

NON-OBVIOUS TRUISMS OF EDUCATION: PUBLIC SCHOOL

OBVIEDADES NÃO ÓBVIAS DA EDUCAÇÃO: ESCOLA PÚBLICA

OBVIEDADES NO OBVIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN: ESCUELA PÚBLICA

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ABSTRACT: Development is not an open nod that, even having external motivations/pressions, needs to be solved from the inside out, with due authorship. Today there is no chance for a country to try any economic policy alternative that opposes liberalism, even if it is not Marxist or similar. Liberalism is a violent straitjacket, even if the notion of freedom is essential in etymology. Let us not simplify things, however. When we observe in African countries that girls are genitally mutilated for religious reasons, the impulse is to defend them, because sexuality itself is an inalienable right. Those who believe that even though human rights are endowed with relative (non-relativistic) validity, it is the case to condemn such mutilation practices, because humans cannot be truculently disfigured enters into a complex area, such as interfering with the education of children, to prevent girls from being domesticated as servants of men. In any case, however, we must prefer convincing approaches, although one can or should even admit intervention to prevent truculences of this magnitude.

KEYWORDS: Research. Teaching and learning. Psychology.

RESUMO: *Desenvolvimento não é um aceno aberto que, mesmo tendo motivações/pressões externas, precisa ser resolvido de dentro para fora, com devida autoria. Hoje não existe qualquer chance de um país tentar alguma alternativa de política econômica que se contraponha ao liberalismo, mesmo não sendo marxista ou similar. O liberalismo é camisa de força violenta, mesmo tendo na etimologia a noção de liberdade como essencial. Não simplifiquemos as coisas, porém. Quando observamos em países africanos que moças são mutiladas genitalmente por razões religiosas, o ímpeto é defendê-las, por ser a sexualidade própria direito inalienável. Quem acredita que, mesmo sendo direitos humanos dotados de validade relativa (não relativista), é o caso condenar tais práticas mutiladoras, pois humanos não podem ser desfigurados truculentamente, entra numa seara complexa, como é interferir na educação dos filhos, para evitar que meninas sejam domesticadas como serviçais dos homens. Em qualquer caso, porém, precisamos preferir abordagens de convencimento, embora se possa ou deva admitir até mesmo intervenção para impedir truculências desse porte.*

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PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Pesquisa. Ensino e aprendizagem. Psicologia.

RESUMEN: *El desarrollo no es un asentimiento abierto que, incluso con motivaciones/presiones externas, debe ser resuelto de adentro hacia afuera, con la debida autoría. Hoy en día no hay posibilidad de que un país intente ninguna alternativa de política económica que se oponga al liberalismo, aunque no sea marxista o similar. El liberalismo es una camisa de fuerza violenta, aunque tiene en la etimología la noción de libertad como esencial. Sin embargo, no simplifiquemos las cosas. Cuando observamos en los países africanos que las niñas son mutiladas genitalmente por razones religiosas, el impulso es para defenderlas, porque la sexualidad en sí es un derecho inalienable. Quienes creen que, aunque los derechos humanos están dotados de una validez relativa (no relativista), es preciso condenar esas prácticas de mutilación, porque los seres humanos no pueden ser truculentamente desfigurados, sino que entran en una esfera compleja, como la de interferir en la educación de los niños, para impedir que las niñas sean domesticadas como sirvientas de los hombres. En cualquier caso, sin embargo, hay que preferir los enfoques convincentes, aunque se puede o incluso se debe admitir la intervención para evitar truculencias de esta magnitud.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: Investigación. Enseñar y aprender. Psicología.

