “primary education and secondary education” to “first-degree education and second-degree education”, establishing that second-degree education would be developed in at least three annual series and would have professionalization as its main objective. First-degree education, gathering everything from elementary school to junior high school, would be responsible for surveying aptitudes and initiating work, leaving professional qualification for second-degree education (Brasil, 1971). Thus, high school gave way to a unified, professionalizing course, accommodating, “at least as a possibility, a wide array of professional qualifications” (Saviani et al., 2014, p. 42).

This reform, by adopting a completely vocational character for high school, also intended to reduce the popular pressure for vacancies in higher education, as students would leave high school with a profession and enter the labor market, leaving higher education to those young people who could do without a quick entry into this market (Cunha, 2017). However, it did not achieve the results expected by the government, whether because of the lack of human and/or material resources or the interests of young people, and in 1972, Opinion No. 45³ came to repair the problems of implementing the generalization of compulsory vocational education in high school and re-establish in the Brazilian educational scenario the “general education/professional education duality” (Nascimento, 2007, p. 84).

Still during the civil-military dictatorship, Opinion No. 76, from 1975, attempted to eliminate the idea that every high school should become a vocational-technical school. The document argued that qualification in high school should no longer aim to prepare young people for the exercise of occupation but should provide basic preparation for initiation into a specific area of activity (Brasil, 1975).

However, it was not until 1982 that Law No. 7.044 was sanctioned, which established that vocationalization at the secondary level was not mandatory, making it an option for schools (Brasil, 1982). In reality, the only compulsory vocational school never actually came into existence. According to Nosella (2016, p. 56), the military had

³ This opinion provides guidelines for qualifications for work in high school. It guides, among other issues, the minimum curriculum to be required for each professional qualification offered, becoming a manual for work qualification at this level of education (Brasil, 1972).

an “educational dream” of “universalizing a school for submissive technicians, practical operators”, that is, to create a ‘unitary’ school system “cutting out the critical and humanist part of the curriculum”, but it never truly existed.

With this, Law No. 7.044 reverted to the concept of the dualistic school that existed before 1971, reaffirming the distinction between the education of those who would be intellectual workers and that of manual workers. It was in this context that criticisms of the educational system implemented by the military regime intensified, including increased popular pressure for more schooling, including high school (Saviani et al., 2014). At this time, the government was compelled to expand this type of education, which, according to Nosella (2016, p. 57), increased access to high school, but continued “the populist educational policy that facilitated graduation without major quality concerns” – a period that also saw the expansion of night and supplementary education.

The educational situation during the civil-military dictatorship was the target of criticism from educators. The criticisms intensified in the 1980s, highlighting the urgent need for a thorough change in the educational system. It was in this context that the 1988 Constitution ratified some interests of the educational community and organized social movements, such as “the right to education from age zero, the guarantee of public education at all levels, the democratic management of public education, university autonomy, access to compulsory and free education as a subjective public right”, among others (Saviani et al., 2014, p. 45).

In addition to these achievements, the exclusive role of the State was reaffirmed in establishing the Guidelines and Bases of National Education, resulting in the creation of a new LDBEN, approved on December 20, 1996, through Law No. 9.394, which regulated education in the country (Brasil, 1988, 1996). It maintained the structure of first and second-degree education, changing the nomenclature to elementary school and high school, and also introduced the concept of “basic education” as an educational level that encompasses early childhood school, elementary school, junior high school, and high school, aiming at the development of students by ensuring them an indispensable common education for the exercise of citizenship and providing means for their progression in work and further studies (Brasil, 1996).

In this new legal and educational scenario, the states were given the responsibility for high school. The consolidation of the reform for this level of education was only achieved through Opinion No. 15, of June 1, 1998, and Resolution No. 3, of June 26, 1998, which established the National Curricular Guidelines for High School (DCNEM), proposing a new curricular configuration (Brasil, 1998a, 1998b).

