

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BRAZILIAN PRE-SCHOOL: AN ANALYSIS OF THE LEADERS OF PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS IN 1989 AT XXII CONEPE

A ORGANIZAÇÃO DA PRÉ-ESCOLA BRASILEIRA: UMA ANÁLISE DOS DIRIGENTES DOS ESTABELECIMENTOS PRIVADOS DE ENSINO EM 1989 NO XXII CONEPE

LA ORGANIZACIÓN DE LA PRE-ESCUELA BRASILEÑA: UN ANÁLISIS DE LOS LÍDERES DE LOS CENTROS EDUCATIVOS PRIVADOS EN 1989 EN XXII CONEPE

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ABSTRACT: This article aims to debate and make a history of Brazilian preschool education starting from a discussion made by private education leaders at the XXII National Congress of Private Educational Establishments (CONEPE). For this we focus on the conference "Politics, Structure and Organization of Preschool" given by Fernando Caramuru Bastos Fraga, which is one of the themes highlighted by this event. These congresses of private establishment leaders have taken place since 1944 and were used to articulate strategies for the private sector in education in order to create consensus around educational reforms and the very conduct of these institutions in the face of the problems of Brazilian society. The composition of the subjects of these events was heterogeneous, from businessmen to members of religious groups, and with the new Brazilian Constitution they sought new spaces for action. Based on Gramsci, Bobbio and Thompson, we understand the subjects present in this process as intellectuals who worked in search of their hegemony in society.

KEYWORDS: Private education. Organization of the Brazilian preschool. Conepe. Intellectuals. Federal Constitution of 1988.

RESUMO: Este artigo tem como objetivo debater e fazer um histórico do ensino pré-escolar brasileiro partindo de uma discussão feita pelos dirigentes do ensino privado no XXII Congresso Nacional dos Estabelecimentos Particulares de Ensino (CONEPE). Para isso focalizamos a conferência "Política, Estrutura e Organização da Pré-escola", proferida por Fernando Caramuru Bastos Fraga, sendo essa uma das temáticas de destaque desse evento. Esses congressos dos dirigentes de estabelecimento particulares aconteciam desde o ano de 1944, e foram utilizados como forma de articular estratégias para o setor privado na educação a fim de criar consenso em torno de reformas educacionais e da própria conduta dessas instituições frente aos problemas da sociedade brasileira. A composição dos sujeitos desses eventos era heterogênea, desde empresários até membros de grupos religiosos, que com a nova Constituição Brasileira de 1988 buscavam outros espaços de atuação. Nos pautando em

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Gramsci, Bobbio e Thompson, entendemos os sujeitos presentes nesse processo como intelectuais que atuavam em busca de sua hegemonia na sociedade.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Ensino privado. Organização da pré-escola brasileira. Conepe. Intelectuais. Constituição Federal de 1988.*

RESUMEN: *Este artículo tiene como objetivo debatir y hacer una historia de la educación preescolar brasileña a partir de una discusión hecha por líderes de educación privada en el XXII Congreso Nacional de Establecimientos Educativos Privados (CONEPE). Para ello nos centramos en la conferencia "Política, Estructura y Organización del Preescolar" impartido por Fernando Caramuru Bastos Fraga, que es uno de los temas destacados por este evento. Estos congresos de líderes de establecimientos privados han tenido lugar desde 1944, y fueron utilizados como una forma de articular estrategias para el sector privado en la educación con el fin de crear consenso en torno a las reformas educativas y la propia conducta de estas instituciones frente a los problemas de la sociedad brasileña. La composición de los temas de estos eventos fue heterogénea, desde empresarios hasta miembros de grupos religiosos, y con la nueva Constitución brasileña buscaron nuevos espacios de acción. Basándonos en Gramsci, Bobbio y Thompson, entendemos los temas presentes en este proceso como intelectuales que trabajaron en busca de su hegemonía en la sociedad.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Educación privada. Organización del preescolar brasileño. Conepe. Intelectuales. Constitución Federal de 1988.*

Introduction

This article aimed to discuss and make a history of Brazilian pre-school education, based on a discussion made by the leaders of private education at the XXII National Congress of Private Educational Establishments (CONEPE). To this end, we focused on the lecture "Politics, Structure and Organization of Pre-School", delivered by Fernando Caramuru Bastos Fraga, this being one of the prominent themes of this event.

