

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 'TURNO ÚNICO' IN RIO DE JANEIRO:
INTERACTION AND DISCRETION OF AGENTS**

***A IMPLEMENTAÇÃO DO TURNO ÚNICO NO RIO DE JANEIRO: INTERAÇÃO E
DISCRICIONARIEDADE DOS AGENTES¹***

***LA IMPLEMENTACIÓN DEL TURNO ÚNICO EN RÍO DE JANEIRO: INTERACCIÓN
Y DISCRECIONALIDAD DE LOS AGENTES***

Ana Cristina Prado de OLIVEIRA²

Deisilucy de Aragão Fernandes SEQUEIRA³

Luan Felipe Xavier GOMES⁴

ABSTRACT: This paper intends to contribute to the field of public policy implementation, carried out from an investigation that focused on the translations and interpretations by the parties involved in the implementation of the 'Turno Único', a policy to extend school time in Rio de Janeiro. Considering the scarcity of studies in the educational field dedicated to the agents implementing policies (A. OLIVEIRA, 2019; MUYLAERT, 2020), we discuss conceptually the relevance of the interactions and the discretionary spaces that these actors use when implementing the policies (LOTTA, 2015). We analyzed the role of bureaucracies (LIPSKY, 2010 levels) and their interaction, in a qualitative research design that involved interviews and focus groups. The results point out to contextual and contingent features that permeate the interactions and decision making in the implementation of the policy.

KEYWORDS: Implementation. Educational policies. Implementing agents. Expanding the school day.

RESUMO: *O presente artigo pretende contribuir com o campo dos estudos sobre a implementação das políticas públicas educacionais a partir dos resultados de uma investigação que se dedicou às traduções e interpretações dos sujeitos envolvidos no processo de implementação do Turno Único, política de ampliação da jornada escolar no Rio de Janeiro. Considerando a escassez de pesquisas no campo educacional que se voltem para os agentes implementadores das políticas (OLIVEIRA, 2019; MUYLAERT, 2021), discutimos conceitualmente a relevância das interações e do uso dos espaços de discricionariedade que*

¹ We thank the Network of Studies on Implementation of Public Educational Policies (REIPPE), with the collaboration of Itaú Social, for the financial support for the translations of this article into English and Spanish.

² Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO), Rio de Janeiro – RJ – Brazil. Adjunct Professor of the Pedagogy Course and the Graduate Program in Education (PPGEdu). Member of the Network of Studies on Implementation of Public Educational Policies (REIPPE). PhD in Education (PUC-Rio). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0367-6669>. E-mail: ana.oliveira@unirio.br

³ Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO), Rio de Janeiro – RJ – Brazil. Member of the Network of Studies on Implementation of Public Educational Policies (REIPPE). Master in Education (UNIRIO). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1278-4223>. E-mail: deise.sequeira@gmail.com

⁴ Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO), Rio de Janeiro – RJ – Brazil. Master's candidate in Education. Member of the Network of Studies on Implementation of Public Educational Policies (REIPPE). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5760-0272>. E-mail: luanfxg@gmail.com

estes atores empreendem na implementação de políticas (LOTTA, 2015). Analisamos o papel das burocracias em diferentes níveis (LIPSKY, 2010) e sua interação, em um desenho qualitativo que envolveu entrevistas e grupos focais. Os resultados apontam para as características contextuais e contingenciais que permeiam as interações e tomadas de decisão na implementação da política.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Implementação. Políticas educacionais. Agentes implementadores. Ampliação da jornada escolar.*

RESUMEN: *El presente artículo pretende contribuir al campo de estudios sobre la implementación de políticas públicas educativas a partir de los resultados de una investigación que se dedicó a las traducciones e interpretaciones de los sujetos involucrados en el proceso de implementación del Turno Único, una política para ampliar la jornada escolar en Rio de Janeiro. Considerando la escasez de investigaciones en el campo educativo que se enfoquen en los agentes implementadores de políticas (OLIVEIRA, 2019; MUYLAERT, 2020), se discute conceptualmente la relevancia de las interacciones y el uso de espacios discrecionales que estos actores emprenden en la implementación de políticas (LOTTA, 2015). Analizamos el rol de las burocracias en diferentes niveles (LIPSKY, 2010) y su interacción, en un diseño cualitativo que involucró entrevistas y grupos focales. Los resultados apuntan para las características contextuales y de contingencia que permean las interacciones y la toma de decisiones en la implementación de la política.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Implementación. Políticas educativas. Agentes implementadores. Ampliación de la jornada escolar.*

Introduction

The article in question is part of a group of studies on the implementation of educational public policies, especially those that refer to the translations and interpretations of the subjects involved in the process of implementing a given policy. The research reported here proposed an analysis of the restructuring of the educational supply of school units in the Rio de Janeiro municipal public school system with a view to implementing the extended school day for students in this system, a proposal that became known as the *Turno Único* (Single or Unified Shift on a loose translation). The discussion on extending the school day as a path to educational quality, the idea behind the policy agenda analyzed here, is the object of study of several researchers (CAVALIERE, 2009, 2014; COELHO *et al.*, 2013). Its appropriation in the formulation and implementation of the Single Shift will be discussed in this text.

