

## 'Soft power', educational governance and political consensus in Brazil<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT.**- The article analyses the 'soft power' that the Federal government of Brazil has gained by designing and implementing a very ambitious Plan for the Development of Education. It draws on fieldwork carried out in the country in 2009 and 2010 in order to conduct a discourse analysis of the strategy deployed by the key political agents. The results show to what extent the Federal government has used some catchwords to underpin a general consensus. It has also convinced the international organisations and civil society organisations that the 'programme ontology' of the programme (e.g. hypotheses on the beneficial impacts of multi-dimensional intervention) is reliable enough to wait for a decade until having a whole evaluation. However, since these agents eventually recall varied kinds of political mobilisation, some contradictions and tensions are already apparent. In general, the analysis unveils a complex interplay of national and supra-national politics of education.

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Brazil provides a salient case study to researchers interested in education, the 'soft power' derived from ideology and political influence and global governance (Nye, 2008). Actually, it is not only an emergent economy but also a new player in most fields of regional Latin American and global politics. Moreover, the current implementation of the global Education for All Programme, the regional Ibero American Educational Goals, and the national Plan for the Development of Education in all the states, municipalities and schools of the Federation also posits intriguing questions about the connections between 'soft power' and education.

In the article an initial description of the case study introduces an analysis of the power-resources that political actors used to produce, promote and implement the Plan for the Development of Education. Then, the discourses of governments, international organisations, social movements, and a new business-friendly coalition are analysed. The following discussion identifies significant coincidence but also some contradictions in the components of these discourses. Thus, the current political equilibrium is explored by means of these rhetorical markers of the players' position .

### **A brief history of recent education policy in Brazil**

Nowadays, all Brazilian schools are formally committed to the Education for All goals, the Ibero American Educational Goals, the Federal Plan for the Development of Education, and its sub-national implications for the states, municipalities and the very schools. All these initiatives are the outcome of a dense process of educational planning that started with the transition from authoritarian to democratic rule in the eighties.

In 1988 the Brazilian people voted for a Constitution that largely expanded social rights, with universal basic education being the legal responsibility of the Federal Union, the states and the municipalities. In 1996, the Administration chaired by Fernando Henrique Cardoso passed a framework act on the Bases and Guidelines of Education dealing with all the programmes included in the education system. By that time, it also implemented a Fund for the Development of Fundamental Education (FUNDEF) that was delivered to local educational authorities if they actively increased the number of school places. Later on, in 2001 the same Administration launched the first ten-year National Educational Plan as required by the constitution. However, the institutional deployment of those rights was significantly conflictive insofar as the main teachers' union (CNTE) reacted against the allegedly restrictive governmental priorities, which were mostly

focused on enrolment in primary education. This social movement drew on an international understanding of a wide-ranging basic education to blame the contemporary Federal government for its exclusive focus on increasing primary enrolment by means of FUNDEF targeted transfers for municipalities.

In 1995, the Partnership for Educational Revitalization in the Americas (PREAL) was established by the Inter-American Dialogue in Washington, DC and the Corporation for Development Research (CINDE) in Santiago de Chile. Funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the World Bank and other donors, it monitors educational progress, looks for best practices, promotes alliances between the corporate and the educational sectors, and stages working groups on standards and evaluation, the development of the teaching profession, and school effectiveness (PREAL- Consejo Consultivo, 2005).

Since 2003, the two administrations chaired by Mr. Inácio Lula da Silva dramatically transformed educational planning in the country. On the one hand, in 2007 the Federal government launched a comprehensive Plan for the Development of Education (PDE) in order to expand child education, vocational training, adult education and higher education, and increase academic performance in primary and lower-secondary years (Ministry of Education BR, 2006a, 2008). The new and public Index of the Development of Basic Education (IDEB) was estimated in order to measure the advancement of all the schools, municipalities and states in terms of enrolment and performance. In fact, PDE goals and IDEB scores were basically a rhetorical reference for the richer states in the Centre and South regions, but became inescapable conditions for Federal funding in the poorer regions and states, mostly located in the North East and the North. On the other hand, the Federation reformed the curriculum in several ways, including a wider concern with ethnic minorities, human rights and the African- Brazilian culture. Thus, the curriculum recognised the groups who normally define themselves as 'blacks' in the official census, which amount to half of the population and live in worse social conditions than the 'white' half. Their recognition also entailed important challenges for the national historical memory and the history curriculum.

In 2008, an interim report monitoring EFA in the country stirred up controversy on the possibility to really achieve the goals by 2015. Since these require universal primary enrolment, gender parity, and significant progress in completion of primary schooling, such a pessimistic account cast doubt on the very basis of Brazilian education. Mostly, it attributed the main obstacles to the persistence of poverty in urban slums and remote rural areas (UNESCO, 2008). However, this official concern

was somewhat alleviated by the partial extension of the deadline until 2021 according to the Ibero American Educational Goals (OEI, 2008, 2010), because this other, regional plan was even more ambitious than the global EFA but foresaw a longer period for accomplishment. The Ibero American Organisation (OEI) coordinates educational, scientific and cultural activities in Portugal, Spain and their former colonies. For the last years it opened a bureau in Brasilia in 2004, signed an agreement for cooperation with UNESCO in 2007, and released and discussed the white paper of the Ibero American Educational Goals in 2008, which was finally approved at an inter-governmental summit in 2010. The final plan expects to broaden participation, fight discrimination, increase enrolment in infant, primary, secondary and higher education, improve academic quality, implement an encompassing vocational and technical education as well as a whole system of lifelong learning, strengthen the teaching profession, increase and rationalise investment, and create an Ibero American space of knowledge. According to our interviews, in 2009 Federal, UNESCO and OEI officials were very optimistic about this partnership.

