

# Curricular and Educational Practice Policies

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This text discusses an ethnographical study made in a Primary Education school of the municipal public system of Rio de Janeiro, referred to here by the fictitious name “Rio School”. Its purpose is to analyze the impact of the current curricular policies in that school.

In my portrayal of the scenario where Rio School’s pedagogic activities take place, it should be borne in mind that everyday school life has been undergoing transformations. They result from changes that took place outside the school and that developed into a reconfiguration of the sociocultural, economic and political structures of contemporary social organizations.

In this context, Afonso (2001) talks about the emergence of an evaluator-State based on a regulatory body that wants to foster “a competitive *ethos* that is now becoming more explicit when, for example, pressures exerted on schools are noted ... through an outside evaluation ...” (p.26) and hold teachers and administrators of scholastic education responsible for the results achieved. Thus, contradictorily, schools have been allowed autonomy to attain goals proposed by organizations outside the pedagogic environment, giving rise to a homogenizing scholastic education through the imposition of standardization of pedagogic practices, in spite of the widely declared discourse of catering to specific local features (ROSAR & KRAWCZYK, 2001).

They are standards I have used as a basis to say that, in my first contacts at Rio School, what surprised me were the significant changes in implementing pedagogic work and in the style of conducting educative action.

To determine the effect of those changes – accompanying Afonso’s analysis – one must consider the complex system of evaluating the learning process, which was being introduced during the 1990s, and which is based, at a regional level, on the reform of the evaluation system of Rio de Janeiro municipality – which began with Resolution 606 of 03/15/1996 – and, at a national level, on the National System of Evaluation of Basic Education (SAEB). Associating what was proposed by the new curricular policies – which in Rio de Janeiro municipality can be narrowed down to the proposals of Multieducation and to the National Curricular Standards (NCS) – that mechanism of the Evaluator-State’s action, as a regulator and centralizer, made it possible to implement very perceptive changes in the pedagogic practices of Rio School.

Multieducation was introduced in 1996 as the Basic Curricular Nucleus for public system schools of Rio de Janeiro municipality. It has the constructivist appearance of curricular organization and is based on the thinking of Vygotsky. The text published in 1996 professes interest in “preserving the system’s unity and guaranteeing to all its students access to the same knowledges without any kind of privilege or discrimination” (p.217). It talks about interdisciplinarity, based on the association of four educative principles (environment, work, culture and language) with four conceptual nuclei (identity, time, space and



TO CITE THIS ARTICLE PLEASE INCLUDE ALL OF THE FOLLOWING DETAILS:

Tura, Maria de Lourdes Rangel. (2011). Curricular and Educational Practice Policies. *Transnational Curriculum Inquiry* 8 (2) <http://nitinat.library.ubc.ca/ojs/index.php/tci> <access date>

transformation), which are, however, organized around the scholastic disciplines that traditionally form the basic curriculum of Primary Education.

It also emphasizes the democratization of access to the means and languages that construct thought, subject and the citizen” (p. 133) and, in that context, focuses on the new information, communication and media technologies, indicating interaction among the different languages. Therefore it seeks to associate interdisciplinarity, unity of the system, homogeneity of behaviors, access to the new technologies, participation of students and teachers around the classical disciplines of the curriculum, in a proposal of dynamic articulation, which accompanies the time and the space experienced in the school environment, making the traditional interact with the product of a new pedagogic discourse, based on constructivist conceptions and on the new school education requirements.

In 1996, - at the same time as Multieducation was announced – the preliminary version of the National Curricular Standards (NCS) circulated at a national level. They were prepared by experts related to the Federal Government. At that moment, a “national curriculum” was being produced, despite the affirmation – in the introductory text – that it was not compulsory to adopt those standards.

Hence, in reality, the curricular issues became more complex and Lopes (2004a) draws attention – based on the discourse of several authors – to the centrality of the curriculum in educational policies in the globalized world.

Let us then examine the impact of those policies in the everyday life of a school.