Introduction

“Public School” is a superlative chapter of education, echoing great battles for democracy and republic, for the European welfare state, clashes against privatist economic liberalism, union conquests (associate workers), in search of an egalitarian society, in which everyone could have any chance of thriving economically and living a decent life. This succinct and introductory text does not withhold. I will give an initial overview of the question, much more comprehensive, but still only introductory, compared to the text of Wikipedia. The public school has a direct link with human rights, representing the desideratum of universal access to education, as a lever that should be available without reservations or supremacy/privileges, so that the marginalized find, in this democratic and republican entity, a possible chance to improve life in every way, not just economic. In the welfare state, even within liberalism, the idea crystallized that education cannot be bought, nor sold, being an inalienable right of all. By offering a high quality public school, the welfare state has achieved another important feat: avoiding the privatization of basic education and even higher education, which requires huge contributions from public funding, implying incisive egalitarian structuring, for example, in the taxation of income and wealth. This model, however, has only remained in some countries, generally less for democratic, republican and ethical reasons, but because of the expectation that quality basic education has a strong impact on competitiveness and productivity, an attempt

that has been accepted in a greater tone in PISA and other instances of external evaluation, even unreasonably instrumentalists (ZHAO, 2018; 2014; DEMO, 2020).

In part, this indicates that a dark stage has been overcome: there is no longer any interest in the population remaining illiterate, disqualified, because this slows down the economy. Prosperity does not rhyme with illiteracy, as it rhymed at the beginning of the last century with the school linked to Fordism, parodied blatantly in Chaplin's "Modern Times". However, there remains another dark effect that Foucault called docilization of bodies (1977), today intensely sought in cognitive capitalism, in such "employability" (the worker needs to be tirelessly updated to work, although the productive system has no commitment to offer employment) (FUMAGALLI *et al.*, 2019; RINDERMANN, 2018; MILANOVIC, 2019; PIKETTY, 2020). Even when speaking, enthusiastically in general, of a critical spirit to be employed in the enterprise of cognitive capitalism, critical skill does not include questioning the productive system; quite the contrary, it appears as a contribution to competitiveness and productivity. The image is of the well-formed, well-behaved, studious, but subservient worker, who draws himself so ostensibly in Asian education systems (ZHAO *et al.*, 2019).

Ambiguities of an enlightened idea

Since education is an ever-ambiguous social reference, largely because it is part of broader power structures and is itself a power structure, it does not always deliver what is expected of it, sometimes it even does the reverse. It is one of the most civilizing ideas in the human saga, but for it to have the necessary quality, many conditions need to be fulfilled. It took us millennia to understand that literacy is a fundamental right. Until the beginning of the modern era, literate people were few and access to literacy was scarce. The press brought another phase in this scenario, but the most important step was the dissemination of the public school, in the context of a collective effort that the State should conduct and finance (MANGUEL, 1996). Such advances were made possible in the midst of monumental clashes over who can participate in society and the economy, in culture, in politics, scenarios in general reserved for wealthy "patriarchs". Also in this dimension, education as literacy has always had libertarian pretensions, the prototype of which is the most acclaimed one of "reading the reality" (FREIRE, 1989). The shackles of ignorance have always been compared to the shackles of socioeconomic exclusion, although these were two different but intertwined levels of reality: political and socioeconomic poverty (DEMO, 2007). Education has a less visible condition to face socioeconomic exclusion, although it can be a powerful instrument for preparing for work,

but it has a more effective capacity to fight political exclusion through formative processes that constitute subjects capable of their own individual and collective history. It does not do this linearly, because education is not linear dynamics; it is quite complex, being able, more likely, to privilege the privileged even more, without, however, losing the potential to anchor real emancipatory processes. In general, concepts such as “**transformative learning**”, drawn, for example, by Mezirow and colleagues (MEZIROW, 2000; MEZIROW; TAYLOR, 2009; MEZIROW; ASSOCIATES, 2000; TAYLOR; CRANTON, 2012), in a stated Freirean context they made time, especially in the United States, suggesting that the learning process, when profoundly authorial, is potentially **transformative**.

