

ARTICLE

THE REFORM OF PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN BRAZIL: 2016 TO 2021

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ABSTRACT: The objective of the article is to analyze the impacts of the current Brazilian educational counter-reform process on Professional and Technological Education (EPT). In this context, we start from the hypothesis that the counter-reform of High School has produced transformations in other fields of educational policy, including EPT, not restricted to the general education curriculum. The concept of counter-reform as elaborated by the political theory of Poulantzas is assumed as a theoretical presupposition. From a methodological way, initially, a group of legal-political mechanisms that relate simultaneously to High School and EPT were delimited. Then, through the Content Analysis technique, official documents that support such mechanisms were investigated, emphasizing the political-pedagogical and curricular principles. The mechanisms analyzed are: a) Common National Curriculum Base (BNCC) for High School, expressed in Resolution CNE/CEB No. 17/2018; b) New Paths Program (PNC), announced by the federal government in November 2019; c) National Curriculum Guidelines for EPT (DCNEPT), approved by Resolution CNE/CP No. 01/2021. In conclusion, we defend the thesis that a reform of the Brazilian EPT has been in development, since 2016, a reform of the Brazilian EPT. This reform has been constructed in three stages, chronologically comprised between the years 2016-2018, 2018-2021, and 2021 onwards. The emphasis given to the reform of the EPT is intended to characterize it as one of the sectors that make up the current context of neoliberal counter-reforms in Brazil, therefore, professional education is not exempt from deeper changes in the content of its policies.

Keywords: counter-reform, High School, Professional, and Technological Education.

A REFORMA DA EDUCAÇÃO PROFISSIONAL E TECNOLÓGICA NO BRASIL: 2016 a 2021

RESUMO: O objetivo do artigo é analisar os impactos do atual processo de contrarreformas educacionais brasileiras na Educação Profissional e Tecnológica (EPT). Nesse contexto, parte-se da hipótese que a contrarreforma do Ensino Médio tem produzido transformações em outros campos da política educacional, inclusive na EPT, não se restringindo ao currículo da formação geral. Assume-se, como pressuposto teórico, o conceito de contrarreforma definido a partir da teoria política poulantziana. Do ponto de vista metodológico, foi delimitado, de início, um conjunto de mecanismos jurídico-políticos relacionados, simultaneamente, ao Ensino Médio e à EPT. Em seguida, por meio da técnica da Análise de Conteúdo, foram investigados documentos oficiais que embasam tais mecanismos, destacando-se os princípios de natureza político-pedagógica e curricular. Os objetos da análise são: a) Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC) do Ensino Médio, expressa na Resolução CNE/CEB nº 17/2018; b) Programa Novos Caminhos (PNC), anunciado pelo governo federal em novembro de 2019; c) Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para a EPT (DCNEPT), aprovadas pela Resolução CNE/CP nº 01/2021. Como

conclusão, defende-se a tese de que está em desenvolvimento, desde 2016, uma reforma da EPT brasileira. Essa reforma se construiu, até aqui, em três etapas, compreendidas cronologicamente entre os anos de 2016-2018, 2018-2021 e 2021 em diante. A ênfase dada à reforma da EPT tem o objetivo de caracterizá-la como um dos setores que compõem o quadro de contrarreformas neoliberais no Brasil atual, não estando, portanto, a educação profissional isenta de alterações mais profundas no conteúdo de suas políticas.

Palavras-chave: contrarreforma educacional, Ensino Médio, Educação Profissional e Tecnológica.

LA REFORMA DE LA EDUCACIÓN PROFESIONAL Y TECNOLÓGICA EN BRASIL: 2016 AL 2021

RESUMEN: El objetivo del artículo es analizar los impactos, en la Educación Profesional y Tecnológica (EPT), del actual proceso de contrarreformas que vive la educación brasileña. En este contexto, partimos de la hipótesis de que la contrarreforma de la Escuela Secundaria ha producido cambios en otros campos de la política educativa, incluido EPT, y no se limita al currículo de formación general. El concepto de contrarreforma definido a partir de la teoría política poulantziana se asume como un presupuesto teórico. En el camino metodológico, se delimitó, inicialmente, un conjunto de mecanismos jurídico-políticos que se relacionan simultáneamente con Escuela Secundaria y EPT. Luego, mediante la técnica de Análisis de Contenido, se investigaron documentos oficiales que sustentan dichos mecanismos, destacando los principios político-pedagógicos y curriculares. Los objetos de análisis son: a) Base Curricular Nacional Común (BNCC) de Escuela Secundaria, expresada en Resolución CNE/CEB No. 17/2018; b) Programa Nuevos Caminos (PNC), anunciado por el gobierno federal en noviembre de 2019; c) Directrices Curriculares Nacionales del EPT (DCNEPT), aprobados mediante Resolución CNE/CP No. 01/2021. Conclusivamente, se defiende la tesis de que desde 2016 se viene desarrollando una reforma de la EPT brasileña. Esta reforma se ha construido, hasta el momento, en tres etapas, comprendidas cronológicamente entre los años 2016-2018, 2018-2021 y 2021 en adelante. El énfasis a la reforma del EPT pretende caracterizarla como uno de los sectores que conforman las contrarreformas neoliberales en Brasil hoy, por lo que la formación profesional no está exenta de cambios más profundos en el contenido de sus políticas.