### **The investigation work**

The choice of the school as the *locus* of my investigation was based on previous criteria that I chose – good functioning conditions, easy access, a complete staff of teachers, and recognition by the Regional Education Coordination (REC) of the good quality pedagogic work done. With those criteria, I approached the Municipal Education Department (MED) for authorization to do systematic observation work – of an ethnographic nature – at a public school of the municipal system and on that occasion, reciprocal negotiations began regarding my activity in the field of research. I then chose Rio School where I was following up the development of pedagogic activities conducted during 2004 and in the first half of 2005.

In that pedagogic environment I was welcomed warmly by the various school staff members and enjoyed good moments of companionship, as well as moments of tension and difficulties, as was to be expected.

I took part in Teachers’ Meetings and in different activities of the various pedagogic projects implemented by the school and also talked to the students about school life and participated in meetings – both formal and informal – of teachers in their free time.

I interviewed teachers of different stages of the school course and of different scholastic disciplines. I was also able to accompany the Pedagogic Coordinator’s attendance to students that needed special attention for recovering some delay in assimilating school knowledges. Similarly, I witnessed conversations of parents or persons responsible for the students, who sought out the School’s Director to attend to their interests or when called by teachers.

In the many moments and places where I went, I increased my knowledge of Rio School, clarifying some analyses, updating my attitudes and reviewing old interpretations.

### **Life at Rio School**

Rio School has – as I learned – a good reputation in the region and in the Regional Education Coordination (REC). I noticed that some parents wanted to have their children



study at that school and found, while participating in its pedagogic activities, that this evaluation is coherent with the work done.

A number of studies have pointed to differences between schools of a same teaching system (BOURDIEU, 1999 & YAIR, 1996). They are schools that combine the situation of having recognized quality – meaning that there is no very regular distribution of funds made available for scholastic education – and that even so they are also “chosen” by those parents who are able to look for a school with a better reputation, which includes – very particularly in Rio de Janeiro – its distance from regions where urban violence is more visible.

Rio School is large and spacious, it is built in the middle of a plot of land and at the rear there is a larger space used for Physical Education, recreation and commemorations. The ground floor is used for recreational activities and also houses the Teachers’ Room, Director’s Room, Dining Hall, Washrooms, etc. Additionally, there are 3 more floors used for the school’s different pedagogic activities in Classrooms, Reading Room, Computer Laboratory, Auditorium etc.

Around 800 students were enrolled in two class periods – one in the morning and the other in the evening. It also housed various activities of the Education for Work Hub of the Municipal Education Department, which offers good contributions in its communication with teachers and pupils that attend the School<sup>2</sup>.

Rio School was, also, a space for a cordial relationship between teachers, students, the management staff and employees. This helped to make the different teaching conceptions clearer regarding pedagogic processes, expectations regarding the students’ learning process, concepts of school evaluation, greater or lesser possibilities for participating in pedagogic activities and cultural differences – more apparent among the group of students.

At this point – or before going on to describe the characteristics of Rio School – it would be worth considering the matter of the difference, which was very clear among the subjects of that educative environment and is very visible in the various manifestations of the cultural life of Rio de Janeiro city. Based on Bhabha (1998), I have noted that “the cultural difference cannot be understood as a free game of polarities and pluralities in the homogenous and empty time of the national community” (p.227).

In other words, what is being problematized are perceptions based on an anthropological tradition which sees – in the context of totalized cultures – the confrontations between cultures as orientated in dichotomies that articulate the dispute between symbolic contents and hegemonic and non-hegemonic traditions.

What I have designated, then, as cultural difference particularly denotes the situation of living in “liminal spaces”, as Bhabha calls them, or on the “slippery banks of cultural displacement” (p.46), which eliminates the idea of a “national culture”, or of a totalized culture and its universalizing presuppositions and turns toward that which is constituted as a cultural and historic hybridism, accompanying the constitution of a postcolonial world. The difference, therefore, portrays a movable context in which meanings and values are appropriated in very specific ways of translation, transfer of meaning, negotiation and ambivalence that eliminate the possibility of thinking in a stable system of reference and representation. In that perspective, the difference lies in a process of negotiation surrounded by discontinuous temporalities, experienced in spaces of intertextuality or in between-places of race, class and gender. A difference marked by the silence of repressed stories, by cultural displacements, by the emergence of other meanings, by the desire to be named. These situations are part of our nation’s history, of the silences of our people, of the surprise that many of their gestures, languages and values provoke, of what cannot be understood in the attitudes of the students, in their “muddled” ways of asserting themselves.