In the research, we seek to know the understanding of the agents involved in the implementation of this policy about its objectives and goals. Moreover, we sought to understand if there were different interpretations of the policy that would translate into different

possibilities of implementing the same guidelines. That is, considering that the municipal public schools in Rio de Janeiro, the field of this research, are organized in the same administrative network and are subject to the same educational policy, we asked ourselves: Is there a difference in the interpretation and use of discretion among the different agents in the implementation of the policy? Are the strategies of adaptation to the demands brought by educational policies similar among the school units of this network? How do the different agents involved interact in the implementation of the policy?

To try to answer these questions, the research made use of document analysis and a qualitative empirical design that collected the narrative of the different agents involved in the implementation process of the Unified Shift at their different levels of action. Thus, interviews were carried out⁵ with three representatives of the Rio de Janeiro Municipal Secretariat of Education responsible for the Single Shift in the SME/RJ (one at the beginning of the implementation process and the other two who took over during the field research period); with the Education Managers responsible for implementing the policy in two Regional Education Coordinating Agencies - CREs⁶; and with the principals of four municipal schools (two located in each of the selected CREs). Focus groups were also held with teachers from the four schools. The data from all the interviews and focus groups, after transcription, were treated with inspiration from Bardin's content analysis (1977). Some of the categories that emerged from this analysis, inspired by studies in the field of educational public policy implementation, are presented and discussed in this paper.

The article is organized in 4 sections after this introduction. The first section proposes an approach to the field of public policy studies, considering especially, in its classic cycle, the studies on implementation. Highlighting the still scarce production on the subject in the field of education policy, we present a conceptual discussion about the use of discretion by the implementing agents and the relevance of their interaction in policy delivery. The second section presents the policy analyzed, which proposes the expansion of the school day in the municipal public schools of Rio de Janeiro. Understanding that the phases of the policy cycle are complementary and non-linear, we consider it relevant to include a brief discussion on the formulation of the agenda and the text of the policy to then analyze its implementation from the perspective of the different implementers. The third section presents the research data, analyzed based on a categorization that was built in dialogue with the adopted theoretical framework.

⁵ The field research was conducted in the year 2018.

⁶ Rio de Janeiro's public school system is territorially divided into 11 Regional Teaching Coordinators.

And, finally, the fourth section presents the study's final considerations, even though reflections and reconsiderations will accompany us throughout the research.

Educational policy studies: a look at the implementers

Assuming the relevance of the role of the implementing agents, their interactions and decisions at different moments of the implementation of a policy, we propose to conceptually analyze, in this section, the role of Middle Level Bureaucrats and Street Level Bureaucrats, their discretion and interaction in the implementation of an educational policy.

Traditionally, studies on public policy turn their gaze to the stages of agenda formation or policy formulation. Few of them, especially when it comes to the Brazilian context, have been dedicated to delving into the implementation phase of the policy (LOTTA, 2015). When it comes to the educational field, the scarcity is even more significant. In an exploratory systematic review of national and international educational policy research published from 2007 to 2017 in a sample of journals, A. Oliveira (2019) finds that studies devoted to analyzing the implementation of educational public policies represented only 6% of the publications in the period. Detailed analysis of these articles (N= 153) pointed out that only 26% of them were devoted to exploring the role of implementing agents. Muylaert (2019, p. 3), when presenting a recent dossier that gathered studies on implementation of educational policies in the fight against inequalities, reinforces this scarcity: "In this field, studies that appropriate the theoretical frameworks coming from Political Science, which usually focus more on the implementation phase, are rare.

Analyzing the processes resulting from the adoption of new educational policies, in different spaces and involving different actors seems, therefore, to bring an important contribution to think about the agents that implement these policies and their strategies in the understanding, interpretation, reinterpretation, and articulation of their demands. This transformation process involves re-reading, reinterpretation, and changes in meanings. Lotta (2014, p. 201) considers that to broaden the analysis of the implementation of public policies

it is essential to incorporate a look at the various interactions, at the existing values and referentials, and at the exercise of discretion by the implementing agents. Thus, we consider that, depending on the action, discretion, and interaction occurring in the process, we will have different forms of implementation (our translation).

On the path between policy formulation and implementation, through different logics of action, the actors reinterpret and interact with the demands of educational policies at different

levels and in different modalities. We understand these different strategies as determining factors for the appropriateness and recontextualization of educational policies in school contexts, especially the one highlighted in this study. Lipsky (2010) called the agents responsible for the "delivery" of policy Street Level Bureaucrats - BNR. According to the author, they deal daily in communicating with policy beneficiaries, including reconciliation strategies, needs, and constraints (LOTTA, 2014). One of the great contributions of this theory is to see the bureaucrat as a policy maker, that is, his function is to carry out/make policies.