The CONEPES began to be organized in 1944 and, since that year, were held every two years by the Federation of Teaching Establishments (FENEN). These congresses brought together diverse subjects linked to private enterprise in education, from leaders more focused on a more profitable education and with an organization close to that of a company, to leaders linked directly to a religious order. Both groups sought to create consensus around private initiative education to act in a way to achieve their interests in society and become hegemonic. In this regard, with the intention of identifying the various social groups present in the process of building the hegemony of private education, we highlight the words of Gramsci (2011, p.15) on the formation of the social group and its intellectuals:

Every social group, being born on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates for itself, at the same time, organically, one or more layers of intellectuals that give it homogeneity and awareness of its own function, not only in the economic field, but also in the social and political field (GRAMSCI, 2011, p. 15).

The construction of the hegemony of the private sector in education goes through the historical process of these CONEPEs, which were spaces of formation and debate for the formulation of consensus around the private sector. In addition, strategies for action in Brazilian society were debated, such as the elaboration of drafts for educational reforms, policies of their own benefit, with transfers of funds from the State to private education, and then sent to the competent organs as a way to pressure and make their conception of education prevail in society. In this sense, hegemony is no longer simply:

[...] a position of supremacy in society, dominating it through force, state institutions and political rule. In a dynamic hegemony, alongside the dominant and ruling groups, there are antagonistic social groups that try to achieve this condition of intellectual and moral direction, but if they do not achieve a majority consent in relation to the ruling groups, they remain submissive. For this reason, the central idea in the dynamics of hegemony is consent. Consent is the foundation of the relations of any social group, since a social group is formed the moment some people share principles and behaviors, visions of reality and existence (BRUNELLO, 2007, p. 1).

This consent among the leaders of private schools is what we seek to analyze, based on their explanations and articulations within these congresses. Gramsci changes the view on the conception of hegemony when he talks about the construction of a popular hegemony, but this formulation also allows us to think about the whole movement of the leaders of private educational establishments, since they had differences and distinct worldviews. According to Semeraro (2000)

For Gramsci, on the contrary, in the process of building hegemony it is a matter of achieving a profound personal and social transformation that generates self-determination, the socialization of the political and operates the passage to a substantively democratic society, whose more realistic and concrete meaning must be deduced from the concept of hegemony. In the hegemonic system, democracy exists between the ruling group and the directed groups, to the extent that [the development of the economy and, therefore,] the legislation [that manifests such development] favors the [molecular] passage from the directed groups to the ruling group (SEMERATO, 2000, p. 183).

This understanding comes from the view we share with Gramsci about the political subject, since he did not separate the political process from the social. According to Gramsci

[...] the political subject [...] is never a presupposed being, ontologically already formed nor is in fact idealized, it is not a homogeneous people (*demos*), unitary and infallible, *a priori* bearer of a natural sovereignty, but always a concrete subject that is self-constituted in the praxis, which is established by the political action, by the capacity of initiative and organizations, more socializing that it knows how to create. Political praxis is the true place of subjective formations, cultures, values, structures and truly democratic institutions, always historical and, therefore, surmountable (SEMERARO, 2000, p. 185, emphasis added).

With this we understand that the CONEPEs constitute a form of organization and political action of these leaders in search of their interests as a social class, in order to create their consensus, in the specific case in relation to the performance of the Brazilian preschool.

The XXII CONEPE took place in Salvador, in the state of Bahia, between July 10 and 13, 1989, in a context after the promulgation of the new Brazilian Federal Constitution (1988). The lecture given by Fraga took place specifically on July 12 at nine o'clock in the morning of 1989. Fraga, at the time, was a teacher linked to the bankers' union of Minas Gerais and intended with this exposition to reach directors and owners of preschools, making a reflection on their teaching policy and philosophy. In this regard, he bases his initial presentation on the book "Education: from common sense to philosophical conscience", by Demerval Saviani, inviting those present to reflect with him and think critically about their role when facing the reality experienced in this teaching sector.