Between 2008 and 2010 the government convened the National Conference for Education (CONAE) in order to define the new National Educational Plan (2011-2021), which actually responds to the Constitutional requirement to implement ten-year plans in this area. On the one hand, a number of unions and social movements associated to the World Social Forum -mostly the national teachers union (CNTE) and the Brazilian branch of the Global Campaign for Education (CNDE)— stood for improvement in teachers' wages and careers and claimed for a bigger share of the public budget to be spent in education. They attended the National Conference for Education (CONAE) and afterwards explicitly supported its conclusions. On the other hand, some civil society organisations signed them but kept a distance. In fact, the association of municipal leaders of education (UNDIME) prioritised performance-based management rather than the emphasis on teacher labour conditions stated in those conclusions. In a similar vein, an array of corporations backed the All for Education Campaign (TPE), which was also supported by PREAL. The TPE campaign actively watched progress in its own indicators (on enrolment, educational expenditure, and effective implementation of the law), and emphasised the contribution of skills to economic growth rather than the value of the right to education per se.

After President Ms. Dilma Rousseff -presented by the Workers' Party in the same way as Mr. Lula da Silva— was elected in 2010 the dialogue between the two sides continued despite rampant conflict. For instance, in September 2011, teachers were launching an intensive strike to improve their wages in some states whose governors refused to pay for the established minimum for the whole country, but they decided to participate in the conference “Education, an Urgent Agenda”, convened by All

for Education (TPE), where they released an open letter reminding of the conclusions of CONAE.

Far from simplistic accounts, national commentators of educational planning in the country notice underlying tensions between technical and humanistic rationality (Ferreira, 2009), compensatory volunteer work and democratic participation (Rezende, 2008), worldviews inspired on performance-based management and worldviews inspired on school autonomy (Oliveira, Fonseca, Toschi, 2005), support from civil society and support from corporations (Saviani, 2007) as well as competitive and cooperative federalism (Cury, 2008). Similarly, other authors contrast equity-driven and competitiveness-driven elements of these complex and ambitious initiatives (Beltrán, 2010). The broad scope and the demanding benchmarks of these overlapping educational plans really posit challenging questions to research on education, globalisation, international social norms and the setting of the educational agenda at different levels of decision-making.

<TABLE 1>

### **International social norms and pluriscalar politics of education**

Interestingly, the former portrait illustrates how a bundle of international norms regulate schooling (Ramírez and Boli, 1987), human rights education and post-national citizenship (Ramírez, 2006; Puntigliano, 2007; Suarez, Ramirez, Koo, 2009) so that governments cannot feel comfortable if they are unable to convince international organisations that their country meets a number of conditions. In Brazil, the state addresses some traditional obstacles to comply with universal primary enrolment, and it dares to challenge the traditional ethnic order. This policy enacts “cultural disjunctures” in varied ethnoscares and ideoscares (Appadurai, 1996), such as worldwide paradigms of development policy and controversies on cultural rights, American and African contentions about hierarchies between whites and blacks, and the Brazilian, long-standing debate on how to teach slave trade and the plantation economy.

Moreover, the government engages in the global politics of education, and responds to the global civil society (Mundy, 1999, 2006, 2007), by means of the aforementioned comprehensive reforms and encompassing educational plans. In fact, the Brazilian Federal government intentionally operates through different scales of policy-making (Dale, 2005; Robertson, 2009), by looking at the global Education for All programme for inspiration, by contributing to define a new Ibero American educational space, and by setting conditions for both sub-national states and municipalities. Crucial to this growing complexity is the 'denationalisation' of education policy by strengthening the

executive power with a new sort of norms that differentiate specialised subsets of goals and benchmarks underpinned by international references. The Federation acquires new 'political capabilities' (Sassen, 2006: 7-11) by transporting those grand initiatives from the worldwide EFA and the Ibero American Educational Goals to national and subnational politics. Notably, the central government can influence, manage and monitor the performance of states, municipalities and schools drawing on the new targets, benchmarks and deadlines; besides, these instruments also produce new kinds of statistical knowledge about the current state of education in the country.

Generally speaking, 'political capabilities' help political actors to impinge on alien social practices by means of 'hard' economic, military, and 'soft' political or ideological resources (Nye, 2008). Economic resources consist of capital and income, military resources rely on the means of coercion, political resources depend on the state central command in a given territory, and ideological resources are cognitive skills and properties of symbolic constructions (Mann, 1986: 22-27). In the arena of contemporary education policy, the complex scales of global, regional, national and sub-national governance broaden the scope of political command by allowing the players to decide at what level(s) they can pursue their interests in a more efficient way (Gentili and Frigotto, 2000; Poupeau, 2003; Robertson *et al.* 2007). These actors may also avail of the ideological power conveyed through expert knowledge on reforms and educational plans (Ozga *et al.*, 2006; Ozga, 2009). Mostly, this depends on the 'programme ontology' embedded in the design of each plan, that is, the set of causal beliefs on the expected impacts that is often shared by decision-makers, managers, the technical staff and some civil society organisations (Pawson, 2006).

