

PRIORITIES FOR THE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AGENDA: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, LEARNING, TEACHING QUALITY AND EXTERNAL EVALUATION

PRIORIDADES PARA A AGENDA INTERNACIONAL DA EDUCAÇÃO: QUALIDADE DA EDUCAÇÃO, APRENDIZAGEM, QUALIDADE DOCENTE E AVALIAÇÃO EXTERNA

PRIORIDADES DE LA AGENDA INTERNACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN: CALIDAD DE LA EDUCACIÓN, APRENDIZAJE, CALIDAD DE LA ENSEÑANZA Y EVALUACIÓN EXTERNA

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ABSTRACT: This paper is the result of an investigation that sought to map out the priorities of the international agenda for education that began in the 1990s in Jomtien, re-evaluated in 2000 in Dakar, and improved in 2015 in the city of Incheon. Its objective was to analyze how the managerialist perspective for learning was introduced in the agenda, relating the concepts of “Quality of Education”, “Learning” and “Teaching Quality”. The documents of the three world education meetings were analyzed (JOMTIEN, 1990; DAKAR, 2000; INCHEON, 2015). It was concluded that the strategies used in the documents aim to produce consensus, when using widely accepted slogans such as quality and empowerment. We also emphasize that the teacher is placed at the center of the agenda, and that the professionalization discourse is strongly associated with the managerial logic of accountability.

KEYWORDS: Agenda for education. Globalization. Teaching professionalization. Quality of education.

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RESUMO: O presente artigo é resultado de uma investigação que buscou mapear as prioridades da agenda internacional para a educação iniciada a partir dos anos 1990, em Jomtien, reavaliada nos anos 2000 em Dakar, e aprimorada em 2015, na cidade de Incheon. Seu objetivo foi analisar como se introduziu, na agenda, a perspectiva gerencialista para a aprendizagem, relacionando, para tanto, os conceitos de “Qualidade da Educação”, “Aprendizagem” e “Qualidade do Professor”. Analisou-se os documentos dos três encontros mundiais de educação (JOMTIEN, 1990; DAKAR, 2000; INCHEON, 2015). Conclui-se que as estratégias usadas nos documentos visam a produção de consensos, quando usam slogans amplamente aceitos como é o exemplo de qualidade e empoderamento. Também destacamos que o professor é colocado no centro da agenda, e que o discurso de profissionalização está intimamente associado à lógica gerencial de responsabilização.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Agenda para a educação. Globalização. Profissionalização docente. Qualidade da educação.

RESUMEN: Este artículo es el resultado de una investigación que buscó mapear las prioridades de la agenda internacional de educación iniciada en la década de 1990, en Jomtien, reevaluada en la década de 2000 en Dakar, y mejorada en 2015, en la ciudad de Incheon. Su objetivo fue analizar cómo se introdujo en la agenda la perspectiva gerencialista del aprendizaje, relacionando, para ello, los conceptos de "Calidad de la educación", "Aprendizaje" y "Calidad del docente". Se analizaron los documentos de los tres encuentros mundiales de educación (JOMTIEN, 1990; DAKAR, 2000; INCHEON, 2015). Se concluye que las estrategias utilizadas en los documentos apuntan a generar consenso, cuando utilizan consignas ampliamente aceptadas como el ejemplo de calidad y empoderamiento. También destacamos que el docente se coloca en el centro de la agenda, y que el discurso de la profesionalización está estrechamente asociado a la lógica de la rendición de cuentas gerencial.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Agenda de educación. Globalización. Profesionalización docente. Calidad de educación.

Introduction

Education, raised as human capital from the 1980s (FRIGOTTO, 1995), has become a fundamental part of economic development in capitalism. Be it more evident, when it prepares future workers to work in different jobs, or implicitly, when it assists in the construction of hegemonic thinking through the production of consensus, the fact is that we cannot think of a project of society, whatever its identity, without an educational project capable of providing ideological and practical support. Considering such importance, we arrived at the end of the 1980s with the certainty of the role that education played and that it was necessary to produce a model that would meet capitalist aspirations in all countries of the world. Given this observation, Multilateral Organisms whose history shows support for capitalist development, functioning as true heralds, will produce policies that outline a very

effective plan to produce a globalized model of education. On the issue, Libâneo (2012) highlights that,

The internationalization of educational policies is a movement generated by globalization in which international agencies, financial or not, formulate recommendations on public policies for emerging or developing countries, including ways to regulate these policies because of cooperation agreements between these countries (LIBÂNEO, 2012, p. 3, our translation).

