

Contribution Details

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Curriculum as the Fluid for Unsireness Times: in Between the Solid and the liquid

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Proposal Information

Pandemic has been the driver for a faster and deeper change in teaching and learning, challenging teachers, and schools all over the world in several ways. Perhaps one of the most relevant challenge is to understand how students learn, what is crucial for them to be learned and how should that be organized. These questions point out to the core of the school, the curriculum, which is under pressure to combat inequalities and to pursue cognitive justice, relevance, and culture.

However, curriculum is itself marked by an excludent nature (Goodson, 2006) given its prescriptive character, invented for the control and management of the teacher's work and a powerful ally of social relationships of power that are reproduced in it. For the author, some national policies, despite being built on a broader distribution of elite educational categories, will provoke more exclusion, rather than social inclusion, because the educational strategies used are elaborated on very well-defined bases of exclusion, such as the traditional subjects or academic exams, part of an excludent "grammar of schooling" (Tyack & Tobin, 1994). Indeed, as one of the elements of this grammar that defines schooling, curriculum can still be taken as a pre-adaptation to "a new world—a world of repetitive indoor toil, smoke, noise, machines, crowded living conditions, collective discipline, a world in which time was to be regulated not by the cycle of sun and moon, but by the factory whistle and the clock (Toffler, 1970, p. 362). Although the world has changed and the spaces of work do not feet anymore in this description, the pillar of labour market has overcome the pillar of citizenship in education (Santos, 1991) and world is even more regulated by capitalism and production of goods and services.

Furthermore, social relations, including professions, are being dissolved into competences that need permanent update and adaption due to these fluid times (Bauman, 2007) with effects all over our society, namely democracy.

The argument is that to overcome this excludent nature, and prepare future citizens to live in unsireness times, curriculum needs to be understood not as solid as it was in ancient times, but also not as a liquid that no structure is present and it can be transformed every day, not ensuring a common culture for citizens. Narrative learning can be the concept to shape this curriculum under a communication paradigm (Trindade & Cosme, 2016).

The analysis will look over curriculum policies in Portugal in almost 50 years to find how these proposals have answered to the changes in the world, namely to this fluidity. Curricular proposals will be analysed taking cognitive justice, curriculum relevance and curriculum culture as the categories that allow the identification of the relationship between curriculum critical internal elements - knowledge, pedagogy and assessment - and external conditions for teaching and learning processes.

Methodology or Methods/ Research Instruments or Sources Used

Although this research looks over curriculum policies in Portugal since the beginning of political democratization (1974) until the latest curriculum changes (2019), organized in political cycles (Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992), the focus is on the cycles where curricular reforms/changes with expression at the legislative and national level can be found. This analysis will identify the dialectic relation between curriculum internal elements – knowledge, pedagogy, and assessment – and external conditions, namely historical and social ones. There will be used operative concepts under the three dimensions in analysis - cognitive justice, curriculum relevance and curriculum culture - that vary in their relative strength, being more open or closed (Bernstein, 1971). They are not treated in a dichotomous way, rather they are seen as a continuum, which may or may not coexist in the same cycle, varying in terms of their predominance. The approach assumes national curriculum policies are spaces of refraction (Goodson, 2010) of regional and global educational policies, bearing in mind that curricular knowledge and curriculum policies are considered as a process, a continuum, produced by multiple actors operating in different fields, within an economic, political and social context that it must take on an analytical body. On the other hand, educational change, and the curriculum, must be understood considering patterns and forces of change that provide different paths according to the historical and cultural reality of each region, country or even professional. This means that all curriculum policies are refracted whenever there is a change in level or actors, accepting that this refraction occurs even at the level of the classroom with each of the professionals who work in it. Therefore, we pay attention not only to national trajectories, but also to the individual trajectories of each educational actor under analysis. In this way, the methodological approach is completed with teachers' narratives, relevant in this context of individualized society, and a fundamental tool for understanding educational change, as they are assumed as a refraction of the curriculum's history, as well as social, political and economic changes.

Conclusions, Expected Outcomes or Findings

The curriculum changes developed in the various policy cycles analyzed show non-linear trends related to historical and political time. In fact, it cannot be said that the curriculum proposals in Portugal have followed a sequential and similar path.

External conditions are present in these orientations considering that it is possible to relate social and historical conditions more adverse to the lack of fulfillment of social justice with the closure of the curriculum and a focus on curriculum uniformity, as well as academic excellence as opposed to pedagogy.

Regarding the initial question that provoked this investigation, it is fair to say that the curriculum, in Portugal, is only oriented in a more 'jelly' perspective if we consider one of its critical internal elements: pedagogy. As for knowledge, it fluctuates over policy cycles, although in the last 6 years we can speak of a trend of knowledge fluidity. In fact, it is visible in the teachers' narratives the claim of this knowledge with diluted

borders, based on narratives and teaching professionalism, already in question in the near future. The most resistant internal element of the curriculum seems to be assessment which, despite the reinforcement in the last policy cycle towards formative assessment, maintains its selective and hierarchical character, both for students and schools. Probably, this fact is related to the implementation of large international statistical surveys that contribute to reinforce the standardized evaluation.

Effectively, teachers' narratives show the need to develop professional learning processes that contribute to the focus of teaching professionalism on pedagogical processes and not, as they witness, on digital resources that imprison teachers and limit innovation processes that respond to students' needs.

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