In that environment, riddled with ambivalences created by cultural pluralism, the management staff (the School Director, the Assistant Director and the Pedagogic Coordinator)

and their few and insufficient assistants, redoubled their efforts to fulfill the many tasks entrusted to them, making such work at times very wearying. It was the effect of the new policies for running municipal schools that kept that team bound to goals established at regional and central levels of the scholastic education administration which, sustaining its discourse of autonomy of pedagogic institutions, delegated to those professionals an immense load of activities, reports, planning and time limits to be fulfilled in scanty time, with insufficient funding and human resources and the fervent desire of Rio School's management staff to achieve their aims because of the consequent advantages. Those requirements delimited the "rendering of accounts" regarding the implementation of the new curricular proposals, which should be in progress in the School and which involved transformations in the teachers' and students' work.

Watching the development of pedagogic activities in Rio School, I saw, also, the many strategies the teachers introduced for accompanying the different curricular proposals. That is said on the basis of Multieducation texts and of the National Curricular Standards (NCS) and, in a pragmatic sense, what was contained in the textbook which, more specifically, incorporated the NCS proposals.

The textbooks are distributed by the MED to Primary School students and represent an important indication of what the teachers understood to be specific contents of their scholastic discipline. However, one must not disregard the different styles of work, personal experiences and attitudes to the social functions of the school specifically of the teaching staff. What I found was that regarding the proposals, the teachers – in a *continuum* that ranged between accepting the new curricular proposals and remaining attached to their personal styles and conceptions about pedagogic practice – sought to associate the different curricular proposals with the characteristics of that pedagogic environment and of their students and also with their personal beliefs and working styles. As Apple (2004) said, it was easy to see that it is in the dynamism of educative action that the scholastic disciplines – introduced, standardized, evaluated and made official – become something concrete, alive and active.

At another point, the Pedagogic Coordinator mobilized the teaching staff and student body to participate in different pedagogic projects she had prepared with the help of some teachers closer to the coordination. The construction of pedagogic projects was included among the goals of the Pedagogic Policy Project of Rio School, called "The Citizen", and in the Multieducation recommendations. Consequently, in 2004, in the first two-month period work was done on the pedagogic project "Saber Cuidar" (Know How to Care), which implemented a series of activities focused on ecology. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> two-month period, the School took on the pedagogic project "Olympiad: Myth and Mythology" which, taking advantage of the motivation of the Olympic Games in Greece, worked with students on a group of knowledges related both to sport and to historical facts and to the group of narratives of Greek mythology, using the wealth of traditions adapted to the geographical space of the sporting event and which were being widely disclosed in the different medias. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> two-month period, the School carried out the project "O Folclore" (Folklore), which culminated in a party which all the class divisions attended, presenting dances, games and various aspects of folklore of the different regions of Brazil. In the 4<sup>th</sup> two-month period, the project "O Brasil Plural" (Plural Brazil) had as its climax Culture Week. In that two-month period there was also a Sciences Fair involving all the class divisions showing their work to fellow students from the different school grades.

On that occasion, I observed a 6th grade class<sup>3</sup> preparing with the teacher the work they were to present. The Sciences Fair was to take place in the following week and the teacher had already arranged beforehand what the students should bring from home to make models showing different types of terrain and plants. Materials provided by the students' families were also used. Among them was a small set of gears that moved water from a tank

to sprinkle it on planted soil. It was made by one of the student's uncle. The teacher reminded the children to bring what had been agreed and had also brought to the classroom earth and other materials necessary for the work. What I realized was that the time for preparing the project was very short and that while one group of students actively participated in the work, another group just watched. When the work was presented to a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade division, I found that those that had done the work were also its presenters.

That type of situation reflects the multiplicity of tasks entrusted to the teachers, who had to meet the Multieducation requirements, fulfill the textbook's directions and the pedagogic projects and what they also considered important to be done by the group of students of the scholastic stage they taught. This characterizes exactly the associations made to fulfill the different curricular proposals and the teacher's purposes.