The challenge is to bring this transformative potential to the public school. This is an extremely complex undertaking, because it entails a difficult concert between many and enormous initiatives, levels of government, preparation of professionals and institutions, continued management of schooling and its results, intertwined and overlapping legislation, mandatory and generally unfavorable conditions of most marginalized populations. Public schools, thus, became commonplace in practically all countries, but under the tendency of **something poor for the poor**. A handful of countries maintain public schools of a high educational standard, with highly qualified professionals and always accompanied by effective permanent formative programs, such as Nordic European countries (Finland is the best known, for having occupied the first places in PISA in 2000, and now Estonia, for occupying the highest position in Europe) (DEMO, 2002a). The leadership of PISA, meanwhile, has migrated to Asia, in particular to China, where schools hold a very prominent place in the development of countries, and the quality of basic education is expected to have a strong impact on competitiveness and economic productivity. The two landscapes are only approximately comparable. They are comparable in the sense that the economic reference is the most substantial, ultimately, in spite of the pious pedagogical discourses always recited. Even though the Asian education system be more violent, especially in China, which seeks, with unprecedented effort in the economy and education, to achieve world leadership (LEE, 2018, MILANOVIC, 2019). This has led to a provocative hardening of instruction, with ostensive deforming reflexes, repressive procedures and exacerbated controls (student suicide has increased, for example) (ZHAO, 2014), especially with respect to performance in mathematics, which countries like Finland do not intend to follow. The welfare state is not a consummate wonder, but at least it values the well-being of students, who need to feel good at school, as protagonists of their learning, without any pressure of any kind, without occupying the student too much (finished the school time, students in Finland come home and do not do homework,

because it is family time). In a playful tone, Sahlberg speaks of “*FinishED leadership*” (2017) in Finland, in the echo of a previous book in which he analyzed reasons for the Finnish success in PISA 2010 (RIPLEY, 2013). They are not comparable in the sense that the pedagogical route is sufficiently diverse, that is, while in the Asian world pedagogical issues are of little or no importance (no time is wasted on discussing formation and other philosophers, because global economic and educational leadership matters), in the welfare state formative care should appear, even if the evaluation is only concerned with technical performance. Both environments are instructional, because direct instruction is the basic recommended method, aimed at systematic and intense transmission of curricular content and the ability to seek the right answer to closed preference questions, but the pedagogical ambience is much more favorable in Europe.

In pedagogical terms, then, the school went astray. Under the weight of voracious and draconian instrumentalism, its function is reduced to passing curriculum content effectively, with an emphasis on direct instruction, maintaining pedagogical discourses as a disposable ornament. Paulo Freire does not need to be expelled from school, because he is no longer there (if he ever was) (DEMO, 2018): what we have in school is class, only class, transfer of content, proof to guarantee this memorized transfer. Learning activities do not exist, literally, nor do they seem to be needed. In our case, at Enem, candidates who write well are negligible margin (around 50 in 4 million), because the courses, crazy instructors, take care of memorized content, not of the students' authorial elaboration. The difference, however, with Asian instructionism is enormous, because it occupies the first places in PISA and we the last. There, they “are worth it”, in the raw pragmatic sense of insertion in the market. It has no value here. In pedagogical terms, however, both scenarios are deforming.

In Table 1 we have the PISA 2018 ranking of the countries participating in Reading (it was the basic theme of this version), showing the leadership of the 4 Chinese provinces (proficiency of 555), followed by Singapore (549), Macau (525), Hong Kong (524) - so far they are Asian systems. Then Estonia appears, the first European country in the ranking (523, 32 points behind 1st place); Canada is next (520), along with Finland (520). Brazil appears in 58th position (413), with Chile (452) being the best-dressed Latin American country, which was 39 points above Brazil.