Palabras clave: contrarreforma educativa, Escuela Secundaria, Educación Profesional y Tecnológica.

INTRODUCTION

The starting point of this article is the diagnosis of a process of counter-reforms in Brazilian education, which began in 2016. This process is part of a more general framework of recomposition of the power of the dominant classes and fractions that characterizes the resumption of the political-economic program of neoliberalism, as the core foundation of the State's social policy. The High School counter-reform is part of this context, analyzed by Motta and Frigotto (2017), Ferreti and Silva (2017), Silva (2018), Araújo (2019), and Moura and Benachio (2021). Although there are distinctions, both methodological and at the conceptual level, one finding is common to all these works: the guiding axis of the set of mechanisms that have been articulating changes in the Secondary Education policy in Brazil is the deepening of social inequalities and differences in class in the last stage of Basic Education, imposing a policy that fragments the technical and scientific dimensions of the school curriculum.

Our objective is to identify the impacts of this process on public policy on Professional and Technological Education (EPT- *Educação Profissional e Tecnológica*). The Brazilian EPT realized, over the first fifteen years of the 21st century, a series of transformations. From a significant increase in the number of enrollments, through the creation of new institutional models – with emphasis on the Federal Institutes of Education, Science, and Technology –, to legal changes that allowed the integration between general education and professional education, all these changes put pressure on the structural duality of Brazilian education. Educational policy and practices in EPT (a term, incidentally, inserted in the educational legislation in 2008) began to organically relate to Secondary Education, in a different way from what had been happening since the country's redemocratization.

Substantial changes in this context, which took place from 2016 onwards, allow us to raise the hypothesis that the counter-reform of High School also produced transformations in EPT, not having been restricted to the general education curriculum. When analyzing the content of recent documents that regulate the EPT, produced by both the executive branch and the federal legislature, and comparing them with the changes in Secondary Education, we conclude that the aforementioned counter-reform induces another educational reform, referred here as *EPT Reform*.

The methodological path adopted in the work is as usual. We delimit, at the outset, a set of legal-political mechanisms¹ that are related, at the same time, to the counter-reform of Secondary Education and EPT, in particular Technical Professional Education at Secondary Level. Then, through Content Analysis (FRANCO, 2005) and the historical-structural location of the official documents that support such mechanisms, the principles that articulate the two levels of these reforms were identified. In this analytical process, two types of principles were prioritized: political-pedagogical and curricular².

According to Evangelista and Shiroma (2019), the sources researched in educational policy research materialize specific interests represented by the capitalist State and carry objectivity attributed to their historical class condition. The authors call this condition “document position”, to be exhaustively and methodically investigated by the researcher. This conception is the basis for the look we cast at the Content Analysis methodology, based on Franco's (2005) general guidelines.

The mechanisms chosen for analysis are: a) the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC- *Base Nacional Comum Curricular*) of Secondary Education, expressed in the Resolution of the National Council of Education - Basic Education Chamber (CNE/CEB- *Câmara de Educação Básica*) n° 17, of 2018; b) the Novos Caminhos Program, announced by the federal government in November 2019; c) the National Curriculum Guidelines for EPT (DCNEPT- *Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para a EPT*), approved by CNE Resolution – Full Council (CNE/CP) No. 01, of 2021.

¹ The term is inspired by the work of Poulantzas (1977), who defines one of the fundamental dimensions of the capitalist State: bourgeois law and its function of hiding the class relations that organize the capitalist mode of production. In this type of State, individuals are atomized, appearing as citizens endowed with particular interests and disconnected from social classes. Public policies (social, in the words of Poulantzas) are means for the performance of this function.

² From the outset, this opens up the possibility of future works that adopt a similar path, but approach principles of other natures to analyze the selected documents. For example, the economic, social, epistemological or philosophical dimensions. Thus, it will be possible to compose a more robust picture of the intentions presented by the documents, characterizing with greater density the thesis of an EPT Reform.

The text initially addresses a general characterization of the Brazilian situation, showing the context of the Secondary Education counter-reform. Then, it discusses the results of the analysis of the mechanisms selected in the research. Finally, it proposes, still in preliminary terms, a periodization of the EPT Reform underway in Brazil. In this final section, other measures are mentioned whose implementation may have contributed to the consolidation of the reform, but not analyzed in this work.

CONJUNCTURE AND COUNTER-REFORM IN EDUCATION

First, it is important to highlight a conceptual assumption of the work, which is decisive for the delimitation of the analyzed object. Among Gramscian intellectuals who research educational policy, it is possible to find a certain consensus in using the notion of counter-reform to characterize policies that, despite being presented as progressive, represent, in essence, conservation or restoration movements. The counter-reform is opposed, in this sense, to the concept of passive revolution, created by Gramsci to interpret historical movements of “revolution-modernization”. The processes of passive revolution, although limited to a given social totality, represent novelties towards the interests of subordinates, even though they reconcile agendas and programs of different social classes.