Apart from that, they had to cope with a numerous group of children or teenagers and live with their cultural differences, placing them far from the standards of students that the teachers had introjected.

It was in that context of situations that I heard the Director of the Rio School comment that a problem had come to her attention related to a certain "loss" of teaching authority. She said that the students – because of the way they behave or address the teachers, due to the expectations they show they have regarding their schoolmasters – seem to no longer consider the standards traditionally established for the teacher/student relationship.

In short, work with pedagogic projects was very much encouraged by the REC and the Pedagogic Coordinator, who took part in weekly continued training meetings in the Regional Coordination, brought from those contacts the incentive to continue conducting such projects, which could associate the educative principles of the curricular proposal of Multieducation with the contents of the different disciplines of the school curriculum.

The MED has made efforts to introduce Multieducation in Rio de Janeiro municipality and it is to that effect that one can see some continued teacher training actions and the production of technological resources, supported by Multirio, a multimeans enterprise of Rio de Janeiro Municipality.

Nonetheless, those efforts have not made the MED deviate from what was produced on a national scale and, corroborating this affirmation, Multirio in 2004 published the book "O mundo cabe na sala de aula" (The World in a Classroom), which disclosed to 40 thousand teachers of the municipal system the National Curricular Guidelines (NCG) for Infant Education and for Primary Education and explanations about those Guidelines, suggestions of subjects for consideration and activities to be carried out.<sup>4</sup>

## The Teaching Staff

By and large the teaching staff had good experience in their work area and, at times, a long career in the teaching profession. There were teachers who had even held direction and coordination positions in other schools and some who had worked in activities of the Education for Work Hub, or in other municipal projects. Several had also worked in other public and private system schools. It was a very assiduous and active team.

In view of those characteristics, I am not talking about homogeneity of practices or consensuses on the ways of handling the school curriculum. The methodological alternatives and the solutions found for teaching and learning problems were part of the singularity of the practice of those teachers. In other words, however inflexible pedagogic activity may be, condensed in it are personal trajectories and traits of everyday school life – seen as a cultural environment that mobilizes a network of meanings – that impart sense to individual actions and produce a multiplicity of ways of being inserted in the school's educative project, according to Clarke (1994).



Thus, I was able to observe, in contact with the teachers, some strategies that were implemented to impart more dynamism to classes or better assimilation by the students. I saw teachers who brought materials from home – from newspapers and magazines, for example – to motivate or make pedagogic work possible, using more up-to-date texts or working with issues disclosed by the media. I noted teachers guiding the students' research work, using computers. That is, I found that there were many ways of "fixing things" to work with the many discontinuities of that school environment. I also saw the sameness of the teaching activities, the rigidity of teacher/student relationships, when following standards as old as the teacher's working career. In that case, I saw that the teachers were very concerned about making their students organize themselves in a more disciplined way and in adapting the homogeneity of the proposals to the prevailing heterogeneity, without paying attention to the need to forge closer ties with student cultures and with the multiple needs resulting from their cultural and linguistic differences, as Valli, Cooper & Frakes (1997) observed in another educational context.

When I was invited by teachers to participate in some of their classes, to observe aspects that they had already talked about earlier with me – aspects that were always associated to the difficulties they had in motivating students or to understand better what they were working on with the students – or to participate in presenting group work, I witnessed major issues that are currently arising for teachers regarding pedagogic processes. Those issues are particularly related to cultural differences in social and family environments and, also, to shortage of money, insufficient time, the need to accelerate pedagogic activities; problems relating to the sense given to implementing curricular proposals and the disbeliefs of parents and teachers about the real possibilities of attaining the sought-after "scholastic success".

In the middle of all that, external pressures appeared, coming from the MED and the REC, to the effect of achieving previously programmed academic results and of imparting more visibility to pedagogic activities.

As a way of further disclosing the educative action implemented by the Rio de Janeiro Municipality, the MED has organized exhibitions of work done by the students of the municipal public system in convention Centers. The media popularizes those events in articles published in newspapers and on TV. Rio School always sent some of the students' works to such exhibitions. In that case, what I noted is that it was always the same students that participated in these projects that involved help from the Pedagogic Coordination and the teachers. It was much preparation and many efforts to give prominence to the work done at the School. While life at Rio School maintained its routine and customary everyday life, outside it that small group of students and teachers were experiencing the brilliance of the "excellences".

