

Política e governança educacional: Contradições e desafios na promoção da cidadania [Educational Policy and Governance: Contradictions and challenges in promoting citizenship]. Guimarães-Iosif, R. (Org.) (2012). Brasília, DF: Universa-Liber Livro. 281 pp. ISBN 978-85-60485-59-8.

Uncertainty is one word to describe one of the most arresting features of the educational policy of today in Brazil. This indefiniteness arises directly from within the educational model adopted in this country which has declared education a constitutional civil right. However, the implementation of this right is often in conflict with varied interests of different groups that are opposed to it. It is clear, however, that Brazilian educational policy, in turn, is affected by some aspects that distinguish the set of contemporary educational policies, which are: the constant changes and disappearing borders of a globalized world, the emergence of various social groups with distinct objectives and interests, and the adoption of markedly neoliberal policies promoted by international organizations.

In this scenario, characterized by uncertainty and partisan interests, gaps appear, authority vacuums obfuscate real needs and turn almost all actions into complex matters in seeking the implementation of public policies in education. Furthermore, emancipation becomes almost unattainable for most citizens. It is from this scenario that is lacking in academic publications on these issues, that the book *Política e Governança Educacional: Contradições e desafios na promoção da cidadania* [Educational Policy and Governance: Contradictions and challenges in promoting citizenship] draws inspiration and addresses such matters as who truly governs education in Brazil? What actors decide the direction of public policy in local, national, and global educational contexts? What kind of citizenship is promoted by the current hegemonic model of educational governance? How is decided what areas of knowledge to be prioritized and how much space is given to social issues within this current globalized and neoliberal model of public management?

This book draws its roots from the *Seminário Internacional em Política e Governança Educacional para a cidadania, diversidade, direitos humanos e meio ambiente* [International Seminar on Educational Policy and Governance for citizenship, diversity, human rights and the environment] that occurred in 2011 and was organized by the Graduate Program in Education at the *Universidade Católica de Brasília* (UCB). The book brings together works by Brazilian and Canadian scholars and UCB graduate students that are concerned about the current state of educational policy and governance. It is divided into eleven chapters grouped into three parts, where the first two emphasize topics related to educational policies, governance, and practices and the third represents a *tour de force* by the organizer in collaboration with other researchers who seek to summarize the essence of the preceding discussions and indicate other possible research avenues that may result from reading the book.

The book's collection of articles on Brazilian education presents a pertinent analysis of this country dichotomous national educational system. On one hand, they indicate that there exists preoccupation with the dominant force that endows Brazilian education with a counter-citizenship characteristic since it places financial profit before the social function of education and on the other, it demonstrates the existence of the belief that in the very concept of governance, underlie proper educational administration criteria that are in line with reforms that occurred in educational systems around the world. These include the concepts of accountability and strategic planning, so dear to the private sector, but that also interest civil society as a whole.

The chapters discuss the impacts of global integration, largely facilitated by technological advances and hegemonic impositions on peripheral countries through homogenizing educational policies. By doing so, the book skillfully demonstrates the impacts of these macro phenomena and describes how far removed from reality the local policies are, thus ignoring the real wishes and needs of the local population. This is jeopardizing whatever social actions were planned and consequently

renders inefficient the formation of citizens that, through education, can attain awareness of their duties, rights, and choices.

The book offers a thorough study on the purpose and philosophy of chief international agencies that have influence over the proposal of educational policies. The authors question the role played by these institutions on the political decision-making related to education. In the position taken by the authors in their articles, they demonstrate that although the original guidelines issued by these agencies have suffered modifications over the years, they are still conceived in order to ensure that their interests are protected and that education is marketed as a product. It is in this context that state policies are established in order to accommodate the interests of major donors to educational projects. This is where one of the major areas of activity and limitation of educational governance exists. It is where the great dissonance between actions that are good for the economy, but not for the citizens, reveals itself, influencing the spaces and limits of social governance activities.

In revealing the existence of a strong neocolonial ideology in education, the book establishes several markers to define the term "dominance" that is present in the Brazilian and other colonized countries' case with greater force. Education, in its new role as a colonization vector, plays a central role and therefore has both the power to form patterns of exclusion, as much as free individuals from these very ills. Another important contribution made by this work organized by Guimaraes-Iosif, is emphasizing the existence of an ideological movement based on neocolonialism which is affecting their agenda on the Brazilian educational system. This anthology is a significant addition to the field of educational policy and governance since non-territorial colonialism is rarely addressed in Brazilian literature. Furthermore, even fewer works reflect on the ramifications of neocolonizing ideologies on educational policies and governance.

In general lines, great attention was paid to the consequences of globalization in its neoliberal form on virtually all stages of the education system, shaping its very nature. Neoliberal globalization never hesitates in employing new ideologies and forms of domination in exclusively seeking to maximize efficiency and effectiveness in favor of producing profits. The compilation stresses the fact that globalization, understood as a process of human integration, is not a recent historical event, but rather one that was dramatically amplified by technological advances and neoliberal ideology. On the other hand, ignoring, or not bringing to attention to the potential that civil society has to build an emancipatory social process, means watching shadows projected on walls that point to a world consisting of truisms.

Even so, the selection of articles lacked an analysis on the role that the third sector, composed of non-governmental organizations, comes to play in the process of educational governance. Unlike most of the more trivial relations between State and market covered throughout the book, the actions arising from this type of entity exploit isomorphisms between the community and the State may, at least balance the power relations and truly characterize the concept of governance in application to education. It is inferred that this absence may indicate that, unlike international organizations, non-governmental have yet to obtain their place in representing the interests of the people, in a manner free from the influence of some dominant hegemony.

Another shortfall is the absence of a thorough analysis on the role played by the private sector in the Brazilian educational reality, in the sense of turning the access to education more democratic, as paradoxical as it may seem. It is common in the national literature to criticize the activities of the private sector as a member of the Brazilian educational system. However, little has been said about the important role played by the latter in bringing education to remote places in geographical terms and enabling mass access to higher education, or by raising the standards of quality, even if only for select groups, with respect to the initial school years. It is important to state that we do not defend a complete privatization of education. Neither do we uphold that quality education offered to privileged groups that can afford it is an ideal to strive for. Nonetheless, one should consider that private education has a

decisive role in rising the quality level of secondary education, filling the gaps left by the government. It also has a pivotal role in the formation of a Brazilian intellectual elite that could hardly be conceived by the standard public education system of today.

One of the main contributions of the work is to indicate alternative horizons from where a society can employ the essence of education for the advancement of society in harmony with the environment and also ensuring the inclusion of all groups. The articles also contribute to raising issues that have to be problematized and are scattered in various educational literature documents. It also identifies the existence of different groups in the political and decision-making process, and the importance of managing the latent interests of these groups through a process of educational governance directed to social demands. It suggests to reject the concept of governance supported by the World Bank, rooted in the relationship maintained between state and market, and adopt a new principle that is based on relationships held between the State and its citizens.

Moreover, it highlights that a process of educational governance led by select groups that usually also have significant representation in the formation of public policy tends to suppress the fundamental right of an emancipatory citizenship education, insofar that they manipulate political action in favor of their own interests.

The book is recommended for all those who seek to better understand the process of educational governance supported in the Brazilian reality. The conjunction of entities participating in the Brazilian decision-making and political process, and their interconnections call for the need of a far more holistic approach to the formation of educational policies. Only such an approach, by taking in consideration the whole instead of isolated parts, can enable education to contribute to educate emancipated citizens.

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