The preschool organization

To talk about preschool we need to talk about the constitution of the idea of the child and about the theories that have discussed its formation. Fraga stated that a child born in the 1980s already encountered a variety of "theories, values, cultural and behavioral patterns" that previously did not exist. The world and societies had become somewhat more complex, and the discovery and interaction of the child with its environment was the educational process itself.

It is with this complexity of society that the idea of school emerges, school in the sense of creating a space with specialized and hierarchical knowledge. However, children will become the focus of attention after the 17th century, because before this they were treated as "little adults".

In the 18th century, welfare daycare centers began to appear, where workers left their children and took in abandoned children. According to Froebel, the pre-school itself emerged in Germany in 1837, under the name of kindergarten. Fraga stated that for Froebel

[...] children are like plants, whose future development is the result of the work they receive in the first years of their lives. For this purpose, then, the kindergarten was created - a school for children, for their integral development. Unfortunately, however, after several parts of the world, this school for children became the pre-school, with a purely compensatory character for deficiencies and deprivations (social, cultural, etc.) and preventive of failure in the first grades of school (ANNALS, 1989, p. 74).

The character of this school was distorted in several countries: the preschool should in fact "unfold the knowledge that the child builds in his everyday life in order to initiate him in the first relations with specialized knowledge" (ANNALS 1989, p. 74). It is in this sense that contestations arise about the fact that, in order to educate a child, he should attend school.

According to Fraga, this position is divided among some intellectuals, such as Margareth Mead², Quintilian³ and Bernard Shaw⁴, where each one, in his context and his time, claimed that the school was detrimental to education. For these intellectuals, pre-school would be easily replaced by education in the family.

With the development of educational policies and various types of trainers and training, many of the subjects linked to education saw the importance of the school for the formation of the child, despite making several criticisms to certain teaching models. The institution should be preserved, what should be discussed were the models, projects and execution of these types of education.

With this thought, pre-school began to be valued in several countries, culminating with the expansion of the educational offer from six years of age. To exemplify this issue, Fraga (1989) provides information on the schooling situation in five countries besides the United Kingdom, as we can see below:

France - Schooling rates are 110% for five year olds, 90% for four year olds; and 65% for three year olds. 13 to 15% of preschoolers are in private education. Compulsory schooling is from age six to sixteen.

Japan - Kindergarten from three to five years old. 58.9% of kindergartens are privately run. Compulsory from ages six to fifteen. Kindergarten enrollment

² American anthropologist, she was one of the exponents of the so-called American culturalist school. Born in Pennsylvania, she studied psychology and later anthropology at Columbia University (1923). Mead devoted her studies to developing theories about the relationship between culture and personality, the socialization of children, sexuality, differential gender roles, and the connections between collective culture and individual personality. One of his many contributions to anthropological studies was to demonstrate the influence of sociocultural learning on the behavior of men and women. Available at: <http://ea.ufflch.usp.br/autor/margaret-mead>. Accessed 24 July 2019.

³ Marcus Fabius Quintilian was one of the most respected Roman pedagogues. He taught at the school of rhetoric and valued the technical aspects of education, distancing himself from philosophy. He valued psychology as a tool to understand the individuality of the student. He was not interested in theoretical discussions, but tried to make technical observations and practical indications. Available at: <https://pgl.gal/quintiliano-proposta-ensinar-jogando/>. Accessed 24 July 2019.

⁴ Playwright and journalist, he was also an art, music, and theater critic.

ratio 43.9%. Primary school 99.9%. Textbooks for compulsory schooling are free, both for public and private schools.

United Kingdom - (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland). Pre-school is included, with compulsory schooling from ages five to sixteen; 43% of three to four year olds attend kindergarten (England); 6% of pupils from primary and above are in private schools that can have their studies funded by the government. There is a reduction in the number of preschool and primary school pupils due to the low birth rate.

Portugal - Pre-school from age three to six; there has been an experiment in extending (compulsory) primary schooling to age five; compulsory: from age six to twelve; private schooling exists.

Denmark - Education is provided in public schools, private schools, and even at home. Pre-school, from ages five to six; 70% of the private school budget is subsidized by the government, 30% by parents.

German Federal Republic - Pre-school from ages three to six, 80% of children attend. Private initiative permitted. Compulsory from ages six to eighteen; full time at nine (ANNALS, 1989, p. 76).