When several social agents face one another in order to pursue their interests, sometimes they use these resources to engage in open conflict, often at some cost for everybody. Discourse analysis is particularly helpful to observe conflict by unveiling the markers of singular discourses as expressed in their particular 'catchwords' (Fairclough, 2003). But a social agent can also impose its objectives at lighter conflict costs if it can afford the maintenance and the mobilisation cost of its power-resources. Maintenance depends on keeping these assets in stand-by for a long period: for instance, an initiative underpinned by an accepted 'programme ontology' (Pawson, 2006) does not entail significant maintenance costs. In discursive terms, the 'programme ontology' is a script containing some causal assumptions normally expressed by useful rhetorical instruments of influence. Apparent statements of fact perform this function very efficiently by disguising recommendations with allegedly objective observations of reality (Fairclough, 2003). Relative advantage in terms of mobilisation arises if a party manages to appeal the majority of the audience, or at least, the key elites in a social domain (Korpi, 2001; Lukes, 2005; Schmidt, 2008). Mobilisation depends on the

capability to align the 'framing' of collective action with identities (Belford and Snow, 2000), sometimes through the use of an exhortative style of discourse (Fairclough, 2003). So far, globalisation studies have already identified the low maintenance costs of some prevailing policies such as the project-based organisation of labour (Boltanski, 2005) or the gendered definition of some political issues (Jessop, 2007). Similarly, ideological views of active welfare have availed of apparent factual statements that governments can repeat now and again, and exhortative appeals that mobilise support for this anti-poverty strategy as a reaction to neoliberal policies (Fairclough, 2000).

### **The discourse of the Federal government, the states and the participative conference (CONAE)**

This section draws on three kinds of public documents, namely those presenting the rationale for Federal educational plans, those reflecting how the departments of education in some states receive the message, and the proceedings of the national conference on education (CONAE). They have been selected on the grounds of contextual information collected by means of interviews in Brasilia and Belo Horizonte in 2009 and 2010. Besides the Federal Ministry, the following quotations come from the department- of- education websites of several states which for most years during the 2000-2010 decade were either governed by the Presidents' Workers Party (Bahia and Pará) or by opposition parties (Mato Grosso, Minas Gerais and São Paulo).

The Federal discourse is basically featured by the 'catchwords' that many other actors also utilise (Fairclough, 2003). Thus, its terminology is common to all the states except for São Paulo, which has been the basis of the main opponents to incumbent presidents in the 2003, 2007 and 2010 elections. For instance, the documents produced by the departments of education in Bahia (SEDUC-BA, 2010), Mato Grosso (SEDUC-MT, 2009) and Pará (SEDUC-PA, 2010) as well as in the national convention (CONAE, 2010) clearly retrieve the Federal Ministry bid to foster and broaden educational development. While the Federal Ministry is committed to educating students so that they perform better in cognitive tests and become more autonomous, most states declare their adherence to EFA- inspired notions of educational quality and express their goals with a similar wording that stresses integral education.

The notion of education that inspires the Plan for the Development of Education (PDE) (...) aims at *building autonomy*, that is, educating individuals who can take critical and creative worldviews (Ministry of Education BR, 2008: p. 5)<sup>2</sup>.

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2 [My translation, see the original text in Portuguese] "A concepção de educação que inspira o Plano de

Since the 1920s and 1930s *integral education*, a wide-ranging view of school education including social and cultural tasks, was assumed by a number of political projects (SEDUC-MG, 2009: 3)<sup>3</sup>.

The national conference (CONAE) uses the same 'catchwords' when it synthesizes these views with the general points made by the international agencies and the civil society, since the teachers' union (CNTE), the national campaign for education (CNDE), the association of local educational authorities (UNDIME) and the All for Education (TPE) movement participated in the meetings, debates and final statements. In general, the same terms denoting a subject who learns and becomes critical, emancipated and autonomous are a common ground.

122- The vindication of a public education, therefore, requires building a democratic and inclusive kind of institutions with a social quality which guarantee *access to both the knowledge and cultural inheritance* produced by [the Brazilian] society. [Their pedagogy] should build *critical and emancipatory knowledges* on the grounds of concrete contexts (CONAE, 2010: 52)<sup>4</sup>.

The bulk of these official voices draw on the same 'programme ontology'. Most of them expect that wide-ranging educational plans will foster academic achievement and equity, because the simultaneous reforms in policy design, political participation, school organisation and pedagogic innovation will improve performance and narrow the existing gaps between classes, genders and ethnic groups. Notably, these 'apparent' judgements of fact imply guidelines for action, thus recommending action on the grounds of an empirical background that is nevertheless not quoted (Fairclough, 2003).

For example, the institutional evaluation of schools is imposed because it allegedly produces cross-sectoral linkages, helps institutions to improve, and captures internal and external factors; however, the alleged evidence underscoring these theses is never presented.

The *evaluation* of the educational network is eventually a sort of self-evaluation.- (...) Institutional evaluation makes reference to the process whereby **schools analyse and reflect on their own practice so that they engage with both internal initiatives and interventions in other areas of the (educational) system in order to promote a high- quality Basic School for the whole population** (...) Single schools evaluate themselves so that they keep improving their own work; then, school agents build monitoring systems of school work that take diverse issues into account, mostly goals and outcomes, and the **internal and external factors** that condition their decisions and actions (Ministry of Education BR, 2006b: Vol I, p. 161)<sup>5</sup>.