This interpretation is adequate for the analysis of the set of current reforms in Brazilian Secondary Education and their implications. However, it is necessary to add another dimension to the concept of counter-reform, generally little discussed in current usage. Poulantzas (1977) demonstrates that, even if there is the possibility of a social policy of the capitalist State benefiting the interests of some dominated classes, these same policies cannot structurally question the State. In the words of the author, “it is this very autonomy of institutionalized political power that makes it possible to curb the economic power of the dominant classes at times, without ever threatening their political power.” (POULANTZAS, 1977, p. 188) Strictly speaking, reforms and counter-reforms are situated on the same historical-conceptual plane, which is conservation. This is because the political class direction of both is given by the dominant fractions. The difference from the other is the form of capitalist State corresponding to each of the phenomena. “It is here, for example, that the whole problem of the so-called Welfare State lies, which is nothing but a term that masks the form of the ‘social policy’ of a capitalist State at the stage of monopoly capitalism.” (idem)

The definition by Martuscelli (2015) is, in this sense, enlightening:

We believe it is more appropriate to use the expression counter-reform to designate a type of state policy, such as neoliberal, which aims to reduce or suppress the social achievements of the workers and popular movements, obtained in the period of the so-called welfare state, in the European or American, or national-developmentalism, in the case of Latin American countries. In summary, neoliberalism fails to reform capitalism to meet the interests of subordinate classes, and should therefore be characterized as a counter-reform. (p. 33)

The neoliberal model has been in force and provided the content of the policy of the Brazilian capitalist State since 1989 (MARTUSCELLI, 2015). There were confrontations with this policy throughout the Workers' Party (PT- *Partido dos Trabalhadores*) governments, between 2003 and 2016, creating conditions for the distribution of income induced by economic growth, some stability in the generation of jobs, and deceleration of the privatization policy. However, in the words of Boito Jr. (2018), they managed the developmentalism possible within the limits of the neoliberal capitalist model. In this context, the set of educational reforms satisfied the interests of the working classes, especially in the scope of Secondary Education and EPT.

At least two movements are emblematic of this process. Firstly, the emphasis is given by the EPT policy to the integrated form of articulation between general training and professional education. The simple re-establishment of the construction of unitary curricula broke with the fragmentation that generally guided the legislation of the previous period. In essence, the content brought by Decree nº 5.154/2004 and introduced in the LDB by Law 11.741/2008 placed the perspective of polytechnic education at the center of the educational debate, through the idea of integral human formation.

This emphasis resulted in a second movement. Policies and programs such as Professionalized Brazil and the expansion of the Federal Network of Scientific and Technological Professional Education (RFEPCT- *Rede Federal de Educação Profissional Científica e Tecnológica*) led to an

increase in the number of enrollments in Integrated Secondary Education from 98,299 in 2007 to 366,959 in 2014, that is, a variation positive 273% across the country (PELISSARI, 2019). More than 350,000 young people started to attend high school guided by the polytechnic concept, not counting the integration courses between Youth and Adult Education and professional education referenced by a specific policy that represented the expansion of the right to public education universal.

This process was foreseen by the guiding documents of public policy as a political³ pedagogical and curricular reference for the entire national Secondary School. The perspective of curricular integration was not restricted to the technical and scientific aspects, but claimed a guiding axis for the entire High School curriculum, based on the dimensions of work, science, culture, and technology. For the first time in the history of Brazilian education, it was a movement to build an identity for this stage of Basic Education.

The period inaugurated with the 2016 coup d'état (BOTTO JR., 2018) represents the era of counter-reforms. Constitutional Amendment 95/2016 – which limits public spending on health and education for twenty years – was the cornerstone of the resumption of the neoliberal program, following a series of regressive social reforms. In addition to gradually eliminating the remnants of developmentalism that remained from the previous period, the Temer and Bolsonaro governments are characterized by the entry of a new actor into the Brazilian political scene: the neo-fascist movement and its cultural and ideological pillars. There is, in the political-economic conjuncture, a complex combination between authoritarianism and neoliberalism, which prioritizes the implementation of counter-reforms, making possible secondary contradictions between the two fields. For a better characterization, it is worth visiting the definition of fascism proposed by Togliatti in 1935:

The term 'fascism' is often used in an imprecise way, as a synonym for reaction, terror, etc. This is not fair. Fascism does not only mean the struggle against bourgeois democracy, we cannot use this expression only when we are in the presence of this struggle. We must use it only when the struggle against the working class develops on a new mass basis of a petty-bourgeois character, as we see in Germany, France, and England, wherever typical fascism exists. (TOGLIATTI, 1978, p. 5)

Bolsonaro government not only gave voice to a broad reactionary social movement that can be its base but also represented the arrival in the national government of a group with the characteristics mentioned by Togliatti. Implementing a neoliberal economic policy and within the context of a pandemic of global dimensions, the new period deepened, in a few months, the historical inequalities of the Brazilian social formation, reconstructing scenarios typical of the 1990s.⁴

Specifically, regarding the impacts of this situation on High School policies, Motta and Frigotto (2017) already pronounced 2017: “it translates, in practice, the liberal-conservative ideology in which fascist elements of the movement converge. School 'without' Party and economists of Todos pela Educação, covered by the benefits of the philanthropy of good men and propellers of economic development.” (MOTTA; FRIGOTTO, 2017, p. 368)

Law 13,415, approved in 2017, is a well-rounded synthesis of this scenario. Fundamentally, the law establishes the following bases for the “New” High School: a) fragmentation and deepening of the educational duality, established through a common national curriculum base and specific training itineraries (SILVA, 2018; ARAÚJO, 2018; MOURA; BENACHIO, 2021); b) anti-scientific, which is based on the notion of competences and imposes it on the curricular guidelines of the reform (FERRETTI; SILVA, 2017); c) devaluation of teachers' work and professional training (ARAÚJO, 2018).