In short, when I mention what I observed as outside pressures on the teaching work and the interest – also external – in disclosing the "good performance of the public school students", I am also seeing what is currently reported as the search for performativity, which represents a new standard for ways of legitimating the knowledges that are being taught in schools and their ways of appropriation. That is a process that interacts with what is presented as the results of the evaluation of pedagogic practice (the SAEB, for example), and which consequently makes teaching work very controlled by criteria of efficiency, constructed in spaces of management of pedagogic activity outside the school (Macedo, 2002).

Ball (2004) maintains that the performativity standard permits remote control of teaching work. The State is, then, through its discourse on quality and efficiency, reflected in the results and levels of performance observed – imposing a new institutional culture, new action profiles and new subjectivities.

Santos (2004), following the same line of analysis, talks about a performance culture, governed by a new logic – technician and utilitarian – of school administration which uses auditing technologies centered on a system of tests and inspection.

These, therefore, are the new ways of controlling teaching action that I saw happening in Rio School and which made standardized performance indicators delimit its teachers' pedagogic activity. I found that the effectiveness of those actions and their impacts on the school curriculum are included in what I perceived to be a set of innovations that emerged in the everyday life of Rio School, in 2004 and 2005.

## The Students

As for the students, what drew more attention – as I pointed out above – were their cultural differences. Those differences contained the milestones of our colonial history, of the many diasporic movements that revealed the displacement of different African peoples to the Americas – in the degrading state of slavery –, the migrations from the country to the city, from the northeast to the southeast, from European and Asiatic countries to the Americas, in pursuit of work and survival. What led Hall (2003) to affirm the hybrid result of our American cultures or of cultures that were irremediably “impure”, anthropologically speaking.

Prominent in that group were the residents of the neighboring shanty-towns, who represented an excluded segment from the social point of view (low income, low educational level, little access to goods and urban services). There were also students residing in the district and others who were children of service providers in the region where the school was located and who brought their children to Rio School, especially motivated by its good reputation. Accordingly, some students said they lived in places far from the school.

The students ranged from those in a very adverse social situation to those belonging to middle class persons who due to some circumstance – usually related to an employment crisis, prevailing in different world spaces these days – had opted to enroll their children in that school<sup>5</sup>. The latter had better chances of widening the opportunities offered by the School and presenting work using new resources of information and communication technologies. Of course there were some students from other social groups that used some of these new technologies, taking the opportunities offered by the School or by the areas of the Education for Work Hub.

Thinking of the opportunities offered by Rio School, I recall a Physical Education teacher who also worked in the Education for Work Hub and had already been the director of a public school. He was always about to make an evaluation of the results of the School's pedagogic work, which annoyed the other teachers because of the vehemence of what he said. He used to say: “here we are preparing only 10% of the students to continue with Primary Education. The rest of us are teaching them to be nail hammerers.” Nail hammerers! Was that lack of respect for the students, disregard for teaching work, a disappointment over what he observed or excess realism? Well, there it was, at any rate, an evaluation of what could be understood as being detached from the many cultural differences in that school environment and which, in our social organization, walks side by side with inequalities of socioeconomic opportunities.

At this point, I want to point out that the evident inequalities among the students were reflected in a great difference of school performance and were also related to the inequality of opportunities to participate in the School's various activities. The group that had the greatest opportunities was small and, as the above-mentioned teacher said, the mass of students produced only fair school work, marked by many deficiencies in certain areas of the

curriculum, by backwardness and failure to attend classes and by very mediocre behavior – although always noisy – in the context of the school life.

Still about the students, I saw domestic and neighborhood solutions adopted to bring the children to and from the School, or to heed some requirement from the school management.

As a whole, an immense array of problems was noted, resulting on one side from the actual school organization or from the limits of school organization and, on the other, from the times in which we are living, from city violence etc.