Chart 1 – Ranking of countries in PISA 2018 - READING

Countries	13	26	39	52	65	79
PXJG (China)*	555	Vietnam 505	Netherlands 485	Ukraine 466	Montenegro 421	Saudi Arabia 399
Singapura	549	United Kingdom 504	Austria 484	Turkey 466	México 420	Thailand 393
Macau (China)	525	Japan 504	Switzerland 484	Slovakia 458	Bulgaria 420	North Macedonia 393
Hong Kong (Ch.)	524	Australia 503	Croatia 479	Greece 457	Jordan 419	Baku (Azerbaijan) 389
Estonia	523	Taipei (Ch.) 503	Latvia 479	Chile 452	Malaysia 415	Kazakhstan 387
Canada	520	Denmark 501	Russia 479	Malta 448	Brazil (58) 413	Georgia 380
Finland	520	Norway 499	Italy 476	Serbia 439	Colombia 412	Panamá 377
Ireland	518	Germany 498	Hungary 476	United Arab Emirates 432	Brunei 408	Indonesia 371
Korea	514	Slovenia 495	Lithuania 476	Romania 428	Qatar 407	Morocco 359
Poland	512	Belgium 493	Iceland 474	Uruguay 427	Albania 405	Lebanon 353
Sweden	506	France 493	Belarus 474	Costa Rica 426	Bosnia Herze. 403	Kosovo 353
New Zealand	506	Portugal 492	Israel 470	Chipre 424	Argentina 402	Dominican Republic 342
United States	505	Czech Republic 490	Luxemburg 470	Moldavia 424	Peru 401	Filipinas 340
						Spain m*

* Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Guangdong.

** Anomalous data.

Source: Demo (2020a)

The United States was in 13th position (505), 50 points behind the first Chinese position, which suggests a worrying distance that does not match the country's global position. In the last two places were Philippines (340, Asian, but of Spanish colonization) and Dominican Republic (342), at an astronomical distance from the 1st Chinese place (215 points towards the Philippines, 213 towards the Dominican Republic). In the table, the public school is not separate, but as it is, in general, the dominant offer (in Brazil, 80%), the data ostensibly imply very insufficient performances as a general rule. Strictly speaking, let's say that the most satisfactory performance is found in only 10 countries (even Poland, with 512 reading proficiency), five of which are Asian and in the lead (with the exception of Korea). If we asked ourselves how and when countries such as the Dominican Republic and the Philippines, but also Brazil, could they have the Chinese performance, postulating not to imitate truculent

instructionism, for sure? On the one hand, the Chinese success, also the Korean one, indicates that it is possible to fix the house, even in the most devastating instrumentalism (RIPLEY, 2013), but the delay on the other end suggests that such achievements are almost exceptional. While the school at one end is effective, even so deforming, at the other it is useless.

Chart 2 shows the performance in mathematics, which greatly increases the contrast and anguish. The first observation is the Chinese achievement (even restricted to 4 provinces), well above the second country (Singapore: 591 x 569; distance of 22 points in proficiency). Asian countries occupy the first 7 places, with Estonia in 8th place. This condition implies that mathematical success is becoming Asian, especially Chinese. The United States, in 13th place in reading, now occupies 38th place, a blunt shame. Brazil appears in 71st place, while Uruguay in 59th and Chile in 60th. In the last two places we have, again, an Asian country, the Philippines (353) and a Latin American and Caribbean country, the Dominican Republic (325), light years from the first Chinese place: 238 and 266 apart respectively.