Therefore, the reform breaks with the slow and contradictory movement of building an identity for High Schools that had been developing. Thus, claiming the “novelty” and “freedom of choice” of youth, under the leadership of private capital that operates in the educational area (PIOLLI; SALA, 2020) is characterized as counter-reform. It is articulated in a complex network of legal

³ See, for example, Brazil (2007; 2012).

⁴ At the beginning of the first year of the Bolsonaro government, the number of Brazilians in extreme poverty was approximately 13 million. In March 2021, it increased by 9.2%, which corresponds to 1.2 million people. On the other hand, 22 people entered the list of Brazilian billionaires, only in 2021. This number was composed of 43 individuals in 2020, that is, in less than a semester, the number of billionaires increased by more than 50% in Brazil. (DIEESE, 2021)

mechanisms and, what is most important to us, it has repercussions in several other fields of educational policy, such as EPT.

LEGAL-POLITICAL MECHANISMS THAT INDUCE A REFORM IN EPT

The discussion about a common base for all Secondary Education is not new in Brazil. It was appropriated by the current counter-reform and re-established within a conservative framework (SILVA, 2015). The final text of Law number 13,415/2017 provides for the segmentation of the High School curriculum into a common base and a diversified part, consisting of training itineraries that would, in theory, be chosen by the student. In addition, it presents the following wording for a new LDB article: “The National Common Curricular Base will define rights and learning objectives of secondary education, according to the guidelines of the National Council of Education” (BRASIL, 2017). Therefore, within the framework of the imposition of a curricular fragmentation, the common national basis for the entire High School is presented.

One year after the approval of the referred law, the CNE/CEB publishes its Resolution nº 17/2018, which expresses the new BNCC. The first characteristic of the document is the consolidation of a perspective that had already been foreseen in curricular guidelines for Secondary Education since the well-known National Curricular Parameters (PCN- *Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais*) of the 1990s. The pedagogy of competencies was present not only in PCN but in other devices published over the past 25 years. Now, the guidance given by the BNCC makes it possible to homogenize this perspective, insofar as, already in its first article, the resolution proposes to define “the organic and progressive set of essential learning as a right of adolescents, young people and adults of High School” (BRASIL, 2018). What would these essential learnings be? Article 2 answers precisely: “Essential learning is defined as knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and the ability to mobilize, articulate and integrate them, *expressing themselves in competences*” (idem, emphasis added).

Regarding the concept of competence, Silva (2018) visits the educational reform of the 1990s, showing its proximity to the ideas of competitiveness and competition, typical of neo-technicist ideas. The author complements, dealing with the theme in the current context:

This discourse, now reinvigorated, is resumed amid the same justifications, that it is necessary to adapt the school to supposed and generalizable changes in the 'world of work', mechanically and immediately associated with innovations of a technological and organizational nature (SILVA, 2018, p. 11)

In this sense, a fundamental philosophical basis for rescuing the concept of competence is classical utilitarianism. A careful analysis of Art. 4 of CNE/CEB Resolution number 17/2018, which presents the ten general skills to be developed in High School, highlights the permanent mobilization of ideas on the use of knowledge, practical experience, and decision-making. When linked to the scientific and school fields and if adopted as assumptions of the curricular organization, such notions restrict the meanings of knowledge, limiting themselves, as Silva (2018) shows, to immediate applicability, “when exercising what is learned at school in situations of everyday life [, reinforcing] the idea that knowledge is limited to giving immediate answers to day-to-day problem situations” (p. 11).

In the BNCC of Secondary Education, this conception is combined with the nationalization of a curriculum, including within the scope of EPT of Secondary Level, generalizing and consolidating the pedagogical turn provoked by Brazilian neoliberalism. Between 1996 and 2017, differently, the pedagogy of competencies was restricted to certain mechanisms, allowing degrees of freedom in the production of public policies, such as the emphasis on a polytechnic pedagogy, as discussed earlier. In the current context, the intention is for the concept of competence to guide all practices – not only curricular – in High School, which is even foreseen in Law nº 13.415/2017, which establishes the counter-reform. In this document, which has nine pages, the word competencies are mentioned in fourteen opportunities.

It is also necessary to mention the essentially prescriptive character in which the document is organized. Each area of knowledge is composed of a set of prescriptions transformed into codes, which begin to structure course projects, teaching plans and even teaching materials, as already seen in the new format of the National Book and Teaching Material Plan (PNLD- *Plano Nacional do Livro e do*

Material Didático) (MATHIAS, 2021). The very notion of “area” of knowledge must, at this point, be questioned, since, in the cases of Natural Sciences and their Technologies and Applied Human and Social Sciences, it dilutes the proper scientific knowledge of fields such as Physics, Chemistry, Biology, History, Geography, Sociology, and Philosophy. The flexibility of such knowledge in the “organic set” (BRASIL, 2018) of competencies consolidates a precarious curriculum and does so by resorting to the prevailing anti-scientific in the current context.