### **Pedagogic practice**

At this point, based on the contributions of Stephen Ball (1997), who maintains that the educational policies document is a “true intervention in educative practices” (p.18), because it raises problems that will have to be resolved in the context of school life, I confirmed the impact of the new curricular proposals for teaching work and the profound changes in the ways of educating, as well as the effort made by the School Management and the Pedagogic Coordination to account for the results of the students’ performance and of the administration of human resources and funds managed by Rio School.

The great help and great complicator of pedagogic activities was the textbook. On one hand it was good quality pedagogic material, distributed by the municipality and all – or almost all – could accompany pedagogic activities using this teaching resource as their focal point. On the other hand, there was all the rigidity and sameness of that list of contents, of that language, of those illustrations that cater to a small group of students and cramp the teachers’ style.

At the Class Councils<sup>6</sup> meetings first there was a moment of reflection on a text or a pedagogic topic. Afterward, an evaluation of the two-month period was made class division by class division, pointing out the characteristics of the group and personal issues. There were many consensuses in the discussion, especially regarding some students who stood out because of their insufficiencies, who participated little, who were often absent, who systematically arrived late and lost the first classes. There was also dissension about other students who were accompanying well some disciplines and were bad in others. It was the moment to take attitudes, to seek solutions, always bearing in mind the importance of recovering arrears to achieve success at the end of the school period. The great problem for those finalizations was time, always short.

In view of that situation, I should mention the new proposals in relation to the evaluation. For example, I was able to verify the Pedagogic Coordinator’s effort to emphasize the importance of considering the “qualitative aspects” of the evaluation, which pointed to a growing flexibilization of the school results, to meet the standards proposed by the MED’s evaluation system. Among those standards there was always concern about attaining the pass rates goal. It is ideal not to exceed 10% of the total students. To that effect, my attention was drawn – compared with another opportunity I had to observe the daily life of a school of Rio de Janeiro’s municipal system (TURA, 2000) – by the observation that the teachers, by and large, accepted to negotiate with the Pedagogic Coordination modifications in the results achieved by the students, so as not to be very far from the desired rates.

As for the teachers, I noted specially the difficulties arising from implementing the new pedagogic projects which, at times, entered into conflict with the values they attributed to teaching activities. I also found an increase in interest in the exhibition/disclosure of the school work done, as I commented above. In this context, there were conflicts between different teaching subjectivities. These were very often expressed in distinctions among those that adhered more easily to the new curricular proposals and those that opposed such changes because of their beliefs and earlier experiences. In this group, I could also see the multiple



ways of recontextualizing the new curricular proposals. I saw the Pedagogic Coordinator's attempts to articulate the different disciplinary contents with the pedagogic projects.

Underlying the efforts made by the school community to attain the objectives proposed by those managing municipal education, were methods of regulating the pedagogic work, which had a perceptible effectiveness on teaching activities and were redimensioning the ways of dealing with the disciplinary contents and leading the teachers to take care to show their productivity.

On the other hand, to get an idea of the tangle of situations that had just been revealed regarding those new curricular proposals and the concern over showing productivity, one fact became very clear to me.

In order to adhere to the School's pedagogic project at the time of the Olympiads, a 7th grade teacher suggested to the students that they prepare an individual work. They should produce a poster on the Olympiads with texts and images. That teacher was very interested in sports and this, at that moment, made it easier for him to dialogue with the students.

One girl student produced a poster that surprised everyone. Its images were very evocative, it was very well done and its text was very well written... in French! The teachers looked at it and there was a perplexed silence. Rio School's students had no contact with French. They only had English lessons at the school.

What could that mean?

Why did the student not care about not understanding what she had copied and copied so correctly?

How did that student assimilate the contents of the school disciplines?

What meaning did the things she had been learning at the School have for her?

What odd ways out are found by those who live on the "slippery banks of cultural displacement", as Bhabha (1998) said!

This other curriculum was not part of the proposals that reached Rio School and there were no parameter to measure its productivity.

### **The school curriculum**

In my work of observing pedagogic practices in the everyday life of Rio School, I picked out some aspects that seem to me fundamental for outlining the scenario in which its school curriculum or curricula are structured.

Those aspects can be grouped around three constructs: school culture; hybridism of conceptions and pedagogic practices, and external control of teaching work.