Desenvolvimento da Educação (PDE) (...) tem como objetivo a *construção da autonomia*, isto é, a formação de indivíduos capazes de assumir uma postura crítica e criativa frente ao mundo”.

3 [My translation, see the original text in Portuguese] “Desde as décadas de 20 e 30 do século XX a *educação integral*, significando uma educação escolar ampliada em suas tarefas sociais e culturais, esteve presente nas propostas das diferentes correntes políticas”.

4 [My translation, see the original text in Portuguese] 122- A demanda social por educação pública implica, pois, produzir uma instituição educativa democrática e de qualidade social, devendo garantir o acesso ao conhecimento e ao patrimônio cultural historicamente produzido pela sociedade, por meio da construção de *conhecimentos críticos e emancipadores* a partir de contextos concretos”.

5 [My translation, see the original text in Portuguese] “A *avaliação* da rede de ensino a auto-avaliação.- (...) A avaliação insitucional refere-se ao processo de a escola **analisar e refletir sobre sua prática, com vistas às iniciativas internas da instituição bem como à atuação das outras instâncias do sistema**, na promoção de uma Escola Básica de



Similar rhetorics are visible in our sample of state governments with diverse ideological inspiration. Some of these authorities defend their educational reforms by taking for granted that full-time schools implement a new curriculum, or expecting that affirmative action on 'more education' immediately curbs over-age enrolment, triggers mobilisation and reduces underperformance.

Therefore, the *transition from part-time (4 hours) to full-time schools* not only consists of increasing teaching hours but also of creating a new type of curriculum. This curriculum must rely on the pedagogical organisation of schools, a flexible matrix of contents, and an interdisciplinary perspective on the pedagogic work of educators (SEDUC/MG, 2009: 10-11)<sup>6</sup>.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES: 1- Implementing of Programme 'More Education' at school; 2- *Reducing over-age enrolment* due to difficulties in teaching and learning; 3 – *Mobilising the school community* for a quality education that prioritises *integral education* through broader educational times, spaces and opportunities; 4- Mobilising School Councils for a democratic and participative management; 5- *Reducing underperformance and early school leaving* (SEDUC/PARA, 2010: 2)<sup>7</sup>.

The national convention (CONAE) also grounds its recommendation of tapping cross-sectoral synergies on alleged facts concerning synergies between education and other domains of social life (CONAE, 2010: 17, 100).

79- Any debate of school quality requires grasping *wider social relations* and societal issues on the concentration of income, social inequality and the right to education inter alia (...) Therefore, it is crucial to state that education is embedded in varied dimensions and spaces of social life which education itself also contributes to make. Then, education is crossed by the pedagogic, economic, social, cultural and political constraints and possibilities of a given society (CONAE, 2010: 40)<sup>8</sup>.

Finally, the voices of the Federal and state governments and the national convention (CONAE) coincide to set an analogous national 'frame' for collective action in education, which retrieves the image of a nation mobilised for its schools.

PDE offers a concept of education in line with the constitutional objectives of the Federal Republic of Brazil.

qualidade para toda a população (...) A auto-avaliação das unidades escolares, como atividade que se volta ao *contínuo aperfeiçoamento do trabalho escolar*, se caracteriza pela construção, pelos agentes escolares, de uma sistemática de acompanhamento do trabalho escolar, contemplando objetivos e resultados do processo de trabalho, *considerando fatores internos e externos* condicionantes de suas decisões e ações".

6 [My translation, see the original text in Portuguese] "Portanto, a *ampliação do tempo pedagógico da escola*, nesta ótica, deve significar muito mais que a extensão do modelo que todos conhecem. Deve implicar em *uma nova construção curricular*, com base na integração como princípio de organização pedagógica da escola, na flexibilidade como dinâmica da produção da matriz curricular e da interdisciplinaridade, como concepção para o trabalho pedagógico dos educadores".

7 [My translation, see the original text in Portuguese] RESULTADOS ESPERADOS: 1 - Efetivação do Programa Mais Educação na Escola; 2 - *Redução na defasagem série/idade* em virtude de dificuldades ensino e de aprendizagem; 3 - *Mobilização da comunidade* escolar em prol de uma Educação de qualidade que priorize a *formação integral* por meio da ampliação de tempos, espaços e oportunidades educativas; 4 - Mobilização dos Conselhos Escolares na implantação da gestão democrática e participativa; 5 - *Redução da reprovação e evasão* escolar.

8 [My translation, see the original text in Portuguese] "79- Debater a qualidade remete à apreensão de um conjunto de variáveis que interfere no âmbito das *relações sociais mais amplas*, envolvendo questões macroestruturais como concentração de renda, desigualdade social, garantia do direito à educação, dentre outras (...) É fundamental, pois, ressaltar que a educação se articula a diferentes dimensões e espaços da vida social, sendo, ela própria, elemento constitutivo e constituinte das relações sociais mais amplas. A educação é, assim, perpassada pelos limites e possibilidades da dinâmica pedagógica, econômica, social, cultural e política de uma dada sociedade".