Going through the counter-reform chronology, we arrive at the *Novos Caminhos Program* (PNC- *Programa Novos Caminhos*), announced by the federal government in 2019, therefore one year after the publication of the BNCC. The program is aimed at offering EPT courses to what it calls the new public entering Brazilian high schools. It is worth noting that, as provided for in Law number 13,415/2017, the High School curriculum now includes a diversified part, established on the national basis of skills presented by the BNCC. The idea is that, after completing the path common to all curricula, each young person will be able to select one of five possible training paths, according to their aptitude and affinity.

Based on this general notion, the principle expressed in the guiding documents⁵ of the PNC is freedom of choice. Among the possible paths – called training paths by law –, the student can opt for the technical and professional path, if he wants to enter the job market quickly. This is how it is presented, within the scope of the mechanisms that induce a new reform, the PNC: as a fundamental linking strategy between the “New” Secondary Education and the EPT. The program presentation classifies this strategy as one of its potentials, explaining its objectives with the new vacancies in a very didactic way:

The Secondary Education Reform (Law number 13,415, of February 13, 2017) promoted changes in the Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education, in which the definition of training itineraries stands out.

They should be organized together with the National Common Curricular Base, by offering different curricular arrangements, according to the relevance to the local context and the possibilities of the different education systems. One of the training paths of Secondary Education is the Technical and Professional Training itinerary.

Thus, from the implementation, the student who enters high school will be able to opt for technical and professional training within the workload of high school. The graduate, therefore, may be qualified to exercise a profession.

The deadline for implementing the new High School is 2022. For this, it will be necessary to consider updating the state curricula. (BRASIL, 2021a)

The prioritized form for the articulation between EPT and Secondary Education becomes concomitant, in line with what the other mechanisms of the counter-reform foresee (SILVA, 2018; ARAÚJO, 2019; PIOLLI; SALA, 2020). The PNC proposes to be the tool through which this priority will be implemented, stimulating the offer of technical courses with a curriculum separate from regular Secondary Education and, therefore, contrary to the unitary and polytechnic basis that had been guiding Integrated Secondary Education.

It should be noted that the new National Curriculum Guidelines for Secondary Education (DCNEM- *Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais para o Ensino Médio*), also published in the scope of the counter-reform in 2018, explain the very composition of the adjectives used to classify the training itinerary discussed here: “technical and professional”. The document allows for such a curriculum to be developed through technical or professional qualification courses, the latter called Initial and Continuing Training (FIC- *Formação Inicial e Continuada*). Thus, the workload of that itinerary can be completed not only separated from the general training curriculum but also through a sum of short courses. The FIC courses have a different objective, as they are a strategy for the initial presentation of labor processes or, then, renewal of knowledge about techniques and procedures by workers in service. Their curricula differ from

⁵ For the implementation of the PNC, the federal government did not make use of a set of laws or decrees. On the contrary, he resorted to the expedient of issuing ministerial ordinances, which allow the elaboration of public policies to pass outside Parliament. Our analytical plan was defined, then, based on five ordinances (n°s 1717, 1718, 1719, 1720 – all from 2019 – and 62/2020), in addition to the program’s website, maintained by MEC (BRASIL, 2021a).

articulated and long-term technical training, which systematizes the most rigorous principles of a profession.

One of the ministerial ordinances that regulate the PNC (Ordinance MEC nº 1.718/2019) authorizes the offer of EPT courses by private institutions. Given the vocation of these institutions to offer FIC programs, due to the very immediate nature of the courses and facilities required, this is yet another strategy used to impose concomitance as a general rule in the relationship between general education and professional education. In this sense, we agree with Araújo (2019, p. 61), who identified that there is “anything goes” in the counter-reform EPT. This flexibility focuses on what the author called the “itinerary of the poor” since what is at stake is the deepening of the duality characteristic of Brazilian education. With this, learning to read, write, logical-mathematical reasoning, natural and social sciences, arts, and body culture is restricted to the choice of other itineraries, which, in terms of the social function they fulfill, constitute the pole dominance of duality.

The general elements discussed in the two previous mechanisms reappear in a document published in 2021. Resolution CNE/CP nº 01/2021 inaugurates a new stage in the present chronology, while organizing, in National Curriculum Guidelines for EPT (DCNEPT), all devices that link professional education to the principles of the ongoing counter-reform. It is necessary to remember that general DCN for all levels and forms of provision have been claimed by the EPT scientific and school community for some years, under the argument that they would provide organicity and unity to public policy. The claim was met, but at the same time, the published document dismantles the foundations and identity that had been built up until then for the EPT. Again, the Gramscian sense of counter-reform in the policies analyzed here is evident.