In the DCNEM, the minimum hourly load for high school was established at 2,400 hours, and disciplines were divided into two blocks, called the common base and the diversified base. The common base, mandatory and with 75% of the minimum curriculum time, consisted of three areas of knowledge: language and codes; natural sciences and mathematics; and humanities. The pedagogical proposals of the schools should ensure an interdisciplinary and contextualized treatment for the disciplines of Physical Education and Art and knowledge of Philosophy and Sociology – the latter necessary for the exercise of citizenship (Brasil, 1998b). The diversified base comprised 25% of the hourly load and included at least one foreign language. Other disciplines could make up the diversified part; however, they should have “an interdisciplinary

character and [...] consider the context and the productive world” (Nascimento, 2007, p. 86).

Vocational-technical courses were separated from high school, being offered concurrently or sequentially⁴. In this sense, the legislation explains that “there will be no dissociation between general education and basic preparation for work, nor will the latter be confused with professional education”; however, “basic preparation for work must be present both in the common national base and in the diversified part” (Brasil, 1998b).

According to the legal text, high school, while addressing general education, including the basic preparation for work, may also prepare for the exercise of technical professions through a combination of professional education and independence between the courses. Likewise, studies completed in high school may be used to obtain a professional qualification, in courses carried out concurrently or sequentially to this level of education, up to the limit of 25% of the minimum legally established hourly load (Brasil, 1998b).

Resolution No. 3 of 1998 established as a duty of school education the connection to the world of work and social practice (Brasil, 1998b). According to Nascimento (2007, p. 86), this perspective, linked to the understanding of high school as the final stage of basic education, changed the existing conception in Law No. 5.692/71, which defined this level of education with a dual function: “to prepare for the continuation of studies and to qualify for the exercise of a technical profession” (Brasil, 1998b). Therefore, the character of the finality of basic education, attributed to high school, together with its connection to the world of work and social practice, established a perspective of integrating these functions into a single and unique modality of education, with the presumption of offering a combined and balanced education similarly for all.

During the 1990s, in the two administrations of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, from 1995 to 2002, the political-economic context, marked by the adoption of neoliberal measures within the framework of globalized capitalism, focused on the continuation of the quantitative expansion of public schooling; however, without prioritizing the efficiency of teaching, as demonstrated by the performance indicators adopted by the Ministry of Education (MEC) since then. The expansion of high school, according to Krawczyk (2009), was due to the international economic context, policies of expansion and privatization of elementary schools, and the need for higher levels of education to obtain employment.

A MEC’s advertisement at the end of 1999 stated that “from now on high school is for life” (Kuenzer, 2000, p. 16), contradicting the educational structure in place until then, in which this level of education prepared young people for work or entrance into higher education. The advertisement was complemented with the information that

⁴ It is worth noting that during the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, there was the pretext of taking Brazil out of the financial crisis that had worsened in the 1980s and putting the country back on the path to economic growth, this time with foundations set in the process of globalization and the strengthening of neoliberalism. Under the claim of reducing poverty and increasing the poor citizens’ access to the labor market, the government adopted old political measures based on market logic, reducing State costs and increasing productivity. One such measure was Decree No. 2.208, dated 17 April 1997, which aimed to regulate clause 2 of article 36 and articles 29 to 42 of the newly created LDBEN, enabling the separation between regular high school education and vocational-technical education (Brasil, 1997).

young people could take a professional course concurrently or as a supplement to high school, but in another educational network (Kuenzer, 2000).

Nevertheless, according to Kuenzer (2010), even the most recent educational reforms aimed at high school, which entered the 2000s, continue the logic of a structurally dualistic school, as is the case of Decree No. 5154, dated 23 July 2004, which perpetuates the structural duality and the process of social and educational discrimination by not effectively integrating the schools and curricula of propaedeutic and professional education.

With this Decree, the government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva sought to establish a new policy for high school and technical education, eliminating the legal separation between the two, emphasizing the coexistence of integrated technical education with concurrent and subsequent modalities to high school (Cunha, 2017). To this end, the Decree ensured that professional-technical education, at the high school level, would be combined with high school education, through the “integrated high school” modality (Brasil, 2004). Thus, the creation of federal technical schools was prioritized, along with the expansion of existing ones, with the installation of decentralized units – the Federal Institutes (Kuenzer, 2010).