Chart 2 – Ranking of countries in PISA 2018 - MATHEMATICS

Países	13		26		39		52		65		79
PXJG (China)*	591	Slovenia	509	Iceland	495	Malta	472	Romania	430	Jordan	400
Singapore	569	Belgium	508	New Zealand	494	Croatia	464	Montenegro	430	Georgia	398
Macao (China)	558	Finland	507	Portugal	492	Israel	463	Kazakhstan	423	North Macedonia	394
H. Kong (Ch.)	551	Sweden	502	Australia	491	Turkey	454	Moldavia	421	Lebanon	393
Taipei (Ch.)	531	United Kingdom	502	Russia	488	Ukraine	453	Baku (Azerbaijan)	420	Colombia	391
Japan	527	Norway	501	Italy	487	Greece	451	Thailand	419	Brazil (71)	384
Korea	526	Germany	500	Slovakia	486	Cyprus	451	Uruguay	418	Argentina	379
Estonia	523	Ireland	500	Luxemburg	483	Serbia	448	Chile	417	Indonesia	379
Netherlands	519	Czech Republic	499	Spain	481	Malaysia	440	Qatar	414	Saudi Arabia	373
Poland	516	Austria	499	Lithuania	481	Albania	437	Mexico	409	Morocco	368
Switzerland	515	Latvia	496	Hungary	481	Bulgaria	436	Bosnia Herze.	406	Kosovo	366
Canada	512	Vietnam	496	Unite States	478	United Arab Emirates	435	Costa Rica	402	Panamá	353
Denmark	509	France	495	Belarus	472	Brunei	430	Peru	400	Filipinas	353
										Dominican Republic	325

* Beijing, Shanghai, Jianguo, Guangdong.

Source: Demo (2020a)

How and when could the Dominican Republic perform Chinese?

We can observe in this challenge two painful incongruities. First, is it worth competing with China if the education system is so deforming? Second, to have a similar and, above all, alternative performance in the pedagogical dimension, we would have to change everything. The comparison, of course, needs to be done wisely, because we compare very different histories and conditions: are the Dominican Republic and China comparable situations? Certainly, we can compare, even if this requires forcing the bar, but it is a violence. This consideration does not refresh, however, that the performance in most countries in mathematics is an endless misery, making it a futile exercise to philosophize about how to one day take the 1st place in PISA.

Two basic topics are uncomfortable in this picture. On the one hand, that the first two places be occupied by extremely instrumentalist countries (not to mention that China and Singapore are dictatorial regimes); in another, they are not good pedagogical examples; instead.

Public and private school in Brazil

The private school in Brazil, which serves around 20% of students, is, in general, 2 whole points above the performance of the public school, as shown in Table 3. We see that the private school did not reach the goal of 2017 (Initial Years, Final Years, High School), while the public school only in the Initial Years. Taking the reference of High School, the proficiency in 2005 was 5.6, stalling in this level some periods, and falling to 5.3 in 2016; in 2017 it reached 5.8, just above the level of 2005. Under these figures, the private school seems to be a very stagnant system.

Chart 3 – Ideb (Proficiency) 2005-2017 – Brazil

	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017	Goal 2017
Initial Years								
Private	5,9	6,0	6,4	6,5	6,7	6,8	7,1	7,2
Public	3,6	4,0	4,4	4,7	4,9	5,3	5,5	5,2
Final Years								
Private	5,8	5,8	5,9	6,0	5,9	6,1	6,4	7,0
Public	3,2	3,5	3,7	3,9	4,0	4,2	4,4	4,7
High School								
Private	5,6	5,6	5,6	5,7	5,4	5,3	5,8	6,7
Public	3,1	3,2	3,4	3,4	3,4	3,5	3,5	4,4

Source: INEP

This impression is strongly reinforced in Chart 4, where the large regions are compared, whose numbers for 2017 are practically the same as those for 2005. As the school is considered a model of school success, especially because it opens the doors of the best free public universities, it seems not be bothered by pedagogical stagnation. The laurels themselves get in the way, just as success can be the enemy of change / innovation and learning (CHRISTENSEN, 2011).