The main characteristics of this document are three, which, incidentally, were also identified in the BNCC and the PNC. In the first place, the generalization of the perspective posed by the pedagogy of competencies, now presented as a structuring principle of all EPT courses, stands out. The definition given to the term competence is similar to that identified in the BNCC; the difference, in the DCNEPT, is the emphasis on their professional characteristics, on the very dimension of employability. These are skills exclusively aimed at the labor market, something not so explicit in the BNCC text. In this sense, the guiding axis of the curriculum of the courses is taken here with the following conception:

to allow progressive professional development and learning, promoting the permanent ability to mobilize, articulate and integrate *knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and emotions*, essential for the constitution of new professional skills with intellectual autonomy and critical spirit. (BRASIL, 2021b, emphasis added)

The set of five highlighted elements is mentioned seven times in the document. In addition to defining competencies from it, this vector is mobilized to assign a foundation to curriculum planning. Again, the debate is not new. Ciavatta and Ramos (2010) demonstrated that the quinine composed of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and emotions had already been presented as the core of another proposal for the EPT curriculum, also during a discussion on DCN, still in 2010. Data the assumed schematic character, the document presented an acronym for this axis: the “KEY” of the professional education curriculum. The proposal, called Opinion Cordão – an allusion made to the rapporteur for the process at the CNE at the time, Francisco Aparecido Cordão, representative of the interests of the S System in the Council –, according to the authors, brought a serious problem in theorizing about competences:

Competent action at work is guided by a type of knowledge that is a synthesis between [...] theory and practice. The curriculum cannot anticipate professional experience; it can, at most, represent it (in practical learning situations, whether in classes or internships). The opinion, however, emphasizes practice as the teaching methodology itself, with professional practice organizing the curriculum. (CIAVATTA; RAMOS, 2010, p. 24)

The problem of adapting to the labor market, written on the 2021 DCNEPT, is the same as in the Cordão Opinion. It should be noted that the result expressed in the DCN then approved and in force until 2021 (CNE/CEB Resolution number 06/2012) did not incorporate the vector as proposed in the opinion. Almost ten years later, pragmatism reappears as the “KEY” for the entire EPT.

Another characteristic of the competencies mobilized by the 2021 DCNEPT is the apparent construction of a link with the notion of integration. The five elements of the “KEY” vector “integrate”, according to the document, the curricular organization to “put learning into action” and “expressing themselves in essential professional competencies to solve complex demands of everyday life, of the full exercise of citizenship in the world of work and social practice” (BRASIL, 2021b). Thus, a notion that is very important to the elaboration of the Work-Education field of study is used, responsible for important reflections regarding the integral human formation of a polytechnic nature, which had been structuring the policy of Integrated Secondary Education, as we have already discussed.

However, in the DCNEPT, a rather complex discursive expedient is used, based on conceptual hybridity. It is about providing a term with a different meaning from the concept that originated it but mobilizing the same discursive expression. The integration to which polytechnic education refers and the integration of the “KEY” of competencies belong to theoretical-conceptual systems that are diametrically opposed and not even articulated. In the elaboration of a curriculum, the adhesions to each of the perspectives are exclusive. Otherwise, pedagogical eclecticism will harm educational practices themselves, more confusing than clarifying school communities. The term integration is mentioned more than two dozen times in the document, including and mainly when referring to the “KEY”.

The second characteristic of the document analyzed here refers to the form of articulation foreseen between general training and professional education. Once again, fragmentation is the core of the proposal, and there is even a forecast for a new type of High School EPT offer: the “inter-complementary concomitant form, developed simultaneously in different institutions or teaching networks, but integrated into the content” (BRASIL, 2021b). It is, again, the mobilization of the notion of integration to ratify a proposal for a different principle, hiding its true meaning. In this case, by taking the logic of a general base + training itineraries as a reference, the perspective of the BNCC and Law No. 13,415/2017 is emphasized, now articulating it to the EPT curriculum. This becomes clear in the following paragraph, which regulates the inter-complementary concomitance integrated into the content:

in addition to the objectives of Professional and Technological Education, they must observe the purposes of Secondary Education, their respective National Curriculum Guidelines, and other related Guidelines defined by the National Council of Education, in particular those referring to the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC), as well as complementary norms of the respective education systems. (BRASIL, 2021b)

It is worth remembering that this type of offer is presented as an addition to the LDB, which provides for only three ways of articulating general education and professional education: the integrated, the concomitant, and the subsequent. Therefore, there are inconsistencies of a legal nature in the resolution, which goes beyond its competence by legislating on matters already delimited in the maximum law of national education.

Furthermore, the same logic mobilized by the PNC is now emphasized by the DCNEPT. The composition of the workload of the technical and professional training itinerary can be done not only with technical courses but also through professional qualifications. Within the concurrent offer, the possibility of fragmenting it internally opens up, transforming the “technical part” of the curriculum into a sum of small FIC courses. In the context of the integrated or concomitant inter-complementary offer, although there is a prediction of meeting the workload with short-term professional courses, it is quite difficult to imagine how the curriculum planning would take place. In this case, the aim is to reconcile the irreconcilable: to juxtapose as an algebraic sum what should happen in a single curriculum, which dialectically integrates technical and scientific knowledge.

Box 1 below seeks to clarify and systematize the two characteristics previously discussed in the analysis of the DCNEPT, in a comparative perspective with the conception of polytechnic education that had been structuring the curriculum of the EPT of Secondary Level until then.