First I must establish the clear relationship between school culture and pedagogic practice and in that context the profound cultural changes occurring at the moment are clear.

Another point was the discovery of new ways of communication of the group of students relating to the new ways of thinking and acting of the different cultures existing in the School's neighborhood.

At Rio School the teachers were working with a much differentiated student body, with new demographic and community profiles, which curtailed the old pedagogic practices and administrative rules. They were situations linked to a complex of meanings and senses being produced in the sociocultural relations experienced by the teachers and students and which would have to dialogue with the multiple proposals presented to the schools by the MED and the many conceptions about teaching work and pedagogic theories circulating in that school environment. That is, what could be observed was the existence of a set of cultural changes that interacted with traditions strongly rooted in pedagogic practice. Those traditions were directed to maintaining processes of homogenization of conducts, knowledges, working rhythms and construction of specific skills, according to the standards of

organization of a school culture which, at the present moment, finds itself faced with many technological innovations, new language codes and the various *ethos* of the different social groups.

It was in that context that the rigid normalizing of the pedagogic environment became conspicuous and the expectation of a certain homogeneity of learning, which has been the subject of supervision and control by the REC, although the MED has Multieducation as a reference, which proposes the school's relationship with the multiplicity of referents and languages that produce the richness of cultural life in the city environment.

At this point, I also want to point out that while observing events at Rio School, the dissonances between the student culture and the school culture became clear and, for that reason, there was an evident need to adapt the instructional and curricular models to the new groups of students.

These affirmations lead the analysis to something very remarkable about the educative action, i.e. a hybridism of conceptions and practices that were organized like a blend of postures that overlapped the ambivalence between more traditional positions and the search for new contents and methodologies that could incorporate, for example, the transformations of the present scientific-technological development and, as a result, the new ways of producing knowledge.

They were positions that marked both the work of different teachers and the forms of pedagogic action of a same teacher. That hybridism of conceptions and practices I was able to observe very closely when I was accompanying, for example, the progress of a History program unit, which was being conducted by a 6th grade teacher who invited me to sit in on her classes. The reason for the teacher's invitation was her perplexity at the students' behavior who, she said, were increasingly changeable and agitated and what she had acquired from experience in dealing with students already seemed not to produce results.

Nonetheless, I cannot say that the attitudes, beliefs or values of the teachers of Rio School with regard to the transmission/assimilation of the school knowledges are either one or the other, but that, before all else, those teachers bring to their professional practice elements from different thought matrixes and cultural practices and what is perceived is a mixture of conceptions, values, expectations and practices, in a hybridism peculiar to the time in which we are living.

In other words, in the dynamics of implementing the curricular proposals, teaching actions overlap with old ways of management and pedagogic practices, as well as with the product – dynamic – of the school culture, of the culture of Rio School. That mixture was produced in a hybridation of meanings or, as Lopes (2004b) pointed out, in a recontextualization through hybrid processes.

We are, therefore, seeing fusions that represent an amalgam of the new and the old, negotiation strategies, transitory moments, marked by ambiguity of senses and hybrid meanings that are being incorporated by the subjects of the school community, as noted by Garcia Canclini (1998).

It was in that context that I observed situations – different from the most usual in everyday school life – when students visited internet sites and coupled the use of the textbook with information found in internet consultations. I found the results of that type of pedagogic practice in a presentation of works on the functions of the digestive system, in a 7<sup>th</sup> grade Science class. In that work, the students - divided into groups – presented to their fellow students research done on the internet.

In this case, it was possible to identify those students that had done the work more actively, and also that there were two groups that said they had not managed to do the research, maintaining the perspective of the included and the “excluded from the interior”, as Bourdieu & Champagne (1999) defined and as the above-mentioned teacher pointed out.

## Finally

As I said above, Rio School had a very good reputation in the REC and wanted to maintain that rating, because it had brought benefits to the School. Among them, the possibility of being in a privileged position when funds are allocated, school equipment and human resources. Thus, through a discourse on quality and efficiency – reflected in the results observed – the MED was imposing a new institutional culture, new profiles of activity and new subjectivities. It was in the context of that discourse that the prospect emerged of developing a performance culture, as Santos (2004) said.