Lipsky (2010) defines BNRs as employees who work directly in the interaction with users for the provision of public services, thus making the delivery of services and, therefore, possessing a significant discretion in the execution of their activities. For the author, discretion is understood as the relative freedom that these agents have to determine the nature, quantity, and quality of benefits and sanctions to be offered by their agencies to these citizens. In a field full of actions, discretion and the interaction of implementing agents are relevant concepts, and are necessary to understand the performance of the bureaucrat who makes decisions and generates effects in policy execution. Studies on discretion usually start from two dimensions: one that seeks to explain the existing space of discretion (where rules and organizational factors are the focus of analysis) and one that turns to the exercise of discretion, seeking to explain how individuals use this existing space (LOTTA, 2018). As Sequeira (2022) discussed in a study conducted in the same field, the space that is given in politics can be larger, smaller, comprehensive or not. Whether the subject will exercise this discretion is his or her decision - which depends on his or her context of implementation and the interactions he or she establishes. In the educational field, teachers are the main BNRs, as they are in direct relationship with the policy beneficiaries. According to Sequeira (2022), they are the main responsible for student learning, it is up to them to implement daily pedagogical practices and other public policy guidelines.

It is known that the exercise of discretion is influenced by several institutional and relational factors, so that policy outcomes can be partly explained by the interactions established by bureaucrats (LOTTA, 2018). When analyzing the interactions existing in the implementation process, it is necessary to recognize not only the individual choices of the actors, who are influenced by values and references, but also to analyze the instances of which they are part. According to Lotta (2018), such aspects are built dynamically from interactive processes between bureaucrats and other actors.

In this interactive process, it is important to consider that between the BNRs and the formulated policy, there are the Medium-Scale Bureaucrats - BMEs. According to Cavalcante and Lotta (2015, p. 13-14), "the importance of this bureaucracy is precisely in being the link between the high level and the executors of public policies. It is, therefore, one of the main responsible for connecting the formulation and implementation phases".

In this study, we intend to understand the spaces and uses of discretion by the BMEs and the BNRs and the possible interaction between them in the implementation of a policy to extend the school day. It is worth noting that there are few studies in the educational field that have been dedicated to the subject, especially highlighting the interaction between these different agents.

The Single Shift as an initiative to expand the school day in Rio de Janeiro: agenda and formulation of a policy

The discussion about extending the school day as a way to improve educational quality is not new. Legislation and different national educational policies and programs address the issue. The Law of Directives and Bases for National Education - Law No. 9.394/96 establishes in Article 34 that "the school day in elementary school shall include at least four hours of effective work in the classroom, and the period of time spent in school shall be progressively extended. (BRAZIL, 1996). And adds, in § 2: "Elementary school will be taught progressively on a full-time basis, at the discretion of the education systems" (BRAZIL, 1996). As Cavaliere (2014) notes, the proposition is born with a wide margin for interpretations and omissions.

The Plan of Goals All for Education/PDE 2007 (BRAZIL, 2007) and the former National Education Plan - PNE 2001-2010 (BRAZIL, 2001) brought some guidelines related to full-time student attendance. Regarding the expansion of school time, we can consider that the *Mais Educação* Program - PME (BRAZIL, 2010) appears (in 2010) proposing the complementation of school hours with after-school activities, developed by workshops in the school space itself or in another public facility in the surroundings. Thus, it reinforces the understanding of the school as a community space. The activities offered by the program are not necessarily linked to the school's pedagogical project, which ended up producing criticism about its more welfare than educational character. The current PNE 2014-2024 (BRAZIL, 2014a) dedicates a specific goal to full-time education. Goal 6 provides that, by 2024, 50% of Brazilian public schools will be serving at least 25% of basic education students on a full-time basis. The plan replicates the *Mais Educação* Program's definition of full-time education, that

is, it understands it as "a school day lasting seven hours or more per day, throughout the school term, including the total time the student stays at school or in school activities in other educational spaces" (BRAZIL, 2014b). In this way, it makes it explicit that full-time education will not be translated, essentially, in the expansion of the school day, but in the expansion of the time allocated to activities at school. The only strategy that addresses the expansion of the school day is 6.9: "adopt measures to optimize the time students spend in school, directing the expansion of the school day to effective school work, combined with recreational, sports, and cultural activities" (BRAZIL, 2014a).

The discussion on the expansion of the school day in basic education in Brazilian educational standards has led to different initiatives (national, such as the PME, and local, such as the CIEPs in the state of Rio de Janeiro), with different conceptions on the use of school time⁷. It is worth considering, in this regard, that the proposal of the Single Shift happens under the influence and induction of national and local legislation and programs to expand school time, both previous and simultaneous.