In this sense, education is reduced to the formation of a workforce for the capitalist market, since it forms subjects that correspond to the new forms of the social organization of work, moving the neoliberal machine itself. In addition, it is clear the influence that Multilateral Organizations (MO) have on the definition of educational priorities in all countries of the world, especially peripheral ones.

The materialization of this is an educational agenda for the world that has been built alongside profound reforms that States have undergone since the 1990s, mainly. In this sense, “[...] its recommendations have largely directed educational systems, using the economic and political spheres to pressure the State and reach neoliberal hegemonic interests through these channels” (DALE, 2004, p. 441, our translation).

Among the various concepts and concepts dealt with in the countless documents produced by the MOs, responsible, as we have already said, for forming an agenda for the educational sector, we use, for this article, the results of the analyzes carried out on three documents, from the last three meetings education (1990, 2000 and 2015). From such analyzes, we highlight as a central objective of this article the demonstration that one of the priorities of the agenda is to instill a managerial vision for learning, relating the concepts of "Quality of Education", "Learning" and "Quality of the Teacher". These concepts, as we will follow, translate the search to establish a vision for teachers based on the idea of efficiency and effectiveness, proper to managerial management. We also present that these relationships will produce, as an effect, the responsibility of the teacher and important changes in the structuring of his career, or at least the attempt to change.

World education meetings and their goals: universal education, learning, quality of education, teacher evaluation and accountability

Despite the international construction of an education agenda, led by the MO - mainly the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), supported by the World Bank - started in Jomtien (1990), and the theme of learning to be present in the

motto of “guaranteeing basic learning needs”, the concern was different throughout the 1990s, since the number of students outside school remained high, leading to the conclusion, still in Jomtien, that it was urgent promote the universalization of basic education. “Basic education is more than an end. It is the basis for learning [...]” (UNESCO, 1990, p. 3, our translation).

As of the 2000s, with the considerable increase in students enrolled in schools, these entities aimed to build an agenda that symbolized new objectives, primarily related to learning and its quality, but that remained committed to neoliberal ideas. This is evident when the Dakar Mark stresses, “Quality education is one that satisfies basic learning needs and enriches the lives of students and their overall experience of life” (UNESCO, 2000, p. 17, our translation). Still in that document, one of the objectives that they said to commit to for the next 15 years was “to improve the status, self-esteem and professionalism of teachers” (UNESCO, 2000, p. 9, our translation).

It should be noted, therefore, that the emphasis on learning outcomes becomes a priority in this document, when they state that “Its essential points and principles are as follows: generalization of access to education; insistence on equality; **emphasis on learning outcomes**” (UNESCO, 2000, p. 12, author's highlights, our translation). These objectives demonstrate the concern with the quality of education combined with learning, and also expose how this new objective will be the main strategy of the MOs for the next decades. “To improve all aspects of the quality of education and ensure the excellence of all, so that recognized and measurable learning results are achieved by all, especially in literacy, calculus and essential life skills” (UNESCO, 2000, p. 20, our translation).

Fifteen years later, a new world meeting was held with the objective of evaluating the actions planned for the educational field from Dakar (2000) to Incheon (2015). Aiming at the continuity of the education agenda, the goals for the international educational agenda for the next 15 years (2015-2030) were launched, placing an even greater emphasis on learning and assessment as a privileged instrument for measuring its success.

We are committed to quality education and the improvement of learning outcomes, which requires the reinforcement of inputs and processes, in addition to the assessment of learning outcomes and mechanisms to measure progress. We will ensure that teachers and educators are empowered, properly recruited, well trained, professionally qualified, motivated and supported in systems that have good resources and are efficient and effectively managed (UNESCO, 2015, p. 4, our translation).