Here the impact of large-scale evaluations should be underscored – such as the SAEB – in the school's everyday life. Here, it was not a case of an initiative that originated in the MED, albeit there was much interest in the municipality being classified well in those exams and, for that reason, there was much concern over the fulfillment of the school programs, which were or seemed to be condensed in the textbooks distributed by the MED. That was why they had to be the focal point of the pedagogic work and were also the object of a control that began in the supervisory action of the Pedagogic Coordination – strictly supervised by the REC – and expanded into the various ways of accounting to the different levels of the scholastic education administration.

I noticed that the presence of REC personnel at Rio School – particularly the presence of the School Supervisor – was always a threatening event. It entailed the possibility of finding something that was not going well and of demanding changes in the conduct of the teachers. The School Direction then had to negotiate those changes and already there was a mixture of tensions and conflicts they had to discuss considering its interest in continuing to be well rated by the REC.

In other words, what I found was that the teaching work was being controlled by criteria of efficiency, constructed in management spaces of school activity outside the school. That impact left the teaching autonomy considerably shaken, much upsetting the teachers of Rio School.

It is, therefore, important to consider the effectiveness of that control by the REC and MED and, in that sense, I noted the change of discourse of various teachers, who sought to adapt their practices to what was wanted by the central and regional education administrative bodies.

That was not, however, the whole story. The teachers also found ways of conducting their teaching activity following their own criteria, values, beliefs and conceptions, while the REC's demands went on adding new standards to the hybrid formations of the teaching activity.

Consequently, an entire scholastic community was involved by subtle political technologies regulating academic work and in this aspect a discourse was being perfected about the evaluation of academic results, of great interest to the municipal education administrators.

On the other hand, it is important to emphasize – as Giroux (2003) helps us to think – the effects of that school curriculum that I saw happen and that revealed a variety of possibilities for the students. It is worth mentioning the various opportunities presented to the students of Rio School, who were involved with different learning and cohabitation situations and, among them, the opportunity to use new electronic technologies and new cultural texts, even those who were not the most active players in the pedagogic activities of the school's everyday life.

Affirming these inter-relationships and their dynamism, Ball (1997) recalls that an official document cannot be considered the curricular policy *per se*. First, because it is unable to encompass all the group of problems and issues existing in the educational field. Second,



because the curricular policies can be perceived as being inserted in a process that associates different historical times and contexts or arenas in dispute. In that sense, a curricular proposal will always be dialoguing with other texts and discourses already produced, or that are circulating in other spheres of the public authority and of civil society, as well as at the same time a recontextualization will be made of the political text inside the pedagogic practice where that text is going.

That is what I saw at Rio School. The pedagogic projects – adjusted to Multieducation – appeared as a curricular proposal that would have to involve all the disciplines of the curriculum, which, in its turn, would have to meet the requirements of the National Curricular Guidelines.

On the other hand, I also saw many kinds of recontextualization of those proposals in the school's everyday life. That recontextualization appeared very frequently in the discourses of the teachers who associated those projects with their beliefs, their teachers' *habitus*, the understanding of what it is feasible to do and interest in finding in the new cultural texts ways out for mobilizing the learning process of the students.

The different educative subjects of Rio School were thus involved in those conflicts.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> [ltura@centroin.com.br](mailto:ltura@centroin.com.br)

<sup>2</sup> The Education for Work Hub is a program of the Education Department that enables students of the municipal public system to participate in workshops for producing artistic or technical work, outside their school hours. The Education for Work Hub attends students of both sexes from different schools of a same region.

<sup>3</sup> With students aged between 12 and 14 years.

<sup>4</sup> cf.: <http://www.multirio.rj.gov.br>

<sup>5</sup> By and large or more frequently, in Brazil the public school is frequented by the low income population. The more privileged groups tend to enroll their children in private schools.

<sup>6</sup> Class Councils are periodical meetings of teachers and of the Pedagogic Coordination of a certain grade or stage of school organization, whose purpose is to evaluate the pedagogic work and the students' performance in that period.

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**Submitted: August, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011**

**Approved: September, 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