Chart 4 – Ideb (Proficiency) of Private Schools in the Regions, 2005-2017

	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017
Brazil	5,6	5,6	5,6	5,7	5,4	5,3	5,8
North	5,0	5,1	5,4	5,2	5,0	4,7	5,5
Northeast	5,2	5,1	5,2	5,4	5,2	5,1	5,5
Southeast	5,7	5,7	5,6	5,8	5,4	5,5	5,9
South	5,9	5,8	5,9	6,0	5,7	5,6	5,9
Midwest	5,7	5,5	5,8	5,6	5,6	5,4	5,7

Source: INEP

Looking more closely, the two-point difference is not pedagogical. Although it is striking and for this reason, whoever can, places the child in private school, the gain is instructorist, Asian style, sought through discipline, control, severe management, pressure from parents, etc. But, as success is what matters, in terms of opening up chances for the best free university course, it became common belief that the private school would be pedagogically better. On average, it is not, also because it works with the same teachers, offers the same classes (strictly content focused), practices the same evaluation, bets on direct instruction

ostensibly. The public school does have something to learn from the private school, in particular discipline and management, as long as it is kept in mind that this does not guarantee pedagogical quality (LUBIENSKI; LUBIENSKI, 2013).

That said, it is absolutely important to stress the role of the public school, not only because it reaches 80% of students, but because it is the only possible socio-cultural and economic insertion route for them. The available data, even if very questionable, indicate extremely poor performance in the Brazilian school, in general, and even more accentuated in less developed regions. For example, in the North and Northeast, adequate learning in mathematics since 1995 (when the Ideb historical series begins) has been around 5% or less, with no prospect of effective improvement. Just to illustrate, let us look at data from Pará, the most distinguished state in the North in socio-cultural terms. In the Early Years, adequate mathematics learning in 2017 was 23.1% (did not reach $\frac{1}{4}$), although it has risen considerably in relation to 1995 (5.9%); in Portuguese, it reached 37.5% in 2017, just over $\frac{1}{3}$; compared to 1995, when the figure was 30.7%, the 22-year increase was conspicuously restricted.

Chart 5 – Pará – Appropriate learning, 1995-2017 – Ideb (%)

Year	1995	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017
5 – ES – Mathematics	05.9	07.9	08.0	06.0	05.4	05.5	10.9	-	18.0	17.4	22.1	23.1
5 – ES – Portuguese	30.7	20.6	13.2	15.2	14.7	17.5	15.4	-	26.4	25.5	37.0	37.5
9 – ES – Mathematics	06.1	07.0	04.2	06.5	05.3	05.2	06.6	-	08.6	07.7	07.9	08.3
9 – ES – Portuguese	29.3	25.8	15.1	18.4	13.4	13.8	13.0	-	19.4	21.0	23.6	23.2
3 – HS – Mathematics	04.3	06.5	03.1	05.4	04.6	04.1	03.1	-	04.5	03.5	02.9	03.9
3 – HS – Portuguese	32.4	37.9	12.9	19.3	16.0	14.2	13.3	-	26.1	14.8	19.0	15.6

Source: Inep/Todos pela Educação

In the Final Years, adequate learning in mathematics was 6.1% in 1995 and 8.3% in 2017, in ostensible stagnation, in addition to the very precarious figure. In Portuguese, the figure was 29.3% in 1995, and 23.2% in 2017, walking backwards, unbelievably. In high school, adequate learning in mathematics was 4.3% in 1995 and 3.9% in 2017, indicating total ineptitude of the education system. In Portuguese, it started with 32.4% in 1995, but the figure was 15.6% in 2017, half of the initial figure, a situation of totally irresponsible retreat. Literally, mathematics does not exist, not only in HS, where it is the rule not to exist; it does not exist also in the Final Years, and even in the Early Years. In Portuguese, in the Early Years, the advance in 22 years was insignificant, with a sharp decline in the Final Years and especially in High School. It seems clear that the basic school, on average, is a failed institution. What is the point of being obliged to attend a school where 3.9% of students learn mathematics in high

school? The constraint is even greater when there are no signs of improvement, indicating that misery has become standard.