In view of this, it is important to realize that, despite the quality understandings present variations in the analyzed documents, there are certain points in common, “[...]”

linking the concept of quality to measurement, performance and the indication of the need for the institution of learning assessment programs, in addition to pointing out some basic conditions for achieving the desired quality” (DOURADO; OLIVEIRA; SANTOS, 2007, p. 2, our translation). These points in common reflect the conception of MOs in relating quality of education, learning and performance evaluation. From this perspective, performance evaluations seek to establish benchmarks to recommend productive methodological practices and procedures. This movement results in an improvement in school performance (which does not mean an improvement in the quality of education), which consequently directs public opinion in favor of education (DOURADO; OLIVEIRA; SANTOS, 2007).

The concept of quality in education is strictly linked to learning, since regulating it by assessment systems, the idea of quality education is related to the results of learning effectiveness by education systems, that is, the school performance measured by evaluation systems and the quality of education are treated as synonyms. In this perspective, the MOs print the concept of measured learning, that is, school failures and successes measured by assessment systems. This idea ends up supporting the concept of quality of education, since quality of education is linked to learning, so the results correlate with economic development.

This whole discussion is directed towards the responsibility of the teacher for this quality, because, if the students do not correspond to the learning results measured by the evaluation systems, the teacher is the subject charged for this failure. This means that their work is directed in the search for this learning that the evaluation systems aim for. In this sense, “The attempt to hold the teacher responsible for the results of the evaluations is the gateway to the formation of a consensus around the restructuring of his career, including his hiring regime” (SANTOS, 2015, p. 14, our translation).

Therefore, we will follow, below, that the concept of quality of education disseminated in the analyzed documents is supported by the discourse of learning based on performance and on the responsibility of the teacher, since there is no point in thinking about learning that corresponds to the interests of capital, without thinking about professionals who masterfully execute this dynamic. In this approach, the MOs, through the processes of learning assessment, aim to train a new teacher, molded to the new economic requirements, which will result in the preparation of their students for such requirements.

The production of consensus around the discourse of teacher responsibility and professionalization

Realizing that the discourse of teacher responsibility and professionalization is strictly linked to school management models based on managerialism, and that this model has adopted a discourse aimed at producing consensus, we believe it is fundamental that, when discussing the relationships between learning, quality of education and teaching professionalization, let us do so under the Gramscian conception of active consent.

For Gramsci (2011), consensus is part of the strategies of the dominant classes to also become the ruling class. In other words, the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways: as dominion (coercion) and as “intellectual and moral direction” (active consent). The State, therefore, is never pure force nor can transformation be pure violence. Therefore, a dominant group is not, for that reason alone, a ruler and a dominated group is not doomed to subordination. Considering the importance of consensus for the construction of hegemony, the mechanisms of accountability, present in the discourse of professionalization, become fundamental for the introduction of a new rationality in school management and in the educational system, capable, even, of changing the understanding of teachers about their social function.

The managerialist discourse of teacher accountability, through professionalization, will become a new way of carrying out small politics in the relationship between State and society, which uses widely accepted slogans to disseminate its objectives for education.

The analysis of the educational slogans to obtain the active consent of the majority of the Brazilian population to the project of the ruling class, helps us to clearly perceive that the actions of the group in power for its social legitimation is based on the reform of the material bone of the State. These slogans, seen from this perspective, are part of a broader political guideline in which the welfare state gives way to the gradual establishment of a welfare society (SHIROMA; EVANGELISTA, 2014, p. 9, author's highlights, our translation).

The teacher, as responsible for transmitting new values to students, is at the center of debates and reforms. The term professionalization, initially seen as innovative and widely disseminated as responsible for supposedly improving educational quality (SHIROMA, 2003), evokes, in fact, notions of (de)qualification, competence, improvement, whose objective has been to hold it responsible for learning outcomes.