These requirements entail *building a national system out of diverse educational systems*, that is, the objective is multiplicity instead of uniformity (Ministry of Education BR, 2008: 6)<sup>9</sup>.

Task 1 of the School Council: Actively participating in constructing a democratic management of schools. This entails creating spaces where *new social relations are established between the social sectors that compose the school*. Therefore, School Councils must address this challenge altogether with other school agents such as classroom councils, student unions, and parents associations. All of them must guarantee the involvement of everybody and the spirit of co-responsibility by not only elaborating but also implementing and evaluating the school *Political Pedagogic Project* (SEDUC/MT, 2009: 13)<sup>10</sup>.

9- Insofar as CONAE aims at a *social mobilisation in favour of education – a historic vindication of the organised civil society* —mostly of educational associations, the document-for-discussion asks the state and the Brazilian society to face great challenges: *constructing a National Education System*, guaranteeing political agreement that underpins public policies in education, and guiding all the policies involved in education according to the principles of universalisation and social quality of basic and higher education, as well as of democratising its management (CONAE, 2010: 11-14)<sup>11</sup>.

## The discourses of the other political players

This section compares the former position with the discourses of social movements (CNTE and CNDE), international agencies (UNESCO, OEI), the local authorities association (UNDIME) and the business-friendly movement (TPE, PREAL). It draws on a corpus of documents which proved to be relevant for the interviewees I met in Brasilia in 2009 and Paris in 2010.

To start with, all these political actors share a very similar discourse insofar as they do not depart from common 'catchwords' emphasising rights, integral and comprehensive education. Thus, rights become the main theme in interviews with the union officials and in some declarations of the national campaign for education (CNDE, 2010: 7). UNESCO and OEI agree with the Brazilian Federation encompassing and integrative approach to educational development; besides, they link it to multi-dimensional participative implementation of educational policy in an educating society, and to the principles and goals established by Education for All (EFA Global Monitoring Team, 2008: 128; OEI, 2010: 124). Nevertheless, even though they do not reject the general frame, UNDIME,

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<sup>9</sup> [My translation, see the original text in Portuguese] "O PDE oferece uma concepção de educação alinhada aos objetivos constitucionalmente determinados à República Federativa do Brasil. Esse alinhamento exige a construção da *unidade dos sistemas educacionais como sistema nacional* – o que pressupõe multiplicidade e não uniformidade".

<sup>10</sup> [My translation, see the original text in Portuguese] "Tarefa 1 do Conselho. Participar ativamente da construção da gestão democrática na escola. A construção de uma gestão escolar na perspectiva democrática pressupõe a existência de espaços propícios para o estabelecimento de *novas relações sociais entre os diversos segmentos que compõem a escola*. Para tanto, é de fundamental importância que os CDCEs assumam o desafio de juntamente com outros organismos da escola como o conselho de classe, grêmio estudantil e associação de pais e mães garantir o envolvimento e o espírito da co-responsabilidade das pessoas com o *Projeto Político-Pedagógico* da escola, não somente no momento de elaboração, mas também nos momentos de execução e de avaliação do mesmo".

<sup>11</sup> [My translation, see the original text in Portuguese] 9- Na medida em que a CONAE visa à *mobilização social em prol da educação – demanda histórica da sociedade civil organizada*, especialmente das entidades representativas do setor educacional, o documento-referência inspira-se na necessidade de enfrentamento de (...) grandes desafios para o Estado e para a sociedade brasileira: promover a construção de um Sistema Nacional de Educação (...), garantir que os acordos e consensos produzidos na CONAE redundem em políticas públicas de educação (...), indicar, para o conjunto das políticas educacionais implementadas de forma articulada entre os sistemas de ensino, que seus fundamentos estão alicerçados na garantia da universalização e da qualidade social da educação básica e superior, bem como da democratização de sua gestão".

All for Education (TPE) and PREAL introduce a second, complementary qualification on competitiveness.

*Education is crucial for the social, economic, political and cultural formation of any society.* In the modern world, knowledge is a key factor for human development (...) The vision of the future society, often labelled a knowledge society, remarks that *the capability to transform information into knowledge is key for the wealth of nations* (UNDIME, 2008: 103)<sup>12</sup>.

All for Education is a movement coming from the civil society which wants to contribute to ensure *an effective right to basic education for all the children and the youth of Brazil* by 2022, when the country will celebrate two centuries of independence (TPE, 2010: 18)<sup>13</sup>.

Brazilian education recorded some important advancement in the last decades. However, this progress should not sideline an urgent need of improvement. *Since the economy is more and more globalised and dependent on individual knowledge to distribute wealth*, an uncompetitive labour force could become a very expensive asset for the country, both socially and economically (PREAL, 2009: 46)<sup>14</sup>.

The social movements reproduce the official view on the 'programme ontology' to the extent that they rely on cross-sector synergies between educational intervention and social policies. The national branch of the Global Campaign for Education (CNDE) has produced an index of the quality- cost of education that links quality to inclusive education, indigenous education, rural education, black (*quilombola*) education and vocational education and training in order to define appropriate costs which are aware of quality (CNDE, 2010: 50-1). The teacher union often blames the government for a too narrow approach that sidelines this diversity of students and the correlative diversity of educational disadvantages (CNTE, 2008: 2).