The Decree did not break with the structural dualism as was proposed in Lula’s election campaign. It integrated professional education with high school, leaving it up to the educational networks to opt to maintain the separation between regular and professional high school, with the possibility to offer concurrency or promote integration (Costa e Silva, 2019; Castilho, 2021).

In 2008, Law No. 11.741 regulated Decree No. 5.154 of 2004, again changing the LDBEN regarding professional-technical education at the high school level (Brasil, 2008). With this, this educational modality became one of the three types of professional and technological education provided for in the legislation, which could be offered by public or private institutions (Ferreira, 2017).

In contrast, Law No. 12.061, dated 27 October 2009, ensured access to public high school for all⁵ (Brasil, 2009a), and Constitutional Amendment No. 59 of November 11, 2009, established compulsory and free education for the age group of 4 to 17 years, guaranteeing the right to fourteen years of mandatory schooling for citizens, which was seen as a significant achievement for education and high school (Brasil, 2009b).

Also in 2009, the government implemented the Innovative High School Program (ProEMI) through Ordinance No. 971. ProEMI aimed to create innovative curricular proposals in public regular high schools, that is, of a non-professionalizing nature (Brasil, 2009c). For Costa e Silva (2019), the general objective of this program was to encourage state education networks to create ways to diversify school curricula based on integrating activities related to culture, work, and science and technology, aiming for more attractive education and the improvement of teaching quality.

Still according to Costa e Silva (2019, p. 66), ProEMI brought to the forefront the discussion about high school and its identity, since in the Program, the identity of this level of education “would be constituted from overcoming the duality present historically, that is, [...] constituting a unitary identity”. It is worth highlighting that,

⁵ The 1988 Constitution did not establish mandatory secondary education and did not make the State responsible for its provision. In 2009, Law No. 12.061 (Brasil, 1988) made the provision of education by the State compulsory until the age of 17.

in ProEMI, work is understood as an educational principle mediating the entire pedagogical process. In this logic, the concept of work should surpass the utilitarianism of the market and begin to be introduced in high schools without necessarily being linked to professionalization. Therefore, the Program considers its proposal as an overcoming of dualism (Ferreira, 2017; Costa e Silva, 2019).

In 2011, during Dilma Rousseff's government, Law No. 12.513 established the National Program for Access to Technical Education and Employment (PRONATEC), which proposed "to expand the offer of professional and technological education through programs, projects, and actions of technical and financial assistance" (Brasil, 2011). The law determined a close relationship between professional and technological education and high school, setting goals to expand and democratize "the offer of professional technical education courses at the high school level" and improve "the quality of public high school education through combination with professional education" (Brasil, 2011).

In 2012, the new DCNEM were regulated, establishing the relationship between culture, science, and work as the central axis of basic education, strengthening the premise of work as an educational principle, and aiming to define the identity and goals of high school. The curriculum was divided into a common national base and a diversified part, structured into four areas of knowledge: languages; mathematics; natural sciences; and humanities (Brasil, 2012). According to Moehlecke (2012), these DCNEM were intended to make the curriculum more attractive and flexible, meeting the interests of young people, drawing them to high school, and thus combating repetition and school dropout. They also advocated for full-time education, covering a minimum of seven hours a day.

For Castilho (2021, p. 66), these DCNEM demonstrate "continuity with the political and economic system of the 1990s". Moehlecke (2012) reports that, despite the apparent difference in the political and social context of the 1990s compared with 2012, the major themes and concerns of the 2012 DCNEM remain the same as those of the 1998 Guidelines.

In 2013, Ordinance No. 1.140 established the National Pact for the Strengthening of High School (PNFEM), which proposed a joint action between MEC, State Departments of Education (SEDUC-SP), and Universities for the continuous education of teachers at this stage of basic education, assuming the improvement of high school quality (Brasil, 2013). Also in 2013, Bill No. 6.840 was presented in the Chamber of Deputies to establish the full-time high school program and discuss its curricular organization, proposing changes to the LDBEN of 1996. According to Costa e Silva (2019, p. 70), this bill reignited the debate on the duality of high school "by proposing that students should, in the last year of the course, choose a professional career based on the regular, technological, or vocational curriculum".