Box 1 - Comparison between the concepts that guide the DCNEPT (Resolution 01/2021) and that based on polytechnic education in the Brazilian EPT

	Conception present in DCNEPT - Resolution 01/2021	The conception of polytechnic education in the Brazilian EPT
Curricular axis	Knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions – “KEY”.	Science, culture, work, technology, socio-historically established.
Relationship between general education and professional education	Fragmentation – concomitance as a general rule.	Unit curriculum - organicity between technical and scientific content.
Conceptual core	Skills Pedagogy.	integral human formation.
Meaning of the term “integration”	Merely discursive, based on conceptual hybridity.	Dialectical unity between theory and practice and between part and totality.
Political and social sense	Adaptation to the labor market: flexibility, employability, entrepreneurship.	Raising the level of critical awareness about the contradictions in social relations.
Epistemological sense	Knowledge conditioned to practice.	Knowledge historically produced by human societies, in their struggles and contradictions.

Source: The author, 2021.

The third characteristic of DCNEPT is the reinforcement of a trend toward privatization. As we have seen, the document presents the novelty of a “concomitant integration” – if it is possible to treat the subject in these terms –, in which two forms of offering technical courses are associated. Let us remember that we now have the “inter-complementary concomitant form, developed simultaneously in different institutions or teaching networks, but integrated into the content” (BRASIL, 2021b, emphasis added). The emphasis on the adversative conjunction “*but*” denotes the contrariety between the parts that add up. However, it is worth an analytical effort to observe the terrain on which each of them develops, based on the intentions of the document.

The integration, that is, the unification, the indivisibility, and the organicity of the curriculum would be given “in the content”. Making an effort to separate the political-pedagogical from the other factors that compose it, the content referred to in the text would concern the knowledge foreseen in the curricular components, as the disciplines themselves or, in a more general dimension, school activities.

On the other hand, concomitance would be characteristic of the institutional or administrative scope, since inter-complementarity must take place “in different institutions or teaching networks”. But the continuity of the description, in the text, helps our interpretation. The document defines that the new form of offer can be developed “through the action of an agreement or inter-complementarity agreement, for the execution of a unified pedagogical project” (BRASIL, 2021b). In short, what Resolution CNE/CP n° 01/2021 is on the agenda is: the composition of integrated curricula resulting from the articulation between two or more institutions or different administrative spheres is allowed, including through the partnership between the State and the private education market.

If we combine this result with the vocation of private institutions in offering FIC and concomitant technical courses, we have a reinforcement of curricular fragmentation via the private sector. In this formula, integration is a mere discursive exercise, given the impossibility of dissociating form from content, a basic principle of the first lessons of any course that deals with the curriculum.

In summary, the analysis carried out so far allows us to conclude that the secondary education counter-reform has an impact on the EPT context. As Bauer (2020) shows, the debate on curricular induction has always been very focused on the determination of large-scale assessments, the key through which many changes that occurred in High School in the 1990s were interpreted. We highlight the class component of this process, which, under the neoliberal capitalist model, the influence of imperialism determined counter-reforms in Brazilian and Latin American education, inducing curricular transformations at the most varied levels, stages, and modalities. This is what we see happening

extensively in the current situation and, in particular, in the mutual influence between the Secondary Education counter-reform and an EPT Reform.

CONCLUSIONS: THE THREE STAGES OF EPT REFORM

The results obtained allow a synthesis regarding the EPT Reform. This is still a provisional conclusion, given the cut built up to the current moment of the research. Diverse views can be launched for the same documents, as well as other measures must be analyzed in detail to confirm the more general result we reached. There are two objectives with this final discussion: to present a proposal for the periodization of the EPT Reform and to indicate other juridical-political mechanisms that were used to consolidate the process. We identified, in this sense, three major stages throughout which the reform was built, since the presentation of Provisional Measure (MP) n° 746, in September 2016.

In the first stage, which runs from 2016 to 2018, the general guidelines for the changes intended to be introduced were established. Therefore, there was an accommodation of the EPT to the fundamentals of the counter-reform, using instruments that were still quite punctual and even imperceptible at that time. Ferretti and Silva (2017), however, already identified the two basic principles present in MP n° 746/2016 – a year later, maintained in Law n° 13.415/2017, as we could see – from which the transformations in EPT policy would be produced in the following years. The first of these is stated as follows:

From the educational point of view, with MP n° 746 and with the BNCC, training based on competence, which was not valued during the Lula government, is resumed. For coherence and an epistemological option, this MP proposes that the proposal of integration in secondary education and professional education disappear from the scene, within the scope of state governments, even though it is possible to raise the hypothesis of its continuity in the Federal Institutes of Education, Science, and Technology, for their pedagogical-administrative autonomy and for belonging to the federal education network. (FERRETTI; SILVA, 2017, p. 392)

The pedagogy of competencies was used to impose the fragmented model of the reform. Linked to this aspect, the new devices bring to light what the authors call “restraining access to higher education through professionalization” (idem, p. 396). The result was the proposition of the concomitant form as a general rule for the provision of articulated technical courses, weakening the policy of Integrated Secondary Education, based on the perspective of polytechnic education.