Repeatedly, UNESCO and OEI documents expect that education policies can avail of multiple connections between integrative, multicultural reform, welfare expansion and mixed networks of schools and the civil society. In their view, EFA goals also depend on non-educational circumstances like decent labour, public health or inequalities (EFA Global Monitoring Team, 2009: 79); as a matter of fact, UNESCO argues that sharp social divides hinder the achievement of universal primary education and literacy in Brazil (UNESCO, 2008: 25). At a given moment, they commissioned a multi-agency team led by UNICEF to produce a summary of academic accounts of academic performance by combining school- based and external factors (UNICEF, 2008: 14). As to

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12 [My translation, see the original text in Portuguese] “*A educação é fundamental na formação social, econômica, política e cultural de qualquer sociedade.* No mundo moderno, o conhecimento é um dos fatores básicos para o desenvolvimento humano. (p. 23) As visões sobre a sociedade do futuro, também denominada de sociedade do conhecimento (...) revelam que *a capacidade de transformar informações em conhecimento é a chave para a riqueza das nações* (...).”

13 [My translation, see the original text in Portuguese] “*Todos Pela Educação* é um movimento da sociedade civil que tem como missão contribuir para a *efetivação do direito de todas as crianças e jovens do Brasil* à Educação Básica de qualidade até 2022, ano do bicentenário da independência do País “.

14 [My translation, see the original text in Portuguese] “A educação brasileira registrou alguns avanços importantes nas últimas décadas: (...) O reconhecimento desses avanços, no entanto, não deve fazer sombra à urgente necessidade de melhorarmos a educação em muitos aspectos. *Com a economia cada vez mais globalizada e dependente do conhecimento individual para distribuir riqueza*, manter uma força de trabalho não competitiva pode custar muito caro ao país – socialmente e economicamente”.

OEI (2008: 97), it would rather understand education in the context of large relationships between economic and educational policies. Coherently, these three agencies highlight a complex web of relationships between education and other different fields.

Since UNDIME, All for Education (TPE) and PREAL only agree partially with these tenets, they aim at introducing a further qualification in the 'programme ontology'. In their view, policy-makers should not only rely on inputs like funding or better social conditions but should also stress school autonomy to foster effectiveness.

A recurrent challenge: it is necessary to deconstruct the *traditional political forms that combine centralisation, discontinuity, lack of human resources, and lack of facilities*. The exit will be through a kind of network management focused in students' learning (UNDIME, 2008: 119)<sup>15</sup>.

A good teacher, a good beginning: *The motto of this campaign is that people think on the importance of a good teacher for their lives* (TPE- Todos pela Educação, 2011)<sup>16</sup>.

The region did not achieve any progress in the amelioration of learning and the reduction of inequality in schools. Why? There are two central problems: first, *most governments still rely on inputs instead of targeting outputs*, and second, only a few have been able to reform the system so that schools are accountable for their achievement (PREAL, 2005: 6)<sup>17</sup>.

Finally, in contrast with the appeals of governments and the civil society to a national endeavour and the aspiration to create an Ibero American community of nations, All for Education (TPE) and PREAL 'frame' their proposal within a wider view of public- private partnerships .

First, the social movements vindicate a quality- cost index that triggers collective action for resources, and the teachers' union starts this battle with a direct attack to the alleged vested interests of All for Education (TPE), openly blaming them for attempting to modify the terms of the plan.

The Campaign expects to stimulate public debate *on the urgent definition of CAQi* (Pupil- Quality Initial Cost, in *Portuguese: Custo Aluno-Qualidade Inicial*) *by the National Congress*, which should become the basic criterion of educational funding. The book was produced by Editora Global with the support of ActionAid, Save the Children-UK and UNICEF (CNDE, 2010: 11)<sup>18</sup>.

However, *an extremely worrying fact is the collaboration of the Ministry with All for Education*, a lobby

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15 [My translation, see the original text in Portuguese] “Um desafio recorrente: *necessita-se desconstruir as formas políticas atrasadas* que combinam centralização, descontinuidade, carência de recursos humanos e carência de equipamentos. A saída começa pela efetivação de uma gestão em rede e focada na aprendizagem dos alunos”.

16 [My translation, see the original text in Portuguese] “Um bom professor, um bom começo. *A ideia desta campanha é que as pessoas pensem sobre a importância de um bom professor em suas vidas*”.

17 [My translation, see the original text in Spanish] “La región no ha logrado casi ningún progreso en el mejoramiento del aprendizaje y en la reducción de la desigualdad en sus escuelas. (...) ¿A qué se debe esto? Existen dos problemas centrales: *la mayoría de los gobiernos sigue haciendo énfasis en los insumos*, en lugar de orientarse a los productos (...), [y también] pocos han logrado introducir reformas sistémicas para responsabilizar a las escuelas ante la sociedad por el logro de los objetivos educativos”.

18 [My translation, see the original text in Portuguese] “Com essa proposta, a Campanha pretende estimular o debate público sobre a urgência de definição do CAQi (Custo Aluno-Qualidade Inicial) pelo Congresso Nacional, assumido como base da política nacional de financiamento educacional. (...) Com o apoio de ActionAid, Save the Children-Reino Unido e Unicef (Fundo das Nações Unidas para a Infância), o livro foi produzido em co-edição com a Editora Global”.

which is completely alien to its electoral base but has been powerful enough to influence official interests. The Teachers Union keeps complaining about alterations in the principles of the Plan, particularly the use of public resources to fund public schools and networks, which provides incentives for a market-centred view of education (CNTE, 2008: 3-4)<sup>19</sup>.