For Krawczyk (2014, p. 35), in this project, the educational paths of young people were separated into two axes: one more "immediate and utilitarian" and another "scientific and long-term", which would contribute to fragmenting education and would anticipate their "decisions at the service of social reproduction". Krawczyk (2014, p. 35) states there is a segregation trend in this project, "as it assumed that young people who opt for the labor market would not continue their studies in higher education".

In 2016, the duality and segregation trend pointed out by Krawczyk (2014) was reinforced by Provisional Measure No. 746, which established the “High School Reform” - the first direct action by Michel Temer’s government in the educational field, approved by Law No. 13.415 of 2017, altering the LDBEN (Brasil, 2017, 2018). It mandated a curricular orientation considered more flexible for high school, in which students could choose their “formative paths” and also focus on their life projects, since, according to the Provisional Measure, the old curricular components were excessive and the pedagogical approach used was distant from youth cultures and the world of work. The challenges pointed out were ensuring the young person’s permanence in school, the effectiveness of their learning, and the construction of their aspirations for the present and the future (Brasil, 2018).

With this reform, the high school curriculum began to consist of the new National Common Curricular Base (Base Nacional Comum Curricular – BNCC) and formative paths, with an emphasis on the areas of languages, mathematics, natural sciences, human sciences, and technical and professional education. Schools were given autonomy to define the organization of the areas of knowledge, competencies, skills, and learning expectations set out in the BNCC (Brasil, 2018).

The BNCC is the “national curricular standard”, the result of long-standing disputes over the definition of a national curriculum for basic Brazilian education (Tarlau & Moeller, 2020). With the approval of the 1988 Constitution, discussions began over a new LDBEN and the creation of a common curriculum for basic education. With the new LDBEN’s approval in 1996, this debate was strengthened around the creation of new National Curricular Parameters⁶, with criticisms and defenses about the need for a national curriculum (Hypólito, 2019). The BNCC for early childhood, elementary, and junior high school was launched in 2017, while the one for high school was approved and homologated in 2018.

The formative paths, as defined by Teixeira et al. (2019), are the possible routes that students can take during their propaedeutic and/or technical education. However, in Brazil, the concept of a formative path is traditionally used in vocational education (Brasil, 2018). The reform used the construct “formative paths” to refer to the academic paths as a whole, covering “the deepening in one or more curricular areas, and also, pathways of technical professional education” (Brasil, 2017).

According to the BNCC, the formative paths would value youth protagonism and respond to the multiple interests of students, both in academic deepening and technical-professional education, and validate the organization of high school by areas of knowledge (Brasil, 2018). Therefore, the autonomy granted to the education networks to define the offer of formative paths would allow for deepening in one or more areas of knowledge and/or technical and professional education, recommending dialogue between the demands of young people and local contexts.

In the BNCC, specific competencies are defined for each area of knowledge and these also guide the formative paths related to these areas, which, in turn, must be connected to the specific competencies of the area for elementary school “to consolidate,

⁶ These new parameters defined a new curricular profile for high school, which, according to its creators, was “decontextualized, compartmentalized, and based on the accumulation of information” (Brasil, 2000, p. 4). The text also reports that such parameters would fulfill the functions of “disseminating the principles of curricular reform and guiding teachers in the search for new approaches and methodologies” (Brasil, 2000, p. 4).

deepen, and extend the integral formation of the students”, contributing so that they, upon reaching high school, can “build and realize their life projects in consonance with the principles of justice, ethics, and citizenship” (Brasil, 2018, p. 470).

In this context, the disciplines of Portuguese language and mathematics must be offered throughout the three years of high school, while the other disciplines have been transformed into transversal themes during this educational stage. This approach gives students the choice and responsibility to opt for an education with a more technical and professional focus or for general knowledge, depending on their choice of formative paths (Brasil, 2017). These formative paths are traced in schools through the offering of the work axis and life project – one of the general competencies established by the new BNCC, as previously mentioned, which proposes the provision of educational spaces so that young people can construct their future projects (Brasil, 2018).

According to Silva & Scheibe (2017), this reform represents an attempt to adapt the education of Brazilian youth to market logic, considering the small portion of young people who have the possibility of accessing higher education. Castilho (2021, p. 71) notes that when the reform establishes a general education based only on the mandatory nature of the Portuguese language and mathematics disciplines throughout the three years of high school, “the student will have a reduction in general education under the guise of making education more flexible”.