Palmeira (2016) proposes a temporal comparison of national and municipal (Rio de Janeiro) legislation on full-time education, which leads us to consider that the Single Shift proposal is influenced by the national discussion on the benefits of extending the school day. However, the proposal intends to imprint on the local design an understanding that, to some extent, deviates from the proposition alluded to in the PNE (BRAZIL, 2014a) by establishing the expansion of the school day exclusively with an increase in the workload, provided in the unified curriculum matrix, as will be discussed later. The possibility of other complementary activities beyond the 7-hour shift has not been ruled out. In fact, some schools simultaneously hosted the Single Shift and the *Mais Educação* Program.

The municipal education system of Rio de Janeiro formally incorporates the demand for extending the school day into its policy agenda through Law N° 5,225 of November 5, 2010 (RIO DE JANEIRO, 2010), which provides for the implementation of the Single Shift in public education in the municipal public schools network, authored by Councilman Jorge Felipe and others. It is important to note that the law in effect points out the length of stay of students in school units, but does not expose the purpose of the extension of the school day nor does it put its objectives on the agenda.

⁷ For further information on the subject, see Cavaliere (2014).

The legislation was implemented during Eduardo Paes' administration ⁸, in two terms (2009-2012/2013-2016), with Cláudia Costin as Secretary of Education for most of the time. During this period, numerous projects were developed, including the proposal to extend the school day, with the Single Shift, being supported from the legislation in force, and that will be described below from resolutions and public data from SME/RJ, due to the lack of specification in the law about the proposal.

The network of municipal schools in the city of Rio de Janeiro is one of the largest educational networks in Latin America. It currently serves 634,007 students enrolled in Kindergarten, Elementary School and Youth and Adult Education in 1,544 school units. Since 2010, this network has been going through a gradual process of restructuring the educational supply of its school units to expand the school day. To this end, a comprehensive study project was developed to implement this reorganization in partnership with the Pereira Passos Institute - IPP, seeking to meet the guidance of Municipal Law 5.225 (RIO DE JANEIRO, 2010), cited above.

The schools then began to be reorganized, considering the existing units and the need to build new units, in a gradual process with the forecast that all units will serve students in a single 7-hour shift. The definition of a single shift of 7 school hours required a progressive linking of teachers to the school unit, working 40 hours a week of exclusive dedication in the same school. The increase in the time dedicated to school activities, considered an important achievement to raise the quality of learning, required a curriculum restructuring that was studied by the SME/RJ teams, according to the Undersecretary of Education of SME/RJ at the time (verbal information) and was translated into the documents: Resolution No. 1178 of February 2012 (which establishes the adjustments in the curricular matrices of schools that start attending in Single Shift) (RIO DE JANEIRO, 2012) and Resolutions No. 1317 of October 28, 2014 (RIO DE JANEIRO, 2014) and No. 1427, of October 24, 2016 (which deal with the structure, organization and schedules of schools in the municipal network of Rio de Janeiro and Curricular Matrix, including those in Single Shift)⁹ (RIO DE JANEIRO, 2016). Later, already in Marcelo Crivela's municipal administration (2017-2020) Resolution No. 113 of January 16, 2019 (RIO DE JANEIRO, 2019) revises the recommendations laid out in the previous documents, revoking them. It is worth noting that the structure of the proposal remained the same, with

⁸ Eduardo Paes retakes office as Rio de Janeiro mayor for the 2021-2024 term.

⁹ In 2021, after the research was concluded, Resolution No. 297 of November 17, 2021 was published (RIO DE JANEIRO, 2021), which provides for the Curricular Matrix of the School Units of the Public Education Network of the City of Rio de Janeiro, and makes other provisions.

minor changes (such as entrance and exit times, which changed from 07:30 to 14:30 to 08:00 to 15:00), but which brought impact to the family and structural organization of the school, in some cases, as reported in the media. The Secretary of Education at the time tried to change the organization of the curriculum matrix, but, under pressure from teachers and principals, went back on her proposal.

In the analysis of this proposal by SME/RJ, based on its legal provisions, it can be seen that the text of the policy focuses on its operationalization, i.e., it defines the guidelines for implementing the Single Shift. It is not explicit, however, the link between these adjustments and the improvement of school quality, since this articulation occurred more in the field of discourse than in the textual record. As an example, we have the speech of a representative of SME/RJ in a meeting of the Strategic Information Council of the City (2017): "*The model was inspired by international models, where students perform better. So it is seven hours, from 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., and the organization is by segments, with a 6th grade generalist teacher and always 40-hour teachers.*" It remains to be seen what interpretation the agents implementing this policy (from the SME/RJ to the school unit) make of this proposal and, further, how they reconfigure it in different contexts.