Second, it is relevant to notice that OEI wishes to link its ambitious educational goals with the promotion of an international community of Ibero American nations.

Such initiative should not only underpin education in the national political agendas but also strengthen the *cohesion of the Ibero American community* according to common objectives to build just and democratic societies (OEI, 2008: 16)<sup>20</sup>.

Third, although the association of local educational authorities shares the national endeavour proposed by the Federal government and social movements (UNDIME, 2008: 65), All for Education (TPE, 2010: 18) and PREAL openly state that civil society should consist of public- private partnerships. Besides a general trust on information technologies (PREAL, 2009: 46-7), they trust some unspecified evidence that private suppliers may stimulate educational progress, and expect their reports can highlight the areas for necessary change by focusing on the advancement of individual education systems (PREAL, 2005: 23).

Creative solutions will be necessary to fund education. The *private sector* can also perform a positive role in the improvement of education (PREAL, 2005: 23)<sup>21</sup>.

Reports show how to compare the performance of a single school, municipality or nation with similar organisations, the average in its context and its own historical track. By attributing 'academics grades' on the grounds of these performances, *families and the civil society can recognise good examples easily and quickly*. This kind of information is helpful to pressure for the necessary changes (PREAL, 2009: 6)<sup>22</sup>.

## Configuration of power relations

This analysis scans the views of political actors in interaction. The qualitative data presented in the

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19 [My translation, see the original text in Portuguese] “Contudo, *o fato mais preocupante sobre este aspecto advém da força da parceria do Ministério com a rede Todos pela Educação*, diga-se de passagem, alheia à plataforma eleitoral do governo, mas que tem se mostrado forte suficiente para conformá-la aos seus interesses (...) A CNTE, no entanto, não se exime em externar sua contrariedade e disposição em alterar os princípios contidos no Plano, que implicam em drenagem de recursos públicos a programas de instituições/redes de natureza privada; incentivo à concepção mercadológica de ensino (...) dentre outras questões”.

20 [My translation, see the original text in Spanish] “Semejante iniciativa ha de servir no sólo para reforzar la educación en las políticas de los países, sino también para *cohesionar a la comunidad iberoamericana* en torno a unos objetivos comunes y para construir sociedades justas y democráticas”.

21 [My translation, see the original text in Spanish in the footnotes] “Para financiar una educación de calidad para todos los niños se requerirán soluciones creativas. (...) El *sector privado* también puede desempeñar un rol positivo en el mejoramiento de la educación”.

22 [My translation, see the original text in Portuguese] “Os relatórios mostram, em um relance, como o rendimento de uma escola, município, estado ou nação se compara ao de organizações similares, às médias de seu contexto e ao seu próprio desempenho histórico. Ao atribuir notas a esses desempenhos utilizando um sistema similar ao que se usa nas escolas, os boletins permitem que as famílias e a sociedade civil possam *reconhecer rápida e facilmente os bons exemplos* e as áreas que ainda precisam melhorar. Com esse tipo de informação em mãos, é mais fácil fazer pressão pelas mudanças necessárias”.

former two sections reveals the points of agreement and contention, and simultaneously depicts an order of influence that denotes a configuration of power relations. Eventually, the Federal government of Brazil impinges on the discourses, and probably the actions, of all the other political players by drawing on some political and ideological instruments provided by the Plan for the Development of Education (PDE).

The configuration of power relations between all these actors shapes a 'denationalised' field of activity (Sassen, 2006). Not only the Federal Government has retrieved international messages such as EFA or Ibero American Goals in order to strengthen its own executive force, but it has also managed to attract national movements (CNTE), a transnational advocacy network (CNDE) and some international agencies to its own field. Conversely, the emerging coalition between the local authorities association (UNDIME), All for Education and the PREAL project for Latin American regionalism also articulates national and supra-national strategies, although it does not openly depart from the official 'catchwords' and 'programme ontology'.

By mapping out the main traits of the three discourses, Table 2 identifies a broad convergence in the use of 'catchwords'. This pattern indicates the success of the Lula Administration in managing the conflict that previously divided the education policy network. Nowadays all political players take for granted the rationale of EFA, Ibero American Goals and the Plan for the Development of Education.

The consistent reference to similar 'programme ontologies' also indicates the great influence of mid-term educational plans, which endow the central government with new capabilities to monitor other political actors and set the order of priorities. Obviously, since plans are political instruments of Federal coordination, sub-national states take them into account despite ideological discrepancy, and the association of municipal educational authorities (UNDIME) also makes reference to their official rationale. But the Federation has also been successful to posit a grand theory that nobody overtly challenges. Significantly, the nuances introduced by All for Education and PREAL entail alternative orders of priorities, but apparently, these actors did not feel strong enough to question the general order of priorities at CONAE between 2008 and 2010. Insofar as this complex game between accounts of reality and recommendations for action is one of the more relevant traits of hegemonic discourse (Fairclough, 2003), the current equilibrium of power in Brazil shows the dominant position of the Federal government.

Finally, the table highlights a cleavage, at least a potential divide according to the current

conjuncture. Despite broad zones of agreement, each political player draws on a particular source of mobilisation. Thus, there are quite different if not contradictory understandings of national integration, some of which conflict with other ones. At least, despite some common wording the teachers union overtly challenges the collaboration of All for Education, who stands for public-private partnerships, with a government inspired on Social-Democratic objectives.

<TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE>

## **Conclusion**

Although Brazil is normally discussed in terms of economic growth and international trade, it certainly posits many more questions about social and educational policies. Due to its acute contradictions, including educational inequalities, this emerging country has implemented an ambitious education policy that entails high stakes in both enrolment and performance. In this article, policy innovation has been presented in an indirect, sketchy way so as to introduce a sociological analysis of the involved resources of power.

Notably, the incumbent administration has acquired new capabilities to overcome the conflicts between teacher unions and the former administration in the 1990s. At that time, the Federal government focused on primary enrolment and the unions launched an opposition campaign standing for an international, broader view of basic education, but recently the new Federal administrations have succeeded to shape a general consensus on the potential of an ambitious strategic plan for education by drawing on a particular combination of political (national legislation, international coordination) and ideological (expert knowledge on policy design and governing by data) power-resources. This case study highlights the importance of political conjunctures to spell out how educational programmes intermingle with political struggle. Although the Brazilian government is capable to convene widely attended conferences that state common objectives despite some more specific conflicts, the eventual underpinning of this strategic plan does not only rely on the 'programme ontology' but also on the current political equilibrium at the regional and national levels.

This case study also suggests an important lesson for educators and policy evaluators in Brazil and elsewhere. How can we know whether the Plan for the Development of Education produces the expected measurable outcomes? If a systematic evaluation eventually tests the many factual hypotheses embedded in its 'programme ontology', certainly the whole educational community can gain relevant knowledge about educational development under the particular conditions of emergent

countries. However, if this work is not done, the appraisal of the plan will simply depend on the correlation between its potential contributions and the persistence or variation of the surrounding political equilibrium.

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*Table 1: The education policy network in Brazil*

UNESCO www.unesco.org	It is the organisation in charge of education in the UN system. Since 1990 it stages the headquarters of the Education for All Programme, also sponsored by other international organisations and big donors. In the 1990s it used to be an important political actor that provided support to the Federal government in order to compensate for the devastating effects of the structural adjustment. In the 2000s it scaled down its activities to a role of technical consultant.
OEI www.oei.es	The Ibero American States Organisation, led by Spain and Portugal (thus the Ibero, instead of the Latin, component), gathers the old colonies of these two ancient powers. Its mandate is quite similar to UNESCO's, and it depends on an international secretariat periodically elected by the summit of prime ministers. Since 2008 it has launched the Educational Goals for Ibero America: mostly, they set common statistical targets and benchmarks so that each country advances toward the expected goal.
Federal government portal.mec.gov.br	It regulates the whole system and has a constitutional mandate to approve ten-year National Educational Plans (NEPs). In 2007 the Plan for the Development of Education (PDE) expanded the goals and benchmarks of the 2001-2011 NEP. Between 2008 and 2010 the Federal government convened the national conference for Education in order to discuss the white paper of the new 2011-2021 NEP.
State governments www.consed.org.br	States manage primary and secondary education, and some universities. They have to implement their own PDE. The richer ones, mostly governed by opposition parties, have established their own performance-based schemes of teacher salaries, and reject the Federal requirement to guarantee a minimum.
Municipalities (and UNDIME) undime.org.br	Municipalities manage pre-school and primary education. They have to implement their own PDE. The local education authorities collaborate in a national association (UNDIME)
Teachers' union (CNTE) www.cnte.org.br	CNTE is the main teachers' union, although there are other small ones. After strong opposition to Pr. Cardoso, it backed Pr. da Silva's policies, although the union kept its own cautionary observations. It is openly opposed to the wage policy of the main states. It keeps a strong international connection with Education International.
National Campaign for the Right to Education (CNDE) www.campanhaeducacao.org.br	It is an advocacy network that pressures for the widest understanding of Education for All. It's closely connected with the Global Campaign for Education.
PREAL www.preal.org	The Partnership for Educational Revitalization in the Americas (PREAL) is funded by USAID, the World Bank and other donors. It monitors the progress of education systems according to its own criteria, basically focused on school effectiveness. It runs its own programme to support public-private partnerships in education.
All for Education (TPE) www.todospelaeducacao.org.br	Funded by Banco de Santander, Unibanco, Fundação Bradesco, Fundação Itaú, Microsoft and other important corporations in Brazil, it collaborates with PREAL in monitoring Brazilian education. TPE is a widely publicised campaign with an increasing influence in education policy in the country.

Note: The table systematises some information about the education policy network in the country. The corpus of

the analysed discourses has tried to reflect all these views. For an exhaustive list, check the CONAE website:  
[conae.mec.gov.br](http://conae.mec.gov.br)

*Table 2: Comparative overview of discourses*

	Managing conflict with 'catchwords'	Maintaining plans with 'programme ontologies'	Mobilising support with 'exhortative styles'
Federal Gov, states and CONAE	Comprehensive approach ... competitiveness	An inclusive education policy including all sub-sectors and levels (schools, municipalities, states, federation) fosters development	National integration
CNDE and CNTE			National integration Collective action
OEI, UNESCO		Community of nations (OEI)	
PREAL, TPE, UNDIME		But each organisation needs to break inertia, too	National endeavour (UNDIME) and public-private partnerships (PREAL, TPE)