Moreover, the reform established the progressive increase of the daily study load to seven hours, requiring full-time high school education (Brasil, 2018). Thus, when it indicates compulsory general education only with the disciplines of Portuguese language and mathematics, it reduces the possibility of a propaedeutic education, even while increasing the number of classroom hours, emphasizing curricular components aimed at socioemotional development focusing on work and life projects, as presented in the model of PEI of the state of São Paulo.

High School in the Full-time Education Program (PEI) of the State of São Paulo and a Life Project

The state of São Paulo, through Decree No. 57.571, dated 02 December 2011, established the São Paulo Education Commitment Program, which gathers actions to disseminate school management models committed to improving educational outcomes in its teaching network. These actions include PEI, established by Complementary Law No. 1.164 of January 4, 2012 (amended in some respects by Complementary Law No. 1.191 of December 28, 2021), aimed at high schools and junior high schools; the implementation of the latter began in 2013 (São Paulo, 2012a, 2012b). PEI used the model of Full-time High Schools in the state of Pernambuco as a reference. This model was conceived by the Institute of Co-Responsibility for Education – a non-profit entity founded in 2003 by a group of businessmen who intended to implement a new school model and improve the quality of teaching in the state network (São Paulo, 2014).

In 2012, PEI was offered to 21 regular high schools in the São Paulo state network. Sixteen of them, out of a total of 3,978, began to implement it. According to França & Rinaldi (2022, p. 42), these institutions were chosen because they had “above-average results in external evaluations, good infrastructure, and were positively viewed by the communities where they were located”. With the inclusion of junior schools in the

Program, 417 school units participated in it in 2020, out of a total of 15,363 (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira, 2021), which represents 2.71% of the schools. In 2023, there are 2,311 schools and a total of 1.2 million students (São Paulo, 2023).

The Program offers a differentiated work system for teachers and management staff, initially called Full-time and Integral Dedication Regime (RDPI) (São Paulo, 2012b). In 2022, this system was renamed to Exclusive Dedication Regime – (RDE)⁷, with a provision of 40 weekly work hours at the same school. It is up to the teachers to perform traditional teaching activities and guide students in their personal, academic, and professional development. The exclusive dedication aims to provide students with “social, material, and symbolic support” to prepare and carry out their personal and professional projects (São Paulo, 2014, p. 12).

The Program intends to shape adolescents and young people based on the development of their potentialities, the expansion of self-realization perspectives, and the autonomous, solidary, and competent exercise of citizenship (São Paulo, 2014). PEI advocates for extending the time spent in school, aiming for a comprehensive education, to diversely develop human skills focusing on cognitive, affective, and sociocultural aspects. To this end, the study schedule is up to nine hours a day, and starting from November 2020, Resolution No. 85 allowed for the offer of two seven-hour daily shifts (São Paulo, 2020). Schools have the autonomy to define the students’ entry and exit times; however, they must have lunch at the institution.

The São Paulo State Department of Education (SEDUC - SP) proposes as the mission of full-time schools “to formative centers for young people that strive for excellence in academic education; comprehensive support for their life projects; their refinement as human beings; ethical formation; the development of intellectual autonomy and critical thinking” (São Paulo, 2014, p. 35). The SEDUC - SP identifies the following values for these schools:

Offering quality education; valuing educators; democratic and responsible school management; a spirit of teamwork and cooperation; mobilization, engagement, and commitment of the network, students, and society around the teaching-learning process aimed at public spirit and citizenship; and the school as an innovation hub (São Paulo, 2014, p. 36).

The premises of PEI are young people’s protagonism, continued education for teachers, excellence in management, co-responsibility, and replicability (São Paulo, 2014). Through this model, the SEDUC - SP aims to meet the recommendations of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which has adopted four pillars of knowledge for education in the 21st century: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be (Werthein & Cunha, 2000; São Paulo, 2014).

To this end, the school must offer academic content linked to sociocultural content and experiences directed towards the quality of life, the practice of solidarity coexistence, and understanding the world and its transformations (São Paulo, 2014).