This situation leads us to reflect on our impotence to offer the population the education they need in order to have a chance in life. We have the formal institution, we spend resources, we build physical institutions (schools), we have qualified professionals (teachers), we have all classes, but we have no learning. Governments change, we even had two (almost) leftist governments recently (Lula and Dilma), but instructionalism seems to be everyone's lot. Worse than that, many educators who want or imagine themselves on the left insist on the same instructionalism that suffocates the school, they defend the education system fiercely, and with this they end up defending the raw exclusion of students, avoiding diagnosing, so we don't have to face that we need change radically.

It turns out that changing the school is an astronomical endeavor. When we link school to democracy, we usually forget that one pulls the other: if we need a good school to have a good democracy, we need a good democracy, to have a good school. School results cast doubtful light on teacher formation, although one cannot speak of guilt, but we need to speak of initial and continuing malformation. Teachers are not learning professionals, but teaching professionals. Not being authors, scientists, researchers, they consider their function to pass content on, which only reinforces that, who does not know how to learn, cannot take care of the learning of others. In practice, we never take teachers seriously, even when we invent a salary floor, which is infamous. The degrees are very precarious, almost useless. Shallow pedagogy is not up to the challenge of literacy. We invented a huge gear that works on its own and to no avail. Students attend school uselessly.

Who cares?

According to INAF (Functional Literacy Indicator) (2018) (Chart 6), only 12% of adults would be “proficient” (say, they know how to think). Traditional illiterates would still be 8%, but functional illiterates reach 30%. Even among those with higher education, only 34% would be proficient.

Chart 6 – Distribution of the population by levels of Literacy and Education – 2018

	Total	None	Elementary School - Early Years	Elementary School - Final Years	High School	University
Base	2002	116	297	451	796	342
Illiterate	8%	82%	16%	1%	1%	0%
Rudimentary	22%	17%	54%	32%	12%	4%
Elementary	34%	0%	21%	45%	42%	25%
Intermediary	25%	1%	7%	17%	33%	37%
Proficient	12%	0%	1%	4%	12%	34%
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Functional illiterates	29%	99%	70%	34%	13%	4%
Functionally literate	71%	1%	29%	66%	87%	96%

Source: INAF (2018)

The chart reveals what remains of the school for our lives (DEMO, 2020b): almost nothing. Only in the time of Elementary and High School are 12 years, for the vast majority, thrown away. It is an excruciating, humiliating misery. Who cares?

Taking into account the issue of political poverty (DEMO, 2007), popular imbecilization is politically important, because it is a maneuver of access and permanence in power, the harness vote, the electoral corral, welfare patronage and so on. This is where the value of a quality public school comes in: if it had an impact on the electoral process through the formation of critical awareness at school, it would already be an invaluable contribution to the qualification of democracy. Although linear arrangements cannot be made between one side and the other, better educated people can more easily react to political corruption, discuss candidates, candidacies, political parties, social and economic policies, social egalitarianism, etc. Without ignoring the impact of the Great Wars on the more egalitarian restructuring of societies, the fact that primary education was already properly universalized had a decisive contribution, also for unionization, party formation, and democratic institutions. The idea that at least half of the population needs to be in the middle of the pyramid only thrives if there is an echo in the population that knows how to appreciate this result as a fundamental right. Women, who are easily restrained from voting and studying, are a vivid example of how literacy and schooling with some quality aroused women's energies, to the point that today it is possible, even selectively, to build equal gender conditions. This is perhaps a more pertinent example: girls today not only have better school performance than boys, they are advancing in strategic academic areas, such as health and, in this one, especially in medicine, indicating a possible turning point.