Eneida Shiroma and Olinda Evangelista (2004, p. 531, our translation), point out that in the main international documents, there is an outline of

an ideal type of teacher - as if it was a world class - with specialized knowledge and organizational skills; ability and willingness to alternate school and non-school functions; conditions to help students find, organize and manage knowledge; means of enabling the student to enter the information society, among other qualities.

There is a growing attempt to produce consensus on the need to guarantee students a quality education and, for that, to have equally qualified teachers, remitting them to change the way they work in the classroom. This can be identified in the documents analyzed, as is the case with the one produced from Incheon (2015).

In addition, to ensure quality education and conditions for effective educational outcomes, governments should strengthen educational systems by establishing and improving appropriate and effective accountability and governance mechanisms (UNESCO, 2015, p. 10, our translation).

In order for such modifications to occur, there is a need for important changes in the view on pedagogical work, on the role of the teacher in the transmission of scientific knowledge, in the perspective of a teaching career. The professionalization slogan values pragmatic actions, considering unnecessary fundamental knowledge for the teacher to exercise his profession. It is, therefore, fully aligned with the managerial discourse of efficiency and effectiveness, widely disseminated in the reforms that took place in several countries since the 1990s. This education professional, now “qualified”, must be homogenized in a kind of ideal type, corresponding a world class.

It is through the dissemination of an “ideal type of teacher” that the discourse of accountability and professionalization accompanies the proposal for education on the international agenda when it comes to teachers. As in several processes of capitalist reforms, the slogans help to implant new dynamics - in favor of the group in power - to defend specific interests of capital but based on common languages. As we will see in the next topic of this article, building an efficient teacher will become one of the main strategies of world education meetings and, therefore, of its goals for education worldwide throughout the 1990s and 2000s.

Teacher autonomy and accountability: the constructions of the efficient teacher

In the context of the Reforms that the Brazilian State has experienced since the 1990s, new restructurings reach the organization of teaching work (OLIVEIRA, 2008). Amid the managerial transformations of the public sector, the world was experiencing the globalization of capital and, as we have already pointed out, the construction of a globalized society

(ALVES; ANTUNES, 2004). As they become fundamental elements in contemporary educational policies, the strategies to involve the teacher in the implementation of actions are diverse (accountability for results, managerial management, institution of professional careers based on merit etc.). Of this diversity, consensus building is evidenced (FAUST, 2015).

In this perspective, the discourse has been built around the inevitability of changes, as if they were necessary for the establishment of more “modern” practices in order to improve an education that would be outdated. The teacher is invited to adopt practices considered “modern”, managerial and that ends up leading him to overload, performing tasks below those he should fulfill, often losing the understanding of school educational purposes and his role as an educator (LIBÂNEO, 2012). New demands come to Education, guided by international ideals, built by agendas of the private sector and MOs, with a focus on "equity" and "quality", and under the discourse of "education for all" (OLIVEIRA, 2004). In this scenario, the teacher is responsible for acting in an Education whose implicit function would be to educate for employability. “There is, then, a double focus on the educational reforms that are implanted in this period in Latin America: education directed to formation for work and education oriented to the management or discipline of poverty” (OLIVEIRA, 2004, p. 1131, our translation).

These managerial transformations of most States, mainly in Latin America since the 1990s, are important in the dissemination of a market discourse on efficiency, effectiveness and productivity, placing the teacher at the center of actions aimed at “improving the quality of education”.

In this new logic, so that the students' performance could be measured, the State adopts management based on the “contracting of results”, which would be the necessary instrument for the managerial improvement of the new educational demand. This contracting will work based on what Shiroma; Evangelista (2011) call it “binomial 'autonomy and accountability” (p. 133), in which “the service provider compromises to obtain certain results in exchange for some degree of flexibility in its management” (p. 133, our translation). The ways of governing Education will be based on goals to be achieved in the evaluated results.

According to Schneider and Rostirola (2015), this concept of a regulatory state, based on assumptions of quality control, will experience the contradiction between the minimum state and the centralizing state, since even seeking to modernize its assessment instruments to introduce market aspects to transform the educational system it does not give up a regulatory and controlling posture. Chirinéa (2017) states that external evaluations are responsible for maintaining the dualism between “the neoliberal and neoconservative currents” (p. 170, our translation).