Investment in preschool education in these developed countries was taking place because of this new valuation of schooling. In Latin America and the Caribbean, however, despite the changes and the growth in enrollment, investment in education was restricted. Fraga (1989) demonstrates this growth in enrollment when she states that:

From 1975 to 1983, preschool enrollment in Latin America and the Caribbean grew 246%, from 2 million to 6.8 million. This is 9.8% more than in developing countries and 1.5% than in developed countries. However, with respect to the three-to-five-year-old age groups, the rate was only 9.6% of the population of these children in 1975, rising to 22% in 1983 (ANNALS, 1989, p. 76).

Enrollment growth has been greatest in countries like Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Mexico, Ecuador, Venezuela, and Nicaragua.

If we look at preschool enrollment specifically in private schools, we can see a great variation depending on the country. We can see this variation in the following table:

Table 1 – Preschool Enrollment Variation

Countries	% as a function of the 5-year-old population		% in private institutions	
	1975	1990	1975	1980
Argentina	72	-	30	-
Bárbados	62	77	7	20
Bolivia	27	53	11	-
Brazil	20	43	49	46
Colombia	14	33	70	-
Costa Rica	28	40	11	13
Cuba	55	61	00	00
Chile	52	72	21	20
Ecuador	11	21	35	43
El Salvador	32	32	13	20
Guatemala	16	22	36	38
Honduras	15	27	16	16
Jamaica	20,1	20,8	-	18
Mexico	27	48	08	11
Nicaragua	11	33	67	43
Panama	23	33	40	34
Peru	38	46	27	27
Dominican Republic	15	16	-	87
Suriname	14,1	-	59	-
Trinidad and Tobago	-	07	-	-
Uruguay	81	77	32	25
Venezuela	59	101	21	17

Source: Annals of the XXII CONEPE

As we can see, preschool enrollments in Brazil between 1975 and 1980 were well divided between the State and private initiative. However, for Ferrari (1988), the private initiative from 1968 to 1981 was the great driving force behind Brazilian preschools, since the public sector supply had retracted during this period.

According to Fraga, this increase in the State's interest in pre-school was due to the change in the direction of educational policies, but, for the author, this valorization did not occur in a true way. The level of education that the State really valued was the elementary level, as he argues:

Article 208 of the new Constitution reads as follows:

Art. 208 - The duty of the State with education will be made effective through the guarantee of:

II- progressive extension of compulsory and free, to high school;

This posture makes it clear that, after primary school, what matters is high school; after the older child, the adolescent. To hell with pre-school.

To hell with the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, proclaimed in Geneva in 1923:

1st - All children should enjoy the necessary conditions to follow normally their physical and spiritual development.

2 - In case of public calamity, the child, in whom lies the future of humanity, should be protected, preferably by an adult.

3° - The hungry child should be fed; the sick child should be treated; the ignorant child should be instructed; the abandoned orphan or child in moral danger should be assisted and helped conveniently.

4° - The child should be put in a condition to earn a living for himself, when he is old enough, and should be protected against any exploitation.

The child must be educated in such a way that he will put his highest and best qualities at the service of his fellows and that he will take care to enrich with his efforts the common patrimony of humanity, an inheritance that must be transmitted to future generations.

With his position, Fraga shows us that pre-school was an obstacle for the Brazilian State, which neglected this level of education, not respecting several professionals and international treaties, such as the one of Geneva.

In this sense, the private initiative had to take a stand in defense of the pre-school, emphasizing its importance for the formation of future youth. For this it would be necessary to combat the six most common mistakes of these educational establishments: 1 - Disregarding the propaedeutic function of enculturation and acculturation of the pre-school; 2 - Decontextualized teaching; 3 - Barracks and playground; 4 - Unqualified teachers; 5 - Disqualification of the school itself; 6 - ETC.

By disregarding the function of enculturation, the establishment loses in diversity, because it cannot assimilate the differences among its children, who have diverse cultural components and worldviews. The definition brought by Fraga (1989) about enculturation is based on Marcelo Azevedo's ideas, where "the process by which, from birth to death, a person is introduced into his or her own culture". Each subject has his or her own culture, and the preschool not paying attention to this introduces the child into a process of enculturation, where he or she is inserted into a culture that is not his or her own. The function of pre-school, according to Fraga, would be to "integrate the different and not discriminate them".