The second stage of the reform consolidates substantial transformations in the EPT of the Intermediate Level, in particular, always having as base the elements of the previous phase. Thus, it is in the two months of November-December 2018 that the two main measures that impose curricular reforms in technical courses linked to general training are presented: CNE/CEB Resolutions number 03/2018 and 17/2018, introducing new DCN and a BNCC for High School. The second document was the subject of the analysis presented in the previous chapter.

But, as at other times in the history of Brazilian professional education, a nationwide program would be needed to give materiality to those curricular guidelines. Poulantzas (1977), moreover, demonstrates that it is characteristic of the capitalist State to inscribe a “social policy” within the limits of its structure, whose implementation and modalities – the variations – depend, as is evident, on the concrete relationship of forces in the class struggle” (POULANTZAS, 1977, p. 188). In our case, the PNC tried to involve the social agents of the political context of the ongoing reforms: on the one hand, the pedagogy of competencies, being the most direct development of neoliberal orthodoxy in the pedagogical field, brings into play the bourgeoisie directly associated with international capital; on the other hand, the mechanisms for strengthening private EPT via the offer of the 5th training itinerary, provided for by the PNC, point to the more immediate interests of private capital (national and international) active in education. In this way, the social, political, and institutional conditions are created for the elaboration of new programs, courses, and financing models in the High School EPT.

It is also worth mentioning other mechanisms that made up the second stage of the reform. In the first place, the new PNLD is observed, which is a curricular mediation, promoting the dissolution of the disciplines of knowledge in textbooks by areas and by projects. In addition, it does not present

specific materials for professional education and also dilutes epistemological boundaries that delimit the milestones of each particular scientific knowledge. Preliminary analyzes have shown that there is, also in this case, an incompatibility between the didactic model contained in the PNLD and the conception of integral human formation that had been practiced as the core of the High School EPT (MATHIAS, 2021).

Secondly, it is necessary to understand in detail the content manifested by the current version of the National Catalog of Technical Courses, prepared by the MEC between 2019 and 2020 and officially launched in 2021. Topics such as the links between the branches of economic activity contained in the catalog and the business sectors, the number of workloads for each course, and the pedagogical conception that guides the text are important research questions. In the same way, as foreseen in the PNLD books and all the new DCN, we observed that, in the current catalog, there is a preference for the expression area of knowledge instead of the technological axis, the latter used in the previous version of the document. The scope of the notion of area favors the dilution of scientific fields and, contrary to the idea of an axis, it conceives technical knowledge from its purposes, not about science, work, culture, and technology.

It is also worth highlighting that the context of the counter-reform also induces curricular changes in the field of teacher education. It is known that the Brazilian EPT, since the creation of a new model for the Federal Network of Professional, Scientific and Technological Education, in 2008, values teacher preparation for specific activities in professional education. In this sense, the changes brought about by the new DCN for teacher training (CNE/CP Resolution number 02/2019) also impact teaching practice in EPT and are mobilized as an instrument of reform. In this field, emphasis should be given to Ordinance MEC nº 983/2020, which imposes significant changes in the career activities of the federal teacher of Basic, Technical, and Technological Education (EBTT), such as, for example, an increase in the minimum workload of activities of the class, devaluation of research and extension and increased control over work.

In summary, the second stage of the EPT Reform begins at the end of 2018 and extends until the beginning of 2021, when the new DCNEPT are then published via Resolution CNE/CP number 01/2021, already analyzed here. Thus, the third and current stage of the reform is inaugurated, which generalizes the principles of fragmentation, anti-scientific, and devaluation of teaching work for the entire EPT, including higher education.

Two months after the publication of the new DCNEPT, Federal Decree nº 10.656/2021 is published, which regulates the Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and the Valuation of Education Professionals (Fundeb). Among the determinations, one draws attention, to article 26 of the decree:

The institutions of the Federal Network of Professional, Scientific and Technological Education must inform the state education network, at least every six months, of their capacity to absorb enrollments for concomitant courses of technical professional education of secondary level in the form of an agreement or partnership that implies the transfer of resources provided for in item II of § 3 of art. 7 of Law No. 14,113 of 2020. (BRASIL, 2021c)

For the first time, the EPT and the RFEPCT are included in Fundeb. The intention, however, is clear: the construction of “partnerships” – in the same terms as other documents that establish the reform – between the union and the states for the offer of the 5th training itinerary via concomitant courses. There is also a need to further investigate the content of the measure. However, we can conclude that the intention is to establish Fundeb as the axis for financing transformations in the EPT, calling on the RFEPCT to offer concomitance.

The highlighted elements allow us, finally, to argue in favor of the thesis that EPT Reform has been under development in Brazil since 2016. This reform has been constructed, so far, in three stages, the devices of the third being those that have concreted the bridge between the counter-reform of Secondary Education and professional education. This means that the emphasis we give to the EPT Reform aims to characterize it as one of the policies that make up the framework of neoliberal counter-reforms in Brazil today. Professional education is therefore not exempt from possible deeper changes in the content of its policies, even with the establishment of progressive reforms throughout the first decade

of the 2000s. The preservation of the concept of integral human formation and the polytechnic perspective will depend on the mobilization capacity of the directly benefited classes, under the direction of the working class.

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