⁷ The RDE bonus was in the amount of BRL 2,000.00 for teachers and BRL 3,000.00 for members of the management teams, school principals, and school directors (São Paulo, 2022).

The Program considers “the provision of conditions for the development of life projects as a major differentiator” and to embrace their variety, classes in investigative spaces and elective disciplines based on them are planned (São Paulo, 2014, p. 13). The pedagogical model of PEI “is established to ensure the construction of the Life Projects”, for which the school “must converge all actions and the methodology that will support students in their construction” (São Paulo, 2014, p. 14).

The first contact of the young people with the pedagogical proposal is during “Welcoming”, a moment of reception for newcomers by young people who have already experienced the Program. During welcoming, the students should be guided about the foundations and principles of PEI and dynamics for reflecting on life perspectives, aimed at writing a first draft of the life project at the end of this activity. Students are instructed to “put on paper what their dreams are, as well as what they need to do to make them come true”, which “marks the beginning of a collaborative process between the student and the school” (São Paulo, 2014, p. 19). Subsequently, they should structure their life projects in written documents, to be constantly reviewed, including with the assistance of tutors.

The offering of the Life Project course in high school aims to ensure the development of projects focused on personal and professional aspects, using a certain determination of the students’ future for their adult life as a parameter. This course is established as a specific time to think about life projects and, with the support of teachers, to develop an action plan to achieve them (São Paulo, 2014).

In this context, since 2012, the idea of “building a life project” has been introduced in public schools in the state of São Paulo and, consequently, circulated among the young people assisted by them. For França & Rinaldi (2022, p. 42), “this model of education in São Paulo is aligned with the neoliberal reform shades that began in the early 1990s in the state and have deepened over time”. It is not difficult to find within PEI concepts and ideas that refer to the reforms that structured high school in the country since the Old Republic, especially regarding the education of young people to respond to market capitalism.

França & Rinaldi (2022) report that, since the beginning of the Program, there have been many complaints from the communities where it was implemented, directed at the full-time schedule, considered exclusive because it does not cater to students who worked in the opposite shift or were engaged in activities such as sports and general courses. In contrast, Marques (2017, p. 118) reports that teachers, managers, and students of a school that participates in PEI recognize the extension of the school day as a positive aspect, especially when this time is used to “expand students’ participation in art, physical education, and science projects, among others”.

For Giroto & Cássio (2018, p. 18), the institutions that are part of PEI are considered “schools for a few”, since in addition to the limited number, they have fewer classrooms and vacancies than regular schools, reinforcing “the argument of distortion caused by a public policy that differentiates school units within the same territorial base”.

Beyond the conditions of implementation and the results of the Program, the main point of discussion is the continuity of school duality for adolescents and young people who would be “human beings devoid of meaning in themselves, mere projects of future adult citizens: some miniatures in suit and tie, the majority in overalls” (Nosella, 2016, p. 74).

School, High School, and Young People

Education is a fundamental right recognized by the Federal Constitution of 1988, yet it has not been fully established, especially for the population in contexts of inequality and poverty, particularly concerning young people (Lopes & Borba, 2022). The violation of this right hampers the breaking of the poverty cycle, in which most Brazilian young people are immersed, and decreases the chances of reconfiguring the social place occupied by this majority (Lopes & Borba, 2022; Pan & Lopes, 2022). Therefore, it is essential to understand school as an important social tool for popular groups to gain social visibility, a possibility of better living conditions, and above all, for the promotion of civic education for all (Lopes & Silva, 2007; Pereira et al., 2021; Borba et al., 2022).

Given this, the purpose of the school, and high school in particular, should not only be its relationship with the future of young people but the development of their life projects. School is also a place of “sociability, coexistence, and entertainment”, with the power to teach new things and enable young people to re-signify and “value this learning territory”, becoming a privileged institution to expand the life experiences of young people and their prospects (Pereira & Lopes, 2022, p. 81).

High school should represent “the most delicate and important cathartic moment in a person’s life, when the value of autonomy emerges”, in the sense of the freedom to take a stand. Therefore, the preparation for the labor market should not be sought at this stage, but rather the method of study and research (Nosella, 2016, p. 63). Furthermore, there is a need to find ways to protect the right of young people, especially the poor, to a fair time of professional indecision, since to survive, the vast majority are led to early professional definition, as determined by PEI by instituting the need to construct a life project in high school, with a more professional bias.