The decontextualized teaching would be the copy of the mechanistic model of primary education, i.e., repetition and habit formation were present in pre-school teaching. However, this teaching had no meaning for the student, since it was not contextualized to his or her life, causing difficulties in his or her literacy.

To make training even more difficult, many educational establishments were called barracks, especially those aimed at the lower classes, because the focus was "the formation of social habits, docility and obedience". In the so-called playground schools, predominantly in the private network, the child could do anything. A contrast of extremes.

The professional staff of the schools was also not the best: teachers were often not qualified for their function, without adequate training, and specialization and updating were not required of the school itself.

All this scenario was falling on the school, because it should demand as its own educational objective some goals to be achieved. Many of these schools, according to Fraga, were nothing more than deposits for children because of their low educational aspirations, that is, the educational establishment itself was not valued.

In order to be valued, preschools should be self-critical and formulate a dialogue among parents, teachers, educational technicians, and students to create a policy that encompasses the interests of all these subjects, taking the school to another level.

The function of the Brazilian preschool

With this brief survey on Brazilian pre-schools in the 1980s we could perceive the concerns of the leaders of private education as to the quality of teaching and the objectives of the pre-school. This concern was due to the social context, after the approval of the new Brazilian constitution of 1988 and discussions about the new Law of Directives and Bases of National Education.

The education of and in preschool was seen as an education that should free children from all the ills of society. Thus, as adults, they would become citizens committed to respecting and educating their fellow man.

For this to happen, a change in the preschool's posture would be necessary, leaving behind its amateurism and creating clear objectives with its educational project. Fraga also highlights Piaget in his book "Where education is headed", when he says:

[...] the development of the human being depends on two factors: heredity, which determines much of the physical conditioning, and the knowledge acquired through social relationship and communication. The educational process is directly linked to this set of factors (ANNALS, 1989, p. 82).

Therefore, the preschool could not renounce its role as educational trainer. It, in fact, needed to understand itself as a school, where the human being needs to start learning in order to develop autonomous thinking and responsibility:

The difficult, complex and laborious task of leading the child to develop from egocentrism to responsibility, from anomie, through heteronomy, to autonomy in behaving and thinking is the mission, in the first place, of the preschool transformed into a school. Without freedom, the human being cannot be educated. Without authority, freedom is not educated. Without both, man will not reach human plenitude. Freedom and authority - indispensable concepts and practices for a preschool that becomes a school in fact. And rightfully so. A quality school (ANNALS, 1989, p. 82).

The quality school, for these leaders, was based on the idea of creating educational spaces in which the child was a central part of this process, without imposing models that did not take into account his daily life, that is, his lived experience.

Preschool should become a quality school with freedom to create and responsibility. These are the precepts and the types of ideas that the leaders of these establishments should care about, so that this school level would be recognized with its due importance by the State and for the formation of man as a sociable and collective being.

Final considerations

As we could observe throughout the trajectory of pre-school in Brazil, pointed out by these leaders of private schools, at no time in the history of education until the 1980s, even with treaties dating back to the 1920s on the importance of childhood, was this level of education considered central to the Brazilian State.

The leaders, owners of these establishments, wanted the new educational reforms to take into account the importance of the pre-school for the formation of the child in all aspects, and not to be considered only places of "deposits of children", without a sense or an educational project involved.

As we have seen, enrollments were well divided in the 1980s, with almost 50% being the responsibility of the State and the rest being the responsibility of private initiative. Considering the specificities of each, we can affirm that both were not considered training institutions.

The intention of Fraga and these leaders was precisely to make the pre-schools become training schools, besides getting more financial resources, with well-defined and developed educational projects, thus contributing to the development of the child and of society.

By understanding these subjects as intellectuals in search of hegemony, we understand that Fraga represents a social segment with a well-defined position within the context of dispute. His argumentation represents a search for consensus within the private initiative in favor of a level of education that they considered important not only to leverage their profits, but to make themselves increasingly active in society and in the construction of their ideal conception of citizen.

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