However, it must be recognized that there is no longer any need for economic backwardness because competitiveness and productivity require academic formation. Perhaps taking the most striking example, higher digital professions, such as programming and digital analytics, suppose pristine formation in mathematics. In this sense, the mathematical calamity of our school is totally against the grain. It is a dire mistake to condemn large majorities to informal work, the minimum wage, marginal inclusion, because this does not allow us to participate in global capitalism in a minimally adequate way. The fate will be to live off an unproductive and informal economy, unable to compete in the market, leaving majorities behind. This argument is now unavoidable: in a type of economy Brazil is competitive - in agribusiness; result, it competes well globally. We then need to distinguish things. At the political level, making people stupid is still a political strategy of access and permanence in power. In the economy, no more. In the Fordist economy, the worker, condemned to only repetitive tasks, does not need to educate himself. In cognitive capitalism, it turned into nonsense (WORLD BANK, 2018).

The question, however, does not stop there. It is predicted that the horizon that advances in digital technology, especially in digital analytics, will corner human work, perhaps there is almost nothing left to do, even in highly intellectualized spheres (WORLD BANK, 2018a; 2019). If human work were reduced to minimums or nothing, the scenario changes completely. The vast majority will have to live off citizenship income or something, leading to a dramatic rethinking of democracy and republics, especially the economy (DEMO, 2020c). This condition, however, if it occurs, will require even more accurate formation of workers, in view of the drastic reduction in the spectrum of professional choice. In practice, before that, the biggest disturbance is not having a job, not only because the economy has been digitalized quickly, but simply because it lacks dynamism to produce formal jobs: informality will rule the scene ... We can reach a point where studying no longer pays, because there is no job for those who studied, or the job found cannot generate enough to pay the student debt.

One of the biggest sarcasms of the public school is the belief that attending is enough. Attending classes every day is a sufficient condition. We can see this fact in Bolsa Família, when the scholarship is conditioned to the children's school attendance. It is a pleonastic requirement, as it is already constitutional. However, attending a large part of schools has no effect, except in relevant externalities such as the socialization of children, meals, custody. Werneck said provocatively: "If you pretend to teach, I pretend to learn" (1993).

The HDI, in turn, evaluates education by "years of schooling", a useless measure. As the school is devastated by "automatic progression" - it progresses without learning - the years

of study do not add up anymore. It is not a matter of proposing failure, because it is not the school's purpose to exclude students. But it is the student's right to continue learning. Going forward without learning is a low blow. At the end of the HS, the student realizes that the 12 years of study that he should have on account of having attended the ES and the HS are farcical, empty, useless. When teaching replaces learning, it is because we take care of instructional formalism, not students.

Final considerations

Public school is a depredated treasure. At the same time, it serves as an indicator of the capacity of each country to devise a collective development project, in which everyone can fit. Educational policies are typically among the most farcical (make-believe) in force, in terms of official fraud. We have not been able to learn even the minimum (minimalist) rule of the capitalist welfare state of majority inclusion: a country is only viable, if at least the majority is included in the middle of the socioeconomic pyramid. This rule is not enough, as it does not adequately safeguard quality of life. The question of the minimum wage is exemplary: first, the Constitution defines a minimum wage, the actual value of which is four times below the formal definition; second, each year, instead of pushing for a real increase, so that we can approach the formal definition, we readjust it only according to inflation, postulating that the system cannot afford the costs, but the population has no way out, but accept it subserviently. Thus, majorities are included in the margin, never in the middle. An economy that is unable to pay the real constitutional minimum is not yet “an economy”, it is just a mockery and only confirms the liberal plague: the market is not an instrument of society; it is the other way around.

We have public schools everywhere, where 80% of students study. The typical situation is one of physical precariousness, insufficient, incomplete, nonexistent equipment; flagrant precariousness in didactic terms (laboratories, teaching materials, school environments); full rooms; above all Dantesque exploitation (ANUÁRIO BRASILEIRO DA EDUCAÇÃO BÁSICA, 2019). Public school is not a place of honor, it is a mandatory street that is swallowed by force. It is part of the “public things” of foul democracies, and for that reason it is easily depredated, ugly, graffiti, walled, prison. It looks like our democracy.

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