Contreras (2002) points out that this educational transformation process restructures the teaching work, through rationalization, considering three concepts:

the separation between conception and execution in the productive process, where the worker becomes a mere executor of tasks not decided by him; b) disqualification, such as loss of knowledge and skills to plan, understand and act on production and c) loss of control over their own work, when subjected to capital control and decisions, losing their resilience (p. 35, our translation).

In Latin America, this State management process, as an evaluator and regulator, will bring as a premise of efficiency the relationship between educational quality and ever lower expenses, “maximum efficiency is expected with minimum costs, in order to ensure and maintain quality and competitiveness” (CHIRINEA, 2017, p. 171, our translation).

Some authors claim that these characteristics that the State adopts in its management are close to the accountability policies. For Brooke; Wedge (2011):

[...] the word accountability expresses two concepts, one related to accountability and the other to the idea of accountability. When applied specifically to the school, the notion of accountability means the legitimate demand for a quality public service in exchange for maintaining the school with public resources from taxes paid by the population. The second meaning of the word is inseparable and a consequence of the other, but it expresses the idea that the public has the right to demand that the school assume its direct responsibility for the results of its friends. Accountability, therefore, means a demand for good results and the demand that each of the actors involved assume their responsibility in producing their results (p. 21, author’s highlights, our translation).

For Chirinéa (2017), “the term accountability came to be designated to express educational responsibility, reinforcing the managerialism of teaching systems and schools before the term” (p. 173, our translation).

With this demand, there is an ambiguity between “professionalization and proletarianization” (OLIVEIRA, 2004, p. 1133). The author states that professionalism should bring autonomy of production, self-regulation, but that in shock to this movement of professionalization, the system attributed to the teaching worker the proletarianization of work, marked by the “loss of control of the worker (teacher) over his work process” (p. 1133, our translation). Professionalization has been one of the main strategies adopted for the teacher to assume responsibilities, without clearly perceiving the implications of this for his autonomy. In addition, teaching work undergoes numerous flexibilities in its working condition.

As if it were a consensus among teachers, “in these terms, professionalizing teaching would be of universal interest, apparently meeting the demand of various social segments. Thus, the professionalization movement quickly gained sympathizers” (SHIROMA; EVANGELISTA, 2011, p. 129, our translation).

Regarding the effects of the perspective of teacher professionalization, the authors continue to affirm that

On the part of teachers, the call for professionalization is a way to obtain good working conditions, formation, wage improvement, social recognition, while on the part of employers it is a resource for managing conflicts, forging consensus, establishing meritocracy, different salaries, conditions for the management of the immense contingent of teachers (SHIROMA; EVANGELISTA, 2011, p. 142-143, our translation).

In this context, the teacher is a priority in the post-2015 agenda; changes in career make action more incisive and decisive.

Teachers play an essential role in promoting the quality of education both at school and in more flexible community-based programs and are advocates and promoters of change. No education reform will have a chance of success without the active participation of teachers and their sense of association. Teachers at all levels of the education system must be respected and sufficiently remunerated; have access to formation and the promotion and continuous support of his professional career, including distance education; and participate at the local and national level in decisions that affect his professional life and learning environment. They must also accept their professional responsibilities and be accountable to students and the general community (UNESCO, 2000, p. 21, our translation).

Teachers are left with the responsibility to improve educational quality, through “transformative and proactive initiatives” practices, like what Antunes (2009) has already mentioned about workers in general: “The current world of work has refused workers who are heirs of 'fordist culture', highly specialized, which are replaced by “multipurpose and multifunctional” workers from the toyotist era” (p. 236, our translation).

The accusations made by the MOs record that the teacher misses the opportunity to become a competent and technical professional. The problem would be only technical resources, and not a set of problems that, to some extent, involve the dimension of know-how, which must be extended to the working conditions to which teachers are subjected.

