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EDUCATIONAL POLICIES IN THE CONTEXT OF PRACTICE AND THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION: CONCEPTS OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS

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Abstract: This work seeks to capture the vision of school leaders about the role of educational policies in guaranteeing the right to education. It indicates the conceptions built by school directors in their professional performance in the challenge of bringing security to school units. The study also contemplates the mediation carried out by managers in the implementation of policies in everyday school life. For that, interviews were carried out with 12 school principals from municipal and state public schools in the North region of Ceará. The results show that the interviewees' discourse focuses on the pedagogical dimension. According to the directors, a good policy is one that focuses on student learning, involves the community and prioritizes teacher training. They emphasize, however, that the school reality does not always present favorable conditions for this accomplishment.

Keywords: Educational policies, Right to education; School principals.

INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to situate the school leader in the context of the changes that have taken place in the process of promoting education as a subjective public right, which unfold in the day-to-day at school.

By emphasizing education as a right for all, the Magna Carta reaffirms the principle of equality, *without distinction of any kind* (as prescribed in article 5), making it clear to all those involved in education the inclusive perspective that must prevail, in way to reach people in the most adverse conditions of schooling.

Despite this *universal understanding* of education, the guarantees of law do not operate without conflicts in the field of practice. There are operational challenges signaled by significant indices of age-grade distortion, high numbers of students per classroom,

in addition to dropout and repetition rates (especially in the final grades of elementary and high school).

The discussions arising from the unfolding of article 205 of the Federal Constitution produce several effects whose manifestations are intertwined in the school routine, demanding a management capable of dealing with the consequences in the financial, administrative and pedagogical dimensions of the school (CURY, 2006).

This article presents elements referring to the principal's role in the mediation process of educational policies that reach the school, discussing his conceptions about what is a good educational policy.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH SUBJECTS

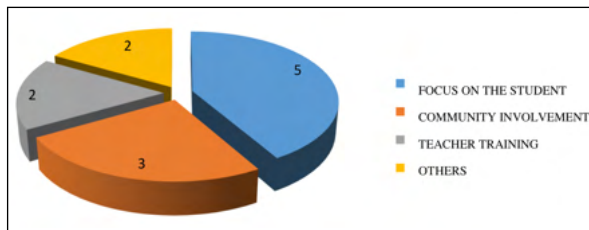
The qualitative methodology involved field research with semi-structured interviews with twelve school principals (state and municipal) of high and low IDEB, in three municipalities in the State of Ceará.

Thus, the municipalities of Ceará chosen for this study were: *Massapê* (medium HDI), *Sobral* (high HDI) and *Viçosa do Ceará* (low HDI). In each municipality, four schools were chosen: two state and two municipal. As a criterion for their choices, the IDEB was used. In order to cover different realities also within the municipalities, the sample should involve schools with high IDEB and low IDEB.

CONCEPTIONS ABOUT EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

In this section, the directors' answers to the question: "What do you consider a good educational policy?" are presented. The conceptions described by the directors can signal how the policies are received by the school, as well as the clues to understand the principle that governs the convergences and

divergences with the policies defined at the macro level.



Graph 1 - Definition of the directors of a good educational policy.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Most of the directors defined a *good educational policy* as one that aims, in some way, to give priority to the students. In this group of answers, references to some aspect of the student's learning were gathered.

It is explicit that the "good results" must involve aspects that go beyond the student performance indices – including, in part, achieved by the school of the principal in question. It is inferred from the speeches of the directors that more than "government policies", educational policies need to be considered "State policies", in the sense that, in addition to being continuous, they are policies capable of covering the aspirations of the various instances of society, and essentially associated with the construction of citizenship (GOMES, 2011, p.03).

In the context of the production of speeches at school, it is necessary, in addition to continuity, the participation of the community in the production of these policies. This discussion permeates the understanding of how these same policies are defined.

The directors deal with quite different realities: municipal and state schools; with high yield results, with low results; in municipalities with different HDI. Despite these differences, they point to student learning as a translation of "good educational policy". They also emphasize that these

mentioned results guarantee the credibility of the community, reflected in the high enrollment of students.

For the reliability of the community in the pedagogical action of the school, it must reflect the good educational policy by being "elaborated and outlined with everyone who works in the institution through effective communication, interaction, mediation, reflection on practice, collective work" and mutual respect for particularities" (SILVA, 2020, p. 3423)

If in the context of discourse production, at a macro level, considerations of the law are essential, as well as the contributions of great thinkers, on the school floor these reflections are reborn with the nuances of the territories in which they originate, but carry at the core the same inscription of struggle for equality of conditions.

Education needs to consider differences, of the most diverse natures. The interviewed directors understand and imprint in their daily experience the struggle that it represents to take these elements into account. In this way, "good educational policies" are allied to school management in order to guarantee equal opportunities, in a context of differences.

Among the directors' definitions of a good educational policy, the speeches referring to *community involvement stand out*. The principals highlight the need for policies that guarantee the participation of families in the education of students. One element that makes this approximation difficult is the reality of social vulnerability that characterizes the communities of the schools in this study.

The directors' speeches denounce the violent reality they are forced to face. There are statements that begin by dealing with events for the community as a management strategy, but end up describing a strategy for the survival of the school and for the community to build a new meaning for the school itself.

Strategies to face this reality stem much more from the creative actions of the school team in order to generate dialogue with community groups than from the interference of any type of policy. Considering that the ultimate aim of educational policies is the promotion of citizenship, mediation of educational policies can only take place in contexts in which basic rights and respect for human integrity are guaranteed.

The testimonies indicate that, in order to become effective, public policies must consider the reality of social vulnerability of schools as a requirement for the realization of rights.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article sought to place the school leader in the context of the changes that have taken place in the process of promoting education as a subjective public right, which are developed on a daily basis at school.

The concrete conditions of the investigated spaces clearly influence the understanding of educational policies presented by school leaders. In these spaces and under the influence of this understanding, the territorialization of the subjects' actions takes place, delimiting new norms and forms.

In the daily exercise of promoting the right to education, through the mediation of educational policies, directors decisively resort to their ability to symbolize and represent meanings – a capacity acquired in their path of identity construction that involves individual and collective elements. An example lies in the fact that the strategies to face violence - which characterizes the condition of social vulnerability of the schools in the sample - start much more from the creative actions of the principal in order to generate dialogue with groups in the community than from the interference of any kind of policy.

In a context in which the principal is the mediator of the educational policies that reach the school, his identity construction is related not only to the mechanisms used to “reinterpret” these policies, but also to the influence exerted on the people who participate in this process within the scope of the school. school management.

It is noticed, however, that there are difficulties on the part of school directors in understanding the definition of educational policies, which is configured as a challenge to be faced in the training of managers. The discourses are converging in the sense that the focus should be on student learning, even though resolutions are needed in relation to various factors of direct or indirect influence (such as the participation of families, violence, bonuses, etc.) .

Just as the *right to education* needs to be “*inscribed in people's hearts*”, the results of this study indicate that educational policies also need to be. The school principal's commitment to promoting the mediation of these policies contributes greatly in this regard.

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