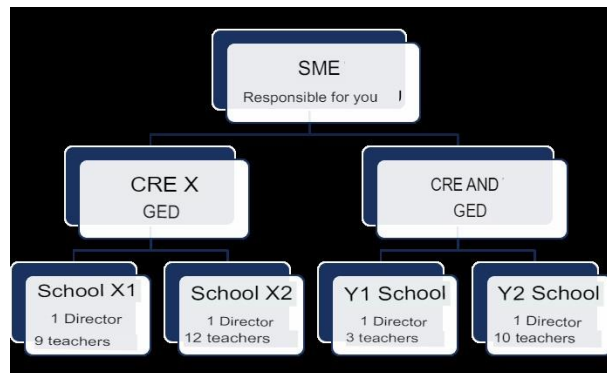
Turno Único -The Single Shift - from formulation to implementation: the voice of the agents

The implementation of the Single Shift happened (and is still happening) gradually, since the context of the network is challenging both in terms of its size and territorial issues. Regarding the pace of this policy implementation process, in 2011, it began in 10 schools, called Carioca Experimental Gymnasiums at the time. By 2013, the Single Shift had already been implemented in 28 schools and, by 2019, in 326 schools (215 serving the early years and 121 the final years of elementary school). It is worth remembering that the goal of the SME/RJ was that all schools in the network would have incorporated the Single Shift by 2020 (RIO DE JANEIRO, 2010). The official website of the SME/RJ states that, currently (2022), 37.63% of students in the Rio de Janeiro municipal public school system are enrolled in full-time schools (which includes students enrolled in Single Shift schools and students enrolled in schools that attend other school day extension projects).

In order to understand the different interpretations of the agents involved in the implementation of the Single Shift, we proposed, as a research design, a qualitative approach that involved interviews with professionals at different levels in the Rio de Janeiro municipal

school system. The interviews were conducted with representatives of the SME/RJ, responsible for the Carioca Single Shift at different times; with the Education Managers, responsible for implementing the policy in two CREs; with the principals of four municipal schools (two in each CRE); as well as with focus groups with teachers from each school. The interviews and focus groups were transcribed and coded in themes, in an internal thematic analysis (each case) and cross-correlation (between cases). Themes were categorized at different levels: topics (interaction among implementing agents and Bureaucrats' discretionary spaces); level of analysis (SME/RJ, CRE, School) and role of the agent in implementation (SME/RJ Representative, School Director etc.). The categories that emerged from this analysis are presented and discussed below, inspired by the literature that guided this work. The identification of the interviewees was preserved and, for a better understanding of the interview excerpts cited in this work, the following flowchart presents the agents considered in the research:

Figure 1 – Levels and agents participating in the research



Source: Prepared by the authors

In the interviews with the different agents involved in the process of implementing the Single Shift, we captured different interpretations and perceptions of the SME/RJ proposal. As presented in the previous section, the policy text does not make explicit the legislators' considerations about the relationship between implementing the policy and improving the quality of school work. However, this concept is present in the speech of most of these agents, especially among high-ranking bureaucrats (representatives of SME/RJ), and middle-ranking bureaucrats (Education Managers of the CREs and principals of the schools surveyed). The excerpts below exemplify this perception:

When the student and teacher stay longer in school they create a stronger bond with the school (SME Representative 2, 2018).

Real approval, the children really learn. They take the same test that everyone does, they use the same material that everyone uses, they only have a different methodology because of a matrix that is more extensive and has another dynamic (CRE Y, year 2018).

For us this is a gain because this school was not very well regarded in the performance issue, but it has already improved a lot (Principal X1, 2018).

Among the implementers who work directly in offering this policy to its beneficiaries, the BNRs, different perceptions and interpretations of the policy were observed, in some cases highlighting positive points, in others negative ones.

The attendance that I am with the students is much higher [...] for me it is very rewarding, because you see your work, the result of the things you do, you can work much more with them, besides the affinity thing (Teacher 1 of school X1, 2018).

The child gets too trapped in the classroom. The ideal thing would be for them to rotate more, would be that a wider range of subjects, extracurricular things would be offered within the public school, so that they would have a more global education (Teacher 2 of school X1, 2018).

It can be seen that the perception of Teacher 2 of school X1 refers to a different conception of extending school time, probably because the intentionality of increasing the school day in the Single Shift proposal is not clear in the policy text.

Still on the interpretation of the agents regarding the intentionality of the policy, we highlight an inaccuracy in the understanding of a principal. According to her, the implementation of the Single Shift, extending the school day in the network, occurred to adapt school time to the change in the teachers' workload:

It really has to do with the hiring of the teacher in expanded workload. The teacher became 40h hours and the school adapted to this schedule that the teacher had to attend (Principal X2, 2018).

There is, in the director's speech, an inverse understanding of the policy design: the 40-hour teachers were allocated to schools that started to work a single shift (7 hours), because the Curricular Matrix design of these schools foresees both the increase in workload and the daily study centers (SECRETARIA MUNICIPAL DE EDUCAÇÃO, 2012, 2014, 2016).