This efficient, effective and “professional” teacher should adhere to international requirements for education, being one of the main ones, meeting the basic needs of lifelong learning.

Teaching policies and regulations need to be applied to ensure that all teachers and educators are adequately empowered, hired and remunerated, well trained, professionally qualified, motivated, equitably and efficiently distributed throughout the educational system and supported by well-funded and efficiently governed (UNESCO, 2015, p. 11, our translation).

This teacher, therefore, should submit to the instruments available to measure the extent to which learning is actually being guaranteed to students, with external assessments being the most important agenda.

The association between external evaluation and quality of education does not consider the work conditions of the teacher, nor the socioeconomic profile in which he works. In addition, the results of the evaluations cause discomfort to teachers, as they face negative numbers and end up adding them as their responsibility, causing stress, demotivation and other disastrous consequences (FAUST, 2015).

Intentionality occurs through the pedagogical relationship. With that, Chuieire (2008, p. 62, our translation) points out, “[...] we believe that the implementation of educational policies, combined with a pedagogical performance that is attentive to conflicts, contradictions, cracks, fragments, voices that constitute the school panorama, can give new meanings to the praxis of evaluation”.

The above quote shows how the working conditions and the levels of competitiveness faced by the teacher generate impacts, not only in his pedagogical action, but also in his own subjectivity.

Still on the propositions of the post-2015 agenda for the teacher, we identified how the problems attributed to him are limited to a very restricted view of pedagogical work, linked to the idea of professionalization based on performance.

High-performance educational systems also provide great recognition and prestige to excellent teachers. They have systems to assess the potential and performance of each teacher and grant the best teachers a special status as a master teacher or leaders in certain areas of the curriculum, such as mathematics (UNESCO, 2000, p. 42, our translation).

To foster more accountability, the State adopts award measures, a kind of compensation for good results, rankings among schools that stand out and others that do not, generating competitiveness among teachers, students and schools, “mainly by inducing, among other things, homogenization (of curricula, organization of schools and educational projects), competition (between and within schools) and selectivity (of the most apt and best prepared)” (SCHNEIDER; ROSTIROLA, 2015, p. 497, our translation). The teaching activity

then becomes rationalized, standardized and measured by its pragmatic and productive capacity.

The quality of education is linked to teaching quality, which, in turn, refers to the students' learning capacity, measured through external evaluations. In the Incheon document, this equation is translated into a goal 4.c that points to the goal of

By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher formation developing countries, especially the least developed countries and small island developing states (UNESCO, 2015, p. 24, our translation).

The document goes on to point out that teachers would be instrumental in achieving the agenda's goals by 2030.

Teachers are the key to achieving the full Education 2030 agenda, so this goal is crucial. It requires urgent attention, with a more immediate deadline, because the quality gap in education is exacerbated by the lack and uneven distribution of professionally qualified teachers, especially in disadvantaged areas. As teachers are a fundamental condition for ensuring quality education, teachers and educators should be empowered, adequately hired and remunerated, motivated, professionally qualified, in addition to having the support of well-funded, efficient and effectively governed systems. (UNESCO, 2015, p. 25, our translation).

The discourse of making teachers responsible for the results is clear, but also that it is a consensual construction, using widely accepted terms, true slogans, as we have already discussed in this text. Terms such as empowerment, adequate remuneration eliminate the idea of changes in the teaching career, for example.

Final considerations

The present article showed that the construction of the education agenda in the last three decades has related quality of education, quality of teacher and learning. To this end, it highlights a very sophisticated discourse on the need to modernize teacher formation, with more practical themes, capable of meeting the most immediate needs of society.

What the article demonstrates, with this view, is the attempt to grant the teacher an adequate formation to the hegemonic needs, precisely because the interest is to maintain hegemony in the hands of the dominant class. The proposals contained in the analyzed documents, move linked to economic development, since the objectives already described aim at the formation of subjects for the job market.

Finally, we highlight that the construction of the education agenda worldwide is under construction, is expected to reach a new evaluative term in 2030 and the changes resulting from these agreements are present and we have a deep need to understand them in all their complexity.

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