It should be emphasized that the pedagogical principle proper to high school, according to Nosella (2011, p. 1060), should be “the young people’s search for autonomy and identity in the moral, intellectual, and social realms – a moment of transition from the phase of heteronomous learning to that of autonomous learning, more conscious and freer”. When PEI prioritizes the life project, making it the central axis of learning, it moves away from the possibility of a “disinterested” and “formative” education (Gramsci, 2004, p. 33) and prioritizes the students’ professional destiny.

According to Gramsci (2004), schools should elevate young people to a certain degree of maturity, intellectual and practical ability, with certain autonomy in orientation and initiative, which would lead to their insertion into social activity. This is the unitary school or humanistic education, and in it, the last phase, that is, high school, must be understood and organized as a decisive element, in which:

[...] one tends to create the fundamental values of “humanism”, the intellectual self-discipline and moral autonomy necessary for a later specialization, whether it is scientific (university studies) or immediately practical productive (industry, bureaucracy, commerce, etc.). The study and learning of creative methods in science and life should begin in this last phase of school, and should no longer be a monopoly of the university or left to the chance of practical life: this school phase should already contribute to

developing the element of autonomous responsibility in individuals, it should be a creative school (Gramsci, 2004, p. 39).

High school is considered a “strategic phase of the school system and the process of democratization and modernization of the nation”, thus becoming the fundamental moment for the general education of citizens (Nosella, 2016, p. 70). For this reason, this stage of basic education is interpreted as the central point of the formative process, the vertex of the parabola that represents the school system, but which does not correspond to a mere change of direction in the trajectory. This is the period of “fullness and maturity of people when the young people learn to produce and direct themselves, as a basic assumption to produce and direct society” (Nosella, 2016, p. 65).

From this emerges the intentionality of thinking about future projects in the plural, not as something stable and definitive, but as a type of constant and enduring objective that helps young people in the search for meaning in life and provokes them to make a difference in the world. Therefore, it is problematic and unfair to understand the life project as something to be determined in basic education to be executed after high school, especially when access to a disinterested and formative education is denied.

Furthermore, the theme of the life project is understood to be complex and multifaceted, susceptible to rigidities and deviations, especially with the young population. Thus, it is important to remember that high school has long faced the duplicity of its function: the basic education of young people and the real conditions leading them to a life of achievements, both in the labor market and in the formation for higher education (Lopes & Silva, 2007). Even with numerous reformulations in the history of Brazilian education, as previously mentioned, public high school is designed to meet the political and economic demands of the country, maintaining the social mark of the poor classes and inequalities in the construction of future projects of its young people. This problem is particularly encountered with the initiation of PEI, in which the centrality of the life project returns to the idea of professional training.

For Gramsci (2004), the social mark comes from the fact that each social group has its type of school, and these are determined to perpetuate a function, whether traditional, guiding, or instrumental. Still according to Gramsci (2004, p. 49), this structure can only be destroyed by not multiplying and ranking professional schools and by creating preparatory schools, of basic education, that lead young people to professional choices, but “forming them, during this meantime, as people capable of thinking, studying, directing, or controlling those who direct”, in other words, citizens interested in themselves and the world.

Therefore, it is necessary to reflect on high school in its relationship with the labor market, higher education, and education in a broader sense, linked to notions of autonomy and citizenship of all young people, to expand their possibilities of choice and increase their opportunities for social participation (Pereira & Lopes, 2022).

Final Remarks

The issue of pedagogical duality continuity in Brazilian high school as a reproduction of power structures seems evident, including in certain proposals that claim to shape

young people by developing their potential, expanding their self-fulfillment prospects, and practicing citizenship.

As stated in this text, there are still significant reservations regarding PEI of the state of São Paulo and its focus on life project construction. This is because schools should encourage intellectual, practical, and autonomous abilities so that young people can reach a level of maturity that enables them to consciously and freely choose their future projects. From this perspective, it is essential to foster the full development of education for young people as human beings of their time.

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