In this same unit, which used to offer extended hours through the *Mais Educação* Program (BRAZIL, 2010) and other partnerships made by the school, the principal sees little change.

"X2 never stopped being full time, it was always full time or single shift. Always full time, the only change was the single shift." (Principal X2, 2018).

For her, the extended day (extraturno) service was already a reality and she does not emphasize the difference in curricular adequacy foreseen by the text of the current policy. The SME/RJ representative, however, makes a point of highlighting the difference between the proposals:

[...] this implementation of the One Shift is a paradigm shift. We had another proposal, which was in the morning common core activities, basic subjects, and in the afternoon diversified activities, more elective subjects, workshops, musical games, etc. [...] The Single Shift has 35 periods in the regular classes. The matrix works with subjects, with disciplines with the teacher (SME Representative 1, 2018).

As Mainardes and Stremel (2010) point out, through recontextualization, the discourse moves from its original context of production to another context in which it is modified (through selection, simplification, condensation, and re-elaboration) and related to other discourses, and then relocated. For the principal X2 (2018), possibly, the guidelines regarding the Single Shift were not very clear, despite the efforts of the central bodies in this direction. We consider that the interpretation about the policy is determinant for the implementation strategies to be adopted by the agents involved at different levels. In the case studied, these strategies involved different forms of interaction and different uses of discretionary spaces, categories analyzed in the data collected in the field that will be described below.

The interaction between the agents

In the field research period and in the data analysis, we noticed that the interaction movements between the implementing agents took place in different moments and directions, being determinant for the results of the policy implementation. In these movements, interaction brings with it the relationships established by the different agents in this policy implementation process. According to Lotta (2014), these bureaucrats are influenced by various factors that impact their shape and ability to shape the policy outcomes from the interaction processes they carry out.

When addressing the coordination of policy implementation, the SME representative highlights the care taken to ensure interaction with other agents, especially school principals:

So, we talked a lot with these directors, we sensitized them, showed them what the possibilities were... This matrix, we also discussed a lot with

collegiate, with field, representativeness. [...] Everyone was heard and it was an interesting process (SME Representative 1, 2018).

The representative of CRE X (2018) confirms the SME/RJ's investment in this flow of information and in the training of agents for the implementation of the Single Shift: "There was already a training in the secretariat with the Single Shift escorts, that was my role." She also highlights the role of the CRE, as BME, in mediating this interaction for the implementation: "I accompanied the single-shift schools, I went to the schools, talked to the school management, helped them solve any specific school issues" (CRE X, 2018).

The statements of the interviewed principals also confirm that there was this monitoring, but they perceive this movement in a more personified way, locating in one of the agents the contribution to the implementation of the policy:

At the time it was implemented here, there was [name/SME] who was in charge... she was a very open person, she listened to all the demands, difficulties, gave feedback... Her team helped a lot, she was really betting, wanted to hear what was working, what needed to change. A lot of support (Principal Y1, 2018).

However, for the teachers, regarding the orientation given to the agents in the implementation of the policy, this movement of interaction between the different levels in communication was not so effective:

It was something very touch and go, let's say so, right. Do it, comply with it, without much guidance (Teacher 2 of school Y2, 2018).

When the CRE does this, it usually comes by email, and the principal copies it to us. And so, there is not much debate, there is not much consultation (Teacher 3 of school Y2, 2018).

In the course of implementation, the SME/RJ guidance included the use of a strategy to promote interaction between agents from schools that had already implemented the One-Shift with agents from schools that were beginning implementation:

We even held a meeting last week with schools that are new to the model, or schools that are not new to the model, but the principal is. We brought two principals to tell us how was this experience, exactly like this: when did it start, how was it? how did you manage to organize electives, life project, protagonism? how did you manage to make this daily planning time more dynamic? This was very cool. Because it is a colleague saying 'this went well, this went wrong, this was at that moment, this could be done, this couldn't be done...' speaking very openly, giving tips. how was the impact? did the teachers complain? didn't they? (Representative 2 of SEM/RJ, 2018).

In the analysis of the speeches of the agents interviewed, it is clear the need for communication among them to guarantee the interpretation of the policy, its objectives, and the responsibilities of each agent in the process. Despite the efforts of SME/RJ in this path, according to the reports, it seems that some problems still remain. SME/RJ Representative 1 (2018) summarizes this perception: "*We give an orientation that sometimes arrives at the end in a different way. We have a network of 1500 schools, the CREs have a fundamental role in this reorganization process*".

According to Lotta (2018), the responsibility of the participation of each agent can be observed, therefore, from the interactions established, considering the existing relationships and the repertoires triggered at the time of implementation. Therefore, the analysis of these interactions, leads us to think about the importance of looking more broadly at the implementation of public policies, considering not only the bureaucracy that participates in this process, but the relationships that are established with other bureaucrats.

The presence of agents for more time in the school, in the interviewees' view, favors and facilitates interaction and decision-making in a more shared way, which could facilitate policy implementation:

I see in Single Shift schools more cases of shared management. Because teachers are at school longer, they are able to participate in decisions. Management is more shared because you need people with you. In part-time schools, I worked in a school like this, and I had to repeat the same thing several times, I could never get everyone together (SME/RJ Representative 3, 2018).

Regarding the teachers' perception, it was observed how important the interaction between the agents is. The reports of some of them show how the interaction among the agents can make a difference in the implementation of the policy:

I think it's much better, because we have a greater bond with the students, we are with them every day. Also being at school every day, [...], being able to work together with the team, I think it makes a lot of difference (Teacher 1 of school X2, 2018, emphasis added).

And we with the coordination, we have the study centers. The coordination, in the study centers, is that it passes most of the information and guidelines that it needs to give us (Teacher 2 of school Y1, 2018, emphasis added).

Because it is impossible, I don't know how it would be to run this gigantic project without this team (Teacher 3 of school Y2, 2018).

Implementation is understood, according to Lotta (2018), as a complex process involving actors, power, interests, disputes, and controversies. In this tangle of interactions, it becomes relevant to understand how bureaucrats construct their actions and make decisions.

The role of the agents: spaces of discretion

The process of implementing the Single Shift involved an important role of local coordinators, responsible for this process in each CRE. They were responsible for talking to the principals and the community during the phase of convincing them about the policy, acting as mid-level bureaucrats - BME. One can say that they are the link between the top level and the executors of public policies. They are, therefore, one of the main responsible for connecting the formulation and implementation phases. It has the primary function of translating decisions into actions (CAVALCANTE; LOTTA, 2015).

In this process, each made use of their discretionary spaces at their different levels to favor the work. To this end, their previous experience, their level of agreement with the policy, and their proximity and interaction with other agents were essential factors, as perceived in their reports. The speeches below exemplify this path in the two CREs analyzed:

I accompanied the single-shift schools. So when I went to the schools, my main focus, although I talked to the directors, was the pedagogical coordinator (CRE X, 2018).

The principals were called, little by little, we started very slowly. We called the parents to talk in the schools and explained how this was going to work (CRE Y, 2018).

And, in the exercise of this discretion, the representative of CRE Y had his own initiative. In that context, he organized a project to monitor the schools that were implementing the Single Shift. The project aimed to bring principals closer to the proposal's coordination in the CRE:

And we do it once a month - this is our proposal - it is a project, we go to one of the schools in a territory. [...] And the schools in the nearby territory [meet with the GED]... the intention is to bring the work that is everybody's job closer (CRE Y, 2018).

CRE X also took the initiative to develop a proposal to favor the implementation of the Single Shift. It invited staff and teachers from a school that was going to implement the policy to visit a school that was already working with the Single Shift.

This school, XI, was implementing the Single Shift, and we had X3, which was one of the first Gymnasium schools in Rio de Janeiro. And we had a meeting between teachers from one school and the other and it was very nice, because they showed us this kind of experience (CRE X, 2018).

When asked if these were suggestions or referrals from the central level of SME/RJ, the representatives of each CRE said no, each one justified their initiative based on their own perception of the needs of each context: *“I think that, during implementation, we see what is working in that community and what is not, this is interesting. So, **autonomy** is conquered”* (CRE X, 2018).

On the use of the concepts "autonomy" and "discretion" in the analysis of the actions of implementing agents, Lotta and Santiago (2017, p. 37), point out that it is in the analysis of the use that individuals make of the discretionary space that the concepts can get confused: "although there are important connections between the two concepts, it is clear that there are different analytical assumptions that must be considered in different research". In this study, we consider discretion as action in the cases of the two CREs' choices. According to Lotta and Santiago (2017), from this perspective, we consider the variation in bureaucrats' behaviors, explained by the elements that influence how they interpret rules and implement public policies. Considering personal experiences, organizational and local contextual conditions, each BME adopted strategies that could, in their perception, favor the implementation process of the Single Shift.

At the school level, we highlight, in this article, the spaces of discretion narrated by the agents in the definition of elective subjects. The freedom in defining the elective courses to be offered from the new curriculum matrix was valued in all interviews, from the discourse of high-ranking bureaucrats:

The choice of elective is a teacher's choice. [...] The school has autonomy to choose the electives it will give. [...] They also evaluate, do a semester evaluation, and if it didn't work out, they change it. There is an unfolding of the elective itself for the following semester. The school solves it (SME/RJ Representative 2, 2018).

Regarding the definition of elective subjects, no definition and/or concept of elective subject was found in the curriculum matrix (RIO DE JANEIRO, 2019), i.e., it is not clear in the guiding document what is the SME/RJ conception of the work to be developed in this proposal, opening more room for interpretation by the implementers. As the literature on public policy implementation points out, the greater the flexibility of the policy text, the greater the discretionary space for implementers. According to Lotta and Santiago

(2017, p. 24) "studies on bureaucracy show that discretion is made possible precisely by the existence of norms and rules and the way they are constructed." In this case, the comprehensiveness of the text - with very generic rules - allows varied interpretations of the implementers, which was valued in the interactions between the different agents involved precisely because it enables greater space for decision-making. In mediating the implementation of this curriculum guideline, the agents of the CREs sought to value this space:

[...] So teachers choose, teachers command I can offer a literature elective (CRE Y, 2018, emphasis added).

In the first semester, the school saw that this elective didn't work out, they have the autonomy to say: this wasn't nice. And then I think teachers have to get together to restructure this, to rethink it (CRE X, 2018, emphasis added).

In the words of these mid-level agents, one notices recognition of the schools' decision-making process for defining the supply of these subjects. The interviewed principals, who mediate this orientation at school, also valued this decision space and the participation of students, even though the choice of a subject with a weekly schedule may seem so limited when compared to the definition of the Curricular Matrix:

The choice is free, within the SME proposal the school has this autonomy, along with their peers who are the teachers. We also have to respect the possibilities and capabilities, because there is no point in saying that we will give a singing and choir workshop if I don't open my mouth to sing anything (Principal X1, 2018, emphasis added).

They love it. Elective day is the best day for them. It's their choice (Director Y2, 2018, emphasis added).

Teachers, in turn, recognize this discretionary space, but consider that the exercise of this discretion is limited by contingency issues. In the choice of elective courses this is perceived, as the teacher needs to

think, adapt with the properties of the school's material because for example, I would really like to do an elective using an internet resource that I know I won't have, so I can't. It already limits me (Teacher 1 of school X1, 2018).

Regarding the material of elective subjects, there is none, what there is is little that the school gives [...] The paper is running out and the elective will be paralyzed because there is no material (Teacher 2 of school X1, 2018).

In this sense, as Lotta and Santiago (2017, p. 36) point out, we can understand that discretion as a space for action "is understood as a freedom of the individual limited by the contexts of bureaucratic action." Thus, even if the BNR recognizes and legitimizes the space

for discretion in the implementation, planning the use of this space based on its values and judgments, its effectiveness may be limited by contingent aspects not foreseen in the policy.

Final remarks

This paper discusses the implementation of educational policies, highlighting the role of the agents involved in this process. Taking as research object the implementation of the Single Shift proposal in the municipal public school system of Rio de Janeiro, we initially discussed the political agenda that influenced the formulation of the proposal. Also, through a brief analysis of the legal texts that regulated the implementation of the proposal, we observed how these policy texts demarcated - or not - the conceptions and orientations of the policy. Thus, understanding the phases of the classic cycle of public policy analysis as fluid and complementary, we highlight the implementation phase from a look towards/about the implementing agents. According to Oliveira (2019), studies on the dynamics of implementation processes have, in recent years, started to take into account the daily life of policies, considering routines, interactions, bureaucrats' behavior, values, perceptions, discretion, translation, and interpretation.

In this study, emphasizing the place and relevance of the actions and strategies of the implementing agents, the design of the empirical research sought to capture the perception of different agents, at different levels of the local bureaucracy, about the interactions, strategies, and decisions at different moments and routines of the implementation of the Single Shift. It was perceived, through the subjects' reports, an inconsistency in the definition of the policy design that translated into different interpretations. These interpretations, in fact, had repercussions on the interactions between bureaucrats and for the definition of the spaces and uses of discretion found in the implementation strategies, leading to different results, considering: i) the contextual and contingent characteristics of each space; ii) the different motivations and individual beliefs of the agents involved; iii) the quality and intensity of interactions between bureaucrats.

It is in this way, through small decisions along a long chain, that policies are in fact constructed and implemented. To evaluate or analyze the implementation of a program, we should keep in mind these various local transformations and appropriations - not as a defect or criticism of the policies, but as a simple starting point for understanding them (LOTTA, 2014, p. 144, our translation).

Thus, considering its limits, the discussion we bring in this article proposes to contribute to the field of research on educational policy implementation and, also, to inform the policy agenda. According to Oliveira (2019), analyzing implementation from the local perspective brings relevant information to decision makers about the daily life of implementation.

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How to reference this article

OLIVEIRA, A. C. P.; SEQUEIRA, D. A. F.; GOMES, L. F. Z. The implementation of the 'Turno Único' in Rio de Janeiro: Interaction and discretion of agents. **Revista Ibero-Americana de Estudos em Educação**, Araraquara, v. 17, n. esp. 3, p. 2337-2358, Nov. 2022. e-ISSN: 1982-5587. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21723/riaee.v17iesp.3.16732>

Submitted 21/02/2022

Revisions required: 30/06/2022

Approved: 10/08/2022

Published: 30/11/2022

Processing and publication by the Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.

Correction, formatting, standardization and translation.

